

# A village in Kosovo and Metohija in the period between the two World Wars

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## Abstract:

In Kosovo and Metohija, in the period between the two world wars, about 80% of the population lived in the countryside. Based on archival sources, press and professional literature, I try to present life in the village, which was an economic, legal and cultural-religious entity that had its own chiefs and officials, as well as obligations that all members had to perform. There were two types of villages (depending on the natural location), non-compact, in the mountainous areas, and compact, in the plains. Despite its importance in defending the interests of the community, the village had its shortcomings. The village was burdened by traditions, closedness, various customs and superstitions. However, before the beginning of the Second World War, modernization began to spread from the nearby towns to the countryside.

**Keywords:** Countryside, Kosovo and Metohija, The period between the two world wars, Tradition, Village.

**Introduction.** Kosovo and Metohija were in the south of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. After the first division of the Yugoslav state into regions, the area of Kosovo and Metohija was part of Southern Serbia. After the next division of the Yugoslav state into nine *banovinas* (regions), this area was part of the Banovina of Vardar, Morava and Zeta.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of the census from 1931, about half a million inhabitants were recorded on the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, and most of them lived in the part that belonged to the Zeta Banovina.<sup>2</sup> Most of them stated that they consider Albanian as their mother tongue, Serbian being a second language.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Simeunović, *Stanovništvo Jugoslavije i socijalističkih republika : 1921-1961 : ukupno stanovništvo, polna i starosna struktura* (Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1964), 16, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Simeunović, *Stanovništvo Jugoslavije i socijalističkih republika : 1921-1961 : ukupno stanovništvo, polna i starosna struktura*, 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 31 marta 1931. Knj.1, Prisutno stanovništvo, broj kuća i domaćinstava*, (Beograd: Opšta državna statistika, 1937), IX.

In the period between the two world wars, there were few cities in the true sense of the word (Kosovska Mitrovica, Peć, Prizren, Priština), and all other settlements were villages. In the period 1921–1931, due to the rush of the rural population to the cities at the end of the 19th and 20th centuries (they left the countryside due to insecurity under the Turkish administration), the percentage of urban population in the territory of the province of South Serbia was about 24%.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, in the cities, the majority of residents were still engaged in agriculture, with poor financial conditions.<sup>5</sup> The village, in addition, was in a degraded position in relation to the city, although it produced personalities who participated in the construction of political and cultural life. Only in terms of the understanding of national independence and personal freedom, it remained inaccessible. In the magazine *Vardar*, it was emphasized that the village and the city could not live without each other, and the city "had to come to the aid of the village with a lot of understanding, love and patience", because "the city with its reckless exploitation of the village" created a very unfavorable image of itself among the peasants opinion. It was necessary to establish "harmony between the village and the city", and the city was supposed „to facilitate the educational upliftment of the village“.<sup>6</sup>

The largest number of settlements in Kosovo and Metohija in the thirties of the 20th century had Šar planina county, Gnjilane county and Kosovska Mitrovica county. Also, on its small surface, Gora county (428 km<sup>2</sup>) had a large number of settlements (36). Kačanik county had the fewest settlements (37), but it also had the smallest area (282 km<sup>2</sup>).<sup>7</sup>

The village in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija in the period between the two world wars was a form of social organization that formed an economic, legal and cultural-religious entity. The village had its own heads and common officials, obligations that all members had to perform, it had its own people's court and its own village cults. About 80% of the population lived in the countryside, primarily on small holdings. Animal husbandry and agriculture were the main activities. The village had its own traditions, which it carefully preserved, and customs that prevented the Yugoslav state from fully penetrating these areas with its modernization measures.

In my article, which is divided into several chapters for a better understanding of the topic, I deal with the position of rural settlements and village organization, types of houses in villages and their interior appearance, health and educational opportunities, the main economic branches:

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<sup>4</sup> Arh. Josif Mihailović, „Razvitak gradova i varošica od oslobođenja do danas“, *Spomenica dvadesetpetogodišnjice oslobođenja Južne Srbije: 1912-1937*, ur. Aleksa Jovanović (Skoplje: Štamparija „Južna Srbija“ Milana Đ. Milićevića, 1937), 799.

<sup>5</sup> *Pravda*, 26 October 1937, 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Vardar*, 15 July 1936, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Tihomir Arandelović, *Kraljevina Jugoslavija: Administrativna podela. Knjiga 1, Vardarska banovina* (Beograd: Štamparija i Litografija Radenković, 1930), 6–7; *Almanah Kraljevine Jugoslavije: IV jubilarni svezak; Moravska banovina* (Zagreb: Glavno uredništvo Almanaha Kraljevine Jugoslavije, 1931), 9; *Ilustrovani zvanični almanah – šematizam Zetske banovine* (Cetinje: Kraljevska banska uprava Zetske banovine, 1931), 6.

agriculture and animal husbandry, the modernization of everyday life in the village, as well as the way of life in rural areas. For the preparation of the paper, I used published sources, such as population censuses, almanacs of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Literature helped me shed light on many aspects of life in the countryside and supplement information from published sources and the press. The researches of Milenko Filipović, one of the most famous Serbian ethnologists and ethnographers, who collected ethnological materials about South Serbia and studied the ethnic conditions in this area, and ethnologist Mitar Vlahović, who collected data and recorded about the way of life in the villages of Kosovo and Metohija, are very significant for the creation of this article. The works of Tatomir Vukanović, an ethnologist, are indispensable for the study of the entire life of the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija. Grigorije Božović, whose books on Kosovo and Metohija I used, was an important politician and writer who focused on this area in his researches. Atanasije Urošević was a Serbian geographer, anthropogeographer and ethnologist who made a huge contribution to the study of Kosovo and Metohija's past. Milisav Lutovac was an important Serbian geographer and a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, where he was the chairman of the Committee for the Study of Kosovo and Metohija, hence some of his important books. Vidosava Nikolić-Stojančević was the first female PhD in Ethnology in Serbia, who researched the ethnological study of Serbs in Metohija, as well as social life and customs. It should also be mentioned the very important collection of papers of the Monument to the 25th anniversary of the liberation of Southern Serbia, which contains research on various topics within southern Serbia. Among the more recent researchers, the researches of the historian and academic Ljubodrag Dimić, who deals with the cultural policy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, including the cultural conditions in Kosovo and Metohija, as well as the historian Vladan Jovanović, who deals with the research of Southern Serbia in the interwar period, are significant. Magazines like *Vardar* give us a picture of everyday events in Kosovo and Metohija and descriptions of certain areas of this part of the Yugoslav state. The issues of the Yearbook on public health and the work of health institutions and authorities, as well as the Bulletin of the Central Institute of Hygiene, were important for health conditions and their management.

**Location of rural settlements and village organization.** The position of rural settlements in the area of Kosovo and Metohija was determined by various factors. The Serbian geographer and ethnologist, Jovan Cvijić (1865-1927), showed that there were two types of villages (depending on the natural position), non-compact village type, in the mountainous areas, and compact ones, in the plains.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Jovan Cvijić, *Balkansko poluostrvo i južnoslovenske zemlje: osnove antropogeografije* (Zagreb: Hrvatski štamparski zavod, 1922), 250–252.

The rural population consolidated its ranks under the Turks and preserved its religion and customs, unlike the urban population, which tried to protect itself with external mimicry. Muslim villages were compacted in a small area for better security (while Christians lived in *mahalas* (parishes)), *džemats* (at least 100 Muslim households), scattered over wooded hills due to a herding lifestyle.<sup>9</sup> Houses in *džemats* were close together and belonged to one, less often to several families. In villages of compact type (for example, in Sredačka župa (a remote geographical region, a valley, in southeastern Kosovo and Metohija, below the Šar Mountains at the source of the Prizren Bistrica), and Sirinička župa (in the vicinity of Prizren, northeast of Šarplanina)) were compact houses, there were no large gardens around the houses, they had one cemetery.<sup>10</sup> In Kosovo Polje, a municipality located in the District of Priština, 90 settlements were located in the plains, 92 at the foot of the mountains and 91 at the rim of the basin. In Gornja Morava and Izmornik, in the southern part of the District of Gnjilane surrounding the Binačka Morava River, there were marginal settlements, settlements at lower altitudes and mountain settlements. In the Metohija-Prizren basin, the villages were located on the rim of the basin.<sup>11</sup>

The rural population lived in hamlets, which were named after the families who lived there or according to their position. It was composed of clans of different origin, and often they were of the same origin, that is, they were all members of the same clan (*rod*) or brotherhood.<sup>12</sup> All members of the village helped each other and defended the interests of the village as a community, and the strongest social environments were rural settlements with an Albanian population. Village affairs were decided by men who came to the village assembly, and the village elder was a member of that assembly appointed by the village, that is, the elderly householders. The headman of the village was called *kmet*, and often also in Turkish *kodzabashi* and *miftar* (in Podrima, a village on the left side of Drim towards Prizren). All champions in the village were called *ulidže* (by Serbs and Albanians). The serf's assistant was a *protoger* or *protođer* (protector) (Podgor of Prizren, a geographical region in Kosovo and Metohija, stretching from the branches of the Šar Mountains, from Prizren to the village of Dulje on the Crnojleđa mountain). In 1940, in the village of Žur, near Prizren, there were two *poljaks* (field guards) and two village guards in addition to one *protodjer*. The guardians of the vineyards were called *pudars*. There was also the duty of the village Romani - they were in charge of announcing prayers or were musicians

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<sup>9</sup> Vladan Jovanović, „Istorijsko, svakodnevno i privatno na prostoru Vardarske banovine“, *Privatnu život kod Srba u dvadesetom veku*, ur. Milan Ristović (Beograd:Clio, 2007), 548–551.

<sup>10</sup> Cvijić, *Balkansko poluostrvo i južnoslovenske zemlje: osnove antropogeografije*, 268-269.

<sup>11</sup> Tatomir Vukanović, *Srbi na Kosovu*, knjiga 2, (Vranje: Nova Jugoslavija, 1986), 11; Vojislav S. Radovanović, „Geografske osnove Južne Srbije“, *Spomenica dvadesetpetogodišnjice oslobođenja Južne Srbije: 1912-1937*, ur. Aleksa Jovanović (Skoplje: Štamparija „Južna Srbija“ Milana Đ. Milićevića, 1937), 125–126.

<sup>12</sup> Mitar S. Vlahović, *Sredačka župa* (Skoplje: Skopsko naučno društvo, 1931), 28.

(Zagradaska Hoča, in the municipality of Prizren, on the left side of Bistrica). A *tutor* took care of the church in Ljubižda. In Ljubižda, in the Prizren municipality, there was a "village room" that was the property of the church, and in it the village gathered for holidays or agreements.<sup>13</sup> The village shepherd was in charge of taking care of the livestock, during the grazing season in the mountains or at the nearby cattle stables, and the Orthodox villages often jointly paid an Albanian for this. The village solved some issues of vital importance for the entire village community - by agreement, it managed affairs related to village property, village kuluk, payment of state duties for property, cutting of the village surtax and fees for the use of the village forest. The defense and security of the village was the highest interest of the villagers. Also, the village took care of the customs and morals of the community members. Under the influence of modern laws, there was little departure from this, but there were cases in which the village resolved not only minor civil disputes but also those that fell under the duty of criminal courts (in the village of Žur there was a "council of elders"). There was a custom of boycotting a villager, if "that person was not honest". The village also took care of the poor and the infirm. On general village holidays, it was shown as a community. In the Dinaric regions (around Prokletije) several villages built one church or mosque, while in the Kosovo region each village had a separate place of worship and in larger villages each hamlet. The village organized in this way not only replaced the brotherhood, but also reduced the importance of clan organization.<sup>14</sup>

Despite its importance in defending the interests of the community, the village had its shortcomings. It was at a low level of health, insufficiently hygienic and with a lack of good nutrition. In the magazine *Vardar* from 1935, it is stated that "The homes were dirty, damp, dark, the rooms were unkempt, with insufficient cubic capacity, unpainted walls, near a garbage dump, a toilet and an unhygienic well. In one room they kneaded, cooked, ate, slept, shoes and clothes were dried there, the air was polluted, heavy and suffocating. The village was burdened by lack of enlightenment, tradition, closedness, various customs and superstitions."<sup>15</sup>

Štimlje, a village on the Uroševac-Prizren road, showed the most visible results in terms of education and culture. It was the only village in Kosovo and Metohija that had its own modern water supply system (built in 1930, 5 km long with 8 pumps). It was one of the largest villages with about 25 homes (115 Orthodox and 135 different) and about 2,000 inhabitants. It

<sup>13</sup> Milenko S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije* (Beograd: Naučno delo, 1967), 57, 138.

<sup>14</sup> Milenko S. Filipović, „Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji“, *Spomenica dvadesetpetogodišnjice oslobođenja Južne Srbije: 1912-1937*, ur. Aleksa Jovanović ( Skoplje: Štamparija „Južna Srbija“ Milana Đ. Milićevića, 1937), 457-460; Miljana Radovanović, „Selo kao socijalna zajednica u Siriničkoj župi“, *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, ur. Mirjana Menković (Beograd: Etnografski muzej: Muzej u Prištini: Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije-Mnempsyna, 2004), 320-325.

<sup>15</sup> *Vardar*, 6 November 1935, 1; *Seljačko kolo*, No 14, 1936, 5.

had a new school, a gendarmerie station and a municipal building. The church was built in 1914, and there were over 30 Orthodox churches in the area.<sup>16</sup>

The village of Goraždevac (the Albanians called it Kara Dağ, i.e. little Montenegro), near Peć in Metohija, was a large village of mixed origins, compact type, "entirely in orchards, with towers and spacious courtyards, high hedges or of charge". The streets were spacious, so it resembled larger Kosovo and Metohija villages such as Babin Most, Čaglavica, Laplje Selo or Prilužje on Sitnica river. Goraždevac was "a rich village that was being built and progressing".<sup>17</sup>

In the village of Banjska, there were a hundred houses, of which, according to Grigorije Božović, most were Turkish descendants who spoke both Turkish and Serbian languages.<sup>18</sup> The villages in Gnjilane County were compact, "large and beautiful with well-kept courtyards, one-story houses and wide and straight streets like in cities."<sup>19</sup>

Kaçanik, located in the Uroševac District of southern Kosovo and Metohija, was a settlement between a village and a town, which according to the 1931 census had 13,400 hectares, 982 homes and 6,534 inhabitants.<sup>20</sup> According to the ethnologist Atanasije Urošević, Kačanik differed slightly from the surrounding villages, being at the entrance to the Kačanik gorge, due to the winding streets between wicker and thorn fences that surrounded the courtyards and many simple houses that were deep in the courtyards, and the character of the town it gave him a small bazaar, several beautiful houses and a beautiful tall mosque.<sup>21</sup> According to the *Vardar* magazine, the terms village and small town are mixed up again when Kačanik is mentioned. So it is stated there that it was an "Albanian village with Turkish-type houses". Further in this magazine, it is stated that "However, from the mid-thirties, it became a summer resort for a large number of Skoplje residents who were guests mostly in private houses in Kačanik." In 1934, in Kačanik it was made a bridge over the Nerodimka river on the Skoplje-Uroševac state road, and several modern villas and houses were also built." At the end of the article about Kačanik, in *Vardar* it is pointed out that "It was a mountain town that lived on wood, lime, fruit and wild strawberries and blackberries, goat's milk and wool, bees and medicinal herbs, corn and rye, tourism and hunting (foxes, badgers, wild boars and bears)."<sup>22</sup> Atanasije Urošević mentions another example of a village

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<sup>16</sup> *Vardar*, 26 June 1934, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Grigorije Božović, *Slike Kosova i Metohije: putopisi i reportaže* (Priština: NUB „Ivo Andrić“, 2006), 93–98.

<sup>18</sup> Božović, *Slike Kosova i Metohije*, 121.

<sup>19</sup> Božović, *Slike Kosova i Metohije*, 127–131.

<sup>20</sup> Aranđelović, *Kraljevina Jugoslavija: Administrativna podela. Knjiga 1, Vardarska banovina*, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Atanasije Urošević, *O Kosovu: gradovi, naselja i drugi antropogeografski spisi* (Priština: Narodna i univerzitetska biblioteka „Ivo Andrić“, 2009), 21–30.

<sup>22</sup> *Vardar*, 15 September 1934, 6.

and town, when he talks about Lipljan, which is located in the Priština district. There, the streets were not cobbled, but made of rammed ground.<sup>23</sup>

**Types of houses in villages.** The most widespread in both Albanian and Serbian villages were houses of the Moravian and Vardar type. The Vardar house began to be built in Kosovo and Metohija in the second half of the 19th century. Moravian houses were made of wattle or adobe, while Vardar houses were made of adobe or stone. Houses in the Kosovo part were built by masters from Sirinička župa, in Drenica (a hilly region in central Kosovo and Metohija) by masters from Podrima (villages: Hoča and Orahovac), and in the Metohija part by masters from Debar (Macedonia). Building houses depended on material possibilities. According to Atanasije Urošević, the most primitive houses were *busara* or *sibara* - conical and square, *krivulja* - made of woven wicker and covered with straw.<sup>24</sup> The simplest house made of straw is smeared with mud (at Arbanas it is "shpija me kashte" - a house with straw). It suited the herding lifestyle. When some residents started going abroad to work (*pečalbari*), they modeled themselves on the city in building houses.<sup>25</sup> Many archaic houses remained until the Second World War. Horses and Oxen lived there with the host and his family on two sides. There was a partition in between - *perda*. The house was used for cooking, eating and receiving guests, and it was rarely slept in. According to Mitar Vlahović, the ancient house was built in Gračanica, in the Priština district, one-part with a square base, with two wooden windows without glass with wooden shutters (Moravian house).<sup>26</sup>

The basic form of house in the Kosovo part of Kosovo and Metohija was a one-story house (*dolma* in Gnjilane) with two rooms with a porch (*ayat*) in front of them (Moravian type of house), and a smaller number were one-story houses (Vardar type of house). Most of them were made of wood and plastered with mud, while houses made of hard material (brick or stone) were in those places that were connected to administrative centers by traffic. Tile was the main covering material,<sup>27</sup> and later those who were in America (only Orthodox) would cover the houses with sheet metal. Newer houses had chimneys on the roof. Until the Second World War, such houses gradually disappeared, and the buildings lost their function, because family cooperatives (*porodične zadruge*) disintegrated, giving way to houses where the changes were most often reflected in the addition of an entrance porch.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Urošević, *O Kosovu: gradovi, naselja i drugi antropogeografski spisi*, 348-359.

<sup>24</sup> Atanasije Urošević, *Novobrdaska Kriva Reka* (Priština: Grigorije Božović; Gnjilane: Sveti Sava, 1996), 15–20.

<sup>25</sup> Milisav Lutovac, *Gora i Opolje: antropogeografska ispitivanja* (Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1955), 266–268.

<sup>26</sup> Mitar Vlahović, "Etnološka promatranja po Kosovu polju", *Južni pregled*, 11 November 1930, 504-510.

<sup>27</sup> Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, 30–35.

<sup>28</sup> Ljiljana Tojaga Vasić, „Prilog proučavanju seoske arhitekture severnog dela Kosova“, *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, ur. Mirjana Menković (Beograd: Etnografski

The houses were divided into two parts - a house (*kuća*) with a fireplace and a "room" (*soba*). The hearth was only later replaced by a tin stove, the so-called French. The furniture and dishes were very simple and sparse.<sup>29</sup>

Around the courtyard (*avlija, dvor*) was a fence, thorns were arranged on the fence, and among the Albanians, the wall was plastered with mud and wicker with stakes on top. In one part of the courtyard there was a garden, which was particularly beautiful in Muslim houses. The Albanians had two-winged gates with small doors - *kapidžik*. There were always two doors leading from the yard to the street, a large door for cars and cattle and a *vratnica* for the householders. In the vicinity of Prizren, the one-story house type with an open veranda towards the courtyard, like in Povardarje, became popular.<sup>30</sup> In the yard there were cattle pens, a granary for grain, a dryer for fruit, a well or a pump, a place where working tools stand, a basket for corn, a bakery for bread, a place for wood and two latrines (male and female).<sup>31</sup>

In the Metohija part, there was no difference between Albanian and Serbian houses. These were one-story buildings, mostly made of stone, later of brick. There were only doors on the ground floor and small windows with heavy wooden shutters on the upper floors. The yard around the house was usually surrounded by a high wall or fence. There were few secondary buildings. The ground floor of the house was used as a stable for cattle. From there, stairs led to the upper floor, where the "house" was located - a room with a fireplace, sleeping quarters, a guest room, a dairy or a pantry. The Muslim house differed only in its internal layout, it had two rooms, *selamluk* and *haremluk*, and where there was only one room, it was divided by a movable partition. Every Muslim house had a *hamamjik*, a small bathroom. This was also the case in Catholic houses, where the layout was the same as in Muslim houses. On the first floor, built from the outside, was a toilet made of boards, with a small window. The household was scarce.<sup>32</sup> Small children slept in cradles made of boards, and carpenters in Đakovica painted various patterns on them with greasepaint. The wealthy had a separate guest house. In the villages around Đakovica, the guest room is a separate ground-floor building that had a room and an anteroom. There were pillows by the wall, and the floor covered with straw; only some houses had a bed. In the middle of the wall was a fireplace, which was decorated with patterns.<sup>33</sup>

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muzej: Muzej u Prištini: Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije-Mnempsyne, 2004), 305–317.

<sup>29</sup> Milisav Lutovac, *Ibarski Kolašin: antropogeografska ispitivanja* (Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1954), 97–102.

<sup>30</sup> Urošević, *O Kosovu: gradovi, naselja i drugi antropogeografski spisi*, 13–14.

<sup>31</sup> Mirko Barjaktarović, „O porodičnim zadrugama na Kosovu i Metohiji“, *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, ur. Mirjana Menković (Beograd: Etnografski muzej: Muzej u Prištini: Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije-Mnempsyne, 2004), 328–353.

<sup>32</sup> Tojaga Vasić, „Prilog proučavanju seoske arhitekture severnog dela Kosova“, 305–317; Branislav Nušić, *Kosovo: opis zemlje i naroda* (Niš: Medinvest, 2021), 94–100.

<sup>33</sup> Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, 35–40.



In the houses in the countryside, a big problem was the lack of bathrooms and toilets, as well as drinking water. Houses had their own wells, but they were mostly uncovered, and as such they were a source of infection. These issues were dealt with by a special department of the state administration - the Section for Colonization and the Institute of Hygiene, which installed modern latrines with garbage disposal in Kosovo and its surroundings. Since 1930, there was also a Fund for Sanitation Works, which issued interest-free loans to villages for the construction of smaller waterworks.<sup>34</sup>

It should be noted that in accordance with the preservation of traditional customs, there were also numerous rituals in the village related to the construction of the house. When building a house, people chose the place either the oldest from the house or they went to the "viewer" to tell him/her where to build the house.<sup>35</sup> The new house was built on top of the old one, never on its foundation, and most often where "the cattle like to lay down or the rooster to crow". Sacrifice was offered during construction (*kurban*), and lunch was made for workers and household members. Everywhere care was taken to start construction on Monday or Thursday in the middle of summer to be finished by autumn. When entering the house, one would first step with the right foot and jump over the threshold.<sup>36</sup>

**The main economic branches in the countryside: agriculture and animal husbandry.** Between the two wars, the rural population in Kosovo and Metohija lived on a small agricultural property (area of 2 to 5 hectares). The reason for this was the disintegration of rural family cooperatives and the increase in the number of households.<sup>37</sup> On such a property, the rural population engaged in agriculture, which, as in the entire Yugoslav state, was characterized by extensiveness and primitivism. Conservative in his way of thinking, the peasant had a hard time accepting modernization and worked as the generations before him had done.<sup>38</sup> The Yugoslav state got involved by

<sup>34</sup> Vladan Jovanović, *Vardarska banovina: 1929-1941* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2011), 470; *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa* (Beograd: Centralni higijenski zavod, 1937), 32–34; Stojan Čupković, *Dvadeset godina naše kolonizacije u Srezu Nerodimlje na Kosovu* (Beograd: Centralni higijenski zavod, 1940), 508; Milenko Filipović, *Ishrana južnosrbijanskog seljaka* (Beograd: b.i, 1937), 4–7.

<sup>35</sup> Tatomir Vukanović, *Drenica: druga srpska Sveta Gora: antropogeografska i etnološka razmatranja na terenu i u narodu izvršena 1934-1937.godine* (Pristina: Muzej: Narodna i Univerzitetska biblioteka, 1998), 62.

<sup>36</sup> Tojaga Vasić, „Prilog proučavanju seoske arhitekture severnog dela Kosova“, 305–317.

<sup>37</sup> Momčilo Isić, „Sitnoposedništvo kao kočnica ekonomske modernizacije Srbije u prvoj polovini XX veka“, *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima 20.veka*, ur. Latinka Perović, Marija Obradović, Dubravka Stojanović (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2018), 101–111.

<sup>38</sup> Sekula Zečević, *Siromaštvo Jugoslavije: predlog za uvođenje i organizaciju obavezne radne službe* (Beograd: Zadržna štamparija, 1936), 47; Janko Vukičević, „Poljska radinost“, *Spomenica dvadesetpetogodišnjice oslobođenja Južne Srbije: 1912-1937* (Skoplje: Štamparija „Južna Srbija“ Milana Đ. Milićevića, 1937), 527.

providing agricultural tools, draining wetlands, introducing artificial fertilizers, establishing agricultural schools with similar properties, but also by colonizing uninhabited and abandoned lands to farmers from more advanced northern regions.<sup>39</sup> However, a peasant needed to see favorable results from another in order to try it. Settlers from the northern parts of the Yugoslav state had difficulty in convincing the peasants that their fields could bear fruit every year and that it was not necessary to leave them to "rest" for a year.<sup>40</sup> This was precisely why the improvement of agriculture was primarily carried out by means of propaganda in the field, in order to direct the people to more rational work in all agricultural branches, courses were held and agricultural books were distributed.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to agriculture, animal husbandry was one of the main economic branches in the village. Plant products with 65% of the productive area were primarily processed by livestock, and only 35% by industry. The Yugoslav administration took care of the improvement of animal husbandry by improving the nutrition and housing of the livestock. However, it was neither advanced nor rational.<sup>42</sup> The number of livestock was small, especially those that represented integral parts of agricultural holdings.<sup>43</sup> The pig was a "source of income" for the peasant, but since there were a large number of Muslims, they were less in demand (8.77%).<sup>44</sup>

In addition to the aforementioned reasons, the agrarian crisis, which was followed by the decline in the prices of agricultural products, also contributed to the slowdown in the modernization of agriculture in the countryside.<sup>45</sup> Also, the problem that slowed down the modernization of agriculture was the over-indebted peasantry.<sup>46</sup> For the promotion and protection of agricultural workers, the peasants were organized into cooperatives, and there was a branch of the Main Union of Serbian Agricultural Cooperatives in Skoplje, founded in 1929. The task of these cooperatives was to provide agricultural loans on the guarantee of their members - for the purchase of seeds, for cultivating the land, for the

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<sup>39</sup> *Poljoprivredni glasnik*, 15 January 1929, 7–8; „Stanje poljoprivrede u Južnoj Srbiji prema sreskim poljoprivrednim izložbama“, *Južni pregled*, 456–461; Rade M. Perović, *Kraljevina Jugoslavija: kratak pregled* (Skoplje: Izdavačka knjižarnica „Slavija“, 1937), 19–20.

<sup>40</sup> *Poljoprivredni glasnik*, 15 April 1933, 8–9.

<sup>41</sup> Archive of Yugoslavia, Fund Tanjug, 38-716-895, 14 June 1937.

<sup>42</sup> Vid Đurđević, *Nekoliko privrednih problema Vardarske banovine* (Beograd: Mlada Srbija, 1936), 317–318.

<sup>43</sup> Urošević, *O Kosovu: gradovi, naselja i drugi antropogeografski spisi*, 205–213.

<sup>44</sup> Adam Pribičević, *Od gospodina do seljaka* (Zagreb: Srpsko kulturno društvo Prosvjeta, 1996), 103–107.

<sup>45</sup> Nikola Vučo, *Poljoprivreda Jugoslavije* (Beograd: Rad, 1958), 78; Sergije Dimitrijević, *Privredni razvitak Jugoslavije od 1918 -1941* (Beograd: Visoka škola političkih nauka, 1961), 132–133.

<sup>46</sup> *Uredba o likvidaciji zemljoradničkih dugova od 25. septembra 1936 sa pravilnicima i ostalim odredbama za njeno izvršenje* (Beograd: G.Kon, 1938).

procurement of human and livestock food, with loans to be repaid after the harvest.<sup>47</sup>

**Modernization of everyday life in the countryside. The departure of workers from the countryside to the city and abroad.** After the First World War, the Yugoslav state worked to establish more modern telegraph and telephone traffic. Direct telephone connections were established between cities, as well as smaller local lines that connected many villages and municipalities with the main routes.<sup>48</sup> Electrification in villages was rare, so the Yugoslav state tried to improve it.<sup>49</sup> However, industrialization was weak not only in the villages but also in the cities. In the years before the beginning of the Second World War, it was just starting to develop and factories were opening. Peasants came to the cities to work in factories at a time when they were not busy working in the fields. They mostly settled on the outskirts of the town. Economically weak, they were a burden to the municipality, and on the labor market, as wage earners, they lowered wages and increased the number of unemployed. From 1920 to 1938, it was tentatively determined that 14,487 families moved from the countryside to the town (and their number may have been even higher). There were more people who went from the south to the northern parts of the country or abroad. Of the large number of *pečalbars* (the word *pečalbar* is derived from the Old Slavic word *pečal* or *pekal*, which meant sadness) that were produced by the villages of the southern regions, barely 8% of them found employment in the south, while all the rest went to the northern parts of the country.<sup>50</sup> There were *pečalbars* abroad as well, especially in European and American countries.<sup>51</sup> Gora county gave 70.59% of *pečalbars*, who were engaged in catering and food activities.<sup>52</sup> Many sons of *pečalbars* graduated from high schools and received a title. They left in groups and in the world they helped each other. According to *Vardar*, they followed local habits and customs, returned home to get married, and brides waited for them for several years. Also, they modernized their families, as *Vardar* states, "they brought good habits and useful knowledge to Southern Serbia."<sup>53</sup>

**Health opportunities.** It was difficult for the health service to reach the people in the countryside, due to traditional village customs, which were also

<sup>47</sup> Petar T. Mihailović, „Zadrugarstvo“, *Spomenica dvadesetpetogodišnjice oslobođenja Južne Srbije: 1912-1937*, ur. Aleksa Jovanović, 1-134. Skoplje: Štamparija „Južna Srbija“ Milana Đ. Milićevića, 1937, 628–634.

<sup>48</sup> *Politika*, 21 October 1937, 3.

<sup>49</sup> Zečević, *Siromaštvo Jugoslavije: predlog za uvođenje i organizaciju obavezne radne službe*, 98-99.

<sup>50</sup> Vlahović, *Sredačka župa*, 32; Cvijić, *Balkansko poluostrvo i južnoslovenske zemlje: osnove antropogeografije*, 516–517.

<sup>51</sup> R. S. Purić, „Radništvo Južne Srbije“, *Južni pregled*, May 1939, 153–165; *Radničke novine*, 8 April 1938, 2.

<sup>52</sup> *Glasnik Centralnog higijenskog zavoda*, 1940, 141–170.

<sup>53</sup> *Vardar*, 12 May 1934, 5–6.

represented in the treatment of various diseases. The Yugoslav state tried in various ways to persuade the rural population to consult a doctor in case of illness. The health cooperatives that were founded in 1921 were very important for health education in the countryside as it was the most effective means for the economic upliftment of the countryside. By bringing a doctor to the village, the health cooperative provided its members with professional help at any time of the day. The issue of health cooperatives was regulated by the state in 1930. Cooperatives could build health facilities, appoint staff, treat their members free of charge or cheaper, establish cooperative pharmacies, work on sanitation of villages, as well as other works to improve public health.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to the state's efforts to build a modern healthcare system, people had deep-rooted notions that included prejudices and popular beliefs.<sup>55</sup> In addition, medicines were expensive and discouraged peasants from treatment.<sup>56</sup> Many beliefs about the spread of disease were widespread; it was believed, for example, that some person could get malaria from plums and watermelons and that it was best to take brandy as a preventive measure, that whooping cough was treated when flying at an altitude of 2,000 meters, and that tumors were treated with the juice secreted by a bee during a sting.<sup>57</sup> Barbers extracted teeth, but often anyone else, and rarely doctors.<sup>58</sup> Only those who fell into bed due to illness and exhaustion were considered sick, they were given the most necessary attention and most of the patients were not isolated, but only their bed, linen and dishes. Sick children were nursed by the mother, men by the older women of the family, and it was often done by village fortune-tellers for a reward. They were convinced that the one to whom "God said he will get well", and the one who "was not destined", will die.<sup>59</sup> Tuberculosis, for example, was treated by leaving the sick person to sleep with sheep in the mountains for two to three weeks. It was believed that malaria - fever was obtained from green melons, corn and early fruits. Toothache was treated with various herbs or tobacco. Medicinal herbs were harvested during major holidays. Those herbs were used by vidarica for healing.<sup>60</sup> Illnesses and infertility were "cured" by covering churches with

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<sup>54</sup> „Zakon o zdravstvenim zadrugama od 19. 12. 1930“, *Službene novine Kraljevine Jugoslavije*, No. 300, 20 December 1930; *Vardar*, 6 November 1935, 1; *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1937-1938*, 18–20.

<sup>55</sup> *Vardar*, 5 July 1935, 4; *Vardar*, 6 November 1935, 1.

<sup>56</sup> Pribićević, *Od gospodina do seljaka*, 297–300.

<sup>57</sup> Jovanović, *Vardarska banovina: 1929-1941*, 465.

<sup>58</sup> Čupković, *Dvadeset godina naše kolonizacije u Srezu Nerodimlje na Kosovu*, 511–516.

<sup>59</sup> Vidosava Nikolić-Stojančević, *Etnološka proučavanja Srba u Metohiji* (Leposavić: Institut za srpsku kulturu-Priština, 2003), 117–118.

<sup>60</sup> Mina Darmanović, „O korišćenju bilja u narodnoj tradiciji Srba na Kosovu i Metohiji“, *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, ur. Mirjana Menković (Beograd: Etnografski muzej: Muzej u Prištini: Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije-Mnempsyne, 2004), 167–179; Filipović, „Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji“, 75; Vukanović, *Srbi na Kosovu*, II, 470, 483–484.

candles, although this was also done at the Kačanik *türbe*, where Christian women came from as far away as Peć and Prizren, while Muslim women did not have this custom.<sup>61</sup> Deaf, mute and mentally ill people were taken to monasteries. Everyone went to Serbian monasteries: Serbs, Albanians and other nationalities, and the same was true for the *tekke* (holy places of Muslims where the Muslim priest "hodja" reads the prayer).<sup>62</sup>

Ignorance and weak cultural habits worsened the hygienic conditions in the village, which was at a low level of health.<sup>63</sup> The country costume, despite its beauty, was often impractical and unhygienic because no distinction was made between winter and summer clothing. Linen was worn for several weeks, and even for a whole month, and peasants often slept in their clothes and shoes, especially during field work in the summer. The morning wash was superficial. There was no mention of oral and dental care.<sup>64</sup> In many villages, bathing was a luxury, even where rivers ran through. There were women who bathed for the last time before their wedding. Village baths have done a lot in this direction, which recorded an increasing number of uses from year to year.<sup>65</sup>

In a series of social factors in which ignorance, poor housing conditions and poor nutrition stood out the most, infectious diseases were very widespread, so they were the basis of the health policy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. That is why the Ministry of Social Policy and Public Health tried to reduce the number of infected people by passing the Law on Suppression of Infectious Diseases. The greatest importance in the suppression was the work of hygiene institutions, with the particular importance of the health committees, which had the role of an advisory body from the ranks of doctors, teachers, priests and other prominent citizens in addition to the educational and cultural mission they carried out in the countryside.<sup>66</sup>

To treat malaria, the state distributed free quinine and antimalarial drugs to villages during field work. Lectures were held, leaflets and posters

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<sup>61</sup> D. Krivokapić, „Narodni običaji“, *Južni pregled*, October-November 1936, 337; Filipović, „Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji“, 68–69; Nikolić-Stojančević, *Etnološka proučavanja Srba u Metohiji*, 137–138.

<sup>62</sup> Tatomir Vukanović, *Srbi na Kosovu*, III (Vranje: Nova Jugoslavija, 1986), 15, 19–20, 78–92, 93–115; *Vardar*, 8 September 1936, 2.

<sup>63</sup> Jovanović, *Vardarska banovina: 1929-1941*, 467.

<sup>64</sup> Čupković, *Dvadeset godina naše kolonizacije u Srezu Nerodimlje na Kosovu*, 508.

<sup>65</sup> *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1936*, 32–34, 36–37; *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1937–38*, 113–116.

<sup>66</sup> Z. Micić Lebedeva, „Anketa o ishrani naroda u Jugoslaviji hlebom 1927–1928“, *Glasnik Centralnog Higijenskog zavoda*, knjiga 8 (Beograd, 1932), 23–53; *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1936*, 32–34; Čupković, *Dvadeset godina naše kolonizacije u Srezu Nerodimlje na Kosovu*, 508–509; S.Ivanić, „Zdravstveni problemi Jugoslavije“, *Agrarna misao*, 15–16, 1–15 August 1937, 3; Ljubodrag Dimić, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji: 1918-1941, deo 1, Društvo i država* (Beograd: Stubovi kulture, 1997), 237–238.

were distributed.<sup>67</sup> For those suffering from typhus, which was one of the most serious forms of social diseases, along with malaria, sanitary control of infected homes in the village did not exist.<sup>68</sup> Tuberculosis was the most common social disease due to the low standard of living in the village, but also in the city.<sup>69</sup> Here was also an increase in the number of people suffering from venereal diseases, as well as skin diseases. For the treatment of scabies, for example, a major obstacle to control was the lack of personal and bed linen.<sup>70</sup> Alcoholism was not widely spread, primarily because of the low standard of living and because of the large percentage of Muslims who did not use alcoholic beverages for religious reasons.<sup>71</sup> However, in the Kosovo region, there was a large number of people suffering from cirrhosis of the liver, as well as liver diseases in general.<sup>72</sup> Among other diseases, the most common were diseases of the respiratory organs, rheumatic diseases, and diseases of the heart and blood circulation. Gastrointestinal diseases were the most common in summer, especially in children and infants. Kidney diseases were common, especially among the Albanian part of the population, because their diet was scarce, mostly consisting of breadcrumbs, salt and pepper. Bad nutrition also led to vitamin deficiencies, which was reflected in avitaminosis and a little more in hypovitaminosis; vitamin D deficiency, anemia, as well as eczema and rickets were mostly pronounced.<sup>73</sup>

Immunization has played an important role in the fight against various diseases. Nevertheless, women of Turkish and Albanian nationality, both in the village and in the city, avoided vaccination, believing that women should not show themselves in front of men.<sup>74</sup> Health propaganda (public lectures, brochures, books and leaflets, illustrations, posters and film) was very important in the prevention and control of infectious diseases. All doctors were engaged in propaganda work.<sup>75</sup> Of great importance were the courses for housewives whose programs also contained a lot of useful lessons in general hygiene, proper nutrition and care of infants and small children.<sup>76</sup> However, health propaganda did not produce the desired results, due to too

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<sup>67</sup> Jovanović, *Vardarska banovina: 1929-1941*, 474; Dušan Antić, „Zdravstvena služba“, *Spomenica dvadesetpetogodišnjice oslobođenja Južne Srbije: 1912-1937* (Skoplje: Štamparija „Južna Srbija“ Milana Đ. Milićevića, 1937), 767–776.

<sup>68</sup> J. Draškoci, „Tifuzna oboljenja na području Higijenskog zavoda u Skoplju 1928–1937“, *Glasnik Centralnog Higijenskog zavoda*, knjiga XX, 1937, 312–324.

<sup>69</sup> *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1937–38*, 627.

<sup>70</sup> Čupković, *Dvadeset godina naše kolonizacije u Srezu Nerodimlje na Kosovu*, 513; *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1936*, 124–126.

<sup>71</sup> *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1937–38*, 159–162.

<sup>72</sup> Božica Slavković Mirić, *Političke, kulturne i ekonomske prilike na Kosovu i Metohiji 1929-1941* (Beograd: IP Prosveta; IP Princip, 2018), 449.

<sup>73</sup> Čupković, *Dvadeset godina naše kolonizacije u Srezu Nerodimlje na Kosovu*, 514.

<sup>74</sup> Jovanović, *Vardarska banovina: 1929-1941*, 465.

<sup>75</sup> *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1936*, 207–212; *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1937–38*, 150–157.

<sup>76</sup> *Službeni list Vardarske banovine*, No 834, 28–31.

few people implementing it and lack of funds, as well as due to a large number of illiterate people who could not understand the content and importance of this important measure, especially in the villages.<sup>77</sup> As a preventive measure for the suppression of infectious diseases, sanitation works were carried out (to supply the settlement with healthy water [wells, fountains], to remove excrement and garbage [sewers, latrines, garbage dumps], to drain marshy land and build bathrooms). Special attention was paid to hygienic latrines and garbage dumps, because feces could spread intestinal diseases, such as typhoid or dysentery. The vectors were flies, polluted water or people (by shoes) and domestic animals (by feet). Septic tanks were built in the Kosovo part. The state provided the wooden houses, the required amount of cement, tiles, nails and iron, as well as professional labor, while the rest was done by the peasants themselves. The institute also built public baths, at institute institutions, health centers or children's rehabilitation centers. The bathrooms had showers. At first, it was difficult to get the villagers used to bathing, but later they asked for it themselves. Until 1931, bathing was free, and from 1936, fees of two dinars were introduced for the urban population, while it remained free for the rural population and school children.<sup>78</sup>

From sanitation and technical works, the draining of marshy fields and places should be mentioned in particular. In this way, mosquito breeding sites were reduced and complexes for agriculture were obtained. Such wetlands were in Kosovo in the vicinity of the Vrela colony. In order to achieve the most successful works on the rehabilitation of the village, on January 10, 1930, a special law was passed on aid for the rehabilitation of the village, according to which the village was given a loan for the execution of these works. According to that law, annual 10-year interest-free loans were given to the Fund for sanitation works for villages with less than 2,000 inhabitants for the construction of small village waterworks, cisterns, wells, sewers, public baths and other works to improve hygiene in the countryside. Loans were granted in the amount of 50% of the costs and the other half was borne by the villages. However, the village's interest in these loans was very weak.<sup>79</sup>

The modernization of health conditions was also reflected in the Law on the Supervision of Foodstuffs for Life, which took into account the quality of foodstuff and general hygiene in production.<sup>80</sup> Among the most important foods were milk, flour and fats. Despite its great importance, there were not enough chemical laboratories, they were not modernly arranged, nor were there enough professional or support staff.<sup>81</sup> In addition to the above, a

<sup>77</sup> *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1936*, 207–212.

<sup>78</sup> Stojimir Simić, „Asanacioni radovi“, *Spomenica dvadesetpetogodišnjice oslobođenja Južne Srbije: 1912-1937* (Skoplje: Štamparija „Južna Srbija“ Milana Đ. Milićevića, 1937, 777–786; *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1936*, 218–220.

<sup>79</sup> Simić, „Asanacioni radovi“, 777–786.

<sup>80</sup> Dimić, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji: 1918-1941, deo 1, Društvo i država*, 241.

<sup>81</sup> *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1937–38*, 179–185.

significant role in health education was also played by the Law on Nutrition and Helping Poor Farmers, which referred to helping farmers by employing them in public works in the countryside in order to ensure income for feeding the family.<sup>82</sup>

**Educational opportunities.** Educational opportunities as well as health were not adequate in Kosovo and Metohija, especially in rural areas. The peasants were reluctant to send their children to schools, because they helped them with their work, also, there was a lack of school buildings, personnel, financial resources, and there was also a lack of awareness of the need for schools. The construction of schools in the villages did not give the expected results, so payment of the school surcharge was introduced. The approach that "the school belongs to those who built it" and that it represented "the common house of children and peasants of one or more villages" very quickly gave a positive result.<sup>83</sup> Schools were built from available materials, and there were also examples of private initiatives in villages.<sup>84</sup> Teachers were reluctant to stay in villages and even in cities in Kosovo and Metohija due to poor communications, poor railway connections, insufficient maintenance of schools, distance from doctors, poverty, remote villages, as well as lack of accommodation, so serious educational work could not be said to be.<sup>85</sup> Also, they were overloaded, because they represented the center around which all the work on popular enlightenment was concentrated.<sup>86</sup> In addition to spreading literacy, the teachers worked on social, hygienic, moral and economic education, primarily of village residents.<sup>87</sup> As for the high schools, some students from the villages went to the cities for education, so it was necessary in the high schools in Gnjilane and in Peć that classes were held before noon.<sup>88</sup> A small number of rural children attended gymnasiums, only 2-3% of the total number of students, due to the lack of financial resources for rural families to educate their children.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Dimić, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji: 1918-1941, deo 1, Društvo i država*, 241.

<sup>83</sup> Ljubodrag Dimić, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji: 1918-1941. Deo 2, Škola i crkva* (Beograd: Stubovi kulture, 1997), 97.

<sup>84</sup> Dimić, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji: 1918-1941. Deo 2, Škola i crkva*, 97-100; Jovanović, *Vardarska banovina: 1929-1941*, 418.

<sup>85</sup> AY, Fund of the Ministry of Education of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 66-1821-1941, Polugodišnji izveštaj o osnovnim školama sreza Podgorskog za školsku 1928/29.

<sup>86</sup> Momčilo Isić, *Osnovno školstvo u Srbiji 1918-1941*, I (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 1998), 481.

<sup>87</sup> AY, 66-1370-1584, Godišnji izveštaj o stanju i radu narodnih osnovnih škola Moravske banovine za školsku 1929/30; Dimić, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji: 1918-1941. Deo 2, Škola i crkva*, 86; Dragomir Bondžić, „Učitelji u multietničkim sredinama: primer Kosova i Metohije 1945-50“, *Obrazovanje i uloga učitelja u srpskom društvu kroz istoriju (XVIII-XX vek)*, Sombor: Pedagoški fakultet, 2009), 34.

<sup>88</sup> Slavković Mirić, *Političke, ekonomske i kulturne prilike na Kosovu i Metohiji*, 382.

<sup>89</sup> AY, 66-1401-1589, Kraljevska banka uprava Ministratsvu prosvete, 31 July 1930.



**The way of life in the countryside.** In some villages in the interwar period, there were still extended families, so-called *porodične zadrug*e, comprising several generations descending from a single common ancestor.<sup>90</sup> Life in such families was better preserved among the Albanians in the region of Metohija, where there were *zadrugas* with up to eighty members. According to Atanasije Urošević, Serbian was spoken in some *zadrugas* despite the members being Albanians. Such was the case of the *zadruga* of Durlević in Drajkovac (Sirinićka župa), which had roughly one hundred members in the 1930s<sup>91</sup>. The Durlevićs came from the tribes of Šalja (Shala), Beriša (Berisha) and Krasnići (Krasniqi). According to *Vardar*, they would say of themselves: ‘I am a Serb, but a Šalja too’.<sup>92</sup>

The disintegration of *zadrugas* was primarily driven by agrarian reform, though the strengthening of aspirations of individual members of such families to do with their personal earnings as they alone saw fit also played a role.<sup>93</sup> Members of a divided *zadruga* (in Albanian, *familje e zgjeruar*) were aware of their common origin and did not enter marital relations. Among the Turks, the awareness of kinship was much narrower than among Serbs and Albanians (up to three belts, i.e. *laube*). Albanians had large families.<sup>94</sup> In some families, fourth-degree relatives, such as an uncle’s brother and an uncle’s sister, for example, were married on the basis of Sharia permission.<sup>95</sup> Catholic Albanians avoided marriage with Catholic Serbs and vice versa, so they married within the family itself, granted the relationship was between two members separated by more than the fourth degree.<sup>96</sup>

Albanian *fis* (tribe or *pleme*) had chiefs who were highly respected not only within their own *fis* but also in others. These chiefs adhered to the Law of Lekë Dukagjinit.<sup>97</sup> The *fis* was above faith. Albanianized Serbs, as period sources described them, bore the names of *fis* that convert them to Islam or influenced them to become Albanians.<sup>98</sup> According to Urošević, the *fis* had so-called *slava*, an annual celebration of a family patron saint, and it was thought that members of a given *fis* were those who’s shared the same *slava*.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Cvijić, *Balkansko poluostrvo i južnoslovenske zemlje: osnove antropogeografije*, 211; Nikolić-Stojančević, *Etnološka proučavanja Srba u Metohiji*, 11–27.

<sup>91</sup> Urošević, *O Kosovu*, 240–242.

<sup>92</sup> *Vardar*, 4 January 1934, 12.

<sup>93</sup> Barjaktarević, „O porodičnim zadrugama na Kosovu i Metohiji“, 328–353.

<sup>94</sup> Filipović, „Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji“, 451–457; Tatomir Vukanović, *Srbi na Kosovu*, I, 223–225.

<sup>95</sup> Atanasije Urošević, *Gornja Morava i Izornik*, (Skoplje: b.i 1993), 126–130.

<sup>96</sup> Urošević, *Gornja Morava i Izornik*, 130–135.

<sup>97</sup> Albanians adhered to the Law of Leka Dukadjini (Kanun i Lekë Dukagjinit), a collection of common rights from ancient times or regulations of Roman law adopted by northern Albanian tribes. It comprised 1,263 paragraphs, according to which everything should be judged by ‘old and good people’ (*pleqnija* – a council of wise men) (see details: *Kanon Leke Dukađinija* (Podgorica: CID, 2011).

<sup>98</sup> Filipović, „Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji“, 487–491.

<sup>99</sup> Urošević, *O Kosovu*, 366–370.

A special example that should be mentioned when talking about Islamization and Albanianization were the regions of Gora and Opolje near Prizren. Gora was inhabited by Serbs who converted to Islam, whereas Opolje was inhabited by Albanian-speaking groups. The population of Gora converted to Islam when a circle was tightened around it, because the population of Ljuma (Luma), which was partly Christian Orthodox and partly Catholic, converted to Islam, but Islamization was gradual.<sup>100</sup> Many churches and cemeteries had been preserved in Gora, but also old family names and surnames, old customs and objects related to the old religion and language; in Opolje, on the other hand, the language and religion were lost. People from Gora did not marry their Albanian neighbours, citing differences of language, customs and apparel, but Albanian girls married inhabitants of Gora because of their higher material and cultural level.<sup>101</sup>

It should be noted that there were also those who had two faiths, observing the rituals of Christianity (Catholicism) in secret in a form of crypto-Christianity while outwardly subscribing to the tenets of Islam. This involved the members of a family pretending to be Muslims and performing Muslim rites, but they also secretly (or in some instances publicly) performed Christian rites. The main reason for this was the difficult parting with religious education from the previous religion, with some individuals going to the mosque in the morning and then to the church in the afternoon.<sup>102</sup> They were also known as *Ljarmani* (*šareni* – colourful), and there were many of them in the Prizren and Peć regions<sup>103</sup> as well as (according to Urošević) in the Gnjilane region.<sup>104</sup>

Tribal slava was a custom that was practised by Orthodox Serbs and Montenegrins, Catholic Serbs and some Catholic Albanians. They celebrated slava in the same way, with the only difference being that they did not cut slava bread. On 4 January 1934, the magazine *Vardar* stated that some Muslims Serbs in Sredačka Župa, Drenica and Rugova also held this tradition and ‘they knew what their ancestors were celebrating’. On this day, they did not work. Some received guests and lit candles. Also, according to Vlahović, Muslims attended the slava of their Orthodox Serb neighbours and acquaintances.<sup>105</sup> Christmas was celebrated by ‘Serbs of the Mohammedan

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<sup>100</sup> Dimitrije Bogdanović, *Knjiga o Kosovu* (Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1986), 119–120.

<sup>101</sup> Bogdanović, *Knjiga o Kosovu*, 113–121; Lutovac, *Gora i Opolje*, 5–83.

<sup>102</sup> Atanasije Urošević, *Gnjilane i okolina* (Kosovska Kamenica: Lokalna kancelarija Zajednica; Beograd: Rantes; Gnjilane: Knjižara Sveti Sava, 2001), 43–45; Vukanović, *Knjiga o Kosovu*, I, 195.

<sup>103</sup> Dušan Bataković, *Kosovo i Metohija-istorija i ideologija* (Beograd: Čigoja štampa, 2007).

<sup>104</sup> Urošević, *O Kosovu*, 83–92.

<sup>105</sup> Vlahović, „Sredačka župa“, 27–52. More about Albanian families and their costumes: Mirko Barjaktarević, „Dvovjerske šiptarske zadruga u Metohiji“, V.S. Radovanović (ed.), *Zbornik radova EI SANU 1* (Beograd: Naučna knjiga, 1950), 197–209; Mirko Barjaktarević „Porodična zadruga Bali Čuke iz Rugove“, *Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije*, (1), 275–83 ;

faith', Albanians and Turks. Muslims in Gora and Drenica, in Sredačka župa and in Samodreža performed Christmas customs on Christmas Eve.<sup>106</sup> (Another common holiday was the *Mladenci* (among the Orthodox), which was also celebrated by Muslims under the name of *Sultan Nevruz*.<sup>107</sup> *Mitrovdan* was celebrated not only by all Serbs but also by Albanians and Turks, since the holiday was considered the beginning of the winter half of the year and many deadlines were tied to it. In addition to the holidays, they celebrated together with the Orthodox, Muslim Serbs also celebrated Mawlud Milad (*Mevlud*), Ramadan and Eid al-Adha (*Kurban Bajram*).<sup>108</sup> It was at the celebrations in the villages that diversity could be seen. The villagers had fun playing a type of drum known as a *goč* and a wind instrument called a *zurle*. Mirko Kus-Nikolajev explains that during the festive gatherings and assemblies in Gnjilane county, "the variety of costumes, temperament and character is just incredible".<sup>109</sup>

The rural population of Kosovo and Metohija was very thrifty, but according to the descriptions of Branislav Nušić, a famous Yugoslav interwar writer and diplomat, they were good-natured "they gave from the mouth to the beggar and the sick".<sup>110</sup> When Vasilije Prvulović wrote in *Niški glasnik* about the negative characteristics of Yugoslavs, as slovenly, dirty, without a sense of order and cleanliness, lazy and careless, full of superstitions, a text was published in *Vardar* as a reaction in which the positive characteristics of the people of Southern Serbia were highlighted.<sup>111</sup>

Vaclav Girza, Czechoslovak representative in Belgrade, after visiting Southern Serbia, noted that the inhabitants of Kosovo and Metohija are "true primitive gentlemen".<sup>112</sup> Fashion began to enter the countryside as well, so according to the *Vardar* magazine, "the peasants worked all year round to get clothes for their daughter or son".<sup>113</sup> Albanians were more ostentatious than Serbs, primarily because they visited each other more often. Grigorije Božović points out that in "The Turks influenced them not to do much. More than in other regions, the Turkish bazaar brought them joy. In other places, in Drenica, for example, the party was a man's conversation, a serious educational pastime for mentioning the past and the old, and here the party

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Mark Krasnići, „Šiptarska porodična zadruga u Kosovsko-metohijskoj oblasti“, *Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije*, 4–5' 1959-1960, 137–71.

<sup>106</sup> Filipović, „Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji“, 462–475; Lutovac, *Gora i Opolje*, 43–44, 54–55; Mitar Vlahović, *Etnološka promatranja po Kosovu Polju*, (Skoplje: b.i., 1930), 574–577.

<sup>107</sup> Petar Vlahović, „Etnološke odrednice Kosova i Metohije“. In M. Menković (ed.), *Zbornik radova Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije* (Beograd: Etnografski muzej: Muzej u Prištini: Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije-Mnemosyne, 2004), 220–228.

<sup>108</sup> Filipović, „Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji“, 462–475.

<sup>109</sup> Mirko Kus Nikolajev, "Kroz Gnjilanski srez", *Socijalna misao*, 1930, 126–128.

<sup>110</sup> Nušić, *Kosovo: opis zemlje i naroda*, 87–90.

<sup>111</sup> *Vardar*, 11 February 1933; *Vardar*, 2. фебрыар 1934.

<sup>112</sup> *Vardar*, 11 November 1935, 2.

<sup>113</sup> *Vardar*, 28 September 1936, 5.

was often accompanied by brandy until midnight. They sang with a fiddle, a tambourine and with their finger in their ear in a duet. Gude worse than Montenegrins. Their songs were quite long. Along with the tambourine, like the other Arnauts, they sang short epic songs, which were sometimes romances and ballads, but with a faster tempo and without breaks, it was more of a Malisor recitative and singing only at the end. They also sang some love songs with the tambourine".<sup>114</sup>

Atanasije Urošević stated that the Serbs sometimes appeared outside the village "in underpants with a shirt" while the Albanians considered it indecent. Urošević further points out that Muslim women in villages with a mixed population appeared with a *fereja*, and in cases where the entire village was Muslim and originated from the same fisa, there was no need for it, because no one could marry a villager from the same fisa.<sup>115</sup> Tatomir Vukanović, a well-known ethnologist, pointed out that Albanians rarely cursed because of their traditional way of life, but "when it came to that, streams of insults and slanders poured out, which led to fights. Sometimes blood revenge would be born out of it".<sup>116</sup>

At the end of the research, I conclude that the Yugoslav state in the period after the First World War, and especially in the thirties of the 20th century, tried to integrate the villages as much as possible into the modernization process. However, it went very slowly because the villages were closed in their traditional customs and their way of organizing life. It was passed down from generation to generation, so modern things were slowly introduced to the rural population. Still, progress was being made. Agriculture and animal husbandry, as two basic economic branches, began to be modernized, especially under the influence of settlers from the northern parts of the Yugoslav state. Health and educational opportunities were improved, although it was very slow due to the entrenched beliefs of the peasants that there was no need to go to the doctor and go to school. The village was also being modernized by individuals going to work in the city or abroad and bringing a new way of life from there. Thus, in the years approaching the Second World War, modernization began to include the villages as well.

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<sup>114</sup> Božović, *Slike Kosova i Metohije: putopisi i reportaže*, 103.

<sup>115</sup> Urošević, *Gornja Morava i Izornik*, 137–142.

<sup>116</sup> Vukanović, *Drenica: druga srpska Sveta Gora: antropogeografska i etnološka razmatranja na terenu i u narodu izvršena 1934-1937*, 190–191, 201–203.