

EVOLUTION OF RURAL AND URBAN POPULATION IN SOUTHERN ALBANIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper has as its object the study of the demographic processes in the rural and urban area of the region of Gjirokastra on a demographic and geographic plan. It intends to identify the laws and features of changes in the rural geography and population of the region. The analysis is carried out in the space and time dynamics on the basis of the comparison among the rural and urban areas of the region of Gjirokastra. The summer of 1990 marked the ending of the long imposing political isolation of the communist regime and marked the shifting from the planned economy onto the free trade, there was allowed the free circulation of the population, the private sector was legalized and the construction activity was rapidly developed mainly to solve the problem of housing. The birth rate and immigration, the death rate and emigration, the social, economical, educational, cultural changes etc are the main factors which have influenced in the change of the number of the rural population of the region. The forecast of the population of the region is important for the calculation of the needs in the development of the economy, education, culture, infrastructure, for general estimations, macroeconomic calculations etc. For a more accurate presentation of the demo-geographical phenomena, attention has been paid to the graphic and cartographic aspect through which many features of the population such as the territorial distribution, features of the age structure and urbanization have been broken down. The cartographic presentation has helped in the detailed presentation of the phenomena of the rural population contributing in this way to knowledge of the rural population geography of the district. The data accumulated from various sources have been processed, synthesized and commented with a view to achieving the aims of the study.

KEYWORDS: physiological density, urbanisation, migrating balance, natural increase, age pyramid.

INTRODUCTION

The region of Gjirokastra lies in southeast Albania, in the central part of the Southern Mountainous Region and it is run by the Viosa River and its main branch Drino. It occupies an important position bordering Greece in the south east, with which it is connected by two border points. Kakavija and Tri Urat. The district is 60 km far from Ioanina, Greece and 160 km far from the Greek port of Igoumenitsa as well as 60 km from the port of Saranda which connect it with Italy and other countries of the northern Mediterranean.

Figure 1. Geographical position of Gjirokastra region (A. Sinani)



OBJECTIVES

This paper has as its object the study of the demographic processes in the rural area of the district of Gjirokastra on a demographic and geographic plan. It intends to identify the laws and features of changes in the rural geography and population of the district.

The analysis is carried out in the space and time dynamics on the basis of the comparison among the rural areas of the district of Gjirokastra.

METHODOLOGY

For a more accurate presentation of the demo-geographical phenomena, attention has been paid to the graphic and cartographic aspect through which many features of the population such as the territorial distribution, features of the age structure and urbanization have been broken down. The cartographic presentation has helped in the detailed presentation of the phenomena of the rural population contributing in this way to knowledge of the rural population geography of the district. The data accumulated from various sources have been processed, synthesized and commented with a view to achieving the aims of the study. Are using a variety of methods:

- Comparing the phenomena in order to identify their differences in time and space;
- Graphic presentation of the demographic indicators and their intensity in space;
- Drawing maps of the phenomena to establish functional-correlative relationships between them;
- Analysis, synthesis and processing of the mathematical-statistical data;
- Computerized, statistical, general and partial observations;
- Multiplan analysis of the object of study and cart diagram;
- Drawing the absolute, average, relative, synthetic of the dynamics.

ANALYSES

The early population and the various economic activities that took place since ancient times have created invaluable riches in the cultural heritage of this area. The administrative division started when the district was under the Turkish rule. According to

the property register “Registration of the lands of the Sandjak of Albania in 1431-1432”¹⁶ the city of Gjirokastra became the center of the Albanian Sandjak, which was divided in provinces and later on in cities (Gjirokastra, Permeti, and Kelcyra) 90.0% of the population lived in the rural areas of the district. The largest number of settlements was in the district of Gjirokastra (118). According to the Turkish registration of the year 1879, the population of the rural areas constituted 86.4% of the population.

The new administrative division of the year 1928 and the creation for the first time of the communes in April 1929 affected directly the size and population of the settlements in the district of Gjirokastra. Both form of migration have existed in the region: temporary (work labour) and permanent (relocation of the whole family). In the first years 47.4% of the emigrants had as destination Greece, 29.2% Turkey, 15.8% America and 7.6% other countries. The registration of the year 1945 in the district of Gjirokastra identified the lack of 22269 people, of whom 21.6% were abroad.

Between the two registrations of the years 1923 and 1945, the population of the district was reduced at a yearly rate of 0.43% and the density at -0.2 people per km². Over the 1923-1945 period, the largest concentration of the population of the district was in the hilly altitudes of 301-900 m (with 67.9% for the year 1923 and 66.9% for the year 1945). With the law No. 284, of the date 22 August 1946, People’s Republic of Albania was proclaimed and the new administrative division was approved which lasted until July, 1953.

The largest local unit of the space was *the prefecture of Gjirokastra*, made up of sub-prefectures, communes and localities. From the year 1953 until 1958, the district was organized, the largest administrative, territorial unit divided in sub-districts, cities, and villages. In the year 1976 the People’s Socialist Republic of Albania was proclaimed and in the year 1979 the administrative unit of locality was absolved but sub-districts, unified villages, cities and villages was preserved. In the year 1992, the political, economic and juridical changes in Albania led to changes in the administrative organization. On decision of the Ministers’ Council, No.269, of the date 25 June, 1992, the reorganization of the territory of Albania was carried out, where the district made up of municipalities and communes constitutes the largest administrative unit. The region of Gjirokastra is made up of 26 communes and 6 municipalities. Its constitution took place on 21.11.2000¹⁷. It occupies 10.0% of the area and 3.7% of the population of the country. The territory suitable for living takes up the largest part of the area of the district at an altitude of 110m up to 1150m above sea level. The rural space takes up 95.8% of the area whereas the rural population makes up 57.9% of the population of the district. The average density of the population is 39 people per km².

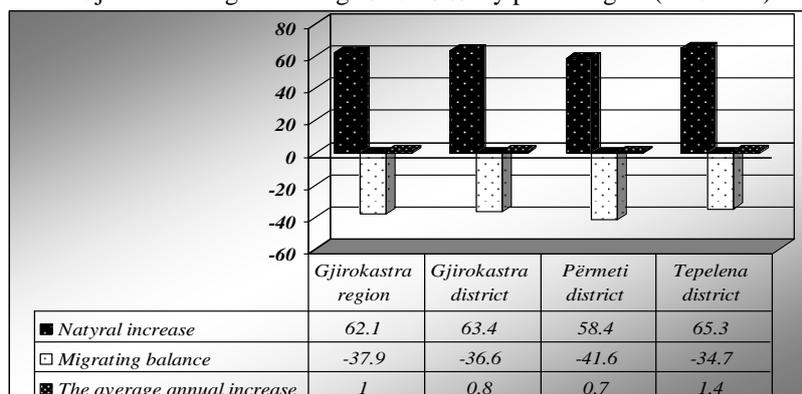
Historic tendencies

During the previous decades the rural population of Gjirokastra region continuously increased: since the Second World War the yearly average rate of the population increase was 1.0%, making it possible that the population would be increased 1.5 times during the 44 last years (62.1% of this increase came from the natural increase and -37.9% from the negative migration balance).

¹⁶ Berxholi 1987, page. 9-15.

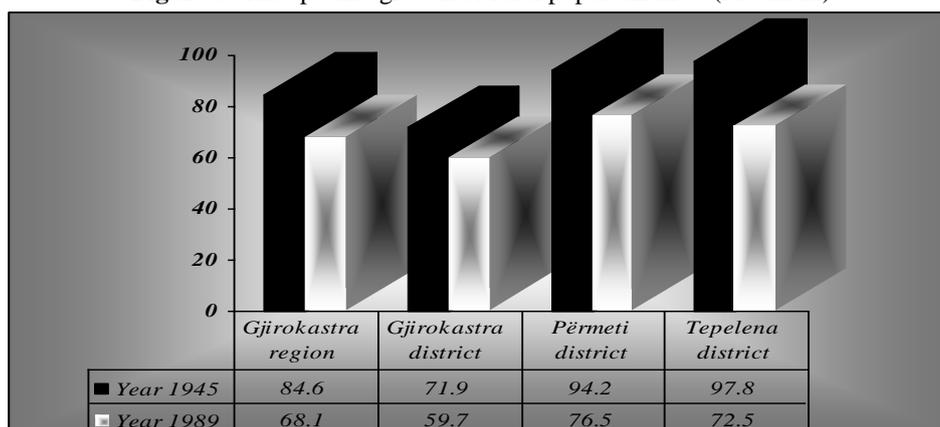
¹⁷ UNDP. The strategy for the development of the region of Gjirokastra, 2005.

Figure 2. The yearly average rate of population increase in Gjirokastra region during 1945-1989 by percentage¹⁸ (A. Sinani)



At the end of 1989, the rural population of Gjirokastra region increased by 52% in comparison to year 1945 (in the district of Tepelena by 82.6%, in the district of Gjirokastra by 41.2% and in the district of Përmeti by 38.3%). The number of the rural population decreased as a result of the urbanization growth.

Figure 3. The specific growth of rural population in % (A. Sinani)



This aspect was considerably changed in the 1990s. This tendency was reversed during 1989-2001, period in which there was a *negative increase* (-3.6%), which shows an *absolute decrease* of the rural population by -37377 and -11343 in habitants respectively during the periods 1989-2001 (according to INSTAT) and 2001-2009 (according to the Registry Office).

Thanks to this massive shifting of the population, the number of the inhabitants changed every year. By Civil Records, in the rural area of the region of Gjirokastra 50% of the communes (Picar and Zagorie in Gjirokastra; Ballaban, Suka, Deshnica, Piskove Center and Frasher in Permet; Kurvelesh, Lopes, Qesarat, Krahes, Luftinje and Buz in Tepelena), there is found the rural population of 40.6% and it has a negative average annual rhythm of the population growth (up to 0.3%); 19.2% of the communes (Cepo and Pogon in Gjirokastra, Petran in Permet, Tepelena Center and Memaliaj Village in Tepelena), there is found the rural population of 22.2% and it has an annual average increase of -0.3 up to

¹⁸ Statistics yearbooks over the years.

0.5%; 26.9% of the communes (Odrje, Lunxheri, Lazarat, Upper Dropulli, Lower Dropulli and Libohova Centre in Gjirokastra and the commune Carcova in Permet), there is found the rural population of 35.3% and it has an annual average increase 0.5% up to 1.4%; there is found an annual average increase of 2.1% only in the commune of Antigone.

During the 2001-2009 period, too, the number of the rural population continued to decrease at an yearly average arte of -1.4%, where the greatest decrease continue to happen in the district of Tepelena at a rate of -2.6%.

Table 1. The yearly average rate of rural population increase during 2001-2004 and 2004-2009¹¹

Period	2001-2004	2004-2009
Gjirokastra region	-0.9	-1.9
Gjirokastra district	1	-1.1
Permeti district	-2.6	-2
Tepelena district	-2.1	-3.1

Source: Elaboration of the Registry Office data in the districts of Gjirokastra region.

The rapid rate decrease of the rural population brought about the decrease of the rural density for each unit of the general surface: from 38.3 inh/km² in a year. Immigration is the main factor that caused great changes in the density index. Districts' differentiation, according to density, influences a lot the district urbanization scale.

This unequal dispersion of the rural density brought about the rapid urbanization near the urban areas of the prefecture, showing decreasing agricultural activity, rural stability in the municipalities near the cities and tourism perspective in the remote mountainous areas.

After 1990, thanks to the political, socio-economic, natural and demographic factors, the centre of gravity of the population¹⁹ was transferred to the urban areas of the costal and central parts of the country (the prefecture of Tirana, Vlora, Durres) or abroad. The same shifting tendency (towards the North by 5.1 km and towards the West by 7.2 km) was shown by the median average centre, too²⁰.

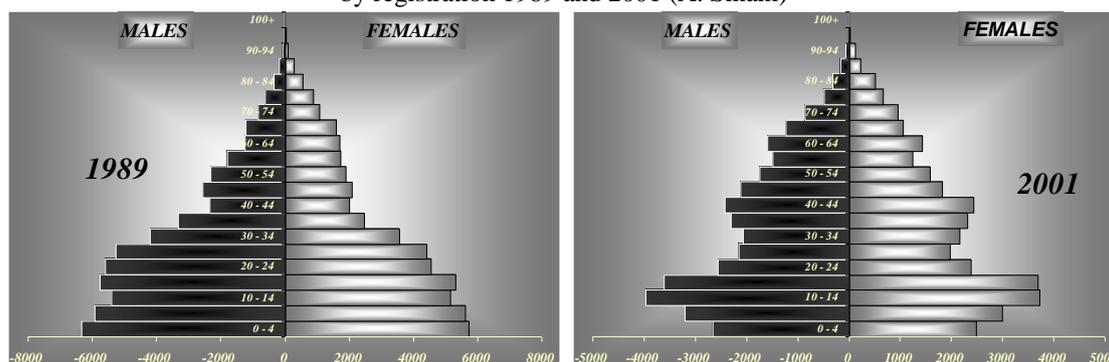
Considering from the rural population age pyramid, we notice that:

First, the immediate birth-rate decrease is reflected in the decrease of the number of the people under 15. Second, the considerable decrease in the people of 20-24 years old age-group as a result of the immigration abroad at a large scale in the 1990s, which influenced indirectly the birth-rate level. The analysis of the form of the age pyramid shows the particularities of today's evolution of the region population, the features and the tendencies of its natural movement, because the registration of 2011 isn't publicated until now, so isn't an office data.

¹⁹ Q (Ave X; Ave Y, where Ave X= $\sum x_i \cdot \pi_i / \sum \pi_i$ and Ave Y= $\sum y_i \cdot \pi_i / \sum \pi_i$): the point of the arithmetic average centre, where are met the two orthogonal lines in the topographic map, around which is achieved the dispersion and attraction of the region's population.

²⁰ The position of the point that divide the dispersion of the region's population in two equal parts, which is calculated by adding the number of the population at length as well as at width up to reaching the half.

Figure 4. The pyramids of the spread of rural population according to age and gender by registration 1989 and 2001 (A. Sinani)



As a result of the slowing down of the natural growth rates and the high selective immigration scale (mainly concerning the 18-35 years old males), the region rural population age structure changed from a pyramid of progressive type before 1990 (having a large basis, where the population under 15 represented 40% and where the pyramid had a narrow point at the top, where the above 50 years old population represented under 10%), a pyramid of a stationary type (having a narrowing point at the top), with a decrease at the age-group up to 15 and an enlarging point at the top, where the old people over 50 represent 23.0%), starting so the demographic ageing process.

The remote municipalities of the prefecture are under depopulation (Zagorie, Odrie and Pogon), representing a pyramid of regressive type (with a narrow basis, where the age group under 15 represent under 20% and with large point at the top, where the old people represent up to 30% of the population).

The immigration movements have lead to some loss of population-a problem having direct consequences in the rural development of the south part of the country.

Immigration has affected even qualified specialists of “Eqrem Cabej” University of Gjirokastra where there were 1.34%²¹ of the country’s intellectual elite, workers of scientific sectors etc. Immigrants’ remittances constitute an important means to the social-economic development of the rural area of Gjirokastra region, to the relieving poverty, to supporting investments and modifying the style of rural living.

The tendencies of rural family

Alter 1990, has been created a new model of the rural family in composition, structure and profile. As regards the size and the structure of the family, the main bias after the political transitional period, has been the decrease of the number of rural families and their members. The foreign emigration, the lessening of marriages (from 8.4‰ to 4.9‰) and the increase of divorces (from 0.7‰-1.0‰) have had an impact in the decrease of the rural family composition in the region. The family with 3-4 members was the most typical one (59.1% of the cases). The two-member families and six-member families are rarer (17.9% and 23%). The city families are smaller than those in the villages: 3.8 to 4.3 persons per family. The largest number of the members can be found in the communes of Deshnica, Lazarat, and Buz (from 4.6 to 5.3 members per family).

²¹ The centre of economic and social studies, Emigration of the intellectual elite from Albania during the transition period, 1999.

The biggest member gap exists in the families with a big number of members, in those with above 6 persons: these contain 10.4% in the cities, and 23% in the villages. More generally, there is detected a bigger concentration in the families with up to 2 members (19.6% and 17.9%), very high especially in the villages of Pogon (50%), Zagorie (45.1%) and Odrie with 43.6% and 3 to 5 members (70% to 59.1%, very high especially in the communes of Piskova-Center, with 68.4% and in Frasher with 67.6%).

In a district level, the families with the largest number of members (above 6 members), are present mostly in the communes of the district of Tepelena (26.7%), worth to mention the communes Buz (44.3%) in Tepelena, Lazarat (32.5%) in Gjirokastra and Deshnica (30.5% in Permet). Even in 2004, the rural families made up 53.8% of the families (61.3% in 1989) and included 57.9% of the population of the region. The decrease of the size of families in the villages and in the cities expresses the clear tendency to ensure a higher living level. The decrease of the family size, the break of patriarchal frames, the increase of the 65-year group, of the index of old people (35%), and the average age of the family, etc, are an evidence of the affiliation of the characteristics of the rural families in the region with those of Europe – consequence of the great influence of emigration and big contacts with the emancipated world.

The process of the pass from the multi-couple families to single-couple or double-couple families has reached the climax; however, the patriarchal family environment is felt even these days in the remote rural parts of the region. This happens because the privatisation of the family property (dwellings, farmland etc,) after 1991 (Law 7501), identified the family as the base economic and produce unit, such causing the livening of the traditional norms. Negative annual rhythm of the difference in the number of families, can be widely found in Buz (-4.2%), Suka, Ballaban, Deshnica, Lopes, Luftinje, Kurvelesh, Qender Tepelena, Frasher, Memaliaj-Countryside, Zagorie (-0.1%).

The greatest decrease of *the marriages* in the communes in the districts of Tepelena and Permet (-4.6 and -3.7‰, especially in the communes of Memaliaj-Countryside, -6.8‰, Tepelena-Center -6.5‰ and Buz -5.8‰). *The divorces* in the rural area have increased from 0.7‰ in 1989 to 0.9‰ in 2004, with a high value in Permet with 1.1‰. There has been an increase in the number of divorces per 1000 marriages in 167.

Table 2. Divorces per 1000 marriages in the rural area of Gjirokastra region

Years	1989	2004
Gjirokastra region	63.1	167
Gjirokastra district	51	140.8
Përmet district	59.1	268
Tepelena district	77.4	150

According to the education level, the greatest number of the divorces happens among the couples with 8-year school education (from 59.8% in 1989 to 52.2% in 2004, with the highest value in the district of Permeti 63.3%, whereas according to the years of marriage in the year 1989 has been within the couples of 2-year marriage (60.7%) and in 2004 in within the couples of 5-year marriage (55.3%), with the highest values in the districts of Tepelena and Gjirokastra. Of high importance is the projection of the rural population in the region, for the accounting of the needs of the development of economy, education, culture, infrastructure, for general evaluations, macroeconomic accounting of the data, etc²².

²² Dumani 1997.

There will be needed, 269 years to be doubled in size, and to half-decrease in size²³ the population of the region of Gjirokastra with a coefficient of increase 0.26%, there will be needed 115 years, the urban population 42 years needed, and the rural population, with a negative coefficient of increase in 0.61% (in the communes of Cepo, 304 years and in Zagorie 189 years).

The economic crisis has greatly enforced the existing tendencies, however, it is difficult to differentiate them from one another. The data elaborated in the above tables, show the bias towards the demographic growth of population or towards aging, which are almost inevitable. Their diversity reminds us that the future, whatever it is, is much more insecure than before.

CONCLUSIONS

The rhythm of the rural population change in Gjirokastra region has been a fast one. The rural aging population is accompanied by a young sparse population and an old dense one. The rural area of Gjirokastra region is affected by a mass of local migration (mainly towards Tirana and Durrës) and by migrants going abroad (mainly towards Greece) identifying a widening gap among the pyramids of the young rural population. It is also identifying a sharp contrast at the index of rural density with a loss of 54% of its population. The wide fluctuation of rural population has immediately affected the density and aging structure of the economically active population, with disastrous consequences for the future.

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²³ Sheri 1997, p140, { $P_n = P_0 + (n-1)\Delta$ -average annual increase}.