

The Profile of Pogoni Area

Pogoni is in the northwestern part of Ioannina and connects Greece with Albania through a road. Professor of Folklore, V. Nitsiakos, in his scientific research for recording the musical tradition of Epirus (1994), points out the peculiarity of the geographical position and connects it with the social changes of the area: "...because of the geographical position, the area is exposed in all kinds of attacks and crossings and as a result it has high mobility and intermixed populations. This is clearly reflected in the culture of the region. Pogoni didn't have the same privileges that were provided by the Gate, as the rest of the areas and therefore it went through a very hard time during Turkish domination, and even before that it suffered from the attacks of Albanians.

Labridis (1993) refers to the settlements in the 14th century that had a great impact on the area. Apart from the information from historical resources, it is very clear that there was a high mobility and interplay of various populations, which is reflected in the local musical tradition. The historical adversities contributed in the increase of migration in Pogoni, which is also strongly reflected in the musical culture. The residents of Pogoni were constantly traveling and trying various professions throughout the Balkans, but they always maintained a very strong connection with their home.

The area of Pogoni is one of the main historical and cultural subdivisions of Epirus and is geographically divided into three larger areas, the Upper and Lower Pogoni and the Lakka of Pogoni. According to a more detailed version, the configuration of the ground divides the area into four natural units: the Molivoskepasti, the Gormo river (northern section), the Giftokampo or Lakka Muhtari (southern section), and Drino river (western section), (Nitsiakos, Garanasis, Arapoglu). Nowadays Pogoni is divided in two larger sections of which one belongs to Albania and the other one belongs to Greece. The Greek part is surrounded by the mountain of Nemertsika in the north and by Zagoria in the northwest, and is bordering with Konitsa and Zagori in the east, as well as Deropoli and Thesprotia in the southeast.

Although Pogoni is presented as a united geographical and cultural area, however some villages were geographically and administratively divided by it for historical and practical reasons. Therefore, the villages near Molivoskepasti associated more with Konitsa, a part of Pogoni is currently in Albania, while the villages of Zagoria like the upper and lower Ravenia were identified geographically and culturally with Pogoni (Nitsiakos, Arapoglou Karanatsis 1998).

The geomorphology of Pogoni is formed by mountains, small valleys and ravines, and small grassland and pastures. The natural geographical area of Pogoni is surrounded by mountains: Nemertsika or Merope (north), Kasidiari (east), Tsamantas (south), and Makrykampos (west). The arrangement of these formations in the area creates a homogeneous space which has distinct natural boundaries. Based on the geomorphologic characteristics of the area, a special hydrograph is formed near the river Gormos which begins at Oreokastro, flows through the northern part and ends up to the Kalama River in Zaravina lake. The Gyftokampos river with adjacent streams are feeding the river Drin, which flows through the western part of Pogoni, stems from Dolo and Pogoniani, crosses west of the Delvinaki and finally ends up in the Albanian territory. The Kalama River appears as one of the Greek wetlands that were inventoried in 1991 by a working group of the Greek Center of Habitats- Wetlands (EKVI). It begins in mountain Dousko and ends up in the Ionian Sea. Its total length is 115 km. The reveries of Kalama are: Smolitsas, Tiria, the Gormos the Mezeros the Veltsistinos, Bania, Lagkavista, and Kalpakotiko Stream. In the lake of Kalama there is lake Zaravina which is 22 sq. miles long and 35 meters deep. In the area of the sources of Kalama is also formed the Lake Kallithea (Grammosti), which is located on the northern side of the hill of Prophet Elias. The climate of the area combines the characteristics of Central Europe and Eastern Mediterranean and it is milder than the climate of northern Pindos. Winter is long, chilly, with plenty of rain and snow, but milder than the winter of the neighboring sections of Zagori and Konitsa. Summer on the other hand is short and warm but has several storms and intensive rain. The intermediate seasons of spring and autumn are very short and the transition from summer to winter (and vice versa) is really gentle.

The mountains of the area are considered average and their snow isn't maintained during summer. The low altitudes of these mountains and valleys are significantly milder during the heavy winter. It is worth mentioning that in the southern parts of river Gyftopotamous, near the ends of river Kalamas, there are olive trees growing and this proves that the climate in this area is really mild.

The roads connecting the region Pogoniou had a key role in merchandise of products and cultural goods. Almost all villages of Pogoni are associated with the road Ioannina - Argirokastro – Saints Saranda, while another road connected the villages of Konitsa with those of southern Albania. Also the Pogoniou and Kourenta used to communicate with river Kalama, through the valley of Giftokampos. The area has also many hills and several ravines. (Nitsiakos, Arapoglou Karanatsis 1998).