

GJIROKASTRA DESPOTATE AND GJIN ZENEbish			Archaeology
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Abstract			
<p>The Zenebish (Byzantine form Zenevisi, Italian Zenebisi or Sarbissa) represent a large Albanian feudal family of Southern Arberia centered on the city of Gjirokastra (1304-1444). Ottoman historians and chroniclers, according to Eqrem bey Vlora, note that the Zenebish family originated in the Zagoria region of Gjirokastra, specifying that it was precisely the support between Gjirokastra and Përmet. The Vilayet of Gjirokastra, as part of the Sandzak of Arbër, in the Ottoman register of 1431-1432, is also known as the "Vilayet of Zenebish". Turkish professor Halil Inalçikk in his 1960 study "Sandzak Arvanid" marks the "Lands of Zenebissi-ili" or Zenbis and gives an accurate description of the ethnic panorama of the southern Arbëresh areas of 1431. Ottoman records prove that the Dropulli Field inhabited by the Albanian population. In 1410, the Ottomans took Gjin Zenebish's son hostage and sent him to the Sultan's court in Edirne (Adrianople) to "educate him with the norms of Ottoman behavior." In Ottoman historiography, Gjin's son is known as Hamza Bey, a military leader, but who, like Gjergj Kastriot Skënderbeu, returns to his homeland and the Christian religion. After 1414, Gjin Zenebishi was forced to settle on the island of Corfu, which was under Venetian rule to escape the Ottoman rule. In 1416 he returned to his homeland with the support of Venice, regained the post of lord of Gjirokastra, but in 1417, together with other Arbëresh leaders, he found refuge on the island of Corfu. There he died in 1418. Thus ended the life of one of the most prominent princes of Arberes, the lord of Gjirokastra and a good part of the southern Albanian territories. The life of this brave man, of this great Albanian, is filled with almost half a century of war and titanic efforts in defense of Arberian interests.</p>			

Zenebishi (Byzantine form Zenevisi, Italian Zenebisi or Sarbissa) represents an excellent Albanian representative of Southern Arbëria centered on the city of Gjirokastra (1304-1444). Gjin Zenebishi married Irena Shpallë, daughter of Arta's prince, Gjin Bue Shpata. There are young students: Ana (Qirjana) Zenebishi, Mrs. Grabosa married to Andrea III Muzaka, 1419. Maria Zenebish married to Perottod`Altavilla, noble of Corfu, (+1445). Topia Zenebish (Depas Zenebish, prince of Gjirokastra (Argyrokastron), 1418-1431. Simon Zenebishi, owner of Strovil. Sajada of Igumenista (1443-61). Hamza Zenebish (or "Amos", 1456-1460), who was taken and released in Edirne. Hamza is named sanjak bej of the Sandzak of Mezistres. The name Gjin (Gjon), a reflex of the Christian name Johan, is typical of Albanians and is found everywhere, in the Arberian territories of the south and north. The surname Zenebishi again seems authentic Albanian, probably from the roots "voice", "zene" and "beast", "beast".

ZENEbISTS AND THEIR ORIGIN

Ottoman historians and chroniclers, according to Eqrem bey Vlora, note that the Zenebish family originated from the province of Zagoria in Gjirokastra, specifying that it was precisely the province between Gjirokastra and Përmet. Dhimitër Shuteriqi in his book "Aranitët"

regarding the tribe of Zenebish states: "Shpataj and Zenebish's are mentioned in historical documents in 1304. Two Anjouan documents of Naples of September 1304, mention the Spata lullaby as a tribal name along with the tribes of Alb, Kataruk, Bishnaz, Aranit, Lekënis, Turbak, Markave, Skuraj's, Zenujas, Buzëzinjëve, Logoresve and Matejve. Johan Hopf, in his work "Greek-Roman Chronicles, forgotten or little known", page 531, says that the Zenebishi family appears in historical sources in 1304, that Gjin Zenebishi is the "god of Makas" (Malakas), later sebastokrator of Argyrokastra and Parakalosa, lord of Venice and Strovilo from 1387 to 1418. The Malakasi form is close to the name Malas, which is preserved in the name of the village of Malëshovë at the entrance of the Zagoria valley from the north, so from Këlcyra. Vajenetia is a province that extends from Sopot to Parga.

In the 14th century the Zenebish family had so much power and influence that it was able to eventually settle in the town of Gjirokastra. In historical sources, the city of Gjirokastra is mentioned for the first time in 1336 by the Byzantine emperor Johan VI Kantakuzeni in the form of "Argjiropolene", so the field of Argur or Argurinëve. In the XII - XIV century, according to archaeologists, the castle of Gjirokastra takes full shape, around it rise the dwellings and neighborhoods of the town. Historical sources claim that at the beginning of the 13th century, the lord of the state of Arta and all of Albania, Mihal I Komneni, rebuilt and strengthened a number of castles in the lands of Arbëria. So, the reconstruction and expansion of the Gjirokastra fortress coincides with the period of the rule of Mihal Komnenos and then with that of Gjin Zenebish. The form "polene" can be a Slavic form "polje" field, so the Silver Field. The descendant of the Zenebishi family, Gjin Zenebishi, rebuilt and expanded the town's castle, which later took its name: Gjino-Kastër. Gjirokastra is still known by this name to the people.

The linguistic form "gjino + kastër", that is, "Gjino Castle", is formed in a pure Arbërian environment. Gjirokastra, consequently the principality of Gjin Zenebish, replaced Adrianople (Dryinopolis), which from the sixth century onwards, has been the capital of the twenty-four provinces of Southern Albania. We recall that Ioannina was created in the 12th century by Mihal Komneni, taking the name of his father, Jani Komneni, governor of Durrës. In 1018, the Byzantine emperor Vasili II transformed Dryinopol (from Adrianopol the name passed into Drinopol according to the phonetic laws of the Albanian language) into the capital of a particular theme; two years later Adrianople, along with Ioannina, Rogi, Fotiken, and Butrintinrivihen, became part of the Ohrid Archdiocese by order of Vasili II. Around 1081-1084, Methodius is mentioned as the bishop of Adrianople, who built a church in Plakia (Pelakon), a large Albanian village between Ioannina and Chameria. Even the Ottomans in the 15th century seem to have copied this organizational structure when they chose Gjirokastra as the capital or capital of the Albanian Sandzak. After the Ottoman conquest, members of the Zenebishi tribe emigrated to other countries, such as Corfu, the Peloponnese, Naples, Venice, and so on. Corfu was the closest and safest place to escape Ottoman retaliation where Gjin Zenebishi and many other Albanians settled. Spiro Asoniti in his study "Relations between Venice, Corfu and the Albanians of Epirus, XIV-XV centuries", presents interesting data on the fate of the Albanian princes who moved to Corfu at this time.

According to him, Albanian princes and members of the Albanian ruling class took property in Corfu, some others already owned property in Corfu. In 1399, the prince of Arta, Gjin Bua Shpata, sold these properties to the locals. The Princess of Kanina, Rexhina Balsha, also emigrated to Corfu, not to mention many residents of the Coast, Himara and the areas in front of the island. These emigrations were most intense in the years 1418-1436 and continued until late. The Ottoman authorities protested several times to the Venetians over the acceptance of Albanians on the island as they saw this as a great danger to their security. In the 15th century, Albanian lords based in Corfu tried to take over the island and some of them were elected to the City Council. We emphasize that Gjin Zenebish had a difficult relationship with Venice, which ranged from fierce rivalry to close assistance and cooperation to withstand the Ottoman offensive. Thus, in 1394, Zenebish promised to help the Venetians of Corfu, later Venice allowed Gjini to recruit military troops in Corfu, to be supplied with weapons by the Republic and to organize the anti-Ottoman resistance in Albania. Simon Zenebishi, his son, a prominent figure in the anti-Ottoman resistance, received Venice citizenship. Alfons Zenebishi ended up in Naples, after great political adventures. We find members of this great tribe in the Peloponnese in the middle of the 15th century. The Toko Chronicle claims that many Albanians in Gjirokastra emigrated to More of Peloponnese, after the Ottoman occupation. Greek scholar Era Vranusi claims that the chrysobulae (decrees) of the despot Theodor Paleologu, 1425-1456, mention the names of 80 Albanian families of the Peloponnese who are exempt from taxes. Two diplomas of Theodor Paleolog, 1451, according to Haris Kalligas (in "Byzantine Monemvasia") mention the "village of Gjin", as well as a number of Albanian names, such as Gjin Zenebishi, Lopësi, Radosi, Golemi, Burasi, Muriqi, Pëllumbi, Buba, Saraqini, Beçi, Zoga, Gjerakari, Kondo, Brati, Platano, Gjin Mazi, Jani Plesa (Plesha), Duka, Bua, Spani, Grapshi, Labiani, Gjonema, Halusa, Demeti, etc.

PRINCIPALITY OF ZENEbish

The importance of the city of Gjirokastra increases precisely in the period of the rule of the Zenebish (14th century) who are in a way the founders of the city. Within a short time, the Zenebish became the chiefs of Gjirokastra, Dropull's Field, Kurvelesh, Zagoria and Pogonjanina. In 1380, Gjin Zenebishi had become so powerful that he announced the creation of a new principality, which included Gjirokastra and its environs, the Dropulli plain, Vajoneta (Vajoneta includes the territories extending from Sopot (Delvina) to the Gliqi River (Acheron), together with the Cham coastal cities of Parga, Sajadha and the border with Ioannina. The Zenebish possessed the castles of Gjirokastra, Parakolos, Delvina; of Butrint; of Kastrovillari near Butrint (which also appears in the form of Sruvil); of St. Donat (Paramithia); of Mazrek; of Parga and Gliqia. Practically, the rule of Zenebish extended to the districts of Gjirokastra, Saranda, Delvina, Bregu i Detit, Tepelena and in half of the province of Chameria, that is, in a region prosperous from an economic point of view and important from a strategic point of view.

Gjirokastra from this period (1380-1418) will become the political-administrative capital, taking on the attributes that Adrianople used to enjoy. The Chronicle of Tokove writes that the Dropull Field is inhabited by Albanians, citizens of Gjon (Gjin, these names are used as

synonyms) Zenebish of Gjirokastra in 1418, when the Ottoman Turks attacked it. Gjirokastra will maintain this status even after the Ottoman occupation with the creation of the Arvan Sandzak. The Vilayet of Gjirokastra, as part of the Sandzak of Arbër, in the Ottoman register of 1431-1432, is also known as the "Vilayet of Zenebish's". Turkish professor Halil Inalçikk in his 1960 study "Sandzak Arvanid" notes the "Lands of Zenebissi-ili" or Zenbis and gives an accurate description of the ethnic panorama of the southern Arbëresh areas of 1431. Ottoman records prove that the Dropull Field was inhabited by the Albanian population. The register of the Sandzak of Vlora, nahija of Gjirokastra, year 1520, shows that the villages that today are Greek-speaking in the area of Dropull and Delvina, were inhabited at that time by an Albanian population. The Greek-speaking population is thought to have come to Dropull around 1700, as Faik Konica thinks, or we may be dealing with a process of Hellenization due to hatred of the Ottoman occupation.

POLITICAL AND INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY OF ZENEbish

Gjin Zenebishi carried out a strong political-military activity in defense of the interests of his possessions but also of the Albanian people as a whole. His principality faced the same dangers that threatened the Arberian lands as a whole. In the face of external dangers (Byzantine, Italian, Ottoman, etc.), Zenebishi was oriented towards the creation of broader Albanian political-military alliances through agreements and political crises, such as with the Prince of Malakas, Gjin Frati, in the Chronicle of Epirus”, pages 264, 266, is considered“ feudal or god of the Malaks and Zenebish ”, with the prince of Arta, Gjin Bua Shpata, with the prince of Muzakia, Theodor Muzaka, etc. Gjin Zenebishi's political and military activity harmonizes with that of other Arbëresh gentlemen, giving great importance and historical importance to the Albanian factor. Gjin Zenebishi becomes an active part of the Arbërian force in defense of national interests. He clashed with Byzantine, Serbian, Italian feudal lords and Turkish pashas.

During the years 1380 - 1382, Gjin Zenebishi conducted military campaigns in the territory of Ioannina against the Serbian invaders led by Thoma Preljubovici, known as Thomai of Ioannina. The genus is known for its great bravery and valuable military skills. Gjini Zenebishi joins Gjin Bua Shpata's alliance in efforts against Serbian and Italian rulers. Ioannina, Vela, Dryinopoli, Vajenetia, are legal possessions of Albanian princes. The foreign despots of Ioannina, put under strong pressure by the Albanian leaders, seek the help of the Ottoman forces, on the other hand, in a completely dishonest way, accuse the Albanians as collaborators of the Ottomans! It was the Ottomans who continued the war with Gjin Zenebishi under the leadership of Commander Evrenoz Bey. The bloody battle that took place in Drishk (Drushk) east of Ioannina ended with the complete victory of the Arbëresh prince.

During 1399, Gjin Zenebishi encountered the Italian count, Esau Buondelmonte, who was married to the wife of the Serbian despot, Thoma Preljubovic, Angelina, who remained widowed after the death of her husband. Esau had been a vassal of the Sultan since 1385, when the Arbëresh expelled him from their lands to Thessaly. Esau Buondelmont turns into a great danger

to the Arbëresh lords of the south because he enjoyed the help of Serbs, Byzantines and Ottomans. Esau Buondelmonde also recruited mercenary troops from the ranks of the Arbëresh of Greater Zagoria, the Papingji Highlands, and the Ioannina Basin. In the battle of Mesopotamia, Delvinë, Gjin Zenebishi defeats the large army of Esau Buondelmonda by capturing him and imprisoning him in the castle of Gjirokastra. It took the energetic intervention of Venice near Gjin Zenebish for the Italian count to be released against a large sum of 10,000 ducats. In 1400 Gjin Zenebishi was appointed Sebastokrator or prefect of Vajenetia. This year, the great Arbëresh prince Gjin Bua Shpata, Gjin Zenebishi's father-in-law, dies. Power in the Gold passed to Gjin's brother, Zguro Shpata, and then to his son, Muriq Shpata, who had to face the goals of Venice, Buondelmonda of Naples, and the Ottomans at the same time. In 1411, Esau Buondelmonde died leaving the place to Count Carl Toko, his nephew, god of the Ionian Islands.

With the help of local Albanians, Karl Toko managed to subdue the Arbëresh of Arta and began to advance towards the principality of Gjin Zenebish. The burden of work now rested only on Gjin Zenebishi, the only bright and great figure held after the deaths of Pjetër Loshë and Gjin Bua Shpata in Lower Arbëria. In 1411 the despot of Arta, Murik Bua Shpata, renewed the connection of the "Gliqia" of 1382 between the Buajs and the Zenebish "so that the borders would be the same, to keep them as they were kept". In 1411 or 1412, Gjin Zenebishi fought a decisive battle with Karl Toko at Krane in Delvina, completely defeating the enemy army. This battle is one of the most glorious of Gjin Zenebish and the Arbëresh forces in general. In the face of the danger of the Italian counts, Gjini created a broad coalition of Arbëresh, both with MuriqShpata of Arta, and with the Arbëresh of the Myzeqe and Vlora areas, with the Aranites and Muzakaj of Berat, with whom he had not only blood ties but also marriages. In this battle Teodor Muzaka sent a powerful military corps in support of Gjin Zenebish. Gjin Zenebishi's daughter, Kirania, was married to a suckling of the prominent Muzakaj family of Berat. The Arbëresh army triumphantly passes in front of the walls of Ioannina, but it was the Ottoman storm that would weaken the Arbëresh power and give wings to the advance of the Toko forces towards the southern areas. In 1410, the Ottomans took Gjin Zenebishi's son hostage and sent him to the Sultan's court in Edirne (Adrianople) to "educate him with the norms of Ottoman behavior."

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