

**ANTHROPONYMY IN MIRDITA.
HISTORY OF ANTHROPONYMY IN
MIRDITA**



Linguistics

Keywords: toponyms, anthroponies, ethnonyms, hydronyms, oikonims.

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Abstract

Mirdita, one of the most unified, most identical provinces of the Albanian lands, with a much defined status, in customs and traditions, in clothing and in popular law, with a special provincial cohesion, a name of pride for its inhabitants, began to appear as early as the Middle Ages, with different names, although it was the nucleus of medieval Dukagjini. In what is called Mirdita, in the broadest sense, in the Middle Ages there was an old local Arberian population and this has been proved by the numerous cemeteries, as common burials in one place, a place with agriculture, vineyards, trees, mills, which explains of a sedentary population and this is proved by the numerous churches and monasteries that have their roots in the Early Middle Ages and the body in the Middle Ages. Even today, migratory movements for different reasons are indicative that the people of Mirdita, wherever they are, preserve the memory of their province and consciously present themselves: "I came from Mirdita!".

Introduction

Mirdita¹, one of the most unified, most identical provinces of the Albanian lands, with a much defined status, in customs and traditions, in clothing and in popular law, with a special provincial cohesion, a name of pride for its inhabitants, began to appear as early as the Middle Ages, with different names, although it was the nucleus of medieval Dukagjini.

We learn from Tirta's study that: The evidence of the times clearly tell us that the population of these areas that are included in Mirdita, since medieval times has been with living culture and economic resources, autochthonous and not nomadic. We must be clear that the toponymic name Mirditë in different times and cases is presented with narrower meanings, but in different degrees of size, but also with a broad meaning, as a complete and provincial geographical-ethnological unit. Administrative designations may change, extend in width, but the provincial connections in the docks and traditions remain.

At the same time, it is emphasized that: It is interesting to note that the name Mirdita with its narrow meaning, comes to us in the Middle Ages, mostly, through the anthroponyms of the migrants who left from there. So they took with them the name Mirdita, as an adjective, as a memory of the country they came from. Thus we have Gjon Mirdita and Pjetër Mirdita, coming from the areas between the valleys of the two Fandas of Mat and settled in Manzabardh, a village near the Drini, in the south of Shkodra (Venetian Cadastre of Shkodra, 1416-1417), also, according to the Ottoman records, 1467, in Suhadol of Dibra is settled Ndre Mirdita and in Shipshan, also of Dibra: Gjon Mirdita.

¹ Tirta, Mark. *Etnotkultura shqiptare, ligji doksore*, Tiranë 2016.

In the 15th century we find Gjon Mirdita embedded in the Headquarters of Pjetër Mirdita in Bërzanë (Not very far from Ura e Matit, Ura e Zogut). In various anthroponyms of people who left their early province, are mentioned old medieval names, and further Fandi, Ndërfanda, Doçi, Skanda and so on. The name Skanda, as an anthroponym is mentioned in 4 villages in Zadrima and Nënshkodër. Bratin Skanda in Shirq, Gjin Skanda in Balldre, Gjon Skanda and Pjetër Skanda in Samrisht, Katalina and Pjetër Skanda in Gleros (near Beltoja) (Venetian Cadastre of Shkodra, 1416-1417.)

Skanda is mentioned in Dibër (1467), in Mat (1467) at the place where Fandi and Mat meet, near Fang. In the Ottoman registers (1529-1536) where it is spoken about Mirdita and Zadrima, SKANDA's village is marked with 4 houses near Vau i Dejes and one village near Ragami. It is also mentioned there a Scandani village, derived from the anthroponym Skanda (1671 and 1702). SKANDA's name will be found everywhere later as an anthroponym and toponym, take it: Skanda Mountain in Dibër, opposite Gamsiqe (as Jastrebov mentions to us).

Tirta testifies that: The Doda Brotherhood (later Meksi) of Labova e Zhapa, Lunxheri) is from Mirdita. Earlier they had the surname Doda as J. G. van Hahnn says and later they changed it to Meksi. The Malo Brotherhood, in Odrie of Lunxhëria, originated from the Malajt of Kthella in Mirdita. The memorization, in the use of the name of the birthplace, of the province of the first has a special meaning, very significant for the spiritual connection of the displaced with their province, with their birthplace or of the grandparents: Mirdita, Fandi, Skanda, Suli, Kthella, Spaçi and so on.

In what is called Mirdita, in the broadest sense, in the Middle Ages there was an old local Arberian population and this has been proved by the numerous cemeteries, as common burials in one place, a place with agriculture, vineyards, trees, mills, which explains of a sedentary population and this is proved by the numerous churches and monasteries that have their roots in the Early Middle Ages and the body in the Middle Ages. Evidence and various historical sources speak about this. In Mirdita are also settled the Albanian populations coming from the northernmost areas of Upper Albania. We have Thaçet of Domgjon, Gojan and Gomsiqe and some other areas of Mirdita that have come from Montenegro merged in the Middle Ages with the local population.

Kthella is also called the Bajraks of Ohrid and this is, of course, an administrative name, due to the fact that this area as a land once wrote as a subordinate to the Ohrid sanxhak. But, on the other hand, there are data on the arrival of the Albanian population from the Albanian areas of Macedonia, from the Slavo-Bulgarian pressure even later and in the conditions of the Ottoman occupation. Shtjefën Gaspri in the XVII century (year 1672) says that the Mirditas came there 180 years ago. The different testimonies coincide with each other. Ottoman sources also speak about this problem. New churches built in Orosh, Spaç and Kushnen in the XVI-XVII century, have the same names of saints as those of the old churches in Has of Gjakova as: St. John (Shengjin), St. Nicholas, St. George, Redeemer. (San Salvatori) and so on.

The scholar Tirta observes in the grouping related to the anthroponym Morina: it is kept coming from Mirdita just as the Pogaj (Pogu) of Has are kept with the same origin. They call them "Fanda", as it is generally called every brotherhood that came, or the so-called coming, from Mirdita. On the other hand, it should be clarified that in Mirdita we do not find in any folklore, in any toponymy or anthroponym, in any written source to tell us about the presence of the Morina or Pogu fraternity with early origins and settlement in these mountainous areas, in a bygone era, and then fled to Kosovo. There is talk of other fraternities or special families that once fled to Kosovo, but with completely different names and fraternities. Again the folklore comes to our aid to clarify in some way these confusing phenomena. She tells us that Shala, Shoshi and Mirdita came from Pashtrik of Gjakova to these mountains where they are today, but when these highlands were invaded, they went to Pashtrik again for some time. Numerous legends about this have been collected by F. Nopça and E. Durham since the beginning of the XX century, when these were even clearer in the memory of the people.

The inhabitants of these provinces (Shale, Shosh and Mirdita)² came from the mountains of Pashtrik near Gjakova when the Turks first invaded the West. Prior to this migration they were part of the Peja tribes and were all Christians (there is reason to think that the Mirditas once, according to her, were Orthodox). They further show that, when the Turks took Shkodra and were desolating the country, they invaded again, for some time, and settled in their mountains in Pashtrik; returned to the places where they live today only 250 years later.

Among other things, Tirta brings important evidence for: Përshpalaj of Spaç show that they have their origin from Vllaznia Kalaj of Kthella e Epër. The Vâthaj, supported and closed by the Bibaj tribe in Spaç, are descended from Fregni of Dibrit. Vâthi came and settled in Spaç as a "grandson" daughter, grandson of a daughter. The reason for the migration is that he was left without parents and at the risk of blood feud, his was taken by his uncle to protect him from being murdered. They had put an earring in his ear in order, according to popular belief, so that the rifle would not catch him, that is, to protect him from being murder. This is how the surname Vâthi remained and today it is a whole genus living in Spaç, based on the Bibaj relative³.

Deda of Oroshi, are described as a genus, as a big door, as prime pride on this Land, there are some branches supported by it like Lalaj, Rrehnakët and so on, thus new comers to this place. A branch of Lalajve (Dedaj) of Orosh has once moved and settled in Vela of Vendi in Dheun of Malësia Lezhë (inside Mirdita).

Çoku i Oroshit consists of a local branch (Pal Çoku of Çokaj of Lajthiza and on the other hand supported branches coming from Korthpula of Dibrit) and of Pulaj of Selita (inside Mirdita). Totëri (Theodore) of Orosh's Shëmri came not long ago from Kthella. Although he has been embedded in Orosh, for more than 150 years, the Tirtaj of Orosh are made of two branches: the local one and the other from Fandi (Shengjin), as a grandson supported by the first branch. In the

² E. Durham, *Brenga e Ballkanit*, f. 450.

³ P. Gjika, *Gjurm.*, f. 63.

new settlement are preserved the toponyms of the old name, which they had when they came as: Kodra of Çetës, Laku of Çetës, Prroska of Çetës, etc.

Later the surname changed, but the early toponyms of origin remain in the place where they were settled. It is said that he came and settled there as a grandson of a daughter. Cakoni's tribe, originating from Dheu of Fandi, has migrated in Bushkash (Dheu of Rrazës among the three Bajraks of Kthella) centuries ago.

Movements from one bayrak to another, as well as an entire peasant community, prove that Oroshi once had only summer places in the mountains. Nënshejti and Lajthiza, which later turned into inhabited villages throughout the year, and for another part of the population, remained again, part of these settlements in question, only as summer settlements "*tbana verore*". The winter places of this Dheu (bayrak) were spread down to Bukmirë, Qafëmollë, Livadhës and the western half of Ndërfushaz, and also to half of the village Shpërdhazë.

Kryeziu was considered Mirdita, as it is known up to this day and for its population's origin⁴. It should be noted that the people of Mirdita, wherever they have migrated, in not a few cases, have taken with them the name of the village or province as an adjective, or as a village name: Thus we have: Sanxhakun near Laç, formed with population coming from Sanxhaku's village of Ulza (Bushkash) when the old village was flooded by Lake HC of Ulza above the river Mat. When the village of Gomsiqë was flooded by H.C. of Vau i Dejës, the population went to Velipoja and formed the village of Gomsiqja e Re.

From folklore, anthroponyms and toponyms we learn, as well as from historical evidence, that a group of population came from the areas of Hoti of Malësia e Madhe located in Zajsa of Selita and today hold the surname Beci, a group is located in Baz where there are preserved many folklore, anthroponyms, toponyms, as are the Hots in Lura; all these Hotë are connected by the valley of Uraka. Hotët in Selitë (Zajsë) are also mentioned in the XV century. It is possible that these Hoti populations came here during the Ottoman occupation, in the XV century or even earlier, as a result of Slavic pressures. Hotë or with other names, we find coming from Malësia e Madhe or from the northwest of Albanian lands such as Dibër, Martanesh and in other regions of Albania, more on the border with Slavic communities.

The Bytyçi family located in Kullaxhi, near Blinisht, must have come from the northernmost parts of the Albanian lands.

This opinion reinforces and clarifies it further by F. Nopça when he says: "Around 1480, then in 1520 and between 1550 and 1590 the population of the north migrated in large numbers and continued to move somewhat more easily until 1650. So we can accept that the occupation of Albania and the rise of Turkish power have been the cause of population migration⁵".

⁴ A. Boué, *La Turquie d'Europe*, Paris, 1840, V.II.

⁵ F. Nopça, "*Fiset e Malësisë...*", f. 259.

In Kthellë, Legisi, Shurbi and Doçi of Sheba, such as Shqalshi of Malajt, large kin groups, have their early origin from Has of Gjakova, as it is preserved in the consciousness of these groups themselves, but also from the inhabitants of Mirdita in general. The arrival of the nephew from the daughter, that is, the nephew in the lands of the uncle, we encounter in not a few cases. A family from Luznia of Dibra has settled in Zajsë of Selita; the daughter has come with her children to her parents' village. From here is the relative Arapaj with the respective tribes: Racaj, Veliaj, Xhucaj. This arrival will be very early, before the Islamization of Luznia.

Tirtaj also points out that: Vllaznia Kuçi of Dibri considers itself a relative of the Krasniqi of the Gjakova Highlands and explains, according to the memories of their tradition that their origin is from there. It is interesting to note that "Reds" and "Krasniqi" have the same meaning, but the first is in Albanian and the second in Old Serbian language. The inhabitants of the "Kuçi" relative do not know this semantic match of the two anthroponyms, but this etymology mentioned is not without interest, it is probably an influx of an early time when the Krasniqi of the Gjakova Highlands were also called "Kuçi", along with the slovenian name through the records of the Serbian church and the Serbian state at an early time.

Vllaznia Muçaj with the extension of settlements in different villages of Dheut të Spaçit as in Kinez, Mesul, Kodër-Spaç, Dom, Tuç, Qafa e Malit, Lumbardhë, Lumi i Zi, Fushë -Arës, Kryezi, Mënelë and Vau i Dejës, keep themselves coming in ancient times from the village of Ketë i Matit. Even the Shtjefanaks of Ndërfushaz have in their consciousness, in the elders of this fraternity, that they come from Shtjefni i Matit.

According to him: In Zallë - Dardhë, the relative Murati is blood with Çoku in Orosh, so they came from there. Sala in Qidhnë is a tribe with Ndoku of Zajsit in Selitë (Mirditë). In Grykë e Vogël: Leka, Lleshi, Markja are from Kurbneshi of Selitës. Mark's father was called Zog, after the Birds of Kurbnesh.

From them was formed the village Zogaj of Dibra, with the relatives Lleshaj, who are originally the same as the Zogaj of the same root. So of this root is the relative of Haxhi Lleshi. The birds of Dibra, according to the early tradition, are known as the "village of 12 houses", as the first, the most fundamental. Later they became very widespread in different parts of Dibra and beyond. Nikolli from Mirdita came and settled there in the New Katund in Arape. Cani and Lleshi first came from Mirdita to Bulaç, very early, and later from Bulaçi they came and settled in Katund i Ri where they still live today. Nezha of Arapa also comes from Mirdita.

A whole family in Pult, named Suma, on the right side of the river Kir keep themselves coming from Mirdita⁶. Mirdita consists of different strata of the population: We have authentic Dedaj of Orosh, Çokaj, Markolaj and so on.

Even today, migratory movements for different reasons are indicative that the people of Mirdita, wherever they are, preserve the memory of their province and consciously present

⁶ E. Durham. *Brenga e Ballkanit.*, f. 449.

themselves: "I came from Mirdita!". They preserve lands and tombs, properties, the surnames that remind them of the old province where they came from, however we manage to affirm and state the same attitude that Tirta expresses that: there is a constant mixture of population from migrations, within the province, from outside - inside and from inside - outside, to other provinces, if they preserve their history.

Before beginning a study on the anthroponomy of a region, of a population, it is advisable to ask the question what does the name symbolizes for human? Just browse through what others have written about it. There is a Christian, Jewish and Muslim tradition regarding the names of people:

In the ancient world, it was believed that name is connected to fate. It is quite true, because often when a name was imposed on a new birth, it was not thought that the name along with the phonemes would show the most secret width of the person, would characterize him.

The name takes on almost a magic value, because it signals the departure with a group, a social environment or a belief. The germination layer, the source, the sacred origin of the name was clear from the era of Greek and Roman antiquity, who often selected names that indicated a kind of ordination, sanctification with deity, with which they evoked the uniqueness, feature of God who wanted to was honored.

In the Roman period, e.g. freedmen (freed slaves) could not safely take on a name freely chosen by their parents; they did almost like the children of their owners wanted to manifest this belonging even by name. Sometimes, on the contrary, they took an ancient name, indicating their geographical and tribal origin⁷.

The value of the name is found to have changed radically with the advent of Christianity. With the spread of Catholicism, the personal name has become increasingly associated with a submission, reference, connection with a character of the New Testament (New Testament), of the synoptic gospels and then with advancing age, with the figure of the saints . Until recently, it was impossible for a Catholic to baptize a child with a name unrelated to a figure in religious tradition. The tightening of the relationship between the Catholic cult of the name was also manifested in some current, continuous expressions, e.g. the special, personal name determined the name of the baptism.

Zef Mirdita testifies to Illyrian names: Anna, Annaius, Andia, Andina, Didia, Dazai, Genthos, Genthis, some of these names are dated as time, in the first centuries of our era, and

⁷ Zeqo, Moikom. Zef Mirdita, Antroponimia e Dardanisë në kohën romake, 1981. Iliria, nr: 1-1988. Në parathënien f. 7-8. Autori duke patur parasysh gjendjen e sotme të dijes dhe qëndrimet disa herë të skajshme të dijetarëve të ndryshëm, sidomos për përkatësinë gjuhësore dhe kohore të të njëtit nomen e kognomen, parashtrohet rëndësinë e aspektit mitologjik dhe trajtimin e materialit mbështetur në rezultatet e fundit të shkencës.

*according to chronological criteria, serve not only the extent space of Illyrian names, their geographical areas, but also the continuity in time*⁸.

Even the tradition of the so-called "congratulatory name", found a wide area, open in the customs of the early Christian communities, in which came information about the names of children from the good congratulation, such as: Benedetto, Benvenuto (blessed, welcome).

Such traditions generally had a very ancient origin: among the Latins (Alba, Bona), the chronological criterion has served to determine early forms of names that often have the same root, but different suffixes, to shed light so also in morphological constructions beyond the boundaries of Latin or Greek suffixes⁹.

1.2 Heritage in Mirdita as a survival of anthroponyms

Mirdita, In this region lives an autochthonous people with traditions in the field of ethnocultural and historical, with a pure dialect and rich in lexicon, phraseology, toponymy from the dough of Albanian language, etc.

Unfortunately, the language written in Albanian is from the late times, which makes it difficult to study the origin of Albanian names in general and those of this region in particular. Mirdita is a unique case for Albania, as almost all the names are derived from the Romans or the Albanian tradition. The personal name of the persons has served not only as a cognitive passport, but also to identify the origin of the tribe, gender and family. The greatest attention was paid to the birth of sons, who brought more joy, as they ensured the continuity of the family.

Their birth was accompanied by gunfire or in older times, by celebrations with people close to them. From the Illyrian time are inherited and constantly repeated names: Ilir, Genc, Gent, Bardhyl, Teutë etc.

Mirdita recognizes the Roman occupation, but not the Turkish occupation, that's why more than 90% of people's names are Catholic, while Orthodox and Muslim names are rare and recent cases, as a result of demographic movements.

In the era of Christianity, during the Roman occupation, Christian names spread both in Europe and in Albania. Mirdita had many churches, which played an important role in the baptisms they performed on children with saint women and saint men names. The father and mother thought that before the child was born for his name, having as a main principle the Catholic faith, in order to preserve the ancestry of the family and tribe, but not his physical appearance.

⁸ Po aty, f. 283 -284.

⁹ Po aty, f. 11 – 35. Kriteri etno – gjeografik, paraqet kriterin e përpilimit, të ndarë sipas njësive administrative, ku Mirdita, katalogun emrat e banorëve të vendt që dalin për ekrë të parë e nuk hasen në treva të tjera.

Usually, the first son was given the name of a grandfather or great-grandfather, while the others were named by gender or tribe. The father's name was seldom given, when he was elderly or in cases where he had died, while the mother was pregnant. While for the girls the faith was fanatically preserved, while the inheritance was not pursued much.

Nowadays there are many names that follow the generations, such as: Marka Gjon Marka Gjonaj, Zef Llesh Përmarku etc.

In the Turkish censuses of 1467, in all the settlements in Mirdita, Catholic names are mentioned, such as: Gjon, Gjin, Lazër, etc. all the churches erected (and these are numerous) bear the names of saints. Until 1945, we do not find Muslim names in Mirdita. Even any Muslim adjective that is mentioned, such as: Hasan, Haxhia, Beqiri, Xhaferi, is either newcomer or temporarily returned to the time of Turkey, which then, under the pressure of the locals, has changed to Catholic.

After 1950, with the establishment of cities, the establishment of enterprises, the opening of mines, the establishment of factories, began the movements of the population from south to north, from one district to another, the arrival of cadres for education, administration and with them, names that Mirdita had not had before.

In 1966, ideological warfare began, especially against churches and religion in general. We emphasize that in Mirdita there was no mosque. Attempts were made to spread names that had nothing to do with religion, came from nature, Illyrian names, etc. These names were served by the civil registry for parents who went to register their children. The names created with suffixes and attachments began to spread, such as: Besnik, Aferdita, Sokol, Ylli, Dritan, Dritë, etc.

After 1990, as a result of emigration, freedom of expression in the Albanian language, have entered and spread names that were not known before, but that greatly fade the Mirdita tradition, but also Albanian.

Today there are opportunities and freedom to think and put names as acceptable as possible. For the next generation, the parent must know the origin of the child's name, preserving the tradition, so as not to get lost in a world that has nothing to do with the Albanian. This is especially true for Albanian emigrants, who are spread throughout the world, some of whom are subject to claims of losing their origin and religion.

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