

Slavonic and Greek Traces in the Toponymy of the Region of Vlora, Southern Albania

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Abstract

As toponyms reflect the life of an area, they deserve special attention while studying the history of that area. The region of Vlora, particularly the area called Labëria, because of its highly varied terrain, is extremely rich in place names, which possess multifaceted values with respect to naming, word formation and lexicology at large. The present study on the Vlora region toponyms focuses on the place names that contain Slavic and Greek elements in their structure. The study material is, basically, from the research of various authors, mostly Albanian. The bulk of the toponyms used here have been collected in field studies, while working with elderly local people and shepherds of the respective zones, who provided us with material of great interest in this domain. The study has cognitive and scientific values and bears witness to the early contacts between peoples. It attempts to further complete and enrich the toponymy of the Vlora region. The collection and systematization of the toponymy of different areas of the region would also be of interest in compiling a toponomastic dictionary in this field of study.

Keywords: toponymy, Vlora, Slavonic toponyms, Greek toponyms, contact.

1. Introduction

Historical relations between the Albanians and the Slavs, according to Sh. Demiraj (1988: 119), started relatively early, in any way after the IV century AD. Traces of such relations must have become more obvious especially during the invasion of Albanian territories by the Slavonic states (the Bulgarian state, 851-1018 AD and the Serbian state, 1331-1355). Numerous researchers, historians and linguists (See: Çabej, 2008: 131; Ylli, 2012: 534-535), have conducted studies on the Albanian-Slavonic historic and linguistic connections. Concerning Slavonic toponymy in Albania, A. Buda (1980: 171) notes that part of it is connected to the state apparatus. According to Šufflay (2009: 157), during the IV century Slav occupation, written texts in Slavonic continued to spread from north to south, reaching the regions of Durrës and even Vlora, bearing a tough competition on Latin as the language of state documents (see also Omari, 2015: 45). There was a Slav chancellery in Vlora (Dhrimo, 1982: 138), which goes to show that Slavonic macro-toponyms in Labëria could not have escaped the administration's attention, whereas micro-toponyms mainly appear outside the villages and they tend to name other locations suitable for pastureland, some of which used as arable land later. It is also worth noting that Ruginë Balsha, daughter of Balsha II and Komnena (Komita) Muzaka (of medieval Albanian principalities) was married to Merksha Zharkovich "rë di Servia" in 1391, most probably in order to reinforce the connections of the noble rulers of Vlora with those of Zeta (Xhufi, 2009: 324).

As to the relations between Albanians and Greeks, they go far back in time. Çabej (2008: 99) emphasizes that the Albanians and the Greeks have been neighbours in this part of Europe for over 3,000 years. These have been multiple-level relations, and beyond doubt, they have left marks on the Albanian language and toponomastics.

Taking into consideration the richness and variety of toponymy in the region of Vlora, we should note that, with the occasional exception of a few research articles,¹ there is no systematic collection of data or an all-inclusive scientific study

¹ See: A. Dhrimo, *A linguistic view of the Kurveleshi toponymy*, in "the Second Conference on Albanologic Studies, Tirana, 1968 and Data from the toponymy of Labëria as witnesses of the ancient origin and unity of the Albanian people", in SF, 3, 1982; R. Memushaj, *Origin of the Kurveleshi villages*, in "History of Kurveleshi", Tirana, 2004 and *Patronymy of Himara*, in "Himara through the Centuries", Tiranë, 2004; M. Karagojzi, *A view of the Labëria onomastics*, in "Scientific assistance by Prof. R. Memushaj", Vlora, 2014. In certain

of the issue in question. The present study sets out to explain, or even lay to discussion, some toponyms whose meaning cannot be gathered as of yet. The semantic and structural analysis has to be made on scientific criteria rather than by applying stale humour to language, as Murati (2008: 11) would refer to those dilettantes who try to explain everything by using anything. Such motivations of toponyms in the region of Vlora, arising from mere phonemic similarities - for example, *Maja e Vrakulit* (Vrakuli Peak) presumably meaning "the peak where the puppy was killed" [since "vra-kul" appear in the verb "vras" (kill) and "kulish" (puppy)]; *Zhirava* presumably deriving from "zhiva" (mercury/poison); *Spithari* [s'pi-thar coinciding to "not-drink-dried"] to mean "I do not drink water because it has dried out"; or *Fiteci* as originated from the Turkish root "fit" (wedge/intrigue) and the Slavonic suffix "-ec" etc. - were all called "fruitful blunders" by the early student of Albanian, E. H. Tunman. Çabej, (2008: 12) stated that, for the history of a people and language, toponyms have almost the same importance as fossils in paleontology. That is why their study requires extensive knowledge of not just linguistics but also history and sociology.

2. Semantic and structural analysis of toponyms

We will attempt below to break down a few toponyms semantically and structurally. We start with placenames of Slavonic origin.

Blanicë, -a (Gu.)¹ – is land with depressions, with arable plots of flatland, with orchards and water. It probably relates to the Bulgarian блато [blato] "swamp" + the Slavonic suffix *-icë*, that is, ground with stagnant water and mud, i.e. marshy land: Blanicë > Blanicë (through assimilation n > ŋ). P. Skok (1971, 168) also supports this etymology from the Slavonic word *blato* "swamp, marshy land".

Gërdilla, -t (Ve.) – crop fields, springs (*Burimet e Gërdillave* – the Gërdillas Springs), plane trees (*Rrapet e Gërdillave* – the Gërdillas Planetrees) and cave (*Shpella e Gërdillave* – the Gërdillas Cave). We believe this to be a toponym of mythologic basis, reflecting the Serbian *grdilo* "monster, giant, dragon". (Compare with: *Guri i Lugatit* (Bo.) – "Ghost's Rock", *Burimi i Vragoit* – [similar to] Dragon's Spring, *Sheshi i Vragoit* – "[similar to] Dragon's Plateau", (Ve.), *Qeja e Dhrakulit* (Du.) "Dragon's Crag"; *Guva e Zërave* (Du.) – "the Cave of Voices"; *Gur't e Divit* (Krajë) – "Giant's Rock" etc.) Placenames like these, containing names of some typically Albanian mythological creatures, some of which reaching from the distant past Yllirian-Albanian beliefs and cults, are of high interest, especially when endeavouring to prove the native roots of the Albanians in the present regions from ancient times (Shkurtaj, 2015: 92). Such toponyms as *Burimet e Gërdillave*, *Shpella e Gërdillave* etc. could well be Slavonic translations of earlier native placenames based on the word *dragua* "dragon".

Izvor,-i (Tr., between Gjo. and Gu., Mat.), and *Zvor,-i/Zvuar,-i* (Ve., Bo.) – permanent spring; relates to the Macedonian/Bulgarian извор [izvor] "spring" (Dhrimo, 2008: 412).

Sadovinë, -a (Ve.) – grain fields and pastureland; vast plateau. It is a Slavonic toponym derived from the root *sad* "plantation, cultivation" and the Slavic origin suffix *-ovinë*, so these are arable lands, or nurseries; semantically the same as the Greek *φύτεια* [fitia]. Serbian also contains the verb *saditi* "plant" and the noun *sadnica* "sapling; shoot; graft". Similarly, the word *bukovina* "grove of beech trees" from the root *bukva* "beech" or *bukov* (adj.) "of beech wood" is a Serbian formation. According to Xhuvani and Çabej (1980: 533), the suffix *-ovina* forms feminine gender nouns that indicate a quality of the primitive word, or the location where the concrete thing it designates is to be found, for example, *baltovinë* – "muddy ground". In Serbo-Croatian, this suffix forms nouns from nouns, for instance, *dubovina* – (oak tree; [oak tree grove]: *dubov* from *dub*), or nouns from verbs, such as *kupovina* (thing bought, [purchase; trade] from *kupiti* "buy").

Radotinë, -a (Ve.) – arable fields, is also a Slavonic toponym. We believe that it is more plausible to relate this placename with the name of some person of Slav origin, such as *Rad* or *Rado*, since Slavonic persons' names such as *Petko*, *Rad* (or *Rado*) etc. as well as some micro-toponyms like *Pylli i Radit* "Radi's Wood", *Qafa e Radës* "Radi's Pass" (Memushaj, 2004:127), *Burimi i Petkos* (Vë.) "Petko's Spring" can be found in the Kurveleshi area. The suffix *-tinë* (< -inë) is of Slavic origin too.

publications on some particular area (such as Smokthina) or specific villages (such as Bolena, Dukat, Tragjas, Gjorm etc.), valuable toponyms can be found, yet explanations as to their etymology in certain cases go against scientific fact.

¹ The following abbreviations have been used in this study for names of villages in the region of Vlora: Bo. = Bolenë, Br. = Brataj, Du. = Dukat, Dh. = Dhërmi, Gu. = Gumenicë, Gjo. = Gjorm, Ka. = Kaninë, La. = Lapardha, M. = Mavrovë, Ma. = Mazhar, Mat. = Matogjin, Pe. = Peshkëpi, Qe. = Qeparo, Ra. = Ranicë, Tr. = Tragjas, Ve. = Velçë, Vë. = Vërmik.

Zhallovtin/ë, -a (Ve.) – crop fields; pastureland, is found as the name of a grove and a spring. Serbian language contains the word *žal* [zhall] designating *pebbly riverbed* or *riverbank*. The suffix *-tinë* (< -inë) is as well of Slavonic origin. The location is named after the material it consists of, as pebbly ground.

Zhirava (Ve.) – crop fields; pastureland. Another designation has been given, as “acorn forest tree for livestock” (Nuraj, 2003). Based of this fact, we think that it relates to the Serbian word *žir* [zhir] “(oak)tree acorn”. The location named *Zhirava* might be motivated as the place where acorn corns can be collected for livestock feed, the same way as the noun *dubrava* is formed in Serbian from the nominative root *dub* “oak”. This naming after the plants (white oak, red oak etc.) growing in a particular place, and whose acorns used to serve as feed for livestock or wildlife species, is acceptable in toponymy.

Lugu i Vrullit (Br.) - “Vruli Valley” We hold the opinion that the word *vrul* relates to the Serbian *vrulja* “spring; source”. Another toponym, *Pusi i Vrullës* (Dh.) - “Vruli Well”, might as well be connected to this word. Albanian placenames like these also commonly appear in Kurveleshi: *Lugjet e Gurrës* “Spring Valleys”, *Sheshet e Gurrës* “Spring Flatlands”, *Lugu i Buronjës* “Source Valley” (Dhrimo, 2008).

Vragua (Ve.) – fields, alluvium: (*Ledhi i Vragoit* “Alluvium of Vragoi”), flatland (*Lëmi i Vragoit* “Flat of Vragoi”, plane-tree (*Rrapi i Vragoit*) “Plane-tree of Vragoi”. In Mesaplik, this appears as *vrakul* (*Maja e Vrakullit* “Vrakuli Peak”); (Jahaj, 2010), whereas in Dukati, as *dhrakul* (*Qeja e Dhrakullit* “Dragon’s Crag”; Çapo, 2009). This is a toponym on a mythological basis, which relates to the word *dragua* “dragon”. According to Çabej (1987: 300), *dragua* is a word of the entire language, and discussion on its source is open to discussion as either from the Lat. *draconem* or the It. *dragone*, whereas the forms in /dh/ “dhragonj” are combinations of *dragooi* with the new Gr. *δράκος* [drakos/dhrakos], a sort of giant in the folk beliefs of Chameria, depicted by Haxhihasani (DS II, 43). According to A. Dhrimo, (2008: 415), the toponym *Dhrakule-ja* in Çorraj of Kurveleshi is derived from the new Gr. *δρακούλης*, a diminutive of *δράκος* plus the suffix *-ούλης* [ulis]. As to the forms in /v/ *vragua* or *vrakul*, we believe they are combinations of *dragua* or *drakul* with Slavonic (compare in Serbian *vrag* “devil, demon”).

The following are placenames of Greek origins.

Fite, -ja (Ve., Gu., M.) – orchard; *Burimet e Fitesë* (Ve.) “Springs of Fite”; *Fitec, -i/Fitjec, -i*, (between Gjo. and Gu.) – a thicket (*Përroi i Fitecit* “Brook of Fitec”, *Kroi i Fitecit* “Spring of Fitec”); *Fitjec* (Ma.) – arable land. We believe that these words relate to the Greek *φύτεία* [fitia] ‘plantation; planting’. The plural form *φύτειες* [fities] “arable lands” also phonetically resembles the name *Fitec*, excluding in this case the likelihood for the suffix –ec to be Slavic. We must also observe that Greek contains the word *φυτό* [fitó] ‘a plant’; *φύτεύο* [fitévo] ‘to plant’, as well as numerous compounds containing as a first part the word *φυτό-* [fitó] in the sense ‘plant / relating to plant’ (about 26 compounds; see: Ndreca, 2007:194). It is also obvious that the configuration of these placenames is the same: arable land with springs or streams nearby.

Pigadhie (Ve., Dh.) – springs, arable lands, and brook. (*Burimi i Aj Pigadhiti* “Pigadhi Spring”, *Përroi i Aj Pigadhiti* “Pigadhi Brook”). This is related to the Greek *πηγάδι* [pigádhī] “well” (and *πηγή* [pigī] “spring, stream”). The toponym *Pigadhul* (with no clues as to its word formation) appears in the village Brataj. Another micro-toponym viz *Aspropigadhie* (Ve.) – a spring in a limestone area, is formed from the Gr. *άσπρο* [áspro] “white” + *πηγάδι* [pigádhī] “well”, that is, a white well or spring, because of the nature of the terrain.

Vris, -i/ Vríz, -i (Ve., Du., Gjo., M.) – springs, crop fields – is undoubtedly of a Greek source, from *βρύση* [vrísi] “spring, drinking fountain, tap”¹.

Spithar, -i (Tr., Bo., Mat.)/ *Cpithar, -i* (Ve., Du., Qe.) – holes of water, generally in rock. According to Çabej (SE VII, 2006, 19), this is a word of the Tosk (southern Albania) dialect and means: “a small hole in the mountains rock, full of water, from which men and livestock drink”. It is a borrowing, adding the prefix *s-*, from the Gr. *πιθάρι* [pithári] “tub, pitcher”, and the extension of meaning has happened because of the similarity of such small holes to tubs and pitchers (Ibid, p. 19).

¹ As elsewhere around the country, bilingual toponymy is not lacking in the region of Vlora, which, according to Shkurtaj (2015:70), bears witness to the Albanian resistance to assimilation. In way of illustration, we bring the Springs of Pigadhie, the Spring of Aspropigadhie (Ve.); the Springs of Vrizi (Ve.), as well as the Spring of Vrizi – a TV commercial of the bottled oligomineral water *Spring*, from the Spring of Nepravishta, Gjirokastra; the Spring of Izvor (between Gu. and Gjo.), the Spring of Zvuar (Ve.), the Spithar Hollow (Tr.) etc.

Sirokashtë (Gu.) – a mountain slope with straw-like grass, *Sirokëmbë* (M.) – steep arable land that does not hold rainwater and *Sirogule* (M.) – arable land on the bank of the River Shushica. We believe that the first part of these toponyms relates to the Gr. word *ξηρός* [ksiros] “dry”. The second part (-gule) of the toponym *Sirogule* is connected with the word *kule*, meaning “a thorny thicket”. The word form in /g/ is connected with the sonorization of /k/ in intervocalic position.

3. On the origin of a few oikonyms

Bolenë, -a, according to A. Dhrimo, is derived from *polenë*, which, in its turn, according to Seliščev too, is derived from *poljana* “a small meadow amid a forest”. Thus: *Poljana*>*Polenë*>*Bolenë* (2008:408).

Babicë, -a, the name of a village, is, according to Seliščev, connected with the word *babë* from old clerical Slavonic *baba* “old woman, grandmother” (Çabej, SE II, 1976: 120). Identical to this is also *babo* (also in modern Gr. *μπάμπω*), fem. “old woman”, in some dialects also “midwife” (Ibid, p. 120-121); also in Bulgarian (Macedonian) *баба* “old woman”, but also “hilly terrain” + -иц-а (Ylli, 2000: 85). In Serbian as well, *babica* has the meanings “midwife” and “wet nurse”. We are of the opinion that this placename has entered the area through the Bulgarians. The naming of this palce of inhabitation might be related to the land configuration, as it is located on a hilly terrain.

Cerkovinë, -a is related to the Slavonic word *crkva* “church” and the suffix *-ovinë*, also Slavonic, which designates the place where the concrete thing is located, that is, land belonging to the church, or where the church stands. According to Seliščev, Bulgarian has *църква/ черква* “church” + -ов-ин-а (Ylli, 2000: 98).

Drashovicë, -a is, according to Seliščev, connected with the name of a certain person *Драша/ Драшо* [Drasha/ Drasho] + -ов-иц-а (Ylli, 2000: 107).

Gumenicë, -a. We hold that the source stem of this toponym is derived from the Gr. *ηγούμενος* [igúmenos] “an orthodox chief monk”, extended by the Slavonic suffix *-icë* in the time of the Slav invasions. There used to be an orthodox monastery in Gumenica, which was the permanent seat of the monks’ chief. (Xhaferaj, 2015: 20). The placename might have remained from the Bulgarians, because they too have borrowed the word *игумен* “chief monk” from Greek.

Mavrovë, -a. We hold that the source stem of this toponym is derived from the Gr. *μαύρος* [mávros] “black”, extended by the Slavonic suffix *-ov*, perhaps because of the ground colour of this place. In the “Defter of Vlora Sandjac”, an official document of the Ottoman Empire (1583), we also come across the placename *Mavrovica*.

Novoselë, -a is beyond doubt of Slavonic origin; perhaps it relates to the Serbian *novo* “new” and *selo* “village, hamlet”, that is, a new hamlet. According to Stojan Novakovich, “in the first half of the XV century, the [Albanian] *katun-s* (villages) started to disappear, and the Slav *sello-s* began to appear in their stead” (Doçi, 2009: 193).

Plloçë, -a is, in our opinion, connected with the Serbian word *ploča* “plateau, slab”. In Serbian, Slovenian and old religious Slavonic, *ploča* appears in the sense of “slab”, whereas in Weigand, *ploci* means “slates, flat pieces of stone used for covering roofs of houses”. (Meyer, 2007: 395). In this village, the ruins of the ancient Illyrian city *Amantia* have been uncovered, a city that was founded around the late 5th century BC, and which, by the 3rd century BC, was the main economic, political and cultural center of the community of the *Amants’ Koinon*, stretching between the (River) *Aoos* and the *Akrokeraun-s* (mountain range) (FESh, 2008: 62-63). The name was probably given by the Slavs because of its geographic features.

Sevaster-i, is according to Çabej (2008: 105), a toponym from the Greek of the Byzantine church, whose counterpart in the North is the name of the village *Sebastë*. The etymology of this toponym is connected to the Gr. adjective *σεβαστός* [sevastós/ sebastós] “venerable, respected”. In the Greek-speaking provinces of the Roman Empire, *Σεβαστός* was used as an equivalent the honorific Roman title *Augustus* (Lat. the honourable), which was given to the first Roman emperor, Oktavius, and later on, his successors.

Smokthinë, -a is, in our view, connected with the Serbian word *smokva* “fig”. The suffix *-inë* appears in almost all of the Balkans languages, as: Alb. *Ballinë* “façade”, Srb-Cr. *bistrina* “clarity”, Bulg. *dolina* “valley”, Rom. *tulpina* “trunk” and in modern Gr. *provatina* “sheep” (Xhuvani-Çabej, 1980). In this case, there is an extension of the suffix with a /t/: *-tinë* (< -inë). The characteristics of the location too tend to justify the placename “a place of fig-trees” or “fig-tree orchard” for “Smokthinec (the placename of a hill) was reknown for the cultivation of figs” (Jahaj, 2010: 61). Placenames after the flora - names of plants (trees, shrubs, brambles, corns etc.) that once used to grow, or still grow, in that place are common in

that area (Dhrimo, 2008). We have come across the Albanian placename *Fiqëza* “a place of figs” in Tragjas (also *Gropa e Fikut* “the Fig Hollow”, *Harca e Fikut* “the Fig Cliff”) (Gjomemo, 2009: 158); in Brataj, *Lugu i Fiqve* “the Figs Valley”; in Dukat there are about twenty placenames containing the word fig as a word group constituent; (See also: Çapo, 2009: 109.); in Qeparo, *Fiqishçë* (Sotiri, 2001: 110) etc.

Vllahinë, -a must relate to the noun *Vlach*. Sh. Demiraj (2008: 105) states that the early presence of the Vlachs or Aromanians in Albanian-speaking territories is shown, among other things, by the toponymic traces, such as the name of the village *Armen* in the vicinity of Vlora, the village name *Rëmaj* in the region of Pogradeci, as well as the name of the zone of Kolonja in the region of Korça or the village Kolonja near Lushnja, which is a name from the Romance -Latin *colonia*. The noun *Vlach*, today used in the sense “Aromanian”, according to Mihăescu, entered the Balkans territories in the time of the Byzantine Empire through the Slavs and the Germans (Ibid, p. 106); however, it must have come into Albanian through the Slavs. The naming *vllah*, according to R. Doçi (2009: 228), can be met today as the name of some villages and other etonyms wherever Albanians live in the Balkans at large, such as: *Vllahia* (a village of Shala), *Vlashnja* (a village in vicinity of Prizren), *Llaushë* (a village of Drenica and another Llapë – derived from *Vllahushë*) etc. In Meyer’s work (2007: 539), we find *vllahinikë* for *Vllahë*, from the old religious Slavonic *vlahъ* “vlachus” = vlachinika (land). In Serbian too, there is *vlah*, *vlahinja* - “Vlach” (m. and f.). The present inhabited location is relatively new, but this could be explained by the fact that Vlach shepherds used to live in the area. The placename of *Llakatund* in the vicinity of Vlora is also related to the noun *Vlach*, though it originated in the time of the Ottoman Empire. *Eflak-katune*, or “Eflak village”, like the village *Fllakë* in the area of Durrësi, inhabited by Vlachs, is related, according to K. Luka (SF, 1976/1, 150), with the word *fllakë*, the Turkish *eflak* for Vlachs.

4. Word formation

Concerning the word formation of these toponyms, we will only analyze the way through suffixation. The most common Slavic suffices for the toponyms of this area, as in all Albanian, are -*ovë* (< -ов) , -*icë* (< -иц) dhe -*inë* (< -ин), and less widespread, the Greek -*aq* (< -άκι). These suffixes form names of places of inhabitation, crop fields, hills, pasturelands, streams etc. following are a few toponyms with these suffixes.

Toponyms with the Slavic suffix -*ovë*: *Bestrovë*, *Buburovë* (M.), *Çipovë* (Ve.), *Drubovë* (Mat.), *Gjirovë* (Ma.), *Kërkovë*, *Kocovë* (Ve.), *Kuçubovë* (Ve.), *Kunjovë* (Bo.), *Kushovë* (Gu.), *Leskovë* (Bo.), *Lugovë* (Vë.), *Markovë* (Bo.), *Mavrovë*, *Penkovë*, *Shajnovë* (Gj.), *Sherbovë* (La.), *Strohovë* (Vë.), *Tërbovë* (Vë.), *Trebllovë*, *Xjogovë* (Tr.) etc.

Toponyms with the Slavic suffix -*icë*: *Amonicë*, *Azvenicë* (Ra.), *Babicë*, *Bllanicë* (Gu.), *Buhavicë* (Ve.), *Bushkavicë* (Gu.), *Çeçenicë* (Vë.), *Drashovicë*, *Dreveshnicë* (Vë.), *Gërcicë* (Vë.), *Gremenicë* (Gu.), *Gumenicë*, *Gjimoçicë* (Mat.), *Këndrevicë* (Bo.), *Korbicë* (Br.), *Koshticë* (Ve.), *Kremenicë* (Br.), *Kurpicë* (Ve., Bo.), *Lepenicë*, *Lepotenicë* (Vë.), *Maricë* (Bo.), *Markovicë* (Bo.), *Mavrovicë*, *Pazanicë* (Ve.), *Pleshovicë* (Bo., Vë.), *Plocicë* (Gjo.), *Polanicë* (Ve.), *Policë* (Br.), *Qylnanicë* (Ve.), *Ramicë*, *Shashicë* (Ka.), *Shushicë* (Bo.), *Siroticë* (Tr.), *Stogovicë* (Br.), *Vodicë* etc.

Toponyms with the Slavic suffixes -*inë*, -*tinë*¹ and -*ovinë*: *Cerkovinë*, *Radotinë* (Ve.), *Smokthinë*, *Sadovinë* (Ve.), *Skroftinë*, *Vllahinë*, *Zhallotinë* (Ve.) etc.

We have also met a toponym formed with the Bulgarian diminutive suffix -*ko*: *Kanelko* (Gu.) – a brooklet and spring. In the “Defter of Vlora Sandjac” (February 1583), this suffix appears in Gumenica, as well as other localities of the Vlora region, in antroponyms of Slavonic origin, like: *Petko*, *Tajko*, *Stajko*, *Tetko*, *Qirko* and *Menko*; at present, however, it occasionally appears as an affectionate ending in certain persons’ names like: *Lesko*, *Zelko*, *Hasko*, *Saliko* etc. (See also: Xhuvani; Çabej, 1980: 511).

Toponyms with the Greek suffix -*aq*: *Gullaq* (Gu.), *Handaq* (Gu.), *Kokopllaq* (Ve.), *Kostaraq* (Mat.), *Livaq* (Ve.), *Llupaq* (Ma.), *Sollaq* (Ve.), *Shushulaq* (Pe.), *Vathilaq* (Ve.) etc. This suffix is highly productive in Greek, and it is used to form diminutive or affectionate names, such as: *ψωμάκι* (<ψωμί “bread”), *νεράκι* (<νερό “water”), *ποτηράκι* (<ποτήρι “glass”), *παιδάκι* (<παιδί “child”) etc.

¹ These suffixes are generally used to form names designating location, indicating a kind of land, plant, etc. the suffix -*tinë* is derived from -*t-inë*: *ligatë* + -*inë* = *legatine*, meaning ‘marshland’. Such placenames helped form a suffix -*tinë*, which later on generalized (Xhuvani; Çabej, 1980).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we could say that the toponymy of the Vlora region is rich, various, and it has plenty of unknown things yet to explore. It is, in its bulk, of native Albanian sources, which goes to show its being inhabited from most ancient times by Albanian population, although there is also a not that large number of toponyms of Slavonic and Greek origins, and still fewer Latin or Turkish, all of which can reasonably be explained by the recognized historic conditions (Dhrimo, 1982: 140).

Furthermore, in order that the etymology of a toponym be satisfactory, an indepth comparative tracing of the toponyms of the Vlora region should be made with those of northern Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, as well as in Albanian diaspora regions in Greece and Italy.

Meanwhile, the necessity arises for the initiation of a research project to collect, systematize according to specific realms and study institutionally the toponyms of this region. Systematic research, recording and scientific discussion would pave the way for a toponomastic dictionary of the Vlora region.

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