

THE INFLUENCE OF PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHIC FEATURES IN ALBANIA ON HUMAN, CULTURE AND SPATIAL

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Abstract

Physical geography is one of the two major subfields of geography. Physical geography is that branch of natural science which deals with the study of processes and patterns in the natural environment like the atmosphere, biosphere and geosphere, as opposed to the cultural or built environment, the domain of human geography. Physical Geographic conditions whether a land is on a seacoast, in the mountains, among the grasslands or in the forest influence the economic and social development of a people. Finding a food source is the first concern. Can food be secured by fishing, hunting, gathering native plants or farming, or are there minerals, lumber or gems that can be traded for food? Populations on small islands, because of their isolation, will probably be excluded from having a large impact on history. Lands shut off from the rest of the world by mountains or sea tend to foster a homogeneous people, while those sharing larger land masses are more likely to adopt characteristics of neighboring cultures. Generally, the habitat where a person was raised tends to hold him, because it dictates the range of climate that he can endure. When the first Albanians came to the lowlands, the debilitating climate stripped them of the qualities that had first given them supremacy. Those who have to overcome the extremes of climate in their daily lives acquire a tenacity and strength of character not required in less demanding lands. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution, cities were formed so factory workers could live close to their new workplaces. City locations were selected where there were more geographic advantages than disadvantages. The point where mountains converge or where land and sea meet might be attractive because it offered the benefits of both features. Transportation needed to be feasible by both land and waterway, if possible. People considering settling near water had to weigh the risks of storms that could cause flooding. In fact, people frequently choose to live or not live in a place based on its climate. Physical Geographic factors often influence Albanians actions, both foreign and domestic. Some of these factors include location, physical environment, and movement of people, climate, and resources. Although these geographic factors can lead to increase in Balkan countries land size and some positive outcomes, there are also chances for negative outcomes. The

influence of physical geography characteristics in Albania on human and their action in this study will be discussed. Examples will be given in this regard.

Introduction

Albania is an ordinary country, a European country. The Albanians, too, are Europeans. Albania has 28.748 square kilometers area and the length of the borderline of the Republic of Albania is 1094 km, of which 657 km land border, 316 km of coastline, 48 km and 73 km through rivers dividing line through the lakes. Albania is bordered by Montenegro to the northwest, Kosovo to the north, Macedonia to the east and Greece to the south. Western natural border of Albania open outlet in the Adriatic Sea and the Ionian Sea to the southwest.

Although a small country, Albania has rich physical geography features. The variation of geomorphology, climate, biological diversity, rivers and lakes create favorable conditions. These features affected on human and their activities. For example, living style, building types, culture, clothing, eating etc... The country has its own geo-culture, traditions, history and customs. More often than not, the weather in Albania is sunny, with a clear sky. Albania has mountains of incomparable beauty as well as marvelous beaches. In general, the country provides everything you'd need for a normal existence. Albania, the "exotic" and "out of the ordinary" "rebel" country, often attracts or incites the curiosity of the foreign public because it presents itself geographic beauty. The effects of physical geography characteristics on human, culture and spatial evaluated in this study.

Physical Geographic Features of Albania

Albania is predominantly mountainous topography, 70% of the country is rugged and often inaccessible mountainous, some coastal and plain relief. Before Alpine Mountains were formed by the end of the Jurassic, while wind during Cenozoic. The average height of the relief is 708 meters. In the north, the mountains are an extension of the Dinaric Alps and, more specifically, the Montenegrin limestone plateau. Albania's northern mountains are more folded and rugged, however, than most of the plateau. The rivers have deep valleys with steep sides and arable valley floors. Generally unnavigable, the rivers obstruct rather than to encourage movement within the Alpine region. With its coastline facing the Adriatic and Ionian seas, its highlands backed upon the elevated Balkan land mass. Greater heights found in the Albanian Alps and the mountains of the East. Korab Mountain (2751 m) is the highest peak of Albania. Higher areas are those Korca basins, about 800 meters above sea level.

The main rivers permeating the territory of our country are; Drini (285 km), Semani (281 km), Vjosa (272 km), Shkumbini (182 km), Mat (115 km), Buna (44 km), Ishmi and Erzen. In the North-Western part of the country, there is the Shkoder Lake, which is the largest in the Balkan Peninsula. In the North-Eastern part, there is the Fierza, in the Southeastern part, there is the Ohrid Lake. A bit southward there are two other lakes of tectonic origin: Bigger and smaller Prespa lakes with 285 and 44 square kilometers respectively. Other small lakes have dotted Albania as well. In the western part of the country, in Dumrea area, there are several karsts lakes 80 m above sea level. Whereas in Lura area 1600 m above sea level, there are several glacial lakes, which are located in groups, thus providing a magnificent view and leaving deep impressions in you.

Albania has a high number of climatic regions relative to its landmass. However Albania generally has a Mediterranean climate and the seasons are clearly distinguished from one another, with a generally mild and moistly winter and with a hot dry summer. The coastal lowlands have typically Mediterranean climate; the highlands have a Mediterranean continental climate. In both the lowlands and the interior, the weather varies markedly from north to south. Its coastline facing the Adriatic and Ionian seas Albanian Alps with, its highlands backed upon the elevated Balkan landmass and the entire country lying at latitude subject to a variety of weather patterns during the winter and summer seasons. The lowlands have mild winters, averaging about 7 °C, summer temperatures average 24 °C. Albanian landscape average precipitation is heavy, a result of the convergence of the prevailing airflow from the Mediterranean Sea and the continental air mass. Lowland rainfall averages from 1.000 millimeters to more than 1.500 millimeters annually, with the higher levels in the north. Rainfall in the upland mountain ranges is heavier. Annual averages are about 1.800 millimeters and are as high as 2.550 millimeters in some northern areas. Vertical currents Initiated when the Mediterranean air is uplifted also cause frequent thunderstorms. Many of these storms are accompanied by high local winds and torrential downpours.

Much of the soil is of poor quality. Far from offering a relief from the difficult interior terrain, the alluvial plain is often as inhospitable as the mountains. Good soil and dependable precipitation, however, are found in the Intermountain river basins, in the Lake District along the eastern frontier, and in a narrow band of slightly elevated land between the coastal plains and the interior mountains.

Over a third of the territory of Albania is forested and the country is very rich in flora. About 3.000 different species of plants grow in Albania. Moreover Albania is distinguished for its rich biological diversity. There are 27 endemic and 160 sub-endemic vascular plants present in the country.

Human, Culture and Spatial Formed Under the Influence of Physical Geography

Some parts of the border with Albania were chosen to make the best marked physical features available. The northern and eastern borders were intended, in so far as possible, to separate the Albanians from the Serbs and Montenegrins, the Southeast border was to separate Albanians and Greeks, the valuable western Macedonia lake district was to be divided among the three states-Albania, Greece. Division of the Lake District among three states required that each of them has a share of the lowlands in the vicinity. The border that runs generally north from the lakes, although it follows the ridges of the eastern highlands, stays sixteen to thirty-two kilometers west of the watershed divide. In Albania's far north and the northeast Mountainous sections, the border connects high points and follows mountain ridges through the largely inaccessible Prokletije, and further south Bjeshket e Namuna.

Albania can be divided into three main regions: the Mountain, the Plateau and the lowlands (coastal and plain) regions (Figure 1).

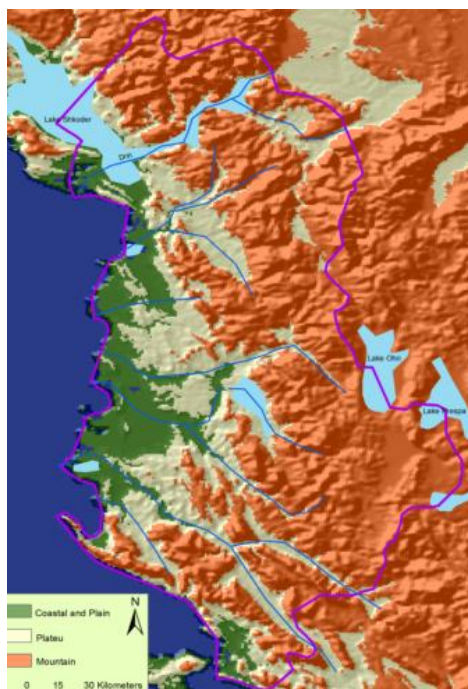


Figure 1: Main Regions of Albania

The coasts are generally gathering area for cities and urban population (Figure 2). Major cities in the coastal regions are Lezhe, Dures, Kavaje, Fier, Vlore, Dhermi, Porto, Kakome and Sarande (Photo 1- 4) (Dujmovics, 2011). Berat, Lushnje, Tirane, Kruje, Elbasan and, Shkoder are located a little inland from the coast. Economic conditions have more favorable. Industrial and commercial activities are available (Photo 5). (Dujmovics, 2011).

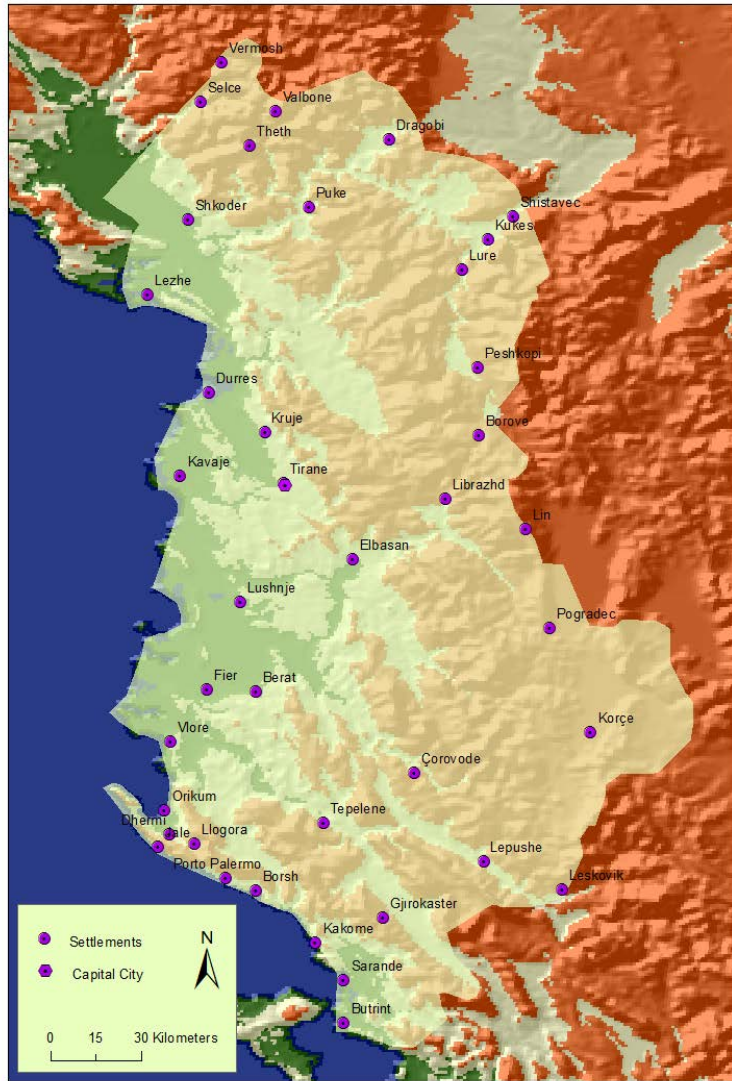


Figure 2: Albania Settlements Map



Photo 1: Vlore



Photo 2: Sarande



Photo 3: Durres



Photo 4: Kavaje



Photo 5: Port of Durres

Tourism is available in coastal area and important source of income. The Adriatic coast starts in the delta of Buna (Bojana) River by the city of Shkodra in Albania. The Albanian coast lies opposite the south Italian shoreline and is just a few kilometers distant from the Greek island of Corfu. In the north, the neighboring beaches of Durres und Golem are the most popular and best developed. The 45 km² Karavasta Lagoon in central Albania is the largest lagoon in the country and one of the largest in the Mediterranean Sea. The ‘Albanian Riviera’, as the southern coastline between Vlora and Saranda on the Ionic Sea is known by the locals, offers miles of secluded beaches. The Llogara Pass, at a height of 1,000 meters, in the northern end of the region is the gateway to the Riviera and offers breathtaking views along the coast towards the south. Albanian coast has shallow waters as a result of the delta of the country’s largest rivers. A number of fields exist to the south of Buna. The formation of snaking underwater beds has created a number of bays and lagoons. The delta continues to grow every year by several meters. This land expansion is larger in the south in Myzeqe and slower in the north near Lezha. It starts in Uji i Ftohte in Vlora and continues with few interruptions all the way to the Cape of Stillo. It has a high abrasive intensity because the sea is deep while river deltas are lacking. As a result, waves on the Ionian can reach up to 4 m while the coastline is rocky. There are a lot of small bays on the coast. Some large tectonic bays are: Vlora Bay, Porto Palermo, Sarenda Bay etc. A Ksamil island is situated in the riviera of Southern Albania. It is located south of the city of Sarande off the road to Butrint and is part of District of Sarande. The presence of lakes, lagoons, rivers, deltas and seas in Albania points towards the development of water tourism (Ekinci, 2011). Dhermi, Borsh, Sarande, Vlore, Porto Palermo, Kakome, Jale and Orikum have tourism potential and they have tourism income (Photo 6-15). (Dujmovics, 2011).



Photo 6: Dhermi



Photo 7: Borsh



Photo 8: Sarande



Photo 9: Vlore



Photo 10: Porto Palermo



Photo 11: Kakome



Photo 12: Vlore



Photo 13: Butrint



Photo 14: Jale



Photo 15: Orikum

The coasts are the areas of migration. There are less problematic issues such as social security and education here. Different cultures live in this area. Traditional culture generally has degenerated. Family and neighborly ties weakened. New values, cultures, and global effects are attention. The effect of western cultures especially Italy is obvious. There is an open society in international collaborations.

Plateaus occupy less space. Plateau forms a transition between mountain and plain. pretty much mountainous areas are not conducive to the settlement and covered with forests (Photo 16-18). (Dujmovics, 2011). Generally settlements are located within valley basin among mountains (Photo 19). (Dujmovics, 2011).



Photo 16: Accursed Mountains



Photo 17: Melesein Mountain/Leskovic



Photo 18: Lure



Photo 19: Lepushe Valley

Mountainous areas are agricultural culture. There are available in rural life. Livestock and animal products are mainly income (Photo 20). (Dujmovics, 2011). Settlements are rural (Photo 21). Population density is low and settlement pattern is rare (Photo 22-24). (Dujmovics, 2011). Powers up into early Twentieth Century, at least in the epic zones of the mountains where fortified stone towers would shelter numerous families and where the patriarchal system, well preserved, organized the collective exploitation of forests, meadows and the other sources of community income. (Knieper, 2002). There are living standards is low and traditional culture continues.



Photo 20: Korçe



Photo 21: Village at the Gramoz Mountain **Photo 22:** Valbone



Photo 23: Selce



Photo 24: Shishtavec

There are closed societies among refuge in the mountains. For example the Goranian people are a Slavic speaking minority living in the triangle between Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia (Photo 25). (Knieper, 2002; Dujmovics, 2011).



Photo 25: Goranian women from Shishtavec

Due to the difficult living conditions and isolation during winter time with roads being closed from November to March, ever more inhabitants of the mountainous areas move away. It is estimated that up to 80% of the inhabitants have already emigrated from rural to urban.

Vjosë, Devoll, Osumi, Leonora, Erzen, Matt Drin, where there are also large residential Centers agricultural lands, and crossed by important road links (Photo 26 -30). Lakes are fresh water reservoir in Albania (Photo 31). (Dujmovics, 2011).



Photo 26: Bridge on the Theth Stream



Photo 27: Ahmed Zog Bridge on the Mat Rv.



Photo 28: Valley of the Lumes River /
Kukes



Photo 29: Shkoder



Photo 30: Vermosh



Photo 31: Bovila, the water reservoir of Tirana

Coastal regions and lowlands have typical Mediterranean macchia vegetation, whereas oak forests and vegetation are found on higher Altitudes. Vast forests of black pine, beech and fir are found on higher mountains and alpine grasslands grow at altitudes above 1800 meters. Some flora is used for medicinal purposes.

The territory of Albania can be subdivided into three eco regions: the Illyrian deciduous forests, Pindus Mountains mixed forests and Dinaric Alpine mixed forests. The forests are home to a wide range of mammals, Including wolves, bears, wild boars and chamois. Lynx, wildcats, pine martens and polecats are rare, but survive in some parts of the country.

Rocky coastal regions in the south for the endangered Mediterranean monk seal provide habitats.

The land used for farming is about 698.900 hectares, which is about 24% of the total land area. Arable land totals at about 603.700 hectares, 21% of the land area, and total about 121 000 hectares permanent crops, 4.21% of the land area; permanent pasturelands account for another 409.500 hectares, or 14.2% of the land area. More than 100 000 hectares of the cultivable land has a slope greater than 30 percent and was allocated almost entirely to tree crops, such as olives. Forests and woodlands covered more than 38% of the total land area. The Soils of the coastal plain and eastern plateau are fertile, but acidic Soils are predominantly in the 200.000 hectares of cropland in hilly and Mountainous areas. Land use Irrigation, desalination, terracing of the highlands, and drainage of the marshes, often being carried out by forced labor.

Albania's main food crops were wheat, corn, fruits, and vegetables, however, there was Increasing attention to tobacco, olives, and oranges. The main agricultural

products in Albania are tobacco, figs, olives, wheat, maize, potatoes, vegetables, fruits, sugar beets, grapes, meat, dairy products, and traditional medicine plants.

In the early 1990s, the thickest woodlands were in the central and northern mountain ranges. Albania's southern half was deforested due to historic cutting of oak trees to build the Merchant Ships of Venice and Dubrovnik, the destruction of woodlands to create pastures, the burning of wood for fuel, and the expansion of villages onto hillsides.

Fishing Albania's proximity to the Ionian Sea and the Adriatic Sea give the underdeveloped fishing industry great potential.

Result

Human and their activities greatly affected by natural geographical conditions in Albania. Settlement, housing, economic activity, clothing, and food are dependent on the physical environment. Physical conditions as the landforms, climate, rivers, lakes, sea, plants and soil considered.

With its landscape, Albania is marvelous scenery. The landscape, the seasons, the climate with the mountains as backdrop, everything brings drama to one's mind. It is in this environment that the Albanians' daily life took and takes place, a life defining their identity and dignity. At first sight, these mountains seem threatening as if they were the embodiment of eternal cold, but observed attentively, their air breathes the aroma of freedom, of the soul and spirit of the people they shelter. For centuries, that mountainous landscape has been home to generations of rhapsodists. As a result coasts are referred to with the wealth and economic development than mountains area. Tourism, industry and agriculture are main activities in these areas. Rural-urban, agriculture and Industry, the development has been shaped by the mountains, coastal and the plains.

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