# The History of Tirana as an Important Factor in the Social and Cultural Developments Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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**Abstract:** This paper aims at giving some very important social and cultural aspects, which were seen during the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially during the transformation of Tirana as the capital of Albania in February 1920. What is seen as most important in this paper is, the political systems of Albania especially after the acknowledgment of Albania as an indipendent country in the international arena and the social and cultural effects it brought in the social life. The most important aspects that will be treated in this paper are as follows:

- a. The history of Tirana and various of its legends
- b. The political transformations during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and their influence in the social life
- c. Population's movements, Tirana as part of this movement
- d. The new comers in front of a new mentality, imposed by the area where they settled down.

These are some of the main issues the albanian society faces in general and especially the inhabitants of Tirana, whose integrity is mostly affected by the economical, social and cultural aspects of the metropolitan capital, Tirana. In this paper, we will take into consideration as well the changes the albanians had to confront after the 1990. We are mentioning here those citizens who left the city to live in the country, making here a comparison of the both situations, of the previous and later life they had. Despite the clash of mentality, lets hope to see a cohabitation and an adaptionin of ideas and integrity of inhabitants of Tirana and other big cities of Albania in a non distant future.

#### Keywords: History, Tirana, Social, Cultural, Integrity

## The history of creation of Tirana and legends about it

Tirana is the capital of Albania and the biggest city of Albania. It has a modest history in comparison with other europian capital cities. It deserves a very special attention not only for being the capital but also for the fact that it constitutes one of the main specific models of the urban development. Its history starts with its foundation as a city in the XVII century. Tirana is the typical example of a mixed structure, somewhere between the sea and the mountains, Ilyrian cultural heritage, Roman, Byzantine and oriental atmosphere, between Europian elements and those typically mediterranean and balcanic elements ; developed urban models and those which were in progress ; between the most authoritarian urban discipline of the communist era and the chaos of the modern times. In other words Tirana is a city with dynamics in Europe and undoubtfully represents a city in transition, prolonged typically in our days. Transition is present in every inhabited center, as an expression of a continuous uninterrupted historical process of the urban and vital transformation throughout all the times. Tirana as a city in transition represents a temporary period of the structural and urban development, in some historical phases, products of many different factors, including here the political, social and economical differences after the 1990s (Aliaj, 2003, p.13).

As far as the archeological references are concerned it is thought that in Tirana dictrict, the favourable geo-climatic conditions for living there, have made possible its inhabitation since the beginnings of the human society. This is proved by the archeological foundings, near the Dajti Mountain and in the Pullumbas cave, which belong to the paleolite era (old stone era). It continued to be inhabited during the new stone era, the metal era and in continuation throughout the whole historical era. An evidence for these living places are the castles, different monumental ruins which were preserved until nowdays. In order to make more credible and obvious their existence, we are mentioning the most important archeological centers found in this district. To starting with Dajti mountain, this entered as a label in the albanian archeology in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a time when the austrian geologist B. Richthofen discovered near the nowday quarry of Dajti some flint tools which belong to the era of the high paleolite (B.v. Richthofen p.152). Another living place of the late Paleolite is discovered in this area, 7 km in the south of the capital, on the left side of Erzen river, 2 km in the notheast of the Pullumbas village. The Pullumbas Cave called differently as the Black Cave served as a living place later on, from the late paleolite to the beginnings of the Iron Age (Korkuti, 2003, p.129).

The documented traces of a continuous population appeared in this area in the antiquity, in a time when these areas were inhabited by the Illyrians. The Ilyrian inhabitants of the preurban era of this area were forced as everywhere, to build castles to protect themselves from the common attacks of other tribes. Many of these castles have reached our days in the form of ruins. We are going to see closely some of the main castles of antiquity and medivial times. The oldest of the castles in the area of Tirana is the castle of Doris, approximately 20 km in the southwest of Tirana, ruin of an Illyrian city, whose ancient name has not been identified yet, and it belongs to the proturban Illyrian period, so the VII-V B.C (Zhegu, 1976, p. 15). In the southeast of the capital city, over the Vila mountain are seen the traces of an Illyrian later castle known as the Presqop Castle, whose 30m long wall build in square blocks, in a very big size without any connection of mortar, is still preserved nowdays.

Traces of another castle of the antiquity Illyrian period are found in the foundations of the medevial Castle of Petrelabuilt over a 500m hill over the sea level in the south of Tirana, in the valley of Erzen river. Petrela is famous for being a medevial castle which is called « Petrula » by the Byzantine writer Ana Komnena, and the arabian geographer calls it « Betrulne », whereas in the turkish mufasal register in 1432 it is called « Petril » and lately in Marin Barleti's work (1508-1510) it is called with the actual name Petrela. The austrian albanologist J. G. Von Han, whose ideas were totally accepted by the nowdays albanian archaeologists, it testifies that the medivial castle of Petrela is constructed over the foundations of an ancient Illyrian castle which belongs to the III Century B.C (Komota, 1969 p.17).

Another Illyrian castle with ancient foundations is the castle of Preza, which reached our times in medivial walls. M. Barleti thinks that it is a continuation of the ancient castle of Oppidum Parathinorum (The city of Parthins), which Julius Caesar mentions in his work about the Civil war (Korkuti, 2003, p.134). After the roman invasion, especially after the establishment of administrative imperial stability in those areas, the castles lost their previous function, as a place for the protection against the outdoor attacks. The centuries of the Roman rule is represented by traces of other contrucion objects : public buildings, living houses, water supply, sanitation, streets, road stations, artistic monuments, grave inscriptions etc. From this period in Tirana we have mostly foundation of buildings, bits of artistic work of arts and grave inscriptions.

The french counselor in Shkodra A. Degrand writes in his own work published over a century ago (1901) that during his trip from Tirana to Kruja near the river of Tirana( River Rigllata ), he had encountered some traces of a Roman necropolis, that belonged to the soldiers of Caesar or Pompeus killed during a battle in this area in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century B.C (Sufflay, 1926, p.7). We have also some traces of a building discovered in the Kocaj village of Baldushk area, in the south part of the capital, near the second mentioned variation of the Egnatia Via. The building of the Kocaj village belongs to the 1st Century B.C, as so noted by N. Ceka and D. Kamata. Apart from the inscriptions discovered in Kocaj of the Baldushk village, there has been discovered 5 other inscriptions in latin. These inscriptions signify living places in the sorroundings, but their traces have not been discovered yet.

The most impressive and important traces seem to be still in discovery in the castle of Tirana, which is near the historical center of the capital city. It is thought that the castle was being built by the Ahmet Pashe Bargjini in the last decade in the end of the XVIII century. Due to the partial archeological researches done by Suleiman Dashi in december 2001, it was seen that in its foundations were seen traces of another more ancient castle. But further escavations in the area of the castle would probably say the last word whether it existed or not an ancient castle at the heart of the castle of capital city. Anyway, Tirana castle, with a rectangular plan almost 160x200 m with the longest rib which went parallel with the Lana bed, seems to have been one of the flat fortresses of the IV-VI century of our era- more precisely one of the castles built or rebuilt by the emperor Justinian in the new Epir. This castle should have been ruined at the end of the VI century, a time when the castles of the emperor Justinian were not able to protect themselves against the attack. If the later escavations would undoubtfully prove the existence of a castle in the late antiquity, in the heart of the nowday capital city Tirana, this may prove the previous point of view of the croatian mediavist Milan Shufflaj men, who said in 1924 that the name of one of the castles Tyrkanos (Tupkquog) rebuilt in the VI century in the southern altitude of the wide valley in the midst of which is situated the nowday city of Tirana (Frasheri, 2003, p.24). Even in medieval times there are a few undocumented testimonies about the existence of the area of Tirana. In order to prove the continuation of fortification and existence in the medieval times in the mufassal registry in 1621 of Karye-i Andronik', there is given testimony about the existence of the Ndrog Castle in the western part of the capital on the left of Erzen river, where there were registered 25 living houses. There have also existed 2 other medevial castles in the eastern part of Tirana, over the Dajti mountain, which controlled the way to the internal mountinous streets.

One of them controlled the way to the Tamadhe Highland in the Great Priska, which used to be the episcopal headquarter, 1404 Episcopus Priscensis et Bendensi, called by Mark Skura in 1641 as it is called today the Great Priska (Priska Grande, (Zamputi, 1965, p.229). The second is the mentioned castle of Tujan where you can still see the ruins of the castle, a medieval Byzantine castle according to Hani and Shuflaj, as well as the ruins of Berrar. According to the

historical and archeological testimonies Tirana constituted one of the areas with an ancient dwelling which has kept with its tradition in medivial and modern times. In order to prove this there are also given some data about those who ruled this area, and it is belived that that for centuries Tirana has had progenies of the Sguro or Skuka family. Later on with the foundation of principality of Carl Topia, the possession and rule of Tirana from the Skuraj family comes to an end, because they are not mentioned any more as nobles in the city of Durres (Frasheri, 2004, p.50).

Tirana was at the center of the principality of Carl Topia. Tirana had a certain stability during this period of time. Fewer and fewer villagers were moving from the villages of the highland of tirana to the fertile land because of their insecurity. After the death of Carl Topia, Tirana was attacked by the Ottoman invaders. In the feudo-miliraty-administrative organization that was sanctioned in the register or defter in turkish : the area of Tirana did not form a single administrative unit, but it was enclosed in the Akca-Hisar vilayet of Kruja. This vilayet or kaza also included Benda which during the middle ages constituted an episcopal diocese. In this vilayet was also included the area of Tamadhe (Shengjergj). Apart from the testimonies and the data provided by different authors about the historical background of Tirana, what is of a great importance to the history of creation of this city are the folk legends created in many different variations. These legend about the history of Tirana is given by Johan George Von Han, in his work "Albanian studies", published in 1854 where he describes the legend as he heard it from the people.

The legend related the foundation of the city of Sujejman Pashe Mulleti and went back to the first years of the XVII century. Anyway the legend accepted that before these events took place, Tirana was a small village of 15 houses. We will cite in the following paragraph some words which were taken from the description of the legend of the creation of Tirana done by J.G.Von Hann :

The legend speaks about servant a boy who used to serve to Sulejman Beu. One day the boy told to Beu his dream that was about the moon which had descended from the sky and rested over the boy's shoulder and enlighted him. Sulejman Beu interpreted the dream as if i twas a warn of a very lucky and prosperous destiny for the boy, so he encouraged him to go in search of his fortune. The legend goes on telling that the previous servant boy had now become a very great veyzir and he didn't want to forget his master, so he gave him the position of commander of the Ohrid Sandza. One day Sulejman was hunting and he was sorrounded by a very beautiful green valley and i twas there where he decided to build a mosque and a bazar by giving Tirana in this way the aspect of a city (J.G.Von.Hann p.87).

The Counselor of France in Shkodra J. Hekar (1857), by adding one ending to the unfinished legend by Hani, and told that after the foundation of the city, Sulejman Pasha went to war in Persia where he died. His body was buried in the mosque of Tirana built by him because this was his own wish <sup>16</sup>. Sami Frasheri in his work about Tirana keeps this same version of the story. Another variation of the legend is given by the French Counselor A.Degrand in Shkodra who carefully elaborates on the events about the foundation of Tirana with a pretended historical background, and supplying it with typical dramatic episodes of a feudal society. According to him Sulejman Pasha was not from Mullet village, but according to his surname (Bargjin)from the Bargjin village, which according to the Arvanit Sandza registry is registered in the area of Tirana, a village with 24 houses whose traces were still found in the 30s in the northeastern part somewhere between Medreseja and the Tirana river (Rigllata). If in the first version given by Hann Sulejman Pasha possesses the area of Tirana without any conflicts and difficulties, in the second version Sulejman Pashe Bargjin acts totally differently by means of violence and the support of powerful friends in Istambul. There are also other legends regarding the foundation of Tirana just like other areas and villages of Albania is filled with episodes and events full of fights and wars which are described in the legends of foreign writers as well as albanian ones.

### The political transformations in the XX century and their impact in the social life.

The history of Tirana as a city ended after its appointment as the capital of Albania and this was a story told only by its own inhabitants. Th history of Tirana started to melt slowly with the history of the albanian state, after its appointment as the capital city and after several dwellers of other areas came to live there. At this time everything changed in the political, economical, social and cultural life of tirana. It started to become the most representative city of the albanian nation and the different regions gave their own contribution in the political, social and economical aspect. By appointing Albania as the capital city, this made it come out of its previous closed character and helped a lot in the modification of the local city dwellers. An important impact exerted the albanian political parties created in 1921. The fight between these political parties resulted in a much faster development of the dwellers in Tirana. There was seen the polarization of two political

parties in a national level which was on one hand the conservative party, landowner beys, and on the other hand the liberal democrats.

It was seen at that time in Tirana the action of the democratic-revolutionary organization called «Bashkimi» founded by Avni Rustemi in 1922 which had a major support from the city dwellers of Tirana and of the whole albanians. There were also seen other democratic organizations such as Xhoka ect. All of these democratic moves, sucessfully coronated the democratic revolution of June 1924, headed by Fan Noli. The goverment which came from the June Revolution had in its bulk the eradication of feudalism and bringing democracy to the nation. Due to several factors the democratic party of June was turned upside down in December 1924. For Tirana and for the whole Albania it was the time for Ahmet Zogu to rule, in January 1925 he was declared president of the Republic and in 1928 King of the Constitutional Monarchy of Albania. At the very beginning of the Zogist rule, Tirana was a city of urban characteristics where the simple handcraft prevailed. Tirana started to change its economical content, social life and its urban structure during the 30s. There were built different factories and the agriculture flourished. In 1938 there was put into practice the first radio-transmiter with a limited program. Very big changes were seen in the aspect of urban structure in the 1930s. As far as the private living flats were concerned they evolved in two directions ; one of them in the old Tirana space and the other was extended in the space in the southwest of tirana where no one ever lived before and it was called the new Tirana. There were built a whole new range of private buildings. In this period of time there was not built any artistic building in the real sense of it. There was seen a huge and rapid development of Tirana's social life. In 1930 s there was seen a proliferation of the cultural and artistic life in Tirana and this was done without the help of the government. At that time started the theatrical plays, some artistic concerts and ther was seen an extension of the sportive club networks ect. The same proliferation was seen in the publication of differents political, cultural, phylosophical, sociological and artistic works.

There was seen a huge development of the social and labour movement. Members of this movement were intellectuals, simple workers who came from different areas of Albania and especially from Tirana who were famous for being organizers of such movements especially Hasan Reci and .Hamdi Shijaku. The citizens of Tirana were amnong the first ones who protested against the Roman attacs in 1939 in Albania. When the roman rule was established in albania in 12 April 1939 with the king and ruler Viktor Emanuel III, who would be called the king of Italy, of Albania and emperor of Ethiopia. The roman invasion made it possible to make some different organizations for example the creation of new job positions by investing in this way the Italian capital in various economic spheres and built several public building most of them situated in Tirana. There were also created various industrial factories and workshops. The living situation improved a little bit with this policy of hiring as many people as possible. Despite the invaders'attempts to be as friendly as possible with the albanian population there were seen various anti-fashist movements everywhere in albania as well as in Tirana. Tirana was on the top list of the anti-fashist resistence. the inhabitants of Tirana contributed in various ways by means of its militants.

The Italian invasion was left behind and was succeeded by the nazist regime in september 1943. It is unforgettable the day of 4 February 1944, when the German forces masacred in the capital city streets 84 people. After various attempts and help given by the National Anti-fashist Liberatory Movement, finally on 17 November 1944 Tirana was freed from the invaders. With the freedom of Tirana there was established the government formed by the communist party that remained in power for 45 years. In 1947 Tirana started to develop economically, socially and culturally. A lot of factories were built such as the milk factory, the shoe and meat one. In 1951 it was firstly constructed the Textile Industry in Yzberisht the Wood KOMBINAT in Misto Mame, the Hydropower plant in Dajti, the metal production Factory and the factories of Dinamo and Partizani.In the late thirty years lots of other industrial factories were built where lots of people were hired and improved their living conditions in Tirana. In this way Tirana turned into a modern industrial city. A lot of development was seen in the cultural and educational aspect. In 1947 it was built the two-year pedagogical high Institute and in 1951 there were 4 other institutes that started work The high Institue of History and Philology, Economics, Medicine and the Agricultural one. And later on with the educational organization there were functioning several colleges and universities mentioning here the State University of Tirana, the Agricultural University of Kamza, The high Institute of Beautiful Arts and the High Institute of Physical Training ect. The scientific life was evolving as well. The first step was done in 1947 with the creation of the Institute of Sciences and several other research and scientific institutions. The cultural and artistic life went at the same pace with the scientific activity. The first National Albanian theatre was build in 1945 and in the same vear Tirana inherited only one single library with 12000 volumes, whereas in 1990s it had 13 libraries and the National Library had almost 2 millions of books. In 1960 it was build the Big Cultural Edifice. The artistic and literary life were proliferating step by step and there was an increase in the number of publications, plays, orchestral concerts, albanian song contests. In Tirana neighbourhood you could see a series of monuments and statues dedicated to famous albanian historical personalities, and we can mention the monument of our national hero Gjergj Kastriot Skëndërbeu, situated in the main square of the capital city. The center of the capital was transformed in an official and cultural center.

The commercial units and production centers were sent inside the nieghbourhoods, whereas the great industrial works were sent in the suburb of Tirana. All of the neighbourhoods of the capital city were full of squares and gardens. The greatest work of all was the big park of Tirana in the artificial lake, in the south of the capital. Because Tirana was the center of the state mechanism, it strongly felt the pressure of the 45-year old communist regime, more than other cities. Apart from this, the democratic aspirations of the citizens of Tirana continued, a testimony for this are the various imprisonments of the citizens which were considered to be enemies of the people of Albania. Although the dissatisfaction was not clearly and frankly expressed in the beginning, it was still waiting for the most favourable moment to explode. This moment came after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. After this main event there were seen popular movements in July 1990 in Tirana and was given the name of « The attack of the embassies». It was called in this way because in 2 July over 10.000 citizens entered the embassies of the western countries asking for political asylum and a boarding pass to pass the albanian communist boundary. The communist government was unable to cope with the revolted inhabitants of the capital and it was pulled down by force. This turnover set the way free for the liberal democratic movement. After the victory of the pluralist party on 12th December 1990 and the first plural elections on 31st December 1991, this was the beginning of the so called transition period where the communist dicatorial regime with a concised social economy was transformed into a democratic regime, a plural one with a more liberal trade economy. This period still goes on.

#### Population moves from rural areas to urban ones, Tirana part of this movement.

Population moves differently known as internal migration, has had in a more general sense its own dynamics. This is a phenomenon that derives from ancient times but became more widespread in the XX century. There was an intesification of the people from rural areas to the urban ones the same was seen during the period of the Republic and the Albanian Monarchy in the years 1925-1939 and were much more intensive during the 50s and 60s, later on we have a certain stability but it didn't go on until 1990. The internal migration was regional, a little inter-regional and partly with a village-city orientation. It constituted of individuals, family members etc. During the 50s the internal migration has included 39 387 perpole per year or 2.8% of the average annual population. In 1960 it is seen an intensification of such internal migration especially from the country to the city. In the 1960-1970 have migrated approximately 97 747 people per year, in the 1970-1980 were 78 526 people and the years 1980-1990 have had an internal migration dynamics of 77 170 people migrating within the country. According to the statistical evidence migration did not pass without traces. Its traces were ; the transitional social life situation which was aggravated even more with the turning of infrastructure services into state services, economic function loss of the living houses in the city as well as in the country and the fall of the economical dynamics and the aggravation of the general crisis. These all resulted in a further aggravation of the labour market. These migration characteristics together with strict administrative codification, affected a lot the increase of population. This migration after the 1990s was tripled compared with the beginnings of the 90s. The center for this migration became the most important cities of Albania like Tirana, Durrsi, Elbasani, Vlora, Shkodra ect. Those people set in the urban areas or pretty close to them, formed 3 human ecosystems with multiple communication between them ect. The problem here was not a denial for these kind of services, but it was mostly the fact of being unprepared for such a chaotic migration. The created formations are : the urban one especially in the local areas, suburban and rural-urban especially in the big cities. These three units have essential differentiations in all aspects and the migrants and the communty have different positions. If we refer to migration as a destiny in the city of Tirana and around it, we can say that it has been quite intensive and at the same time inevitable. As far as the statistical data of the 1990s in the Municipality of Tirana are concerned there were registered 374 000 inhabitants, whereas in the 2011 registration it was seen a population of 624 122 people and apart from the Municipality of Tirana we also have the municipality of Kamza with a population of 20028 inhabitants and the Municipality of Vlora part of the district of Tirana with 81 905 inhabitants. As we see from the data the population of Tirana is tripled and has created chaos in the urban plan but has also brought chaos for the local and non local citizens.

#### The new comers in front of a new mentality, ofered by the place of settlement

The settlement and coming of the inhabitants in the most important urban centers brought them fondamental changes as far as their living conditions and perceptions were concerned. These were result of lots of problematics which they were facing after the 1990s in the places where they were living and by settling down in the urban areas they thought that their life would change for the best in the social, cultural and economic aspect. Some of these problematics are:

- a. The new way of thinking differently among the new comers about the way of organizing family and social life.
- b. The lack of labour offer where competition in the urban center was high

Inclusion of the new technology in education such as digitalisation, computer system and several foreign C. languages, most of which were unknown.

We must say that the albanian society is in general a society with stressed patriarchal elements and its nucleus is the family. The strength of the patriarchal society is greater in those families where the patriarch decides the destiny of the rest of the family without considering before the needs and desires of each of the members. It is the common law that particulary stresses the superior male position especially that of the head of the family and the dependence of other members especially the female members whose rights are denied. Even nowdays there are still extended families in the sorrounding of Tirana especially new comers form the north, who live several families together, and are ruled and directed by the "head of the family". This clearly shows that the common law is still strongly present in many of such families although most of the inhabitants deny such a thing.

What we should make them recall is the fact that the common law limits a lot their mentality related to family, marriage and family relations. What is different in fact is only the different modern terms which are nowday used instead of the old ones, but the rest has remained the same as in the common law. The difference between the local people and the new comers is that the first group has laft behind the common law a long time ago because trhe times have changed and the common law effects do not match with the life build by our society. The local people strongly reject common law effects related to blood fued, arranged marriages and above all the authority of the head of the family towards other family members.

b. Another problem these inhabitants faced was the lack of job offers. As far as their interviews are concerned most of the dwellers said that moving away from their home village towards Tirana was their biggest dream but when it became true it was totally different. They moved because of the financial problems they hoped to be hired in Tirana to get a better future but in reality they were faced with a strong competition and most of them remained unemployed in the long endless streets of Tirana and their only financial source were their immigrants children abroad.

c. Education is one of the main vital elements for man's integration in job market and serves to legitimate financial profits as well, it is also important in other strategies to improve the living conditions including here the protection of personal rights and the possibility of participation in the community institutions" (INSTAT, 2004: 14). In this way education is really important for individuals and the society in general. Because of their great desire for having their children educated in Tirana, they saw it as as a possibility to set there once and forever. The staff was much preparated in tirana than in any other city and the conditions for studying and living were better of course, it also included a digitalized computer system and three foreign languages which the people from the country did not have the chance to have such a technology. Anyhow they are optimistic in this direction because their children's progress is very positive. This has come as a result of different private courses their children have attended and they are at the same level with the local children.

In conclusion despite the contrasts and incompatibility of ideas between the two parties, they learned how to coexist with one another especially in the last few years. However the longevity of their relationship depends on their mutual collaboration and adoption to reality. Time will show their will and desire for a calm and friendly coexistence...

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