

## Population Islamizing in Elbasan City at the End of XIXth Century and the Beginning of the XXth Century: An Anthroponomical Analysis



### Anthropology

**Keywords:** belief, Islam, Ottoman Empire, anthroponomy.

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### Abstract

This paper analyses the characteristics of religion belief in the Elbasan city during the Ottoman occupation at the end of XIXth Century and the beginning of the XXth Century. The analysis is based on a large historical literature and Ottoman original documents (Daimi and Jokllama registers). Besides the explanations of the historical materials, the paper also provides a comparative analysis of the Muslim population dynamics during the study period. The religion belief is considered from the anthroponomy point of view, which suggests that its majority is Turk. This fact is totally reliable because of the long occupation impact. About 72% of the population during that period practiced the Muslims religion and only 28% practiced the Orthodox one. All Muslims neighborhoods had mosques, which served not only for the religion rituals but also as centers for the Islam Religion propagation. This structure has remained almost the same even nowadays. The documents analysis suggests that the population with Muslim belief was increasing not only because of the natural growth but also because of the recently embracing the Islam religion. The Ottoman Empire respected all other religions and this was legally executed. Finally, it seems that Islam religion was already not only an interest concern but also an aware belief.

## 1. Introduction

The city of Elbasan lies on a hill on the right of the Shkumbin river and 135 meter above the sea level. The city is surrounded by mountains on three sides, and on the south east side lies the Shkumbin river valley. The valley enables the winds coming from the sea to pass freely therefore affecting the climate of this area.

The Elbasan city was created in the 3d century of our era. However, the archeological findings in its environs indicate of an Ilirian civilization much earlier than that. Since the city was created simultaneously with a castle as a fortified residence on Via Egnatia, it developed a lot during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It served as the episcopacy residence with its own basilica whose ruins were found in the today's entrance of Elbasan. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the city was destroyed by the Bulgarian congestions and for a long time there was no proof of any development of the city. However, the city did not disappear, because in 1466, the Sultan Mehme,t the Second, chose a site in the city to rebuild the surrounding walls on the foundations of the ancient castle for only "25 days"<sup>42</sup> From this time on and especially during 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century, Elbasan developed tremendously and was one of the first developed centers in the Albanian territory. This development was noted by chroniclers, missioners or historians who were impressed by the enthusiasm of the citizens. They

<sup>42</sup> Babinger. F, Die Grudung von Elbasan, Sonderabdruck aus den Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen XXXIV.Bd(1931),II.Abteilung , Gedruckt in der Reichsdruckerei, The Founding of Elbasan, Reprinted from the Communications of the Seminar for Oriental Languages XXXIV,Abteilung,Printed in Reichsdruckerei, Berlin (1931) p 5.

noticed the happiness, hard work and the desire for development in the city. During this period, alongside the economical and social development the islamization of population began.

## 2. Islamizing process

The islamization process of the Elbasan city population is very interesting, but it is not well researched. It is interesting from the stand point of how this process developed, when did it start and what paths it followed. The majority of the city population is of Islamic faith. Today, there are no documents that can tell the beginning of this process. The spread of the Islamic faith in Elbasan is thought to be related to the Ottoman occupation. Various researchers such as: Shyqyri Demiri, Aleksander Meksi, Sule Dedej, Ferit Duka have treated this process in the Albanian context. Therefore, based on original ottoman documents, we have studied the islamization process and its progress during the of the 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the registers of the Kadi (cadi) of Elbasan, Daimi, of the daily activities, and the Jokllama verifications, we identify an important element of the social life, that of the religious realm. These registers belong to 1892-1908. In addition, we researched a vast historic literature. On the religious realm in the city, we referred to the names and sometimes last names of the registered citizens. Anthroponomy is an important element in this study.

## 3. Islamic Anthroponomy

Names of people and places are created at the same time when the language is born. They multiply, develop, evolve or disappear, and they are no longer used according to the historic, cultural and social circumstances experienced by the population of a country. Names of people and places are as old as the language.<sup>43</sup> These names however, have evolved from one period to the other and reflect the social, cultural and historical development. Each period, with its own developments, is present in the history of the Albanian people. These developments are also reflected in anthroponomy. The ottoman occupation, being a very long one in Albania, had its own impact in this field. I looked into a number of registers of the daily activities of the Kadi of Elbasan (Daimi and Jokllama) which belong to 1892-1908. This was the last period of the ottoman occupation in Albania. These registers indicate that there was a variety of the people's names which belonged to the Islamic and orthodox faith.<sup>44</sup> From a long list of names, we found out that the biggest number of names belonged to the Islamic faith. This is an indication of how deep the Islamic faith penetrated Elbasan. The Turkish and Arabic names were evident in the passports and the Albanian registers. This was related to the strategy of the ottoman occupiers, who, when occupying a country they demanded the population to at least accept one out of three conditions:

<sup>43</sup> Shkurtaç, Gj, Onomastika dhe Etnolinguistika, Onomastics and ethnolinguistics, Sh.B.L.U 2001, p 13.

<sup>44</sup> Arkivi Qendror Shqiptar, Fondi No 113/1, 1892-1908, Albanian Central Archive, Fond No113/1, Register Daimi and Jokllama, 1892-1908.

First: peacefully, the population should accept the Islamic faith principles which should be integrated in the ottoman system.<sup>45</sup>

The anthroponomy of the Islamic faith is very rich. During 1892-1908 there is a variety of people names which are: Abdullah, Alush, Ahmet, Aishe, Adem, Arif, Abdyl, Alemshah, Aqif, Abdylrab, Alije, Abdurrahman, Ali, Abdylrasim, Ataullahh Adile, Abdylrahim, Abdi, Azis, Ahmaz, Abdylqerim, Abdurrahman, Arap, Abdylhamit, Abdylrahman, Abaz, Azem, Abdylbevap, Abdylvehap, Abedin, Arslan, Asim, Abdylhalim, Adil, Ajaz, Asllan, Asije, Avdullah, Alushe, Beqir, Bahtjar, Banush, Bahush, Bajram, Behlul, Belul, Ballkeza, Ballkize, Behush, Bano, Bejtulla, Behije, Behxhet, Beledije, Bilal, Bahije, Brahush, Behrije, Besim, Bule, Bahrije, Bakush, Beshir, Bahman, Bako, Bekije, Balikse, Brahum, Bumka, Cenka, Cerije, Canoke, Cuma, Çaush, Çelmusi, Çanoku, Dervish, Dude, Dalip, Daut, Dule, Deli, Deisi, Dunica, Elmaz, Emine, Eshref, Emin, Ejup, Et'hem, Ebdullah, Es'hat, Ebedin, Fatime, Fejzullah, Faik, Ferko, Fetah, Fahrije, Ferhat, Fazlli, Fatoshe, Fuat, Fotije, Fiqiri, Fiqirije, Fije, Feta, Fatma, Fatime, Fatosh, Grip, Gani, Gjyle, Gjylshah, Gjyslyme, Gjyhsel, Gjyslyme, Gjyslide, Hasan, Hysein, Haki, Halit, Hamide, Hysen, Haxhire, Haxhi, Halil, Hava, Halim, Hafez, Hafiz, Hamza, Hatixhe, Hamdi, Hedime, Hamid, Hamit, Hema, Hatime, Hajdar, Hidush, Hajrie, Hys, Hajrullah, Haxhisalih, Haxhisulejman, Haxhihasan, Hejdush, Hysni, Hedije, Hedush, Hanka, Hurshit, Hushe, Hanko, Hamdushe, Herije, Hurije, Hadije, Hanife, Hemiar, Hazbije, Hasim, Harjan, Hejrie, Hafize, Hasko, Hasib, Hafeza, Hajrama, Ibrahim, Ismail, Iljaz, Islam, Isa, Idriz, Is'hak, Izet, Ibrahimush, Isak, Izetli, Ismete, Ikbale, Isman, Ismon, Jusuf, Jonuz, Jahja, Jakup, Jush, Jatesh, Jashar, Jançe, Kadena, Kadene, Kasem, Kamber, Kalem, Kahreman, Kile, Kordheli, Kadrije, Kapllan, Kelije, Kadishe, Kadri, Keze, Kush, Lushi, Latif, Liman, Lytifi, Lale, Lava, Lushi, Latife, Mahmut, Mustafa, Mehmet, Mahmude, Maksude, Musa, Mehdi, Merzije, Misir, Meço, Myrteza, Merjeme, Murat, Muhtar, Mejreme, Maliq, Mustaf, Merdije, Mersije, Maksut, Mirjam, Muharrem, Myslim, Meçan, Mersin, Metn, Merushe, Mexhit, Maxhum, Minushe, Mihran, Meleq, Mihrian, Miharjan, Mihrije, Mejrie, Metushe, Muhedin, Mirjan, Mylazim, Meti, Myfid, Mehrije, Muhedin, Numan, Nazir, Nexhip, Nezir, Nuredin, Nexhipe, Naze, Nazif, Nurihan, Nasibe, Nadije, Nuranije, Nurije, Nexhibe, Naxhi, Osman, Oshlie, Pertef, Pani, Qazim, Qamile, Qamil, Qerim, Qatip, Qybra, Rrapush, Rabije, Rashit, Rabihan, Ramazan, Rabihan, Rukije, Reshir, Rahman, Riza, Rakip, Rexhep, Ram, Rustem, Repush, Refat, Refik, Repushe, Rushe, Ruku, Razije, Ramiz, Ruzhdi, Rashit, Selamn, Sabire, Sulejman, Salih, Selim, Sefer, Serjan, Siku, Seit, Sejfedin, Sejdin, Sali, Sejdi, Selvi, Sefije, Sejfullah, Sana, Sofije, Sane, Saliha, Sinan, Sanije, Sarafije, Sulo, Saldush, Sikush, Siri, Selime, Sami, Sallaban, Sadik, Sadedin, Serafije, Said, Skender, Sabrije, Sabriha, Syrja, Sitki, Sadullah, Sulçe, Sadi, Sagush, Sadije, Siko, Sabri, Sabina, Salije, Selam, Stoje, Sude, Sejrie, Selha, Suvari, Saide, Serjan, Sadetli, Shaqir, Shaban, Shemsedin, Shaha, Shahsivar, Shefqet, Shefkije, Shasi, Shefike, Shefki, Shevki, Shahin, Shefikat, Sherif, Shyqyri, Shahe, Shuaip, Shahu, Sherina, Shefik, Shaho, Shahzivar, Shiko, Shefqete, Tomorr, Tahir, Tushe, Tasin, Terfik, Tefta, Tole, Taman, Tana, Tuti, Umetullah, Zabit, Zija, Zylfije, Zila, Ziber, Zefir, Zyko,

<sup>45</sup> Rexha, I. Nga Perandoria Osmane ne Shqiperi historine e shkruam me tolerance, From the Ottoman empire in Albania- we wrote the history with tolerance, Tirana, 2005 p. 51.

Zibe, Zhuta.<sup>46</sup> This variety of names tells us of a massive Islamisation of the Elbasan population as well as their opening towards the ottoman culture. This phenomenon was encouraged by the ottoman administration. Based on the registers of the period, which we are analyzing, there were 410<sup>47</sup> names of the Islamic faith. This shows that anthroponomy was vast, diverse and expanded with new elements. In 1892 there were 87 new names; in 1893 there were 43 new names; in 1894 there were 34; in 1895 24; in 1896 one new name; in 1897 28 names; in 1898 23 new names; in 1899 25 new names; in 1900 7 new names; in 1901 28 new names; in 1902 there we 13 new names; in 1903 24 names; in 1904 -1905 27 new names; in 1905-1907 20 new names, in 1907-1908 23 new names. (The three last registers were together). From year to year, not only new names were added, but there was an increase of the number of persons who took these names. In 1892 at the Kadi there appeared 314 citizens who had names from the Islamic faith; in 1893, 456; in 1894, 424; in 1895, 532; in 1896, 88; in 1897, 822; in 1898, 764; in 1899, 661; in 1900, 668; in 1902, 518; in 1903, 621; in 1904-1905, 783; in 1905-1907, 691; in 1907-1908, 1153 persons.<sup>48</sup>

The analysis of these data shows the increase of the Islamic faith population. This population not only increased in numbers, but at the same time, it expanded its contacts with the ottoman culture, where these names originate from. Generally, the meaning of these names was religious, or was an honor to the persons who served the religion. For example, Abdullah means the God's person, Muhamet, someone sent from God, Ali means noble, generous, Halil means handsome, Ibrahim, son of Muhamet, Fatime, daughter of Muhamet, Aishe, life, emir of Muhamet's wife, Asllan, Luan, etc. Translation from Turkish to Albania would make this research more interesting in order to learn more about the social and spiritual life of the population that had these names (This process will be part of the continuation of the research). The population of the Islamic faith extended all over Elbasan. There were neighborhoods whose population belonged to the Islamic faith only. Those neighborhoods were: "Arsllan Bej", "Çaushlli", "Daut Bej", "Dylgjer Hysein", "Ebubeqir Çelebi", "Haxhihasan", "Haznedare", "Kalandrije", "Sapuni", "Karavelie", "Mahzar Hysein".

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<sup>46</sup> Arkivi Qendror Shqiptar, Fondi No 113/1 ,1892-1908,Albanian Central Archive,,Fond No113/1, Register Daimi and Jokllama, 1892-1908.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

**Table.1 Number of households in the Muslim neighborhoods**

|   | Neighborhoods  | 1892 | 1893 | 1894 | 1895 | 1896 | 1897 | 1898 | 1899 | 1900 | 1900-01 | 1901-02 | 1903 | 1904 | 1904-05 | 1906-07 | 1907-08 |
|---|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|---------|------|------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1 | Asllanbej Bej  | 7    | 4    | 4    | -    | -    | 6    | -    | 2    | 1    | 9       | 2       | 11   | 11   | 21      | 14      | 2       |
| 2 | Alaedin        | 7    | 9    | 8    | 9    | -    | 5    | 2    | 2    | -    | 5       | 4       | 10   | -    | 5       | 16      | 2       |
| 3 | Daut Bej       | 3    | 5    | 7    | 9    | -    | -    | 12   | 19   | -    | 9       | 20      | 23   | -    | 21      | 14      | 2       |
| 4 | Dylgjer hysen  | 7    | 3    | 3    | 1    | 2    | 7    | 4    | 3    | 2    | 9       | 3       | 12   | -    | 10      | 14      | 3       |
| 5 | Ebubeqir       | 8    | 6    | 7    | 5    | -    | 13   | 13   | 12   | 10   | 6       | 16      | 1    | 19   | 29      | 26      | 1       |
| 6 | Eski çerribash | 5    | 12   | 2    | 4    | 1    | 7    | 8    | 5    | 26   | 8       | 5       | -    | -    | -       | -       | -       |
| 7 | Haxhi Hasan    | 1    | 16   | 1    | 8    | -    | 5    | 4    | 8    | 17   | 4       | 8       | -    | -    | -       | -       | -       |
| 8 | Haznedare      | 2    | 2    | 8    | -    | -    | 3    | 7    | 5    | -    | -       | 4       | 6    | -    | 10      | 14      | 2       |
| 9 | Kalandrie      | 3    | 3    | 3    | 1    | -    | 5    | 3    | -    | -    | 4       | 12      | 3    | -    | -       | -       | -       |
| 1 | Karaveli       | 1    | 8    | 6    | 7    | -    | 5    | -    | 1    | 7    | -       | 1       | -    | -    | 14      | 22      | 1       |

The data in the table show the neighborhoods whose majority of population was Muslim, and it presents the dynamics of the process. The characteristic of this process was that from 1904 and on there was an increase in the number of households of the Islamic faith as well as an increase in their activities. This is especially interesting for that time because it was the eve of the independence of Albania from the Ottoman Empire. This indicated that the Islamic faith was now part of the city mentality. Based on the registers of that time, the households of the Islamic faith even dominated those of the orthodox faith. In 1982, out of 118 houses that were in the process of buying, selling, (these transactions were conducted in the Kadi's office) 98 or 83 % of them belonged to the Islamic faith. In 1893, out of 200 houses that were in the process of buying, selling, 163 or 81 % of them belonged to the Islamic faith.

In 1894 out of 148 houses, 108 or 73 % belonged to Islamic faith

In 1895 out of 125 – 109 or 87% belonged to Islamic faith

In 1896 out of 26 – 25 or 96% belonged to Islamic faith

In 1897 out of 203 – 175 or 75% belonged to Islamic faith

In 1898 out of 167 – 134 or 85% belonged to Islamic faith

In 1899 out of 121 – 109 or 89% belonged to Islamic faith

In 1900 out of 126 – 114 or 90% belonged to Islamic faith

In 1900 -1901 out of 141 – 119 or 84% belonged to Islamic faith

In 1901-1902 out of 224 -165 or 74 % belonged to Islamic faith

In 1903 out of 170- 113 or 96% belonged to Islamic faith

In 1904 out of 115 - 70 or 61% belonged to Islamic faith

In 1904-1905 out of 199 – 174 or 87 % belonged to Islamic faith

In 1906-1907 out of 190- 147 or 77% belonged to Islamic faith

In 1907-1908 out of 341- 268 or 80% belonged to Islamic faith

The above data indicate that in each period the majority of population belonged to Islamic faith. During 1892- 1908, the average of the Muslim population was 82.3 %. The above data also indicate that in the main neighborhoods in the city, especially after 1900-1901, Islamism tended to increase. For example in the neighborhood called “Dylgjer Hysein”, during 1901-1902 there were 20 households of the Islamic faith that were registered for various activities. During 1903-1904 there were 23 households. During 1907-1908 there were 26 households. In the neighborhood called “Ebubeqir Celebi” during 1907-1908 there were 34 households. In the “Spahikorre” neighborhood during 1907-1908 there were 45 households. These numbers are evidence of the increased number of the households of the Islamic faith. Therefore, there was not only a demographic increase in the number of households, but also an increase of the Islamic faith households. The increase in the households was due to the demography, such as the division of families, or the new comers of the Islamic faith from the village. There could also have been families which converted to the Islamic faith. Although there were not campaigns to convert people to Islam during the period in question, Abdyl Hamiti quit the idea of the laicism and instead encouraged the Islamic faith in the state policy.<sup>49</sup> He undertook concrete steps in this direction according to the Islamic model. For example in the public education he considered teaching Islam and the moral of the Islamic identity as the most important part in the curriculum.<sup>50</sup>

In the above mentioned neighborhoods, the activities continuity showed that these neighborhoods were stabilized from the urban stand point and they were more and more configured as neighborhoods of the Islamic faith. As we mentioned above, the attribution of the Islamic faith was based in the names of the people as recorded in the registers. There was a wide variety of the Islamic names. There were 410 names. However, they did not have the same frequency of use. The following table presents some these names, most of them used in Elbasan during 1892-1908.

**Table 2. Names of people of the Islamic faith**

|     | Names    | 1892 | 1893 | 1894 | 1895 | 1896 | 1897 | 1898 | 1899 | 1900 | 1900-01 | 1901-02 | 1903 | 1904 | 1904-05 | 1905-06 | 1907-08 |
|-----|----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|---------|------|------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1   | Abdullah | 4    | 10   | 11   | 15   | 1    | 20   | 22   | 9    | 10   | 1       | 13      | 7    | 18   | 22      | 14      | 19      |
| 2   | Alush    | 6    | 16   | 7    | 16   | 1    | 22   | 18   | 6    | 5    | 2       | 16      | 12   | 11   | 20      | 9       | 20      |
| 3   | Ali      | 12   | 16   | 25   | 21   | 6    | 22   | 51   | 11   | 14   | 3       | 44      | 29   | 44   | 40      | 29      | 50      |
| 4   | Fatime   | 8    | 16   | 8    | 10   | 2    | 10   | 9    | 12   | 1    | 2       | 13      | 5    | 6    | 10      | 4       | 20      |
| 5   | Hasan    | 15   | 16   | 14   | 19   | 7    | 22   | 30   | 16   | 15   | 3       | 38      | 19   | 21   | 36      | 22      | 53      |
| 6   | Hysein   | 11   | 17   | 19   | 13   | 3    | 34   | 21   | 23   | 19   | 2       | 28      | 22   | 22   | 32      | 27      | 58      |
| 7   | Ibrahim  | 18   | 26   | 20   | 22   | 3    | 48   | 36   | 20   | 16   | 3       | 35      | 28   | 30   | 31      | 32      | 55      |
| 8   | Ismail   | 6    | 11   | 8    | 22   | 1    | 24   | 20   | 10   | 10   | 3       | 18      | 14   | 27   | 28      | 16      | 37      |
| 9   | Mahmut   | 10   | 11   | 8    | 14   | 1    | 20   | 18   | 7    | 6    | 1       | 10      | 10   | 16   | 8       | 20      | 10      |
| 100 | Mustafa  | 15   | 22   | 28   | 29   | 4    | 34   | 35   | 20   | 17   | 4       | 29      | 20   | 20   | 38      | 23      | 52      |
| 11  | Mehmet   | 12   | 22   | 21   | 32   | 4    | 63   | 2619 | 19   | 25   | 10      | 26      | 30   | 41   | 52      | 35      | 57      |

<sup>49</sup> Gawrych G, Gjysemhena dhe Shqiponja, The Star and crescent and the Eagle, Albanian World, Tirana 2007, p 118.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

By analyzing these statistics, we assume that in 1892, there were 314 citizens of the Islamic faith, who presented themselves at the Kadi office to carry out transactions in connection with their properties. In 1893, there were 456 citizens; in 1894 there were 424 citizens; in 1895 there were 532 citizens; in 1896 there were 89; in 1897 there were 822; in 1898 there were 319; in 1899 there were 342 (recording of 1899 was done in two registers). During 1900-1901 there were 668 citizens; during 1901-1902 there were 518 citizens; during 1902-1904 there were 621 citizens; during 1904-1905 there were 783 citizens; during 1905-1907 – 691 citizens; during 1907-1908 there were 1153 citizens.<sup>51</sup> The data show that the population of the Islamic faith increased from 1892 (the beginning of the registers) until 1908 (when registers end). In addition, we note that these names of Islamic contents were more frequently used. For example the name “Ismail” was used six times in the register of 1892. However this name was used thirty-seven times in the registers of 1907-1908. Same goes for the name “Hysein”, which was used 11 times in the 1892 register and 58 times in 1907-1908; name “Ibrahim” from 18 times, increased to 55 times; “Hasan” from 15 times to 53 times, etc., etc. This is another argument in the Islamisation of the Elbasan city population and its pace during that time. What was the progress of this process from its beginning until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in 1491, in Elbasan “sanxhak” there was no household that belonged to the Islamic faith.<sup>52</sup> In the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in Elbasan, out of 283 households, 108 of them or 38.1 % belonged to the Islamic faith<sup>53</sup> (Thëngjilli,2002, p 34). In the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, out of 806 households, 638 or 79% belonged to the Islamic faith.<sup>54</sup> In the 17<sup>th</sup> century almost all the population belonged to the Islamic faith. By comparing the two periods, we notice that during the 16-17<sup>th</sup> century, the Islamisation process happened at rapid rates. The process continued at the same rate in the following periods.

#### 4. Factors that impacted the Islamizing of the population

What were the causes of the progress of Islamic faith in Elbasan? Some of the main factors that had an impact in this process were economic, political and social ones. According to Della Roka, a researcher, “...The system of dimmas (xhisjes) could have been determinant [in this process]. According to this, the non Muslim citizens had to pay in exchange for their protection”<sup>55</sup>. This tax kept increasing until the non-Muslim citizens decided to convert to faith of the ruler and earning therefore the status of the Empire citizen.<sup>56</sup> This argument was also made in the studies of Professor P. Thëngjilli. He claims that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the tax for person was an important economic factor in embracing of the Islamic faith. Alongside this idea, Arnold, the well known

<sup>51</sup> Arkivi Qendror Shqiptar, Fondi No 113/1 ,1892-1908,Albanian Central Archive,,Fond No113/1, Register Daimi and Jokllama, 1892-1908.

<sup>52</sup> Thëngjilli,P. Shqiptaret midis Lindjes dhe Perendimit, Thëngjilli, Albanians between East and West, 1506-1839, Religion 1, Tirana 2002.p18.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid 34.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid 36.

<sup>55</sup> M. Dela Roka, Kombesia dhe Feja ne Shqiperi,1920-1944, Nationality and religion in Albania,Tirana 1994. p 22.

English historian said: “It is not true that Muslims imposed on people to choose between the principle of the Islam and the sword. But they (the citizens) were free to choose between the principle of Islam and “Xhisje”.<sup>57</sup> A. Popovic shared the same opinion. He said: “Islamisation of the Albanian population happened during the 16<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> century. This process happened mostly for economic and social reasons. In addition, he also mentioned the importance in the Islamisation process of the Albanians, of some mystic Muslim orders coming from some figures such as Sari Salltëku or Haxhi Bektashi.<sup>58</sup> This argument is also well illustrated by Fra Kerubini in a piece of information in 1638. This information is related to the Islamisation of population in the north of Albania which he visited. He wrote: “In order not to pay the “harac” –tax, a number of people became Muslims. Some became Muslims in order to get rich and others just to live free”.<sup>59</sup> Until the full occupation of Albania, the Turkish kept a prudent attitude towards religion. Full occupation of Albania created an enabling environment for the occupier to apply an Islamisation policy. The conversion to Islam was a long process, which was the result of all the above mentioned factors. The professional soldiers, who came from the castles, were good conveyors of the Islamic faith. The system of devshirmesë created a native Muslim layer alongside with the feuds who at that time represented the new faith.<sup>60</sup>

Geography was another factor that impacted the Islamisation process in the Elbasan city population. In the Middle Albania, where the Shkumbin river created the linguistic border (gege–toske) and the religion border (orthodox-catholic), islamisation developed rapidly and entirely. The fact that the middle Albania was a border line where orthodoxy and Catholicism met, could have contributed to the Islamisation.<sup>61</sup> Martin Urban tried to prove that the Islamic faith, in its infiltration, strictly followed the natural roads. Therefore, in the main road along the Shkumbin river valley, where the Elbasan city lies, the population is Muslim.<sup>62</sup> The building of a number of mosques in Elbasan also helped in the islamisation process. One of the oldest mosques in Elbasan is the Fatihu mosque, which was built over the tower in the city Castle in 1466. The castle itself was built in 1466.<sup>63</sup>

This might also be the oldest mosque in Albania, built after the one in Kruja, where the church within the tower was improvised to be used half for “mesxhide” and half for dwelling.<sup>64</sup> First mosques were built to serve the ottoman infantries and administration. These were built quickly, using bad quality products, very small and nothing fancy. Very often a number of churches were converted into mosques. Among the religious sites preserved until to date, the sanctuaries are the

<sup>57</sup> Basha.M.Ali., *Islami ne Shqiperi gjate shekujve*, Islam in Albania during the centuries, Tirana 2000, p. 69.

<sup>58</sup> Popoviç, Aleksander, *Islamizmi Ballkanik*, Balkan Islam, Dituria 2006, p 23.

<sup>59</sup> Zamputi.I, *Information on the Northern and Middle Albania during the 17<sup>th</sup> century*, prepared from, volume 1634-1654, document 28,1960 p. 24.

<sup>60</sup> Meksi,A. *Arkitektura e Xhamive ne Shqiperi gjate shekujve 15-19*, Architecture of the mosques in Albania, during the 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century, UEGEN, Tirana, 2007, p. 94.

<sup>61</sup> Bartl, P. *Myslimanet Shqiptare ne Levizjen Kombetare per Pavaresi*, Albanian Muslims in the movement for national independence, 1878-1912, Dituria, Tirana, 2006, p. 25.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> Basha, M Ali, *Islami ne Shqiperi gjate shekujve*, Islam in Albania during the centuries, Tirana 2000, p. 469.

<sup>64</sup> Meksi,Ar. *Arkitektura e Xhamive ne Shqiperi gjate shekujve 15-19*, Architecture of the mosques in Albania, during the 15th-19th century, UEGEN, Tirana, 2007, p. 14.

ones we find to date, simply because of the construction quality. These sanctuaries are found all over the country and their construction was done in compliance with the islamisation process in time and space. These sites are divided into two groups: mosques and mesxhide. The difference between them is that the mosks were the ones where the Friday service was held, and they have a pulpit. As far as the Masjids are concerned they are smaller and are built with simpler building materials and have an wooden structure roof covered with tiles. Another feature of the mosks is the prayers' hall, the portico and the minaret where the most important role is played by the prayers' hall which is connected with the other two.

The psychological factor also played an important role in the emotional and affection aspect in the conversion process to Islam. It had also to do with the human values and attitudes. The process of conversion to Islam included an entirety of ideas which could either be refused or embraced in this process. These ideas rarely were philosophical or theological. These were simply general beliefs which justified the new mentality and deny the old one.<sup>65</sup>

## 5. The Orthodox faith

In order to have a clearer picture of the process of conversion to Islam in Elbasan, we need also to treat the issue of the orthodox faith in this city. From the registers of that time, there is evidence that alongside the population of Islamic faith, the population of orthodox faith existed too. This is shown by the anthroponomy of the orthodox faith. There was a variety of names of people who belonged to the orthodox faith. Such names are listed below: Apostol Anastas, Alqi, Angjeliqi, Andrea, Andon, Angjelie, Andona, Ana, Andre, Athina, Anastasi, Ajka, Asima, Agathi, Aspasi, Avrama, Avram, Aleksander, Andoni, Ani, Anthi, Athanas, Andre, Boro, Cull, Cako, Dunc, Delijan, Danko, Dole, Dhimitrulla, Dhora, Dhespira, Dhamo, Dhimo, Eftali, Eftim, Eftimije, Elefteri, Elefter, Eski, Elis, Elektra, Eli, Evis, Eftimi, Fanije, Filip, Fotini, File, Fanime, Frosina, Foni, Fotina, Damian, Grigor, Gole, Gligor, Gusti, Gavril, Galije, Gjeliqe, Gjoka, Harallamb, Hari, Hoc, Ilija, Irakli, Ili, Jovan, Jakov, Josif, Jorgji, Janaq, Janko, Jani, Jon, Jan, Jaxhi, Jano, Jorgaq, Kozma, Kostandin, Katerina, Koci, Kol, Kristo, Kostaq, Kosta, Kleopatra, Kristo, Kalije, Koçi, Kola, Kostandina, Kov, Lefter, Lila, Loni, Leonidha, Lina, Lami, Ladimir, Ligor, Llam, Llazar, Llushka, Llamri, Lluka, Llako, Llambro, Llambri, Marije, Mosko, Mihal, Miço, Miltiadh, Mati, Mim, Moisi, Mitrush, Marika, Mol, Mitre, Minar, Margalia, Mark, Mina, Mitro, Miti, Mars, Marko, Mikel, Marku, Nos, Nikolle, Naftali, Nush, Naftasi, Naun, Nish, Nasti, Nelku, Nasto, Naren, Naum, Naqi, Nuh, Nasi, Nina, Papajorgji, Parashqevi, Pavli, Papadhimitri, Papajani, Petro, Petri, Poliksen, Papparisto, Pali, Pal, Panajot, Pandeli, Pasko, Perikli, Pol, Petër, Petraq, Prendi, Poli, Peti, Pine, Pandi, Risto, Stase, Stasi, Stas, Spiro, Sotir, Sofi, Simon, Stefan, Santo, Stan, Stasije, Savana, Steo, Serafim, Serafin, Todora, Tater, Todori, Tole, Tina, Taqi, Tanko, Todosi, Todi, Tase, Teodora, Tashko, Thoma, Theohar, Thanas, Theofan, Theodhor, Thana, Urani, Vasil,

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<sup>65</sup> M.B.Mc.Guire...p. 139.

Veniamin, Vasilie, Vasiliqi, Vasili, Vili, Vasilika, Vangjeli, Vero, Vangjel, Vartho, Vanthi, Vaskë, Vase, Vangje, Vardha, Vroth, Vista, Zhaneta, Zina, Zafire, Zagrija, Zak.<sup>66</sup>

By analyzing the whole list of the names of the orthodox faith, we notice a few occurrences: the variety of these names was much smaller than that of the Islamic faith names; there were only 234 names. Their frequency of use was more stable than that of the Muslim names. The following table presents some of the most commonly used names of orthodox faith in different years.

**Table 3. Names belonging to orthodox religion**

|   | Names to orthodox religion | 1892 | 1893 | 1894 | 1895 | 1896 | 1897 | 1898 | 1899 | 1900 | 1901 | 1902 | 1903 | 1904 | 1905 | 1906 | 1907 |
|---|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1 | Anastas                    | 2    | 9    | 2    | 1    | -    | 2    | 5    | 3    | -    | 3    | 7    | -    | 11   | 5    | 9    | 8    |
| 2 | Dhimiter                   | 3    | 8    | 4    | 7    | -    | 5    | 8    | 14   | -    | 2    | 2    | 4    | 4    | 8    | 8    | 8    |
| 3 | Jovan                      | 4    | 9    | 7    | 5    | -    | 4    | 9    | 2    | 2    | -    | 7    | 5    | 5    | 7    | 7    | 16   |
| 4 | Kostandin                  | 1    | 8    | 8    | 4    | 4    | 2    | 11   | 8    | 2    | 10   | 6    | 17   | 6    | 6    | 8    | 18   |
| 5 | Marie                      | 6    | 2    | 2    | 7    | 3    | 3    | 5    | 2    | 2    | -    | 2    | 3    | 3    | 3    | -    | 7    |
| 6 | Mihal                      | 3    | 2    | 2    | 3    | 1    | 4    | 4    | 1    | 3    | -    | 3    | 3    | 4    | 3    | 2    | 11   |
| 7 | Nikoll                     | 6    | 5    | 5    | 3    | 1    | 10   | 11   | 2    | 7    | -    | 4    | 12   | 4    | 2    | 8    | 11   |
| 8 | Spiro                      | 1    | 2    | 6    | 4    | --   | 5    | 2    | -    | 8    | -    | 2    | 5    | 4    | 1    | 4    | 6    |
| 9 | Vasil                      | 7    | 1    | 6    | 4    |      | 4    | 6    | 2    | 2    | -    | 3    | 6    | 4    | 3    | 6    | 5    |

In some cases they were less frequently used than the Muslim names. The Orthodox population, about 80 % of them, lived mostly in such neighborhoods as Kala, Shen Koll, Haxhijas and Sapuni, the rest of population was Muslim. There were 300 Orthodox households in Kala neighborhood, 17 households in Haxhijas, 1 in Kule neighborhood, 3 households in Qevan Bej, 7 in Perven Aga, 2 in Sulejmanie, 83 in Sapuni, 116 in Shen Koll, 5 in Xhami i Qebir, 1 in Karaveli, 5 in Spahikorre, 4 in Baba Ogllu and 2 in Hamam i Atik.<sup>67</sup>

**Table 4. Neighborhoods with households of orthodox faith**

|   | Neighborhoods | 1892 | 1893 | 1894 | 1895 | 1896 | 1897 | 1898 | 1899 | 1900 | 1900-01 | 1901-02 | 1903 | 1903-04 | 1904-05 | 1905-06 | 1907-08 | Total |
|---|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|---------|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| 1 | Kala          | 17   | 29   | 32   | 5    | 1    | 32   | 19   | 5    | 4    | -       | 30      | 29   | 17      | 18      | 21      | 41      | 30    |
| 2 | Shen Koll     | 1    | 1    | 4    | 5    | -    | 10   | 9    | 3    | 4    | 9       | 12      | 14   | 14      | 3       | 11      | 16      | 11    |
| 3 | Sapuni        | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | -    | 4    | 9       | 12      | 14   | 14      | 3       | 11      | 16      | 80    |
| 4 | Haxhijas      | -    | 2    | 1    | 1    | -    | 3    | 2    | 3    | -    | 2       | -       | -    | -       | -       | -       | -       | 14    |

<sup>66</sup> Arkivi Qendror Shqiptar, Fondi No 113/1, 1892-1908, Albanian Central Archive, Fond No113/1, Register Daimi and Jokllama, 1892-1908.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

The above data show that the orthodox households mostly lived in three or four neighborhoods. In order to have a clearer picture of the number of these families in time, we referred to the data given by the registers, where these people recorded their transactions.

In the above table there are only some neighborhoods where the orthodox population dominated. In fact in Elbasan the orthodox population lived all over the city. Therefore, the following table presents the activities of the population of both beliefs in time and space.

In 1892 out of 118—20 or 17% were households of orthodox belief

In 1893 out of 200—37 or 19% were orthodox

In 1894 out of 148—40 or 27% were orthodox

In 1895 out of 125—16 or 13% were orthodox

In 1896 out of 26—1 or 14% were orthodox

In 1897 out of 203—48 or 25% were orthodox

In 1898 out of 167—33 or 15% were orthodox

In 1899 out of 121—12 or 11% were orthodox

In 1900 out of 126—12 or 10% were orthodox

In 1900-01 out of 141—22 or 16% were orthodox

In 1901-02 out of 224—59 or 26% were orthodox

In 1903 out of 170—57 or 4% were orthodox

In 1904 out of 115—45 or 39% were orthodox

In 1904-05 out of 199—25 or 13% were orthodox

In 1905-07 out of 190—43 or 33% were orthodox

In 1907-08 out of 341—73 or 20% were orthodox

Based on the above data, although not complete, we can conclude that during the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century, the orthodox families comprised only 18 percent of the population. This ratio of beliefs in the city population was created during centuries. Although orthodoxy existed much more early than Islam belief, it is even believed to be of the apostolic times,<sup>68</sup> it could not resist its shrinkage due to the spread of Islamic faith.

## 6. Conclusions

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Elbasan population was almost entirely converted to Islam. This process, in a more organized way, began during the Ottoman occupation. This process was due to various economic, social and psychological factors. The Ottoman registers of 1892-1908 suggest that the 80% of population was converted to Islam. This illustrates through the names of people. The population of Islamic faith was located in some specific neighborhoods. Inside each family, the life style was dominated by the Islamic traditions. One of the consequences of Islamizing process is the use of Islamic anthroponomy.

<sup>68</sup> Qiriazhi, Dh Krishterimi ne Shqiperi, Christiany in Albania, Tirana 200, p.5.