


<b>Emigration in the Area of Permet</b>		<b>Ethnology &amp; Folklore</b>  <b>Keywords:</b> immigration, kurbet, region, influence.
<b>Teuta Bajo</b>	<b>Academy of Albanological Studies, Tirana, Albania.</b>	
<b>Abstract</b>		
<p>The political-social changes that took place in Albania in the early 90's of the last century brought development from many different areas in the life of Albanian society. The movement of people, goods and ideas, as an expression of the globalization process, affected the Albanian society in recent decades. In this paper, emigration is treated as a significant phenomenon in the rural parts of Albania. The time period for which the study was conducted extends from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day for the area of Permet. For residents of this area, "kurbeti", as emigration is known by the people, has been practiced as a solution to coping with life's difficulties and economic problems. This phenomenon is memorized in social memory through toponyms for countries where emigrants parted from their relatives as well as through folk songs. According to the ethnographic viewpoint, attention is focused on the impact immigration / kurbeti had on lifestyle, social life, clothing, differences between ethnographic provinces, as well as in some practices pursued for different periods of its development as a phenomenon inside and outside the country. Also from the collected data we will give a picture of the Albanian village that was affected by the migratory movement and as a result the movement of residents from their settlements.</p>		

## Introduction

The phenomenon of migration is as ancient as the human society itself. *The world would have been quite different without the historical patterns of migration* (Misja 1998: 40). To come to our epoch of globalization during various historical stages, the motives, intentions, intensity, composition of migratory flows and the directions and causes of the movement have changed. At certain levels of the development of society and subject to particular historical conditions, the content and forms of movements are presented with nuances and specific features of the time they have occurred. Historical-social factors have caused large and small migratory movements. In the migration process have been noticed the natural factors (climate, floods, earthquakes, other destructive natural phenomena), demographic (increase in the number of population within a given space), political (political changes and uncertainty), ethnic and religious wars, economic factors and unbearable psychological state.

The interest in migratory movements originated in the sociological studies of the Chicago school (Thomas & Znaniecki 1927; Wirth 1956 [1927]) and researchers of British anthropology (Richards 1939; van Velsen 1960) in the first half of the past century. It is shown again as a critical subject of research at the end of the 20th century and early XXI century in sociology, in social and cultural anthropology and ethnography<sup>1</sup>. Researchers have aimed, in research papers, to make an analysis on how the global is intertwined with the local through the experiences of individual agents (Fitzgerald 2004).

<sup>1</sup>Look at Schiller et al 1992, Kearney 1995, Brettell 2000, Foner 2000, Levitt 2001, future R. Smith

The process of globalization has recently made the world more mobile and people and different groups mix with one another more than before. This process has also affected the Albanian society in recent decades. This has attracted the attention of a number of foreign and Albanian scholars considering Albania "as a lab for studying the migration processes" (King 2005).

From an ethnographic point of view, the paper deals with the impact of the migration process within the Albanian society. The research focuses mainly on some of the changes brought about by immigration in lifestyle, clothing and differentiation within the rural community and ethnic districts, as well as the consequences on the Albanian village of internal migration. The study was constructed from the collected data in Përmet area. At the beginning we will address the term that recognizes migration outside Albania and how it is memorized in social memory; secondly, we will present the impacts that immigration / *kurbeti* has had in the tradition of this area; continuing with some practices pursued during the years 1950-1990 of the rural population movement towards urban centers; finally, we will discuss the consequences that the mountain village is going through as a result of migratory movements (internal and external) at present.

### **I. Migration and its memorization in the social memory.**

Migration, as denoted by the word itself, is a process that explains the movement of the population, the movement of people from one residential center to another, close or distant, to live in this second and consequently to secure there are economic means of living (Tirta 2004: 139). In Albanian literature it is preferable to use the word *migration* or *exile*. After the 90s of the last century, the word *emigration* is widely used. In the tradition of the way of expressing oneself, the many types of terms used to name this phenomenon to distinguish these movements within the country with the words: displacement, dislocation, movement, invasion, placement, and abroad with the words: *exile*, *kurbet*, migration.

Residents of Përmet area, where research has been conducted, for various economic, social, cultural and political reasons have followed the practice of leaving and moving from one place to another both inside and outside of the Albanian territories, during the second half of XIX century. In the daily expression, as a term for the movement of the population outside the Albanian territories, they have used and still use the word *kurbet*, and *kurbetllinj* for the persons living their country, whereas for that part of the population that moved from villages to cities the term movement.

In many villages, where we worked outside, the small villages, the small squares in the village, the mountain ranges and the special natural facilities where the immigrants, going to Istanbul, Egypt, America, France and elsewhere, parted and saluted with their neighbors and their villagers, have been memorized among the names such as: "Over Istanbul" (Odriçan village), "Kangjeli" (Leskaj), "Luadhi i Kishës" (Hotovë), "Kodra e Lotëve" (Ogdunan) etc.

Every mountainous area carries in itself painful stories about the boys and men who were leaving towards a life full of suffering and sacrifice away from the family. Also in the area of Përmet it is also talked about the "Guri i Dyfekut" and "Gjurma e Mushkës" close to the valley of Dhëmbel. It was turned into a tradition that when the immigrant crossed the valley of Dhëmbel, to continue the path to an unknown life, he had to shoot in the air. The sound of the gun served as a sign to show his people that he was safe from the thieves.

Through various songs and narratives, the people of the area of Përmet have memorized the movement of the relatives to a new and unknown world: "The stars are faded / The turkeys are heard / The caravans are loaded / the immigrants are leaving".

The regions of Shqeri, Cerja, and Rrëzë were the areas where the immigration was more common. The lack of men as a result of this phenomenon, especially in the region of Shqeri, has been memorized in the social memory even among the verses of the song: "Four Walls were left in the house/ Men left Shqeri/ Mothers are mourning, Wives are mourning/ Shqeri remained abandoned/ Wondering / Why Do you raise Boys for other countries?".

The agro-pastoral nature of the villages and economic poverty forced the inhabitants of this area to leave their family home and seek opportunities to make a living by developing even internal immigration. In the social memory have also been memorized even songs which were sang for the tinkers of Mbrezhdani in the Kukës area: "*Tinker, /Why don't you tink a little bit/ As we need you to do that for the summer's days.*"

It had become a custom that a night before the immigrant left to go abroad, his relatives gathered together in his home, as well as all the men in the village, to greet him and to wish him "good luck". Sunday was considered a good day, according to the elderly, "*promises a good fortune for the immigrant who is about to undertake such a thing.*" That night there were also songs that expressed the mood of the relatives and the person who left. One of the interlocutors tells: "*My mother always got angry when she remembered the day her father left to go somewhere else. Eh, the last night, "she said, breathing deeply and tears could be noticed in her eyes." All the relatives were gathered in our house around the sofa. No one was in the mood to eat, but they were thoughtful and tearful while looking at my dad, who would leave early morning to go to Vlora together with some other people. From there he would get on a ship and go somewhere far away. It was the last time I saw him.*"

All the terms used in written literature or in the tradition of the way people express themselves (emigration, migration, displacement, etc.) essentially mean the movement of people or groups of people from one place to another, outside or within the country, to make a better living or for the sake of a better life. Practices pursued toward a new life which is characterized by lots of pain and sacrifices are memorized in the social memory through the names of the places where people would part from their dear ones as well as in the songs that were sang.

## II. The Impact of the Immigration on Social Life

*(lifestyle, clothing, construction, social life)*

Due to the immigration, as a migratory movement, people and groups of people from the region of nearby or remote places come into contact with each other. Constant contacts have enriched human practices with new knowledge and phenomena, as well as different ways of living that have influenced social life inside and outside the family, in traditional norms and practices: in the way of dressing, building houses, sharing work inside and outside the village community and in some cases creating economic and psychological differences between the regions of a territory.

Many of the immigrants of this area have been living in and out of the country, but at old age they have returned to their own country, sticking to the saying "A person feels important only in his own country". They brought with them a civic way of living.

### a-New knowledge on fruit culture

Since people of Përmet were good at planting they brought from countries where they had emigrated new farming cultures and other practices for cultivation. In the social memory cannot be recalled when they were cultivated for the first time, but many orchards were known with the names of the lands where they came from. In the village of Lëshicë, a kind of white fig tree from Istanbul was called "Sultan Selim"; the kind of pear which blossoms in winter in December from Romania, was called Romanian Pear; French pears from France; Istanbul Cherry (today in other areas call it, napolon cherry) from Istanbul. In the village of Ogdunan, fruits brought from the immigrants were known as: Istanbul plums, yellow plums for gliko, colourful mother. Mr. K. from Odriçan village says: *"The apples trees in our village produced a lot of apples. Though we collected and kept them, most of them would not resist for long. One of our relatives, who went to study in Russia, had learned how apples could be made marmalades and taught that to my mother. In our village, apples also began to be dried. We sold these products to the buy and sell cooperative that was created in 1946 and we were making money. "* One of our interlocutors told us: *"It was enough that only one would bring the roots of the orchard from the country that they had gone and every family wanted to have this new tree in its yard."* Generally most of the orchards and vegetables have been brought from the immigrants in Instambul. According to residents of the village of Odriçan, *"Andon Vasili brought from Istanbul the cauliflower. He also brought a kind fruit that tasted like apples, and we called it "land apples" but did not fit in with the conditions of the country and was not grown at all later. Someone from the families who had been in America brought coffee. The coffee was cultivated until 1945 and grew very little, as it seemed the climate was not appropriate. The coffee beans were small and tasted bitter. In order to eliminate the bitter taste during drinking, they mixed it with barley. After 45 years, it was no longer cultivated because a kind of coffee which was more enjoyable in taste and in flavor was easier to find in the market.*

## b-Lifestyle

New economic resources, new working tools, the social relations system in the new place of residence are a major factor that comes with significant changes in everyday life. In terms of the lifestyle in the villages that were effected by the immigration, a civic culture will be noticed which in turn will attract the attention of foreigners who went to Përmet area in the early XX century and later. The sofas placed on the side of friends' rooms, tables and chairs, china dishes were replaced by the floor mats, the low sofas, and the wooden bowls. These began to be used not only in the city but also in the peasant families that had immigrant relatives. Various objects have memorized in the social memory stories and events related to the immigration, the suffering and sacrifice of their relatives, as well as the joy of engagements, marriages, and birth.

The villages of the regions that continued the tradition of immigration are also distinguished in the **architecture of houses**. Two-story houses built side by side cobbled pavements. Immigrants supported which building those houses, immigrants in different countries, especially those of America. Families who were better off economically and who were considered by the others as "*having being successful abroad*" had the rooms of guests decorated with wood-carved ceilings. In the small region of Shqeri, Cerje, Dangëlli, and also in some of the villages of Rrëzë, on the second floor oda (guest rooms) was with side-by-side decorations, on the walls there were decorations with a carved wooden cover. Near the guestroom in the area of Shqeri and in a few houses in Cerje there was a platform elevated above. There was the place where orchestra played music during weddings and other events. Since the moment of building the foundation of the building, it was thought to have a special place for music to be played (Adhami 2001: 85). Instead, in the area of Dishnicë where the population immigrated a little or not at all the houses were relatively new, and especially built after the Independence. Here the most common type was one called "dwellings of Elbasan", a one-story little building just above the earth. These constructions are a direct reflection of the socio-economic development of the area.

Nowadays, new homes built by immigrants are of a modern style. In their architecture they preserve a few elements of the traditional culture. The only element, which is preserved in rare occasions, is the archway door and the doorsteps.

The impact of the immigration was also reflected *in the clothing style*. Folk dresses were used in the area of Përmet by the end of the 19th century and in special environments until the 30s of the 20th century, especially the so-called *fustanella*. At the beginning of the 20th century, the wardrobe called french style replaced the traditional outfits in this area. The integration of the immigrants in the places where they worked and lived for a long time, made them familiar with the fashion of time and they introduced it to their place when they returned. The woollen trousers and jackets replaced the *fustanella* for men, which after the 30s of the last century were no longer used. The woollen hats were replaced with normal hats. On holidays, men dressed in suits and wore hats that were called "*republican hats*" by the locals. Women were no longer wearing woollen

dresses but instead they started to put on elegant dresses and high heel shoes. Coats made of animal fur started to be introduced as well. Immigrants'wives did not wear a shawls on their heads, but hats and they would put on scarves made of fox's fur. The french style clothing became the norm for the women of the area of Përmet.

### **c-Social organization**

The immigration brought about profound social change. Major changes occur in the family structure and relationships within it. In the area of Përmet, the number of members of the great patriarchal families was reduced to the villagers of the area of Shqeri, Dangëlli and Malëshova. Until the first half of the 20th century, families consisting of 30-50 members, were more prevalent in the villages lying next to the river valleys and were engaged in agriculture, the area of Dëshnicë and Karamamutas (Rrëzë e Poshtme). These families preserved their structure until the time of the occurrence of the Agrarian Reform. However, even small families, consisting of 8 to 10 people, maintained the patriarchal family traits. The man's power within the family is still very important. Even though a woman plays an important role in managing her family's material life, she rarely can participate directly in decision-making process. Only when the man died and the son was too young, the woman was named head of household and attended the meeting where the consent of the entire village was required for the decisions made. We found something similar in the area of Cerje. In the village of Raban and Odrican, when elders would get together to decide on how to divide the property of a family, they would ask even an elderly woman whose opinion was important. This act deliberately meant that both a woman and a mother would be right in case the elders were wrong while making a certain decision.

The contacts of the villagers, the cultural life of the cities where they worked as emigrants, the trade with the neighboring countries of Greece, Romania, etc., have played a major role in changing the old norms and customs and also the mentality of the people which served the civilization of society in the village and its self-governing. The particular impact that immigration had in the area of Permet has to do with the disruption of the canonical norms, which would be changed faster than in the northern areas of Albania. Learning the rules and the legal norms in the places where they went made it easy for them to learn how to implement them. This made it possible for the the introduction of new cultural elements in the Albanian tradition, which the returned immigrants tried to adapt to the tradition and customs of the region. We mention here two agreements between 1927 and 1929, implemented in the villages of Odrican and Leskaj regarding the relations within these villages in terms of taking care of the property and penalties in case of offenses. However, customs such as the method of banquets, the method of washing, the punishment of the perpetrator of the property, which will be discussed in another paper, were found to be in use until the second half of the last century when the rules were not consolidated completely, yet.

## **d-Occupations**

Some of the immigrants who were able to learn different professions started practicing them when they came back and such professions include: tailor, shoemaker, blacksmith, etc. Many distinguished themselves as craftsmen in their crafts and received orders from the villages of the regions around Permet. In the village of Odricani there were three shoemakers specializing in the production of men's boots, women's and men's shoes and repair work. In the village of Hotovë there were tailors who were masters in designing suits for the bridegroom.

The different economic development that emerged as a consequence of the immigration between the regions of this area began to be expressed also in the social relations between different villages. In the villages of Shqeri and that of Cerje, young people continued to get married to each other. The pursuit of the immigration tradition in some of the villages of Rrëzës made it possible for young people from the villagers with the villages of Buhal, Argovë, Leusë, Lëshicë which were located on the left of Vjosa to get married towards the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The social difference between the villages of Dëshnicë and Rrëzëe Poshtme with the other regions, was also manifested through various pejorative epithets because they considered them as a lower social strata than others who had been immigrants or had relatives who were immigrants.

## **III. Practices followed during the 1950s and after 1990s**

Albania is traditionally an emigration country. Emigration has in essence been and remains an expression of the need to cope with the difficulties to ensure a better life for both oneself and the family. The massive immigration of the Albanian population, has begun in the 15th century mainly in Italy, but also in Greece. The long struggle of emigration was not interrupted even in the following centuries. During the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emigration for economic reasons was huge. The most favorite countries were Turkey, Romania, Egypt, and later Greece, Bulgaria, and Russia. The development of capitalist forms of exploitation led to the increase in the number of free laborers, a good part of which was forced to leave Albania temporarily or permanently to France, America and Australia. In 1929 Permet's local government gave out 600-700 passports and registered 200-300 visas for France, Turkey and elsewhere. It was noticed that the largest number of immigrants from Albania were from by the villages of Malëshova, Cerja, Dangëllia, and the last is that of Dëshnicë. In the years 1940-1945 many people, most of whom were political opponents, left the country too.

The fall of this regime in 1990, and the implementation of the capitalism over the next few years, caused large movements of the population abroad and within the country. Today, emigration is seen "as one way only, without thinking of going back home" (Hall 1987: 44).

After the 1990s and especially 1995, they followed the practice of temporary departure from the village. Usually they live in winter in the city and in the spring until the end of October they stay in the village and as residents say, we are living between the village and the city.

#### **IV. The state of the village today**

The lack of accurate literature and accurate data on Albanian emigrants for the period we have taken in consideration in our research as well as the abandonment of the village has made it difficult to get accurate conclusions on the number of migrants from this area. However, based on the collected data within the possibilities as well as the statistical data, we tried to present a clear picture of the situation in which the Albanian village is due to the movement of residents inside and outside the country.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, according to T. Selenica's data, in 1923 Përmet's area numbered 23123 inhabitants. The slow growth of the population, during the Zog regime, is also associated with the immigration that affected a large number of the population, especially the villages of Shqeri, Cerje, Rrëzë and other regions.

In 1940, the most densely populated villages were located in Dëshnicë and Malëshovë: two villages had a population of more than 1000 inhabitants (1018 inhabitants in Bubës, Dëshnicë and 1011 in Brezhdan, Malëshovë). Other villages: 846 inhabitants in katundisht, 690 in Zhepova, 642 in Podgorani, 537 in Këlcyra in the village of Malëshovë there were 556 inhabitants and in Limari 531 inhabitants; in Dangëlli Mecani there were 508 inhabitants. As far as the villages with 300-500 inhabitants are concerned, in the first place we can mention Dëshnica with 8 villages, whereas the others (6 villages) were located in the Vjosa valley, the largest of the inhabited centers were villages with 100-300 inhabitants (49 villages). Of the 8 villages with less than 50 inhabitants that were in the area of Përmet that year 6 of them were located in Shqeri (Adhami 2001: 38).

During the first years of independence, the low population growth of 1% explains why many residents of the city but especially of the village migrated to the big cities of the country such as Tirana, Vlora, Kucova, Durrës, etc. where they found jobs. Most of the population movement is noticed especially during the years 1945-1960. This phenomenon was associated with the decline of the rural population, although there was a continuous increase in the population of the cities.

During the years 1945-1955 there is a kind of decline of the rural population as a result of the movement of the villagers towards the city and the new industrial centers that arose in our country. The number of population in this period decreases from 24968 to 22354 inhabitants, while that of civilians increases from 1647 to 2369. Later years mark the population growth in the



village due to some improvements in the living conditions that the village experienced during this period.

The distribution of the population changes from one province to another. The region of Shqeri is distinguished for a smaller number of residents because villages such as Kreshova, Grabova, Izgari, Melani, Novosela, Lushnja are uninhabited, whereas in other villages there is a tendency to either live down the valley or leave the region, and this is especially noticed until 1965 and continues today. The region of Dëshnica is known for the largest number of population distribution throughout the area of Permet, which is also related to the hilly territory of the Valleys of Dëshnica.

In the last two decades, the population in the mountainous villages has fallen considerably compared to the years before 1990. Many villages are in a critical situation. The movement of the population has started since 1985 (Izgari, Novosela, Leusa, Kostreci etc.) and others are completely abandoned (Postenan, Goroshtian, Kostrec, Odrican, Ogren, Koror, etc.). Lack of investment and road repairs, the removal of all the privileges that the village has had before: schools, cultural centers, health centers, collapse of cooperatives, distance from the civic center or the national road has made villages in the flat areas, and in particular in the mountains in the area of Përmet remain isolated and without any kind of communication. After the 1990s, the internal and external emigration had an impact in the Albanian village. The so-called economic pyramidal systems and the psychology that was created over the profits obtained from the percentages of the so-called "pyramid firms" will be a huge obstacle with great consequences.

Many villagers sold their lands and homes and "invested" their money in these firms. Others, preserving the tradition of their ancestors, decided to immigrate, outside the country as well as in the cities of Albania, leaving the lands behind. Today, in the area of Përmet, villages of the areas of Rrëze, Çerje, Shqeri, Malëshovë, Dëshnicë have a small number of inhabitants, many of whom have moved in the cities of Përmet and Këlcyra, or in other cities, mainly in Tirana and Durrës. Some of the families have gone abroad, most of them in Greece, benefiting from the close distance to this country. From the 2010 statistics, the rural population in this area is 20392 inhabitants from 41641 inhabitants in 1991.

During the research it was noticed that the dominant population today in the villages of Permet consists of the elders. New families leave to go to the city. This is also noticed by the decrease in the number of children going to school. Young people who are studying do not return to the village anymore but try to find work in the city. Some of them relying on relatives go to the capital with the idea of not returning to the village.

## Conclusions

The movement of the population inside and outside the country, in the area of Përmet, known with the term kurbet (immigration) was practiced since the middle of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Agro-pastoral nature of the villages and economic poverty forced the inhabitants of this area to leave their family homes and seek opportunities to make a living for themselves as well as their families. Kurbeti (Immigration) is also memorized in the social memory of the inhabitants of this area through the names of places where the immigrants waved goodbye to their relatives and songs that are still sung today.

The tradition of immigration is followed mostly by the inhabitants of the villages of the ethnographic regions of Shqeri, Cerje, Rrëzë e qytetit, and that of Malëshovë. Whereas in Dëshnicë and Karamamutas (Rrëzë e Poshme) there was little or no immigration. After the 90s of the last century, with the democratic changes that took place in our country, migratory movements are seen as the only way to make a living.

The impact of immigration / kurbeti will also be noticed in the traditions of this area. They were reflected in lifestyle, social life, wardrobe, construction, and so on. and led to a kind of economic and social difference with other regions. The abandonment of the village is also the result of the lack of investment in roads, lack of schools, cultural centers, health centers, collapse of cooperatives, and distance from civic centers or the national road. This has caused the villages in the flat areas, and especially the mountainous ones in the area of Përmet, to remain isolated and without any form of communication. Some of them are almost abandoned or about to be abandoned.

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