

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF WEDDINGS AND WEDDING CUSTOMS IN KOSOVO AND METOHIJA IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD*

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Abstract: *Kosovo and Metohija in the interwar period were part of the Yugoslav state. The Serbian and Albanian population made up the majority in this area, which was characterized by traditionalism, national separation, transport disconnection with other parts of the country and insufficient state control. Social life in Kosovo and Metohija has attracted the attention of numerous ethnologists who have collected valuable material on it. Attention was drawn to folk rules - the village community and its role in life, the organization of the family cooperative and life in it, tribal life, artificial kinship (godparents, blood brothers, blood sisters), wedding and other customs. In my paper, I will contribute to the research of marriage as one of the significant customs in the area of Kosovo and Metohija in the interwar period.*

Keywords: *Customs, Family, Kosovo and Metohija, Tradition, Wedding.*

Kosovo and Metohija were part of the Yugoslav state during the interwar period. It was part of the province of South Serbia, then part of the Kosovo, Vranje, Raška and Zeta regions, and then within the three

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banovinas of Vardar, Morava and Zeta¹. The Serbian and Albanian population made up the majority in this area, which was characterized by cultural difficulties, national separation, lack of transport connections with other parts of the country, and insufficient state control. Traditional customs, Albanian life in fission and brotherhoods, tribal consciousness, and archaic understandings led to the exclusivity, primarily of Albanian society². Traditionalism prevailed in Kosovo and Metohija, which showed that the population had its own moral understandings, an original way of understanding life, social and economic organization, and artistic feeling expressed in poetry and ornamentation. The most obvious characteristic of the patriarchal regime was the social and economic organization in the form of tribes, brotherhoods, and family cooperatives, and the customs that were observed within them³.

The circumstances in Yugoslav society between the two world wars were not conducive to maintaining customs as they had been during Turkish rule, because society in the cities had no regard for traditional relations. Schools, through their teachers and professors, and the church, through their clergy, also worked to change customs⁴. However, the population of Kosovo and Metohija lived conservatively, primarily in rural areas, was slow to change and had difficulty accepting innovations, and was preoccupied with various customs and beliefs that persisted until World War II. Social life in Kosovo and Metohija has attracted the attention of numerous ethnologists who have collected valuable material on it. Particular attention was drawn to folk rules - hospitality, family organization and life in it, family cooperatives, clan-

¹ *Administrativno-teritorijalne promene u NR Srbiji 1834-1954. godine*, Beograd, 1955, pp. 45-48; "Uredba o podeli zemlje na oblasti", *Službene novine Kraljevine SHS*, 92, 28. april 1922, pp. 1-2; "Zakon o nazivu i podeli kraljevine na upravna područja", *Zbirka Službenog glasnika*, XXXVI, Split 1929, 4-5; *Politika*, 7694, 4. oktobar 1929, p. 3, *Politika*, 8375, 3. septembar 1931, p. 3.

² Lj. Dimić, *Kulturna politika u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji: 1918-1941. Deo 3, Politika i stvaralaštvo*, Beograd, 1997, p. 125.

³ J. Cvijić, *Balkansko poluostrvo i južnoslovenske zemlje: osnove antropogeografije*, Beograd, 2011, p. 122.

⁴ V. Bovan, *Srpska svadba na Kosovu i Metohiji*, Priština, 2004, pp. 172-173.

tribal life, artificial kinship (godfatherhood, blood brothers, blood sisters), wedding customs, the village community and its role in life⁵. The research of weddings and wedding customs in Kosovo and Metohija was primarily carried out by ethnologists Vladimir Bovan, Milenko S. Filipović, Grigorije Božović, Vidosava Nikolić-Stojančević, M.S. Vlahović and others. Also, in my previous papers, I dealt with social life and customs in Kosovo and Metohija in the period between the two world wars⁶. In my paper, I will try to provide an overview of the process of concluding a marriage and the marital union itself as one of the significant customs in the area of Kosovo and Metohija in the interwar period, but also later.

Family and family cooperative: circumstances for marriage

Communities in Kosovo and Metohija based on blood kinship were the family and the family cooperative („porodična zadruga“). The family cooperative was one of the remnants of the clan system among the Serbian people. It housed several generations of one ancestor, and it preserved collective ownership, collective production and use of goods, and the social equality of all members, which was

⁵ P. Vlahović, "Etnološke odrednice Kosova i Metohije", in *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, edited by Mirjana Menković, Beograd, 2004, pp. 220–228; P. Vlahović, "Etnološko proučavanje Kosova i Metohije", in *Zbornik okruglog stola o naučnom istraživanju Kosova održanog 26. и 27. februara 1985*, edited by Pavle Ivić, Beograd, 1988, p. 134. An extensive bibliography on ethnology has been published in the book: G. Jovanović, *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije. Prilog bibliografiji*, Beograd, 2004, which lists journals and books from more than one hundred and fifty years old to the latest editions related to this field.

⁶ B. Slavković Mirić, *Političke, ekonomske i kulturne prilike na Kosovu i Metohiji 1929-1941*, Beograd, 2018; B. Slavković Mirić, "Tradition and customs in Kosovo and Metohija within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia", in *Miorița - Revista de etnografie și folclor*, 27, 2021, pp. 68-79; B. Slavković Mirić, "Neighborly Relations in Kosovo and Metohija between the Two World Wars – Examples of Family Cooperatives (porodične zadruge)", in *Slavonic Review*, 1/2023, pp. 29-49; B. Slavković Mirić, „Folk customs and beliefs in Kosovo and Metohia between the two world wars”, in *The Yearbook of Balkan and Baltic Studies*, 6/2023, pp. 119-143; B. Slavković Mirić, "A Glance into the Everyday Life of the Albanian National Minority in Kosovo and Metohija 1929-1941", in *Lost in the Kaleidoscope: National Minorities in Yugoslavia*, edited by B. Slavković Mirić, E. S. Omerović, Beograd, 2024, pp. 361-400.

ensured by the agreement⁷. Family cooperatives were popular in the 19th century, but they were also present in the 1930s in Kosovo and Metohija (cooperative in Turkish "kalabalik" and in Albanian "shpianik")⁸. Cooperative life was better preserved in the Metohija area among the Albanians, where there were cooperatives with up to 80 members⁹. Family cooperatives provided a kind of substitute for a physical organization, and it was naturally easier to raise a larger number of children in a cooperative than in a "single" household¹⁰. The family cooperative was "a small state that guarded its borders, had its own customs, and where anyone who could go to war was a soldier"¹¹. In addition, there were bi-religious cooperatives, made up of members of the Catholic and Islamic faiths, because some members "Turkified" and some retained their faith (ethnologist Milisav Lutovac recorded such a case in 1936 in the Metohija village of Kosurić). In such households, there was exceptional attention to the customs and religious obligations of those of a different faith, primarily because they were close relatives, and also because of the economic interests of the same household¹².

The family cooperative was headed by a householder and a housewife. The elder negotiated everything with all the adult men in the family cooperative. He took care of the house and household chores. In the family, there were names for men and women according to age. From 5 to 9 years old they were children. From 10 to 15 years old, a man was a

⁷ V. Nikolić-Stojančević, *Etnološka proučavanja Srba u Metohiji*, Leposavić, 2003, pp. 11–27; J. Cvijić, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

⁸ M. Vlahović, "Etnološka promatranja na Kosovu polju", in *Južni pregled*, 12, decembar 1930, pp. 574–577.

⁹ M. Barjaktarović, *O porodičnim zadrugama na Kosovu i Metohiji*, in *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, edited by Mirjana Menković, Beograd, 2004, pp. 328–353; M.S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, Beograd, 1967, pp. 50–52; P. Vlahović, "Etnološke odrednice Kosova i Metohije", in *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, edited by Mirjana Menković, Beograd, 2004, pp. 220–228; A. Urošević, *O Kosovu: gradovi, naselja i drugi antropogeografski spisi*, Priština, 2009, pp. 240–242; *Vardar*, 4. januar 1934, 12.

¹⁰ M. Barjaktarović, *op. cit.*, pp. 328–353.

¹¹ Archive of Serbia, Fund BIA (Bezbednosno informativna agencija), d. 112, M. Barjaktarović, *Život i običaji Arbanasa od dolaska Turaka do naših dana*.

¹² M. Barjaktarović, *op. cit.*, pp. 328–353.

"boy" („dečko“), and a woman was a "girl" („devojče“). From 16 to 18, a man was a "big boy", and a woman was a „girl for marriage“. A „groom“ was a man who proposed to a girl and would be married in a year. A „proposed girl“ was the one who was given a ring. The „bride“ wore this name for a year after entering into marriage. She was a „woman“ when she gave birth to children, and a young man when he got married was a „husband“. After the age of 50, a man was called an „old man“ (Gnjilane, Sredska)¹³.

The work in family cooperative was organized as the older members of the cooperative determined. The men did all the harder work. The women were housewives in shifts, they did housework and they did not do field work (except that the women picked fruit, reaped grain and mowed grass). There was a strict division into men's and women's work in the house. The women had to prepare food, take care of and work with the children, do all the work in the garden and in many cases they worked with poultry and livestock. They carried water from wells, often from neighbors, because not every house had its own. They washed clothes with the „lukšija“¹⁴, because there were no detergent. They used pork soap made from pork fat and caustic soda. The women sewed, mended and made clothes. They got up early, lit a kerosene lamp, and went to bed late. In winter, they pickled cabbage, made pickles, dried cheese, and made butter from milk. They kneaded bread in „naćva“¹⁵ and baked it in brick-built bakeries that were fueled with „tala“ (corn) or straw. They usually baked five pans of bread each. They rarely visited each other because they had no time to rest. They would mow hay and clover in the fields. When it was market day, they would go shopping,

¹³ T. Vukanović, *Srbi na Kosovu*, I, Vranje, 1986, pp. 223–225.

¹⁴ Lukšija is a special liquid that was obtained from ashes thanks to potassium carbonate and water. This liquid was ideal for washing clothes, but also for other household tasks such as washing floors or washing furniture. Home-made soaps for washing clothes were also often made, and they were most often obtained with the help of fat and luksia. Fat was obtained from bones, skins, inedible pieces of meat. The above-mentioned parts were boiled and finally mixed with lukšija in order to obtain hard laundry soaps that could be stored in cellars and used as needed.

¹⁵ Naćve is the name for a hollow vessel made of solid wood, with a wide open top, for kneading dough.

but only if they had sold some of their produce¹⁶.

Children's respect for their parents was particularly emphasized. The host could punish his children, but they were not allowed to "raise a hand" against him, which also applied to a married son if they lived in a family community¹⁷. Real estate (houses, land, and other buildings), as well as livestock, money, and debts, were held in common. From the cooperative property, each member received what he or she needed (food, clothing, and shoes), and smokers also received tobacco¹⁸.

The disintegration of family cooperatives was primarily influenced by the agrarian reform, but also by the growing desire of individual cooperative members to dispose of their personal earnings independently¹⁹. Separated families lived in the same building. However, even where family cooperatives began to decline, family relations were the same as they were in a cooperative when it came to the division and distribution of labor, inheritance, order of marriage, eldership, etc. A son did not leave his parents' house anywhere in the village, but remained there until his parents died. The community of property and labor was so significant that often the families that made up the cooperative shared the house and kept the entire property or part of it, thus creating a cooperative²⁰. When a family cooperative was divided, new cooperatives or families were created from it, which became sections „odeljci“ (in the Gornja Morava region); sections formed a single blood community, clan (among the Serbs in Prizren's Podgora, kabila, fis or kinship). Each clan had its own plot in the cemetery. Members of one clan who lived in the same village, as a rule, were together and their houses formed a single neighborhood (in Albanian "maala", in Turkish "takim"), which was named after the clan

¹⁶ P. Denda, P. Dželetović-Ivanov, *Suvi do*, Beograd, 1993, pp. 37–39.

¹⁷ T. Vukanović, *op. cit.*, pp. 223–225.

¹⁸ M. Barjaktarović, *op. cit.*, pp. 328–353.

¹⁹ M. S. Filipović, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–52; M. Barjaktarović, *op. cit.*, pp. 328–353.

²⁰ V. Nikolić-Stojančević, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–27; M. S. Filipović, "Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji", in *Spomenica dvadesetpetogodišnjice oslobođenja Južne Srbije: 1912–1937*, edited by Aleksa Jovanović, Skoplje, 1937, pp. 451–457.

itself²¹. Muslim clans generally took on the names of the great Albanian fises, and were considered one with them²². They did not enter into marital relations with each other, although in some places this was violated, especially due to the Sharia law's permission to marry relatives of the fourth degree of blood relationship²³. There was a ban on endogamy in the village even when all the residents were not from the same fise²⁴. The prohibition of endogamy could not be maintained among Catholic Albanians, because they avoided marriage with Catholic Serbs and even married within the same family, when the relationship was beyond the fourth degree. For the same reasons, endogamy within the family also existed among Catholic Serbs²⁵. Among the Albanians in Podrima (the area on the left side of the Drim towards Prizren, and most of the land of the municipalities of Orahovac and Velika Hoča) (and also among the Serbs in Sredska and Ljubizda, villages in the Prizren municipality in southern Kosovo and Metohija) there were cases of daughter-in-law marriage („snahočestvo“), for example with a son's daughter-in-law. In the Žur municipality, near Prizren, in 1940 there were several Muslims married to two wives, because Islam permitted bigamy²⁶.

Preparations for marriage

Marriage was considered a necessity on which the survival of the individual and the family community depended. The young man's family gained another member to support the family, but also a wife who would strengthen the family with new members. Not only those with severe physical disabilities entered into marriage, and since there were

²¹ M. S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, pp. 52-56; T. Vukanović, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-225.

²² A. Urošević, *O Kosovu: gradovi, naselja i drugi antropogeografski spisi*, pp. 80-82.

²³ A. Urošević, *Gornja Morava i Izornik*, Priština, 1993, pp. 126-135.

²⁴ A. Urošević, *O Kosovu: gradovi, naselja i drugi antropogeografski spisi*, pp. 80-82, 240-242.

²⁵ A. Urošević, *Gornja Morava i Izornik*, pp. 126-135.

²⁶ M. S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, pp. 50, 141.

more girls than boys, every girl had the opportunity to get married²⁷. Also, a widower could remarry after a year, and the wedding took place in the evening and was usually not a joyous occasion²⁸.

Girls were preferred to be married where there were fewer family members. From childhood, "order" in raising children was observed, which was reflected in the division according to gender and age. Younger brothers and sisters waited their turn until the older ones got married. Until the dissolution of family cooperatives, and even later, parents were the main ones in the marriage process. The main concern of the woman in the family cooperative was to inquire about girls and young men who could be considered for marriage, and the main goal was to make the young man or girl marry as well as possible. The first sign of parental concern for this was the different clothing of young people who were old enough for marriage. Girls were distinguished by their hats, as well as by the front and back aprons, which were different from those of married women. First of all, whether she had menstruated, and whether she did housework was also appreciated, as was her behavior towards her elders and other members of her family. Young men grew moustaches, shaved, and wore trousers („čakšire“), and until then they had worn shirts. The age for marriage was between 17 and 25, with men often later, because they needed time to acquire the means to cover the costs of marriage and paying the bride price²⁹.

Usually, marriages were made between people of similar financial status and from the same or a nearby village, or the same ethnic group or geographical unit. It was a great shame for a Serbian girl to „run away to“ an Albanian or for an Albanian to „abduct“ a Serbian girl, which would lead to blood feuds. There were a small number of mixed marriages, only by choice or by exception. In all these examples, the Serbian women adopted the religion, language and costume of the Albanians³⁰. Marriage could be arranged by agreement and consent of

²⁷ M. S. Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, p. 476.

²⁸ B. Nušić, *Kosovo: opis zemlje i naroda*, Niš, 2021, pp. 136-138.

²⁹ M. S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, p. 50.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 141.

two families, by the girl „running away to“ the boy she wanted, or by the boy „kidnapping“ the girl. The first way was the most reasonable and common. The second was when her family did not agree to give her to the boy she wanted. The third was when the girl herself did not want to marry or when her family did not want to give her away³¹.

The most important thing was that the young man and the girl for the wedding were of “good lineage”, and the girl was more valued if she was bigger, taller, and more resourceful in household chores. There were different criteria for marriage. For example, in Gora and Opolje (in the vicinity of Prizren) there were examples of them not intermarrying with their Albanian neighbors, citing different language, customs, and costumes as reasons (Gora was inhabited by Muslim Serbs who had converted to Islam, and Opolje by the Albanian-speaking group). However, Albanian girls were happy to marry boys from Gora because of their higher material and cultural level³².

The family of the girl who was to be married chose a “matchmaker”, who went on the proposal alone and carried a gift of “decorated bottle” (a bottle of brandy with a silk scarf decorated with silver and gold coins)³³. On this occasion, it was determined how much money the young man’s parents should pay the parents for the girl. Giving a bride price (5,000 to 30,000 dinars, among Catholic and Muslim Albanians 50,000–60,000) was one of the main wedding customs³⁴. Higher prices were paid in inaccessible mountain villages, where there were fewer girls, but in some places church authorities influenced the price reduction³⁵. Grigorije Božović describes how this custom has become a “burden and dirty trade” for Albanians and states that “the Albanian is greedy for money and when he slips in this regard he knows no boundaries or shame. He is beaten by the scandal like any primitive

³¹ M. S. Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, p. 477.

³² D. Bogdanović, *Knjiga o Kosovu*, Beograd, 2006, pp. 113–121; M. Lutovac, *Gora i Opolje*, Beograd, 1955, pp. 5–83.

³³ M. Vlahović, “Etnološka promatranja na Kosovu polju”, in *Južni pregled*, 12, decembar 1930, pp. 574–577.

³⁴ V. Nikolić-Stojančević, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–72; M. S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, pp. 69–70.

³⁵ M. S. Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, p. 477.

peasant. He gives his word for the girl and blackmails his friend. Let's say with 12,000 dinars. The latter pays him half and stops because he can't go any further. The girl's relatives find another man, take all the money, hand over the girl to him, and leave the first man in disgrace and without compensation. There were sad examples when the girl got engaged three times in this way. The injured and offended sought protection in vain from the authorities and the Muslim spiritual courts. The Sharia judges showed little understanding and even less real consideration and goodwill. There was corruption and fraud. That was the real misfortune for the Arnauts. They began to kill. One killed a robber in the courthouse itself, a prominent man from Rugova, another killed a man with an axe on a market day in the middle of Peć, and a third killed the mayor's councilor from Podgora"³⁶.

The bride price was given on every major holiday, until the girl's parents approved the proposal. At that time, tokens (a ring and gifts) were sent as a sign of consent and the promise made. In addition, the groom's family had to cover all the costs of the wedding, including the bride's dress and gifts for her family³⁷.

Among Muslim Serbs, the understanding of marriage is generally the same as among Orthodox Serbs. Parents decide on the marriage of their children, so among them the matchmaker played a very important role: he found the girl, tried to get her consent, brought gifts from one side to the other, agreed on the wedding day, the price of the marriage proposal, as well as the amount and type of gifts that the groom's house should give. On the eve of the wedding, the bride's hair and nails were dyed with henna by the women from her family. The male wedding guests led the bride on horseback, who was under a red blanket. There was great rejoicing in the groom's house. Among Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija, weddings were held on Thursdays, and in the area of

³⁶ G. Božović, *Slike Kosova i Metohije: putopisi i reportaže*, Priština, 1998, pp. 91–92; *Vardar*, 10. februar 1934, 2.

³⁷ M. S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, p. 477.

Prizren, all young couples were married on the same day, as among Orthodox Serbs³⁸.

Wedding customs

From engagement to wedding, it usually took several months, or even several years. This was the case in areas where young men went abroad to earn a living („pečalba“), because the young man had to work outside the country to collect money for the bride price, wedding expenses, and starting a their own family³⁹. During this time, parents and closest relatives instructed the fiancée in household chores and the obligations of married life. This mainly concerned running the household, instructing her in wedding customs and working in the house. Mothers especially instructed their daughters in obedience and respect for men. Parents did not consider it their duty to discuss marriage and handing over, as well as to introduce young people to sexual life, so this was done by the closest younger relatives, but again, men were more knowledgeable in this than girls⁴⁰.

The engagement could be broken if the girl's parents demanded too high a price for her, if someone from the girl's or the boy's family committed some dishonorable act, and if the fiancée did not adhere to customs. Among Albanians, a young man could break off the engagement if he didn't like the girl, but he would lost what he had already paid, and if the girl broke off the engagement, she was not allowed to marry another man until the young man who had been left behind found another girl. Also, if the engagement was broken off in an insulting way, blood was owed⁴¹.

³⁸ M. S. Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, p. 482.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 477.

⁴⁰ M. S. Filipović, "Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji", p. 478.

⁴¹ N. F. Pavković, *Pravni običaji na Kosovu i Metohiji*, in *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, pp. 120–121; J. Predojević, "Tradicionalni bračni i porodični odnosi albanskog stanovništva sa Kosova i Metohije u svetlu Zakonika Leke Dukadinija", in *Stanovništvo*, 1–4, 2002, pp. 129–145. It is interesting to note the claim of the president of the Dečani municipality that three things will ruin Albanians: brandy, taxes, and buying a bride.

Weddings were usually held in the fall, less often during the summer. Also, wedding celebrations were usually held on a Sunday (Thursday among the Turks), although there was a custom to hold them on a "slava" day (the celebration of the family saint) so that both could be "done at one expense". Wedding festivities began a few days before the wedding, and the wedding itself was held on the last day after noon on the eve of the wedding day⁴². Among the wedding guests, the most important were the old wedding guest („stari svat“)⁴³, the best man, and the hosts of the groom's and bride's houses. The bannerman carried the banner. The wedding guests from the groom's house went on horseback, and there was shooting and singing along the way. Upon arrival at the girl's house, the wedding guests would sit at the table, and the time would pass in jokes and songs. Also, the wedding guests who came would receive gifts from the girl, and the wedding „pogača“ (a type of bread baked in the ashes of the fireplace) would be shared. If the bride's house was nearby, the wedding guests would return to their homes for the night, and if not, they would spend the night at the girl's family. The next morning, the girls and young brides from the village would dress girl as a bride. Then she would put on a richly embroidered shirt for the first time, and her face would be covered. The groom's older brother-in-law would shave him, regardless of whether he had a beard or not. The wedding guests would then go with the bride to the church, where the groom was already waiting⁴⁴.

The wedding was the most complex of all rituals and customs, because it included many elements from folk life, mythological beliefs, various superstitions and superstitions, elements of magic, customary

(Archive of Yugoslavia, Fund Predsedništvo Ministarskog saveta - Centralni pres-biro, 38-9-37, Dopisnik u Skoplju, 20. septembar 1930).

⁴² M. S. Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, p. 478.

⁴³ A special place in family relations, besides the godfather, is occupied by another person, who may be blood related to the family - the old man. In addition to godparents, the old man is a witness at a church wedding, but also at a civil one. This significant figure at traditional Serbian weddings is usually the oldest unmarried member of the groom's family. In some regions, the old man can also be the bride's uncle or cousin.

⁴⁴ M. S. Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, p. 480.

law and elements of oral folk art. Everything at the wedding was determined by a single oral script, which had been created for centuries⁴⁵. This custom changed fastest in cities, slower in towns and villages, and slowest in mountain villages⁴⁶. Orthodox churches in which the wedding ceremony took place were always full during these festivities, although the church was losing its value in those years⁴⁷. Differences in wedding customs were present in relation to the village and the city, but they also differed between villages, for example mountain and plain villages, but also between those that were plain villages, depending on whether they were ethnically pure or mixed. However, the wedding custom had the same meaning everywhere, preserving the ideological and thematic basis that connected all these elements as a common denominator⁴⁸.

The bride was brought into the groom's house with special customs. She was taken off the horse she had come on, a little child was brought to her, she had to enter the house with her right foot, perform various customs on the threshold and at the hearth, light the fire, bow to her father-in-law and mother-in-law, kiss their hands etc. The entire village participated in the wedding festivities at the groom's house. After lunch or dinner, the bride poured water on the hands of individual wedding guests to wash them, and they gave her gifts. Then the bride would give gifts to her father-in-law and others in the house. In the evening, the wedding guests would disperse⁴⁹.

In the morning, the bride was solemnly taken to the water spring for the first time. After the wedding, it was agreed when the newlyweds would go on a visit and to whom. After a week or two, the daughter and son-in-law would be invited by her father for their first visit, and then the father-in-law and mother-in-law would come for their first visit to

⁴⁵ V. Bovan, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19, 39; M. S. Vlahović, *Sredačka župa*, Skoplje, 1931, pp. 43-45; B. Nušić, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁴⁶ V. Bovan, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

⁴⁷ M. Isić, *Seljaštvo u Srbiji: 1918-1941. Knjiga 2, Prosvetno-kulturni i verski život*, Beograd, 2009, pp. 419-433; R. Vest, *Crno jagnje i sivi soko: putovanje kroz Jugoslaviju*, Beograd, 2000, p. 745.

⁴⁸ V. Bovan, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁴⁹ M. S. Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, p. 480.

the son-in-law. This first visit could be when there was a family or village "slava", and then in the future the two houses would be visited regularly on such occasions⁵⁰.

After the wedding, there was a false sense of shame in the married life of the spouses, the wife did not address her husband in front of others, nor did he address her. They hid their moods and feelings from others. The crampedness of marital relations was increased by the tradition that each married couple lived with their children in a separate room, often sharing a bed with them. However, family morality was at a high level for everyone. The greatest misfortune in a marriage was the lack of children, which was primarily attributed to the woman's fault, but sterility in the man was not a rare occurrence. Such phenomena were treated in monasteries and with magical remedies. But, the number of divorces was low, and this also applied to the number of illegitimate children. Data from the Supreme Court of the Serbian Orthodox Church showed that the strongest marriages were in Southern Serbia (compared to Belgrade, for example)⁵¹. There was also a low number of divorces among Muslims. According to statistical data from 1929, in the first ten months of that year, 5,473 Muslim marriages were concluded in the area of the Supreme Mufti's office and 691 were divorced (In Đakovica, 220 marriages, 15 divorces; in Kosovska Mitrovica, 279, 30; in Prizren, 699, 57; in Peć, 307, 49; in Kačanik, 89, 12; in Priština, 200, 33). Muftis emphasized that the difficulty of obtaining a divorce leads spouses to extramarital unions, but one should still bear in mind the traditional customs that gave girls limited freedom of choice when entering into marriage. The largest number of illegitimate children was in the Kosovska Mitrovica district, and the smallest in the Gora district, and among the cities, the largest number was in Priština, and the smallest in Prizren⁵².

⁵⁰ M. S. Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, p. 481.

⁵¹ V. Jovanović, *Vardarska banovina: 1929-1941*, Beograd, 2011, p. 543; V. Simeunović, *Stanovništvo Jugoslavije i socijalističkih republika: 1921-1961: ukupno stanovništvo, polna i starosna struktura*, Beograd, 1964, p. 42.

⁵² Archive of Yugoslavia, Fund Ministarstvo pravde Kraljevine Jugoslavije, 63-29, Vrhovno muftijstvo Ministarstvu pravde, 9. decembar 1929; *Statistički godišnjak 1938-*

Hygienic and cultural circumstances in marriage

In many villages in Kosovo and Metohija, hygiene conditions were unsatisfactory. Bathing was a luxury, even where rivers passed through. There were women who bathed for the last time before their wedding. Village baths, which were used more and more every year, contributed a lot to this⁵³. The village costume, despite its beauty, was often impractical and unhygienic, because no distinction was made between winter and summer clothing. Underwear was worn for several weeks, even a whole month, and peasants often slept in their clothes and shoes, especially during field work in the summer⁵⁴. Despite this, traditional folk costumes are particularly important for ethnological studies, because they were particularly distinguished by their beauty and diversity⁵⁵. The costume fit into the geographical and climatic environment, indicating the economic activity and well-being of the community. The promotion of traditional clothing was in the service of building national consciousness and integration at the national level. The costume emphasized strict regional and group endogamy, indirectly indicated the social status of individuals, age, and religious affiliation, and the regional and ethnic characteristics of folk costumes were retained until World War II, when a kind of unification began⁵⁶. In areas where Serbs and Albanians lived mixedly, as well as in areas that were in contact with Albanians, the so-called ethnic mimicry occurred, primarily in men's costumes („čakshire“, red belt, džamadan or talagan (a waistcoat worn over a shirt as part of a men's folk costume worn in

1939, knjiga 9, Beograd, 1939, pp. 146–153; B. Slavković Mirić, *Političke, ekonomske i kulturne prilike na Kosovu i Metohiji 1929-1941*, Beograd, 2018, pp. 403-404.

⁵³ *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1936*, Beograd, 1937, pp. 32-34, 36-37; *Godišnjak o narodnom zdravlju i radu zdravstvenih ustanova i organa 1937-38*, Beograd, 1939, pp. 113-116.

⁵⁴ S. Čupković, *Dvadeset godina naše kolonizacije u Srezu Nerodimlje na Kosovu*, Beograd, 1940, p. 508.

⁵⁵ The Museum of Kosovo and Metohija had a collection of folk costumes from various regions in its ethnographic collection (V. Kozarac, T. Vukanović, K. Halimi, *Etnografska zbirka Muzeja Kosova i Metohije*, Priština, 1956).

⁵⁶ V. Jovanović, *op. cit.*, pp. 563-564.

winter on formal occasions), instead of the djurdina (long vest) worn by Albanians and white hat „keče“⁵⁷.

The Kosovo folk costume had special features and stood out from the costumes in neighboring regions. They wore a hemp shirt, a sleeveless vest, trousers with a belt, and knitted socks. Women's clothing was more luxurious than men's, embroidered and decorated. Women's costume occupied one of the first places among folk costumes in terms of beauty and taste. There were several types of women's costumes – Gnjilane, Sredska, Kosovo, Đakovica, Peć, Prekoruplje⁵⁸. Serbian women in towns (Peć, Đakovica, Prizren) had special clothing, similar to the costumes of Catholic Albanian women and Serbian women in Tetovo. This costume was characterized by pants „shalvare“ with very wide legs and a coat lined with fur (this was especially characteristic in Podrima). While in the northern parts of Metohija, black was the predominant color in women's costumes (it was considered a sign of mourning for the victims of the Battle of Kosovo 1389 as well as the death of Marko Kraljević in the battle with the Turks), in the south around Prizren, red was the predominant color⁵⁹.

In some places, it was important for the bride and groom to come from villages that had the same costume (Ljubižda). A characteristic feature of the Serbian women's costume was the "sapletci", a special way of braiding the hair on the head with the help of accessories from their own and other people's hair. Women washed their hair once a month or two, they took the water for washing from a clear river and made a paste of ash or washed their hair with soap. After washing, they smeared it with oil to make it shinier. The bride received a comb on her wedding day, and it was not borrowed because of the "magic". Other accessories were small combs and hairpins of various shapes and colors that they bought in the city. The comb was also worn by a woman when she died⁶⁰. Ears were pierced in early childhood with a needle, and the ear was

⁵⁷ P. Vlahović, *Etnološke odrednice Kosova i Metohije*, pp. 220–228.

⁵⁸ B. Nušić, *op. cit.*, pp. 150–151.

⁵⁹ M. S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, pp. 44–48.

⁶⁰ V. Nikolić- Stojančević, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

previously rubbed with nettle. On the head was worn an "otoz" (a round band sewn with white cloth), which covered part of the head from the forehead to the crown. The everyday „otoz“ was without embroidery or jewelry, with a white scarf over it. For holidays and weddings, women wore an „otoz“ wrapped in a silk scarf embroidered with gold and silk and decorated with coins and aspen leaves⁶¹.

Albanians wore narrow trousers, a sleeveless vest with a belt over their shirt (two types were purchased from Đakovica and Skopje). A coat „mintan“ (white, black or red) was worn on top, and then a džurdina or ljurka (a short-sleeved tunic made of wool and worn over a suit), which was used as a hood if the weather was bad. The most common type of clothing was a white „keče“ or a thick brown cap. Albanian women wore a shirt, a red vest that reached below the knees, and a mintan. Their footwear consisted of short socks and traditional peasant shoes „opanak“. A girl aged 13 to 15 hid her face. Older women wore a „feredže“ (a loose dress made of black cloth with sleeves). Catholic Serbian women wore vests made of black cloth and tied their heads with a black scarf made of local thin cloth. Muslim Serbs, or Torbeši, dressed similarly to the Albanians. Women's costumes were influenced by Turkish costumes, they wore wide pants „dimijas“, long dress „anterija“ and vests, and they hid their faces. The Turks had simple costumes, „čakšire“ with narrow legs, a blue vest, a mintan with sleeves, and in winter they wore a wool coat ("kepe", „gunj“). In Kosovo and the vicinity of Prizren, fur coats were worn - bought from craftsmen or made at home from tanned leather. Footwear was woolen socks and „opanak“. On their heads they wore a black cloth cap, a hat or a fez⁶².

In the interwar period, sewing and knitting machines were also used in many villages. Courses were held in urban areas, the most famous of which were in Peć, attended by girls from all over Kosovo and Metohija. Craftsmen in the villages began to use machine sewing⁶³. In

⁶¹ M. Vlahović, "Etnološka promatranja na Kosovu polju", in *Južni pregled*, 11, novembar 1930, pp. 511–517.

⁶² M. S. Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, pp. 439–446, 487–496.

⁶³ T. Vukanović, *Srbi na Kosovu*, II, Vranje, 1986, pp. 95–111.

the Sredačka župa, the costume began to be lost under the influence of the city of Prizren, because the city began to replace the folk costume with its products. The cultural influence of the city penetrated not only from the immediate surroundings, but also together with migrant workers „pečalbari“ and from various distant cities. „Pečalbari“ returned to their native land and opened shops that had not existed in these areas before. However, the broad masses of Muslims were reluctant to abandon their traditional clothing⁶⁴.

Finally, we can conclude that the majority of the population in Kosovo and Metohija lived a traditional lifestyle and thus respected customs that had been passed down through generations. One of these customs was the preparations for the wedding and the wedding itself, as well as life in a family cooperative. The family, especially women, played a major role in these customs. Serbs and Albanians who made up the majority in the area of Kosovo and Metohija had their own customs related to the wedding, which were very complicated because it included many elements from folk life, mythological beliefs, various superstitions and superstitions, elements of magic, customary law and elements of oral folk art. Everything at the wedding was determined by a single oral script, which had been created for centuries. This custom changed fastest in cities, slower in towns and villages, and slowest in mountain villages. However, some customs related to the wedding remained after the Second World War and still exist in the area of Kosovo and Metohija.

Summary

Kosovo and Metohija in the interwar period were part of the Yugoslav state. The Serbian and Albanian population made up the majority in this area, which was characterized by traditionalism, national separation, transport disconnection with other parts of the country and insufficient state control. Social life in Kosovo and Metohija has attracted the attention of numerous ethnologists who have collected

⁶⁴ V. Jovanović, *op. cit.*, pp. 564–565.

valuable material on it. Attention was drawn to folk rules - the village community and its role in life, the organization of the family cooperative and life in it, clan and tribal life, artificial kinship (godparents, blood brothers, blood sisters), wedding customs. The wedding was the most complex of all rituals and customs, because it included many elements from folk life, mythological beliefs, superstitions, elements of magic, customary law and elements of oral folk art. Everything at the wedding was determined by a single oral scenario, which had been created for centuries. However, the circumstances in society between the two world wars were not conducive to maintaining customs as they were during the Turkish rule, because society in the cities had no regard for traditional relations. The school, through its teachers and professors, and the church, through the clergy, also acted towards changing customs. However, the population of Kosovo and Metohija lived conservatively, primarily in rural areas, was slow to change, and was preoccupied with a variety of customs and beliefs that persisted until World War II.

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