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Božica Slavković Mirić\*

A GLANCE INTO THE EVERYDAY LIFE  
OF THE ALBANIAN NATIONAL MINORITY  
IN KOSOVO AND METOHIJA 1929-1941\*

**Abstract:** According to the 1921 and 1931 censuses, the Albanian national minority in Kosovo and Metohija made up the majority of the local population. The paper is an attempt to cast a look based on archival documents, the press, and literature into the everyday life of the Albanian national minority in Kosovo and Metohija between 1929 and 1941. The topic is very broad, so the paper will be just an attempt at a partial depiction of the subject. The everyday life of the Albanian national minority was marked by absolutely upheld traditional values, so modernization only made slow headway. The beginning of WWII cut short the efforts of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in that respect.

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\* Institute for Recent History of Serbia, Belgrade,  
bozica.slavkovic@gmail.com

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*Introduction: The Albanian National Minority  
in Kosovo and Metohija 1929-1940*

After the first administrative division of the Yugoslav state after WWI, in 1921, Kosovo and Metohija made up part of the Province of South Serbia.<sup>1</sup> According to the data of the first population census, which was conducted on January 31, 1921, it was not possible to establish the ethnic makeup of the population of Kosovo and Metohija since the census questionnaire did not have the question of ethnic affiliation. According to the mother tongue, there were 113.848 (26.6%) Serbs, 278.411 (65.0%) Albanians, and 27.910 (6.5%) Turks.<sup>2</sup> The next administrative change came about with the law of April 26, 1922, that partitioned

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- 1 The territory of Kosovo and Metohija was part of county of Prizren (municipality of Prizren and districts of Gora, Podgora, Podrima, Has and Šar Planina) Zvečan (the municipality of Kosovska Mitrovica and districts of Vučitrn, Drenica and Mitrovica) and part of Skoplje (the District of Kačanik). (Vladimir Simeunović, *Stanovništvo Jugoslavije i socijalističkih republika 1921–1961*, (Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1964), 16, 23; Goran Nikolić, *Kretanje stanovništva Kosova i Metohije između dva svetska rata* [http://www.starisajt.nspm.rs/Debate/2006\\_nikolic\\_kos33.htm](http://www.starisajt.nspm.rs/Debate/2006_nikolic_kos33.htm) (visited od November 11, 2024)).
  - 2 Мил. С. Филиповић, “Етничке прилике у Јужној Србији“, *Споменица двадесетпетогодишњице ослобођења Јужне Србије 1912-1937*, ур. Алекса Јовановић, (Скопље: Штампарија “Јужна Србија”, 1937), 431; *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 31. marta 1931. godine. Knj. 1. Prisutno stanovništvo, broj kuća i domaćinstava*, (Beograd: Opšta državna statistika, 1937), IX.

the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (renamed Yugoslavia in 1929) into 33 regions instead of provinces that had existed until then. The territory of Kosovo and Metohija became part of the Kosovo, Ras, Skoplje, and Zeta regions.<sup>3</sup>

After the introduction of the royal dictatorship in 1929, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was divided into nine *banovinas*. Kosovo and Metohija became part of the Vardar Banovina (districts of Gnjilane, Gora, Gračanica, Kamenik, Nerodimlje, Podgora Šar Planina) the Zeta Banovina (districts of Drenica, Đakovica, Istok, Kosovska Mitrovica, Peć and Podrim) and the Morava Banovina (districts of Lab and Vučitrn). The general census was taken in this territory on March 31, 1931, recorded 552.064 inhabitants in Kosovo and Metohija (in respective parts of the Morava Banovina 67.045 or 4.67 %, of the Vardar Banovina 276.245 or 17.55%, of the Zeta Banovina 208.774 or 22.56%).<sup>4</sup> The census-takers asked about the confession, mother tongue, and ethnic affiliation of the interviewees. Most of the interviewees (331.549) declared Albanian as their mother tongue (60.01%), and 179.524 Serbian (32.05%).<sup>5</sup> However, the census data cannot be regarded as quite reliable since the then borders of districts and *banovinas* do not concur with the present-day Kosovo and Metohija borders. The next census was regional, confined to the so-called Old Serbia (i.e. Kosovo

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3 Службене новине Краљевине СХС, бр. 22, Београд 1922.

4 Simeunović, *Stanovništvo Jugoslavije i socijalističkih republika 1921–1961*, 27.

5 Nikolić, Kretanje stanovništva Kosova i Metohije između dva svetska rata.

and Metohija, southern Serbia, and Macedonia), and was conducted in late 1939 by the district authorities. According to the collected data, there were 645.017 inhabitants on the day the census was taken. Out of that, 65.6% were of non-Slavic origin.<sup>6</sup>

*Ethnic groups in Kosovo and Metohija in the three censuses*

National affiliation	Year of the census					
	1921	%	1931	%	1939	%
Albanians	288.907	65.8	331.549	60.1	350.946	54.4
Serbs and Montenegrins	92.490	21,2	148.809	26.9	213.746	33.1
Bosniaks	13.630	3,1	24.760	4.5	26.215	4.0
Turks	27.920	6.3	23.698	4.3	24.946	3.8
Roma	11.000	2.5	14.014	2,5	15.221	2.3
Croats	2.700	0.6	5.555	1.0	7.998	1.2
Others	2.360	0.5	3.679	0.7	5.940	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>439.010</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>552.064</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>645.017</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Nikolić, *Kretanje stanovništva Kosova i Metohije između dva svetska rata*<sup>7</sup>

The Albanian majority population, as the largest national minority in Yugoslavia in 1931, was very conservative and closed to the outside world. Illiteracy (according

6 Apart from the Albanians and Turks, Bosniaks were also counted as non-Slavs. Among the Slavs ranked the natives who had been living in Kosovo and Metohija before 1918, as well as those who settled down in towns after 1918 or bought their own land. All those who have received land from the agrarian authorities between the two world wars were considered colonists.

7 Snježana Mrđen claims the Albanians made up 66% and the Serbs 26% in 1921 and 57% and 34% respectively in 1931. (Снјезана Мрђен, “Народност у пописима: Променљива и нестала категорија”, *Становништво* 40/2012, 77-79).

to some estimates as high as 90%)<sup>8</sup> was a major problem. Traditional relations, relayed over generations prevailed. This influenced their daily life. In the context of scholarly interest in the everyday life of national minorities, in this case of the Albanians, the research so far has been mostly ethnological. (Branislav Nušić, Atanasije Urošević, Grigoriје Božović, Tatomir Vukanović, Vidosava Nikolić Stojančević, Mirko Barjaktarović, Milenko S. Filipović, Milisav Lutovac, Petar Vlahović and others). Apart from this kind of research, there are also historiographical works on the subject that contextualize the situation in Kosovo and Metohija<sup>9</sup>, something that I also did in my previous rese-

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8 Zoran Janjetović, *Deca careva, pastorčad kraljeva. Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji 1918-1941*, (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2005), 215.

9 Apart from the works used in this paper cf. also: *Југословенска држава и Албанци*, том 1, приредили Љубодраг Димић, Ђорђе Борозан, (Београд: Службени лист СРЈ, Архив Југославије, Војно-историјски институт, 1998); Димитрије Богдановић, *Књига о Косову*, (Београд: Службени гласник, 2006); Милош Јагодић, *Српско-албански односи у Косовском вилајету*, (Београд: Завод за уџбенике, 2009); Александар Павловић, *Свакодневни живот колониста на Косову и Метохији 1918-1941. године*, (Приштина, Лепосавић: Институт за српску културу, 2011); Славенко Терзић, *Стара Србија (XIX–XX век): драма једне цивилизације: Рашка, Косово и Метохија, Скопско-тетовска област*, (Нови Сад-Београд: Православна реч-Историјски институт, 2012); Vladan Jovanović, *Slike jedne neuspele integracije, Kosovo, Makedonija, Srbija, Jugoslavija*, (Beograd: Peščanik, 2014); Божица Славковић Мирић, "(Су)живот Срба и Албанаца на Косову и Метохији", *Хронотон Косова и Метохије у науци и уметности*, ed. Драган Танчић, Јасмина Ахметагић, Далибор Елезовић (Приштина, Лепосавић: Институт за српску културу, 2018), 419-439; Borče Ilievski, "The Albanian Population in the Kingdom of Yugo-

arches.<sup>10</sup> For this paper, I will focus only on the Albanian national minority in Kosovo and Metohija between the two world wars. The paper will give a survey of the everyday life of the Albanian national minority that lived in large family communes and clans, a description of the housing and living conditions, of the common law as the legal system the Albanians adhered to and of certain customs defining the life-cycles.

### *Family Communes and Clans*

The traditional way of life prevailed in Kosovo and Metohija, with the population having its moral standards, a particular way of understanding life, social and economic organization, and artistic sensitivity that found its expression in poetry and ornaments. The most conspicuous trait of such a way of life was the social and economic organization in tribes, clans, and family communes, shared by both the Serbian and the Albanian populations of Kosovo and Metohija.<sup>11</sup>

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slavia: Demographic and Statistical Analysis”, *Istorija 20. veka* 1/2023, 19-44.

10 Božica Slavković Mirić, *Političke, ekonomske i kulturne prilike na Kosovu i Metohiju 1929-1941*, (Београд: Просвета: ИП Принцип, 2018); Božica Slavković Mirić, “Clothing and Entertainment in Kosovo and Metohija between the Two World Wars”, *Tokovi istorije* 3/2019, 53-78.

11 Јован Цвијић, *Балканско полуострво и јужнословенске земље: основе антропогеографије*, (Београд: Марко, 2011), 122. More about this see also: Božica Slavković Mirić, “Neighborly Relations in Kosovo and Metohija between the Two World Wars – Examples of Family Cooperatives (porodične zadruge)”, *Slavonic Review* 1/2023, 29-49.

Family communes were the remnant of the Kosovo and Metohija population's clan system. Several generations derived from one ancestor lived in a commune, preserving collective property, production, and use of goods, as well as the social equality of the commune members secured by general consent.<sup>12</sup> Although family communes were particularly developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they started disintegrating and dividing later on. They were still preserved in Metohija in the 1930s among the Albanians (shpija house in Albanian).<sup>13</sup> In Sirinička Župa near Prizren, an Albanian family cooperative had 33 members in 1938. Until 1934, there was a huge Serbian family commune in this area, that of the Durlević in Drajkovce (the municipality of Štrpce), comprising 106 members. It split in that year and was reduced to 99 members.<sup>14</sup> The story of this commune was interesting, so the journal *Vardar* also reported on it. The Durlevićs originated from the tribes of the Shala, Berisha, and Krasniqi, spoke Serbian, and considered themselves Albanian, but claimed: "I'm a Serb, but a Shala man." In that respect, *Vardar* wrote that "no administration could impose Serbian national feeling on them, since there was no administration on the Šara mountain at all. That was a

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12 Видосава Николић-Стојанчевић, *Етнолошка проучавања Срба у Метохији*, (Лепосавић: Институт за српску културу-Приштина, 2003), 11–27.

13 Милан Влаховић, "Етнолошка проматрања на Косову пољу", *Јужни преглед*, br. 12, decembar 1930, 574–577.

14 Атанасије Урошевић, *О Косову: градови, насеља и други антропогеографски списи*, (Приштина: Народна и универзитетска библиотека "Иво Андрић", 2009), 240–242.

completely autonomous part of Yugoslavia where all people were natives.” Vardar pointed out that the Durlevićs had a large estate of 45 ha, “but they did not get the land within the framework of the agrarian reform, nor did they believe they would get it” (they said “this is Kosovo”). They had their own alp (200 sheep), a water mill, a forest, a church and a cemetery.<sup>15</sup> Apart from the Durlevićs, there was another large family commune in Kosovo and Metohija, that of Tahir Shehu from the village of Planeja near Prizren that had some 100 members who lived in five houses with 30 rooms in 1940.<sup>16</sup>

Family communes were, according to the ethnographer Mirko Barjaktarević, a kind of substitute for the clan organization. It was also easier to bring up a larger number of children in a communal than in a nuclear family (*vetumlak loner* in Albanian).<sup>17</sup> The family commune of the Albanians was a “small state that guarded its borders, had its customs and where everyone capable of going to war was a soldier”.<sup>18</sup> There were also two denominational communes made up of Roman Catholics and Muslims since some members “turned Turks” (i.e., converted to Islam), whereas others kept their old religion. Miroslav

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15 *Вардар*, January 4, 1934, 12.

16 Мирко Барјактаровић, “О породичним задругама на Косову и Метохији”, *Косово и Метохија у светлу етнологије*, ур. Мирјана Менковић, (Београд: Етнографски музеј : Музеј у Приштини (са измештеним седиштем) : Центар за очување наслеђа Косова и Метохије - Mnemosyne, 2004), 328–353.

17 Барјактаровић, “О породичним задругама на Косову и Метохији”, 328–353.

18 Архив Србије, БИА, ф. 112, М. Барјактаровић, Живот и обичаји Арбанаса од доласка Турака до наших дана.



Lutovac recorded in 1936 such a case in the village of Kosurić in Metohija. In such households, special respect was shown to customs and religious duties of the members professing the other religion, above all while they were the next of kin, but also due to the economic interests of the shared household.<sup>19</sup>

Mostly, the agrarian reform, but also the propensity of some members of the commune to freely dispose of their own income contributed to the disintegration of communes.<sup>20</sup> The separated families continued living in the same building but erected partition walls, or they built houses of their own.<sup>21</sup> When a commune was divided, new communes or families called *odeljak*, would ensue. They made up a blood community and were kin, and they did not intermarry as long as there was an awareness of the common ancestry. Relatives who lived in the same village usually lived grouped together and their houses made up a neighborhood (*maala* in Albanian) named after the large family. There were large families among the Albanians primarily due to polygamy and high birth rates.<sup>22</sup>

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19 Барјактаровић, “О породичним задругама на Косову и Метохији”, 328–353; Мирко Барјактаровић, “Двовјерске шиптарске задруге у Метохији”, *Косово и Метохија у издањима Етнографског института САНУ (1951-1998)*, ур. Драгана Радојичић, (Београд: Етнографски музеј: Етнографски институт САНУ, 2014), 255-267.

20 Миленко С. Филиповић, *Различита етнолошка грађа са Косова и Метохије*, (Београд: Научно дело, 1967), 50–52.

21 Николић-Стојанчевић, *Етнолошка проучавања Срба у Метохији*, 11–27; Филиповић, “Етничке прилике у Јужној Србији”, 451–457.

22 Филиповић, “Етничке прилике у Јужној Србији”, 451–457.

In Podrima, an area on the left bank of the Drim in the direction of Prizren that also comprised the larger part of municipality areas of Orahovac and Velika Hoča, was settled by the Albanians from North Albania who kept their customs and organization. They organized their territorial units, *bajrak*, the military-territorial unit being one of them. It comprised several clans that could but need not be blood relations. The Roman Catholic Albanians also had a brotherhood, the *vlaznia*, with the term name (divisions) having the same meaning, i.e. a group that came about through the division of the family commune. For a narrower clan, i.e., a group of families with common ancestry who lived in a village or in the same neighborhood, the term *bašta* was used. It also subsumed the more distant relatives, i.e., branches living in various villages. Furthermore, all those with common male ancestors and bearing the same clan name were considered relatives (*kusherin*). In Podrima there were many Muslim Serbs who considered themselves members of the Gashi clan. They called the Muslims of that clan *kusherin* (relatives). In Metohija, the term *bark* (meaning belly) was used for closer relatives, whereas all more distant relatives built a clan.<sup>23</sup> The clans in Kosovo and Metohija, in order of their strength, during the inter-war period, were the Krasniqi, Gash, Berisha, Sop, Shala, Tsaç, Kruezi, Bitiqi, Kelmendi, Shkrela, Kastrati, Hoti, Mzi, Drushtin, Merturi and Kuçi.<sup>24</sup>

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23 Филиповић, *Различита етнoлoшкa гpaђa сa Кoсoвa и Мeтoхи-je*, 52-56; Tatomir Vukanović, *Srbi na Kosovu*, 1, (Vranje: Nova Jugoslavija, 1986), 223-225.

24 Тaтoмир Вукaнoвић, *Дрeницa-дpyгa српскa Свeтa Гoрa: aнтрoпoгeoгpaфскa и eтнoлoшкa paзмaтpaњa нa тeрeну и у нaрoду*

The center of these clans was in the central part of Northern Albania, north and south of the Drim i.e. in the Malesija of Prokletije, Dukagjin, Mirditë, and Zadrima.<sup>25</sup>

Bosnian families usually took on the names of the large Albanian clans and were considered part of them. Most clans among the Albanians were to be found north of Šara and Skopska Crna Gora mountains. They settled from the clan regions of North Albania. The clans were mixed in various ways in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. Larger groups from the same clan were to be found in Karadag of Gnjilane (Berisha), Golak of Gnjilane (Krasniqi), at the south foot of Kopaonik toward Mitrovica and Vučitrn (Shala). There were also Krasniqi around Kačanik, although intermingled with other clans.<sup>26</sup> The clan had precedence over religion, the members helped each other and were obliged to take blood revenge.<sup>27</sup> Members of a clan did not intermarry, although this rule was broken in a couple of places especially since the Sharia allowed marriage between blood relatives in the fourth degree (e.g. one's brother's son with another brother's daughter).<sup>28</sup> Endogamy within a vil-

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*вршена 1934-1938. године*, (Приштина: Музеј у Приштини : Народна и универзитетска библиотека, 1998), 129–139.

25 Атанасије Урошевић, *Гњилане и околина*, (Косовска Каменица: Локална канцеларија Заједница; Београд: Rantes; Гњилане: Књижара "Свети Сава", 2001), 77.

26 Урошевић, *О Косову*, 80–82.

27 Урошевић, *Гњилане и околина*, 77.

28 Атанасије Урошевић, *Горња Морава и Изморник: антропогеографска испитивања*, (Београд: Народна штампариија, 1931), 126–135. The Coran, in the sura An-Nisā, ayet 22 states: "You are forbidden to have intercourse with your mothers and your daughters and your sisters and sisters of your fathers and sisters of your

lage was also forbidden, even if all villagers were not from the same clan.<sup>29</sup> With Roman Catholic Albanians, the prohibition of endogamy could not be upheld because they avoided marrying Serbian Catholics and even married within a clan if the degree of kinship went beyond the fourth. For the same reason, endogamy within the family existed among Roman Catholic Serbs, too.<sup>30</sup>

The clans had their own chiefs called *bajraktars* or *agas*. These offices were not hereditary and were usually performed by people of outstanding moral authority who were asked for advice by members of their own, but also of other clans. Among the Albanians around Prizren and in Metohija the prominent people, the chieftains (*plakudheut*, *plaku i ketij dheut*, district or country eldermen) whose offices were not hereditary, were not elected but were tacitly accepted as such because it was considered that they possessed great moral authority. Such chieftains were asked to give advice to members of their own clan, but also to those of other clans, especially when a vendetta was to be settled, a property divided, a quarrel over land to be decided, etc. They made up a council called *pleqnia*.<sup>31</sup> These chieftains

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mothers, your nephews and nieces, and your step-mothers who suckled you and your foster sisters and mothers of your wives and your charges if they are under your tutorship from your wives with whom you have had intercourse; if you have not had intercourse with them than you have not sinned; also wives of your own sons and if you couple two sisters, except for what happened before! Allah is indeed the One Who Forgives sins and He is merciful.”

29 Урошевић, *О Косову*, 80–82, 240–242.

30 Урошевић, *Горња Морава и Изморник*, 126–135.

31 Ратомир Антоновић, *Обичајно право на Косову и Метохији*, (Лепосавић: Институт за српску културу, 2023), 190–191.

kept the Law of Lekë Dukagjini which will be addressed later on. For the inhabitants of Podrim, such authority possessed Prenk Tahir from the village of Dolja in Has who took part in all trials in the areas of Đakovica, Peć, and Prizren. However, his esteem was diminished once he had accepted the bribe and acquiesced in the abduction of a girl. He died soon afterwards (in 1938 or 1939).<sup>32</sup>

Albanized Serbs, as the Serbs who had converted to Islam, i.e. turned Albanians, were called in contemporary documents, took on the name of the clan that was instrumental in their conversion to Islam or in turning Albanians.<sup>33</sup> It is not known if a celebration was organized on the occasion of the Serbs joining Albanian clans, as Tihomir Vukanović writes, whereas the Albanians celebrated the religious office (kurban) and organized a large feast.<sup>34</sup> The Albanized Serbs totally identified with the clan they had joined and adopted their characteristics. In Kosovo proper and adjacent areas, clans had patron saints, so the opinion was created that all those sharing a patron saint were members of the same clan. This was considered not only on the occasion of inclusion of those who had converted to Islam into clans but was also transferred to those Serbs who remained Orthodox. Thus, the Serbs, the Nočićs in Plementina (today municipality of Obilić), thought they were the Krasniqi because they revered SS. Cosma and Damian (the Saint Healers), the Ćosićs in Miraš (today the municipality of Uroševac) counted themselves as the Gas-

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32 Филиповић, *Различита етнолошка грађа са Косова и Метохије*, 59.

33 Филиповић, *Етничке прилике у Јужној Србији*, 487–491.

34 Вукановић, *Дреница*, 129–139.

hi because they celebrated St. Paraskeva, etc. It is interesting that Orthodox Roma in some villages also connected with certain clans. In Glogovac (a village between Mount Čičavica and the hills of Drenica near Priština), some Roma considered themselves members of the Shala and others of the Kelmendi. This appurtenance was not due to the family patron saint nor due to reliance on the neighbors, but in Atanasije Urošević's opinion, "it was probably imposed on them by the Albanians because of their miserable looks because for the Kosovo Albanians, these two were the poorest tribes in North Albania."<sup>35</sup>

The clans lost their legal importance in the years before WWII, and only their names survived. However, according to Atanasije Urošević, the new conditions and the more modern way of life caused a sense of solidarity to develop within a village and between large families from different clans.<sup>36</sup>

### *House and Family*

The population of Kosovo and Metohija led a simple and frugal life. Muslim villages were crowded together to increase the security of people and property. In the villages of Shala that belonged to the scattered village type, especially with the Albanians, people of the same clan were grouped, and they built their houses close to one another. On the other hand, Christians lived scattered on wooded hills in mahalla-jamaat (a neighborhood suppor-

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35 Урошевић, *О Косову*, 366–370.

36 Урошевић, *О Косову*, 80–82.

ting a mosque) settlements that were the consequence of cattle-breeding life.<sup>37</sup>

The most widespread type of houses in both Albanian and Serbian villages were those of the Morava and Vardar types. The Vardar house spread into Kosovo and Metohija in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Morava house was made of wicket or adobe, and the Vardar one of adobe and stone. The houses in Kosovo proper were built by builders from Sirinička Župa, by builders from Podrima (from Hoča and Orahovac) in the area of Drenica, whereas builders from Debar worked in Metohija. House-building depended on financial means.<sup>38</sup> The oldest houses were made of straw coated with mud – *košara* (called *shpija me kashte*, (“straw-house”) by the Albanians). They were attuned to cattle-breeders life, but once people started going to work abroad, the style of building houses started to emulate town models.<sup>39</sup>

The main house type in Kosovo proper were ground-floor houses (called *dolma* in Gnjilane) with two rooms and a porch in front (the Morava house type), whereas a smaller number of them had an upper story (the Vardar house type). They were mostly made of wood and coated with mud, whereas houses of hard materials (bricks or stones) were to be found in places along the roads leading

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37 Владан Јовановић, “Историјско, свакодневно и приватно на простору Вардарске бановине”, *Приватни живот код Срба у 20. веку*, ур. Милан Ристовић, (Београд: Слио, 2007), 548–551.

38 Атанасије Урошевић, *Новобрдска Крива Река*, (Приштина: Народна и универзитетска библиотека “Иво Андрић”, 2009), 15–20.

39 Милисав Лутовац, *Гора и Опље: антропогеографска испитивања*, (Београд: Српска академија наука, 1955), 266–268.

to administrative centers. Adobe and tyles were the main materials for roofing,<sup>40</sup> but later on, people who had worked in America (only the Orthodox) started covering their houses with tin. Newer houses had chimneys on roofs, and the older ones just had smoke holes. By WWII, such houses started to disappear, and large family buildings to lose their function because family communes were dissolving. They were replaced by individual family houses, now often with a porch.<sup>41</sup>

Houses had two parts: the “house” with the fireplace and the “room”. Later on, the fireplace was replaced by the tin cooker (so-called “French”). Furniture and dishes were few and very simple.<sup>42</sup> The area where a house was used to be called *obor*, *dvor* or *avlija* (courtyard). The courtyard was surrounded by a thick wicker fence topped with thorns. The Albanians had walls coated in mud and sticks, with pales and thorns on the top. There was a garden in one part of the courtyard that was especially nice in Muslim houses. The Albanians had two-winged gates with a wicket. Two doors ushered from the courtyard into the street, the gate for carts and cattle and the wicket (*vratnica*) for members of the household.<sup>43</sup> Pens for cattle, barns

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40 Филиповић, *Различита етнолошка грађа са Косова и Метохије*, 30–35.

41 Љиљана Тојага Васић, “Прилог проучавању сеоске архитектуре северног дела Косова”, *Косово и Метохија у светлу етнологије: зборник радова*, ур. Мирјана Менковић, (Београд: Етнографски музеј : Музеј у Приштини (са измештеним седиштем) : Центар за очување наслеђа Косова и Метохије - Mnemosyne, 2004), 305–317.

42 Милисав Лутовац, *Ибарски Колашин: антропогеографска испитивања*, (Београд: Српска академија наука, 1954), 97–102.

43 Урошевић, *О Косову*, 13–14.



for wheat, a place for drying fruits, a well or a pump, a tool shack, a corn crib, a bakery, a wood shack and two toilets (for men and women).<sup>44</sup>

There were no differences between Albanian and Serbian houses in Metohija. They were one-story buildings mostly built of stone and later on of bricks due to clan organization and poor public safety. There was only a door on the ground floor and small windows with heavy wooden shutters were on the first floor. The courtyard around the house was usually surrounded by a high wall or a fence. There were few auxiliary buildings, so usually everything was kept in the house. The ground floor served as a stable. The stairs led to the first floor where the “house” with the fireplace, sleeping room, guest room, dairy or larder were. A Muslim house differed only in terms of internal plan. It had two rooms the *selamlik* and *haremlik*. Houses with just one room were divided by movable paravanes. Every Muslim house had a *hammamcik*, a small bathroom. These were to be found in Roman-Catholic houses too, which had the same plan as Muslim houses.<sup>45</sup> Small children slept in wooden cribs on which Đakovica carpenters doodled in oily paints. The better off had a special guest house. In villages around Đakovica the guest room was a separate ground-floor building with a room and an antechamber. The room had cushions along the walls, whereas the floor was covered with straw; only rare houses had beds. In the middle of the wall, there was a fire-place embellished with de-

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44 Барјактаровић, “О породичним задругама на Косову и Метохији”, 328–353.

45 Тојара Васић, “Прилог проучавању сеоске архитектуре северног дела Косова”, 305–317.

corative patterns.<sup>46</sup> Townhouses were usually lined along the street; only Muslim houses were indented. The newer type of townhouses were those with the floor overhanging the street, sometimes rectangularly and sometimes more beautifully in an arch – that was rare in comparison with small, nondescript, and ramshackle houses with two or three rooms.<sup>47</sup>

The Albanians built housing buildings, “towers” (*kula*) with massive stone walls on a square plan and with low rooftops, built in places one could not approach without being seen.<sup>48</sup> Towers were built as a kind of “defensive object” and were Albanian national and religious trademarks. Grigorije Božović wrote about how much the Albanians valued these towers: “When an Albanian crosses the doorstep, he wants to be as safe as in a real fortress, to be able to sleep in peace and to escape only when he hears cannons”.<sup>49</sup> Towers were especially numerous in Drenica. Božović describes them as “feudal castles”. Towers had narrow loopholes and simple furniture. Towers had a cellar on the ground floor for large cattle and rooms, a kitchen, a larder, and a toilet on the first floor. If the tower had two floors, a common room for men was there. On the walls in the lower part of the tower, there were

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46 Филиповић, *Различита етнолошка грађа са Косова и Метохије*, 35–40.

47 Урошевић, *О Косову*, 285.

48 Петар Влаховић, “Етнолошке одреднице Косова и Метохије”, *Косово и Метохија у светлу етнологије: зборник радова*, ур. Мирјана Менковић, (Београд: Етнографски музеј : Музеј у Приштини (са измештеним седиштем) : Центар за очување наслеђа Косова и Метохије - Мнемосyne, 2004), 223.

49 Григорије Божовић, *Слике Косова и Метохије: путописи и репортаже*, (Приштина: НУБ “Иво Андрић”, 2006), 47–53.

no windows, just loopholes. The entrance was a hole in the floor accessed by stairs from the stable. The trapdoor would be closed after the guests have entered, becoming thus part of the floor. The most usual furniture was sofas around the walls, mattresses, and rugs. Fire-places with mantle pieces were used for heating, and tin cooking stoves later on.<sup>50</sup> If a family commune grew, leaning to the tower or near it in the court-yard, a new house would be built, with the ground or with an upper story with new “apartments”, larger room for the womenfolk, larger kitchen, necessary larder, and female toilet. All rooms had windows and often massive wooden shutters, too.<sup>51</sup>

The major problem of living in all these houses in Kosovo and Metohija was poor living conditions. Albanian houses were much worse than Serbian ones, and those of the colonists were comparatively the best because their houses were newer and more comfortable, and the settlers had better hygienic habits. One of the greatest problems was the lack of potable water. Houses had wells, but they were uncovered in most cases, so they were liable to become sources of disease.<sup>52</sup> Apart from water, nutrition was

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50 Тојага Васић, “Прилог проучавању сеоске архитектуре северног дела Косова”, 305–317.

51 Барјактаровић, “О породичним задругама на Косову и Метохији”, 328–353; Вукановић, *Дреница*, 157–161.

52 Владан Јовановић, *Вардарска бановина 1929-1941*, (Београд: ИНИС, 2011), 470; *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1936*, (Београд: Centralni higijenski zavod, 1937), 32-34; Стојан Чупковић, *Двадесет година наше колонизације у срезу Неродимље на Косову*, (Београд: Централни хигијенски завод, 1940), 508; Мил. С. Филиповић, “Исхрана јужносрбијанског сељака”, *Социјално медицински преглед*, Београд 1937, 4–7.

also a problem. Food was simple and prepared with a lot of salt and spices, whereas meat and dairy products were not sufficiently present. Bread was the main food.<sup>53</sup> Colonists ate somewhat more and better, so the natives learned better ways from them, although the Albanians did to a lesser degree.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, personal cleanliness left much to be desired. Tatomir Vukanović states that bed sheets were washed when dirty and underwear, which was in tatters, was changed once a week. Due to poor living conditions, many were many. Vukanović testified that the Albanians in Drenica sought a cure for scabies in a concoction of “two sorts of sulfur and petrol, tobacco in leaves or slices and she-buffalo oil, that was cooked together and spread over the body”. Because scabies were so widespread, Vukanović wrote that “when newlyweds lay together, the bridegroom asked the bride three times if she was mangy, presumably not to contract scabies from her”.<sup>55</sup>

### *The Traditional Way of Life*

Ethnologic legal customs or common law marked life in Kosovo and Metohija. People stuck to the laws passed on by tradition that served to solve disputes. The Albanians respected the Law of Lekë Dukagjin (Kanun I Leke Dukadji-nit), a collection of common law from ancient times and te-

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53 Митар С. Влаховић, “Средачка жупа”, *Зборник за етнографију и фолклор Јужне Србије и суседних области*, (Скопље: Скопско научно друштво, 1931), 28-38.

54 Стојан Чупковић, *Двадесет година наше колонизације у срезу Неродимље на Косову*, 507-509.

55 Вукановић, *Дреница*, 161-162.

nets of Roman Law accepted by north Albanian tribes that contained 1.263 paragraphs. "Old and good men" were supposed to judge everything by them.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, theft was judged and solved within a village. There were many rules concerning sheep shearing, irrigation, milling order, grazing at other people's pastures, stray cattle, right of first refusal, mutual assistance work, collective spinning, wages and prices of field labor, priests' fees etc. Field boundaries were marked with stones and this caused most disputes. It was considered that the greatest oath was connected with the land and boundaries. Many preferred to give up litigation rather than give an oath: "I don't want to take land on my consciousness because of you".<sup>57</sup>

According to the journal *Zetski glasnik*, "courage, honor and dignity" were considered the most prominent traits of people in Metohija.<sup>58</sup> Prominent traits of the Albanians were also "grumpiness and oversensitivity, speedy reactions and thoughtlessness. They drew weapons and shed blood for a trifle – a curse or a reproach".<sup>59</sup> Blood feud existed throughout the inter-war period, despite the wishes and attempts of the authorities to eradicate it.<sup>60</sup> The

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56 *Kanon Leke Dukadjinija*, (Zagreb: Stvarnost, 1986); Милосав Јелић, *Албанија-записи о људима и догађајима*, (Београд: Г. Кон, 1933), 4.

57 Филиповић, *Различита етнoлошка грађа са Косова и Метохије*, 141.

58 *Зетски гласник*, 1936, br.70, 2.

59 Ekrem Čabej, *Život i običaji Arbanasa*, (Beograd: Izdanje Balkanskog instituta, 1936).

60 Jelena Zlatković-Winter, „Tako je govorio Leka“, *Migracijske teme* 3-4/1985, 100; Milutin Đuričić, *Arbanaška zakletva-beja*, (Zagreb: Jugoslovenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 1975), 128.

Official Gazette of the Vardar Banovina pointed out that “savage acts of that kind were often repeated among Muslims who had wrong notions of justice and laws and who arrogated themselves the right to punish through vendetta”.<sup>61</sup> How much store the Albanians set by the given word (*besa*) is testified by Marko Miljanov, who stated that “Albanian prefer to die than to go back on his word, especially if he had undertaken to defend and protect someone”.<sup>62</sup> Grigorije Božović also writes about the importance of blood feud among the Albanians: “The rifle washed every smear, protected certain order and was the main hamper and admonition for those who wanted to upset the general order. Everyone knew he would not remain with an unbloodied cloak if he committed injustice and crime”.<sup>63</sup> The *besa* was given out of moral and religious reasons in order to bury the killed after the usual custom so that *besa* was usually granted to the killer’s party for 24 hours. The brotherhood of the killer was also granted the “*besa* for cattle and shepherds”,<sup>64</sup> i.e. the right to go to pastures unmolested. The concept of the *besa* is clearly defined in the Law of Lekë Dukagjini (art. 854). It was a grace period the family of the killed granted to the killer and his family. During that time, the killer would come to the house of the killed to pay him his respects and to take part at the funeral and at the funeral dinner in the house of the killed. After the lapse of 24-hour *besa*, the community –

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61 Службени лист Вардарске бановине, Скопље, 17 June 1932, 6.

62 Марко Миљанов, *Живот и обичаји Арбанаса*, (Титоград: Графички завод, 1967), 89-90.

63 Божовић, *Слике Косова и Метохије*, 75.

64 *Kanon Leke Dukadžinija*, art. 1222, 1223.

the village – could demand a second truce of 30 days. During that time, all circumstances that led to the murder should be established, and the murderer and his family were to be isolated and confined to their house. It was deemed that one should not rush with revenge, but that it was necessary to accomplish it; because of that, even revenge after 100 years was considered speedy revenge. If the avenger wounded his opponent, it was considered he had achieved “half a liter of blood” and “on the occasion of reconciliation, the other had to pay only one half of the blood”. If unavenged, “blood” had to be paid for with 100 purses (10.000 dinars) or, previously six purses of silver (3.000 groschen). To try “the blood”, a jury of 12 or 24 esteemed representatives of all 12 clans was to be set up. If someone was accused of theft, murder, and the like, he had to bring 12 or 24 witnesses who would testify under oath to his innocence. The aim of the vendetta was not only to satisfy the desire of the wounded party for revenge but also to reestablish the balance that had been upset by the murder of a member of the group, so the other party also had to suffer the same loss in order to restore the “normal situation”. It was not important for the killed to have been a human being. With the Albanians in Kosovska Mitrovica one had to pay wergild even if a dog was killed, and there were many instances when people were killed for dead dogs.<sup>65</sup> If reconciliation was achieved the opponents had to become *kumbari* (*kums*) [spiritual kinsmen] or blood-

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65 Филиповић, *Различита етнолошка грађа са Косова и Метохије*, 56–57, 60.

brothers.<sup>66</sup> If both parties accepted reconciliation, they had to supply a certain number of guarantors who were responsible for achieving reconciliation.<sup>67</sup>

According to the Law of Lekë Dukagjini, a killed guest, raped woman, and desecrated weapons were sacrosanct and had to be avenged by blood.<sup>68</sup> Hospitality was very important to the Albanians. Anyone, regardless of age, sex, confession, ethnic or social background, was considered a guest if he or she asked for any kind of aid in a given house. Hospitality in the mountainous Rugovo area to the northwest of Peć was famous, although the region was very poor. They even accepted Montenegrins, although they had always been “at daggers drawn” with them.<sup>69</sup> People of the Podgora region near Prizren were very hospitable and kind. “In no other part can an Albanian smile so friendly nor be so civil and kindly-spoken as here.”<sup>70</sup> Both Serbs and Albanians developed hospitality in the area of Gnjilane. The Serbs visited each other on a family basis only on family and village patron saint’s days and bigger holidays, whereas the Albanian men went to visits

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66 *Ibid.*, 141.

67 *Kanon Leke Dukađinija*, art. 122, 855; Милош Младеновић, *Законик Леке Дукађинија: прилог постављању проблема упоредне историје балканских права*, (Београд: Штампарија Драг. Поповић, 1938), 15; Миленко Каран, *Крвна освета*, (Љубљана: Партизанска књига, 1985), 29; Милутин Ђуричић, “О правним обичајима Албанаца”, *Анали Правног факултета у Београду*, 46/1998, 449; Hilmi Ismaili, “Besa” и *običajnom pravu Albanaca*, (Beograd: [H. Ismaili], 1969), 122.

68 *Kanon Leke Dukađinija*, art. 920–931.

69 Божовић, *Слике Косова и Метохије*, 75.

70 *Ibid.*, 103.



more often and with no special reason. The Serbs ushered the guest immediately into the house, the host and other male members of the household remaining with him, whereas the Albanians' guest had to knock and wait until the woman had gone away, to be led directly to the guest room. With all the Albanians the duty was to greet the guest in the best way, but not as the Serbs just with food. Rather, the guest was surrounded with kindness and conversation; everyone sat cross-legged around him, passing on the tobacco box and chatting. The Albanians had better furniture in guest rooms but at the Serbs' bed linen was clean and washed, whereas at the Albanians', although it "was finer, it sometimes stank, because it was unclean". Both Serbs and Albanians slept on the floor. The Serbs left the guest to sleep alone in the room, but among the Albanians, someone slept with him, usually the host.<sup>71</sup> It was mandatory to see the guest out on leaving.<sup>72</sup>

Blood-brotherhood was very widespread and blood-brothers were like family. It was sealed with the drinking of blood, even between Serbs and Albanians, because it was an honor not to be refused. Inter-confessional god-fathership between Christians and Muslims was a very special phenomenon – the so-called "shorn god-fathership" that did not create family ties, but strengthened friendships. The godfather gave a child the name and shared it ritually but without a religious celebration. In that way, the child's good father became its protector, willing

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71 Урошевић, *О Косову*, 55–57.

72 Влаховић, *Етнолошке одреднице Косова и Метохије*, 220–228; Јовановић, "Историјско, свакодневно и приватно на простору Вардарске бановине", 551.

to sacrifice his life for it. This custom is mentioned also in the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini as a traditional custom divorced from religion.<sup>73</sup> *Kum-hood* was held in high esteem, it was neither annulled nor exchanged, nor did one pick up quarrel with one's *kum*.<sup>74</sup> The Albanians of Rugovo cherished *kum-hood* (*kumbarija*) and blood-brotherhood with the Serbs "like a holy object and had childish faith in them, so there were cases when they paid for it with their lives."<sup>75</sup>

### *A Glance into some Customs: Weddings and Festivals*

The right age to get married was between 17 and 25, for men often even later because they needed time to obtain the means to pay for the wedding and for the bride.<sup>76</sup> Marriages were usually contracted between people with similar means from the same or neighboring villages. It was especially important if someone from the bride's family did something contrary to the Albanian common law.<sup>77</sup> It was a great shame if a Serbian girl absconded with an Albanian or if the Albanians abducted a Serbian girl. This called for vendetta, and the number of ethnically mixed

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73 Јован Д. Пантић, *Острвица*, (Београд: Културно-просветна заједница Србије, 2003), 255; Hfz. I. Abazi, T. Bislimi, F.Ebibi, J. Zimeri, *E drejta familjare Islame* (Shkup, 1996); Kanon Leke Dukagjinija, art. 31.

74 Вукановић, *Срби на Косову, I*, (Врање: Нова Југославија, 1986), 225–228.

75 Божовић, *Слике Косова и Метохије*, 75.

76 Филиповић, *Различита етнолошка грађа са Косова и Метохије*, 50.

77 Gjergji Rrapë, *Brak Albanaca na Kosovu*, (Beograd: Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu, 1986).

marriages was small. They were contracted only exceptionally and in need. In all such cases, Serbian girls adopted the religion, costume, and language of the Albanians. *Snokhachestvo* was frequent with the Albanians in Podrima, but also with the Serbs in Sredska and Ljubizda, with daughter-in-law or with father-in-law. In the Žur municipality, there were several Muslims with two wives, since Islam allowed bigamy.<sup>78</sup>

According to Albanian common law, the parents of the bridegroom were the ones who negotiated the marriage and planned the betrothal and the wedding.<sup>79</sup> This proves the traditionality of customs. The marriage had to have the goal of producing heirs, bringing economic benefits to the family commune, and allying families.<sup>80</sup> A middleman was chosen to ask for the bride's hand. He went with the present, the "decorated bottle" (a brandy bottle and a silk kerchief decorated with silver and golden coins).<sup>81</sup> On that occasion, the amount of money to be paid to the bride's parents for the girl was negotiated. One of the main wedding customs was paying ransom for the bride (5.000 to 30.000 dinars, with Roman-Catholic and Muslim Albanians between 50.000 and 60.000).<sup>82</sup> Grigorije Božović

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78 Филиповић, *Различита етнологишка грађа са Косова и Метохије*, 141.

79 Антоновић, *Обичајно право на Косову и Метохију*, 126.

80 Милутин Ђуричић, *Обичаји и веровања Албанаца*, (Београд: Слободан Јовић, 1995), 209-210.

81 Влаховић, "Етнологишка проматрања на Косову пољу", *Јужни преглед*, бр. 12. децембар 1930, 574-577.

82 Видосава Николић – Стојанчевић, *Етнологишка проучавања Срба у Метохији*, (Лепосавић: Институт за српску културу-При-

described that this custom became an “onerous and dirty trade” for the Albanians. “The Albanian is avid for money, and when he has luck with it, he knows neither boundaries nor shame. That temptation grabs him like it does every primitive peasant. He promises a girl and blackmails his friend. Say, for 12.000 dinars. The other pays him half, but then stops because he has not got the rest. The girl’s family finds another one, takes the whole sum, and gives away the girl, leaving the first one in shame and without compensation. There were sad cases when a girl was betrothed three times. The damaged and the offended sought in vain protection from the authorities and from Muslim religious courts. Sharia judges showed little understanding and even less real consideration and goodwill. There was corruption and fraud. Only then did the real misfortune for the Albanians start. They started killing one another. One of them killed his bloodsucker, a respectable man from Rugovo, in the courtroom; another one killed with an axe on a market day in the center of Peć, the third killed one of the leading men and the *Banovina* councilor from Podgora.”<sup>83</sup> The money was paid on every major holiday before the girl’s parents agreed to the marriage. Then the marriage gifts (the ring and other presents) would be sent as the symbol of agreement and of the given word. Between betrothal and wedding usually several years pass. In the meantime, the parents and the closest relatives instructed the future bride about house-

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штина, 2003), 71–72; Филиповић, *Различита етнологишка грађа са Косова и Метохије*, 69–70.

83 Божовић, *Слике Косова и Метохије*, 91–92; *Вардар*, February 10, 1934, 2.

hold chores and obligations of married life. This concerned mostly household keeping, wedding customs and work at home. Mothers especially taught their daughters to obey and respect men. Talking about marriage as well as instruction about sexual life was not considered a parental duty, so it was done by younger relatives. Nevertheless, men were better acquainted with it than girls. Betrothal could be broken if the girl's parents demanded too large a compensation if someone from the girl's or the bridegroom's house did something dishonest, and if one of the betrothed did not behave according to customs. With the Albanians, the lad was allowed to break the betrothal if he did not like the girl, but in that case, he would lose what he had already paid. If a girl broke the betrothal, she could not marry until her ex-fiancé found another girl. If the betrothal were broken offensively, a blood feud ensued.<sup>84</sup> Just how nefarious for the Albanian population this custom was is seen from the conclusion of the president of the municipality of Dečani that "the Albanians would be destroyed by three things: brandy, taxes, and buying of brides".<sup>85</sup>

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84 Никола Ф. Павковић, "Правни обичаји на Косову и Метохији", *Косово и Метохија у светлу етнологије: зборник радова*, ур. Мирјана Менковић, (Београд: Етнографски музеј : Музеј у Приштини (са измештеним седиштем) : Центар за очување наслеђа Косова и Метохије - Mnemosyne, 2004), 120-121; Jelena Predojević, "Tradicionalni bračni i porodični odnosi albanskog stanovništva sa Kosova i Metohije u svetlu Zakonika Ljeke Dukadinija", *Stanovništvo* 1-4 /2002, 129-145; Valbona Begolli, "Položaj žene na Kosovu prema običajnom pravu", *Obeležja* 6/1979, 134.

85 Arhiv Jugoslavije, 38-9-37, Dopisnik u Skoplju, 20 September 1930.

According to the Albanian customs, male children had precedence over females who had no inheritance rights. If a family had no male children, a more distant relative could be the heir, but not the daughter. Common law enabled daughters, if they divorced (which happened extremely rarely) to return to the parental home. There were strict rules for women's lives. They had to obey men in the household. They even did not communicate with their husbands, and even if they did, the couple used the pronouns "he" or "she". Also, women had no rights to their children, and the right to divorce belonged only to men. Common law court comprising the respected elderly men decided marital disputes and decisions were implemented on the given word (*besa*).<sup>86</sup> Some of these principles still apply so the divorce rate among Kosovo and Metohija Albanians is low. This prolonged the existence of patriarchy in Albanian families as well as the very pronounced respect for parents.

The family/clan patron saint was celebrated not only by the Orthodox population but Roman-Catholic Serbs too, and even the Roman Catholic Albanians. There were traces of this custom also among the Serbs who had been converted to Islam, not to mention the fact that the Albanians who originated from northern Albanian tribes preserved the tradition that their ancestors had celebrated the family patron saint when they were Christians. The Albanian Roman Catholics celebrated the family patron saint in the same way as the Orthodox, only without cutting the

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86 Антоновић, *Обичајно право на Косову и Метохији*, 128; Begolli, "Položaj žene na Kosovu prema običajnom pravu", 142.

festive cake. All Roman-Catholic Serbs in Kosovo proper upheld such patron saint celebrations, as well as the Roman-Catholic Albanians in Metohija who came from north Albania where family patron saint ( *festa* ) was also celebrated. Some customs connected with the family patron saint were kept by Islamized Serbs in Sredačka Župa, Drenica, and Rugovo: on that day they did not work, some invited guests, lit candles etc.<sup>87</sup> Muslims also attended the celebration at their Orthodox Serbian neighbors' or acquaintances'.<sup>88</sup>

The Albanians also celebrated some holidays as the Orthodox inhabitants of Kosovo and Metohija. Christmas was celebrated also by Muslim Serbs and even by the Albanians and Turks. There were many Christmas customs: Yule log was cut and straw put around the fireplace. For supper on the eve of Christmas, a cabbage meal was prepared by the Albanians. Sparrows were caught before Christmas to break the fast for the holiday. Muslims in Gora and Drenica carried and burned Yule logs and held other customs like the Orthodox Serbs. The Muslims in Sredačka Župa burned Yule logs, brought straw into houses, and ate chestnuts and walnuts, whereas the Albanians in Samodreža in Kosovo proper used to cut three Yule logs, vaticinated from the Yule logs cinders and preserved figs, walnuts and chestnuts for Christmas.<sup>89</sup> People in Go-

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87 Филиповић, *Етничке прилике у Јужној Србији*, 462–475; Филиповић, *Различита етнoлошка грађа са Косова и Метохије*, 61–63; *Вардар*, January 4, 1934, 8.

88 Влаховић, *Средачка жупа*, 48–51.

89 Филиповић, *Етничке прилике у Јужној Србији*, 462–475; Влаховић, *Етнoлошка проматрања на Косову пољу*, 574–577.

ra kept the old customs after converting to Islam. Christmas and the day before Christmas were their greatest old holidays, just like St. Demetrius' Day, St. George's Day, Annunciation, and St. Triphon.<sup>90</sup> The cult of saints was very developed. The Day of Holy Martyrs was celebrated by the Muslims under the name of *Sultan Nevruz*.<sup>91</sup> St. Demetrius' Day was celebrated not only by all Serbs but also by the Albanians and Turks because that holiday marked the beginning of the winter half of the year and was connected with many deadlines. The Torbeshi and other Muslims celebrated Mewlid, the Ramadan fast, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid al-Adha.<sup>92</sup>

### *Traditional Folk Costumes*

Traditional folk costumes from Kosovo and Metohija were distinguished for their beauty and diversity.<sup>93</sup> The costumes were attuned to the geographical and climatic environment, pointing at the economic activity and opulence of a given community. A predilection for traditional clothes was a function of developing national consciousness and

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90 Лутовац, *Гора и Опoље*, 43–44, 54–55.

91 Влаховић, *Етнолошке одреднице Косова и Метохије*, 220–228.

92 Филиповић, *Етничке прилике у Јужној Србији*, 462–475; Тајјана Стојаноска, “Моралните начела на исламската религија”, *Социолошка ревија* 2010, 53.

93 The Museum of Kosovo and Metohija had in its ethnographic fund a collection of folk costumes from various parts. V. Kozarac, Tatomir Vukanović, Kadri Halimi, *Etnografske zbirke Muzeja Kosova i Metohije*, (Priština: s.n, 1956). See also: Slavković Mirić, “Clothing and Entertainment in Kosovo and Metohija between the Two World Wars”, 53–78.



furthering national integration. Newcomers shed their costumes and dressed almost like the natives. The costumes stressed strict regional and group endogamy and pointed indirectly at the social status of an individual, his age, and his religious affiliation. Regional and ethnic characteristics of folk costumes survived until WWII when a kind of unification set in.<sup>94</sup> In areas where the Serbs and Albanians lived intermixed, as well as in those that verged on compact Albanian-inhabited territories, the so-called ethnic mimicry appeared, above all, in men's clothes (white heavy cloth breeches, red belt, vest, a long mantel with a hood without sleeves, instead of a long vest made of heavy cloth worn by the Albanians and white scull-cap.).<sup>95</sup>

The Albanians wore tight breeches, a sleeveless vest over a shirt with a belt (two kinds of ready-made ones – from Djakovica and from Skoplje), over that they had a jacket (white, black or red) and a long mantel made of heavy cloth or a jacket with short sleeves on which a hood was made in bad weather. White skull caps or brown caps were mostly worn. Albanian women wore shirts, long red yelek reaching under the knees, and short dresses with sleeves. On their feet, they had short socks and moccasins of leather stripes. Girls between 13 and 15 covered their faces. Elderly women wore baggy dresses made of heavy black cloth with sleeves. The Torbeshi dressed similarly to the Albanians. Female dress adopted the influence of Turkish dress. Women wore baggy Turkis shalvar, dresses with broad sleeves and belled lower parts, and yelek, whereas they cove-

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94 Јовановић, *Вардарска бановина 1929-1941*, 563–564.

95 Влаховић, *Етнолошке одреднице Косова и Метохије*, 220–228.

red their faces. The Turks had simple dresses: tight breeches, blue yelek, mantel with sleeves and *kepe*, fur coat in winter. In Kosovo proper and around Prizren fur jackets were worn – bought from the furriers or home-made out of leather. The Serbs around Prizren (Sredačka Župa) wore only short fur jackets, that were also worn by the Albanians. Serbian and Albanian shepherds wore large fur coats called *lipovac*. On feet, they had woolen socks and moccasins of leather stripes. On heads, they had black knitted caps or a fez. The Roma strove to blend in dress and customs with the Muslim population. The Circassians, numbering a couple of hundred in Kosovo and Metohija (in Gornje Stanovnice and Donje Stanovnice, Velika Reka, and Miloševo), preserved their customs and dress, as well as the language, although they also spoke Serbian, Turkish, and Albanian.<sup>96</sup>

Sewing and knitting machines made their appearance in many villages in Kosovo and Metohija during the inter-war period. Courses on how to use them were held in towns, and the best-attended one was in Peć. Folk costume tailors adopted machine sewing.<sup>97</sup> The cultural influence of towns spread to the surrounding villages, and workers returning from abroad to their home places opened shops that never existed there before. However, a large number of Muslims did not want to give up their traditional dress, especially in the country.<sup>98</sup>

In the end, we can conclude that the everyday life of the Albanian national minority in Kosovo and Metohija

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96 Филиповић, *Етничке прилике у Јужној Србији*, 439–446, 487–496.

97 Вукановић, *Срби на Косову, II*, (Врање: Нова Југославија, 1986), 95–111.

98 Јовановић, *Вардарска бановина 1929–1941*, 564–565.

was marked by traditions and customs that were transmitted over generations. The Albanians did not want to give them up in favor of a more modern lifestyle. Preservation of customs is important for the preservation of one's identity and individuality. The Albanian and the Serbian peoples were, and still are, in a tricky position, each guarding jealously their specific characteristics. Nevertheless, the bonds between the Serbian and Albanian populations in Kosovo and Metohija were plain to see in similar customs but also in celebration of the same holidays. Although modernization was meant to influence all spheres of life, it made slow progress among the Kosovo and Metohija populations. Its impact was the smallest on the Albanian national minority due to their mistrust of the Yugoslav state, rooted traditionalism, wish to preserve tribal relations, conservatism, fear of innovations, pronounced religious fanaticism and seclusion. Albanian and Serbian populations of Kosovo and Metohija lived side by side, with examples of good cooperation, but also on the edge of conflict. This determined the everyday life of both communities.

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