



TRADITION AND CUSTOMS IN KOSOVO AND METOHIJA WITHIN THE KINGDOM OF YUGOSLAVIA¹

Božica SLAVKOVIĆ MIRIĆ²

Abstract: *The work, written on the basis of appropriate historiographical and ethnographic literature, deals with traditions and customs in Kosovo and Metohija in the period between the two world wars. The population of Kosovo and Metohija lived conservatively, primarily in rural areas, changed slowly and found it difficult to accept innovations, and also was preoccupied with various customs and beliefs. Ethnologists have gathered significant material on these customs. In our paper, we will deal with customary law, folk customs and beliefs, primarily related to folk medicine, wedding and married life, death and funeral, celebration of holidays, and also the role of women in preserving customs. Some customs have survived to this day, especially among the rural population. Also, they represent a very significant ethnographic wealth and part of the cultural heritage of Kosovo and Metohija, as well as the entire Yugoslav and Serbian state.¹²*

Keywords: *Customs, Ethnology, Kosovo and Metohija, The Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Tradition.*

The population of Kosovo and Metohija lived conservatively, primarily in rural areas, changed slowly and found it difficult to accept innovations. They were preoccupied with various customs and beliefs that persisted until World War II. Social life in Kosovo and Metohija attracted the attention of ethnologists who gathered valuable material about it³. The

circumstances in the society between the two world wars did not affect the maintenance of the customs as they were during the Turkish rule, because the new civil society had no regard for the old patriarchal relations. The school acted in the direction of changing customs through its teachers and professors, but also the church through the clergy⁴. In our paper we will deal with customary law, folk customs and beliefs, primarily related to folk medicine, wedding and married life, death and funeral, celebration of holidays, but also the role of women in preserving customs.

Customary law

A special element of people's life in Kosovo and Metohija was legal customs. The people adhered to those laws that they acquired by tradition, and in that way they resolved mutual disputes. Albanians respected the Law of Leka Dukadjini (Kanun I Leke Dukadjinit), a collection of common rights from ancient times adopted by the northern Albanian tribes, which contained 1,263 paragraphs and according to which everything should be judged by "old and good people"⁵.

¹ The paper was created as a result of work in the Institute for Recent History of Serbia, which is financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of Republic of Serbia, and on the basis of the Agreement on realization and financing of scientific research work of Scientific research organization in 2021 no. 451-03-9 / 2021-14 / 200016 dated 5 February 2021.

² PhD, Research associate, The Institute for Recent History of Serbia in Belgrade.

³ Petar Vlahović, *Etnološke odrednice Kosova i Metohije, in Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, Beograd, Etnografski muzej, Muzej u Prištini (sa izmeštenim sedištem), Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije - Мнемосыне, 2004, pp. 220–228; Petar Vlahović, *Etnološko proučavanje*

Kosova i Metohije, in Zbornik Okruglog stola o naučnom istraživanju Kosova, održanog 26. i 27. februara 1985. godine u Beogradu, Beograd, Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1988, p. 134.

An extensive bibliography on ethnology of Kosovo and Metohija was published in: Gordana Jovanović, *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije: prilog bibliografiji*, Beograd, Etnografski muzej, Muzej u Prištini (sa izmeštenim sedištem), Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije - Мнемосыне, 2004. In this bibliography, magazines and books more than one hundred and fifty years old are listed up to the latest editions related to this field.

⁴ Vladimir Bovan, *Srpska svadba na Kosovu i Metohiji*, Priština, Panorama, 2004, pp. 172–173.

⁵ Archive of Serbia (Hereafter: AS), Belgrade, Fund Security



The children's respect for their parents was expressed, as well as the kinship relations that were maintained to the farthest lines. The inheritance was divided by brothers. The land was difficult to alienate (it was a shame to sell the land), but if that happened, then the closest relatives from the village wondered, which was the most common among Albanians⁶. The money was borrowed, the word and the oath were believed, and it was returned without interest. When a cattle was bought, there was no contract, and it was not possible to terminate the contract. Leasing cattle to Serbs was called "ćesim" (There was a saying: "Cattle do not die on ćesim")⁷.

In Metohija, courage, honor and dignity were the most pronounced characteristics of people⁸. Albanians were characterized by over-emphasized sensitivity, quick reaction and recklessness. They drew their weapons and stepped into the blood for a trifle - swearing or reprimanding⁹. The traditional institution was blood revenge, which, in addition to the desire and work of the authorities to eradicate it, also existed in the interwar period. *Službeni glasnik Vardarske banovine* pointed out that "savagery of this kind was often repeated among Muslims who had misconceptions about law and who take upon themselves the right to be punished by blood revenge"¹⁰. "Besa" (in Albanian - given word, hard faith) was given for moral and religious reasons, so that the murdered

person would be buried according to the established rituals, so "besa" was necessarily given to the killer's side in 24 hours. There was also the "besa of cattle and shepherds", that is, their free movement to pasture¹¹. When the debt was settled, the opponents had to become godparents or brothers¹². If both sides reconciled then both gave a certain number of guarantors who were responsible for achieving blood reconciliation¹³.

According to The Kanon of Leka Dukagjini, the killed guest, the raped woman and the desecrated weapons were inviolable and punished with blood revenge¹⁴. Hospitality was very important for Albanians. They considered any person as a guest, regardless of their age, gender, confessional, national or social affiliation, if they asked for any help in their house¹⁵. The fraternity was represented and held as one house, it was expressed by drinking blood, and both Serbs and Albanians fraternized with each other. The godfathership was highly respected, it was not annulled or changed, nor was a conflict entered¹⁶. The people of Rugova "guarded the *kumbarija* (godfathership) and the brotherhood with the Serbs as sacred and childishly believed in them, so there were examples when they paid for it with their lives"¹⁷.

Folk customs and beliefs

Folk customs and beliefs had almost always accompanied many mysterious and mystical actions that people had done on various occasions and for various reasons, so they were considered as one concept.¹⁸ The

Information Agency (Hereafter: SIA), Fund 112, Mirko Barjaktarović, *Život i običaji Arbanasa od dolaska Turaka do naših dana*; Milenko S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa*, Beograd, Naučno delo, 1967, p. 141; *Kanon Leke Dukadžinija*. Zagreb, Stvarnost, 1986; Milosav Jelić, *Albanija: zapisi o ljudima i događajima*, Beograd, G. Kon, 1933, p. 4.

⁶ Tatomir Vukanović, *Srbi na Kosovu I*, Vranje, Nova Jugoslavija, 1986, pp. 229-245.

⁷ Nikola F. Pavković, *Pravni običaji na Kosovu i Metohiji*, in *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, Beograd, Etnografski muzej, Muzej u Prištini (sa izmeštenim sedištem), Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije - Мнемозыне, 2004, pp. 114-120.

⁸ *Zetski glasnik*, no. 70, 1936, p. 2.

⁹ AS, SIA, Fund 112, E. Čabej, *Život i običaji Arbanasa*.

¹⁰ *Službeni list Vardarske banovine*, 17 June 1932, p. 6; Grigorije Božović, *Slike Kosova i Metohije*, Priština: NUB „Ivo Andrić“, 2006, p. 75.

¹¹ Milenko S. Filipović, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 141.

¹³ *Kanon Leke Dukadžinija*, clauses 122 and 855.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, clauses 920-931.

¹⁵ Grigorije Božović, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 103; Vladan Jovanović, *Istorijsko, svakodnevno i privatno na prostoru Vardarske banovine*, in *Privatni život kod Srba u dvadesetom veku*, Beograd: Clio, 2007, p. 551; Atanasije Urošević, *O Kosovu - antropogeografske studije i drugi spisi*, Priština: Narodna i univerzitetska biblioteka „Ivo Andrić“: Institut za srpsku kulturu; Gnjilane: Knjižara „Sveti Sava“, 2001, pp. 55-57.

¹⁶ Tatomir Vukanović, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-228.

¹⁷ Grigorije Božović, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

¹⁸ Mina Darmanović, *O korišćenju bilja u narodnoj tradiciji*



production cycle (plowing, digging, sowing, harvesting, beekeeping, sheep shearing, etc.) was accompanied by many customs whose goal was to ensure economic existence.¹⁹ The divine value of nature was believed. In the Sredačka župa (near Prizren), trees were respected and certain rituals were associated with them. Also, stones were respected and power was attributed to them, the earth had a magical significance in the treatment of diseases, and it was especially related to the cult of the dead. Fire and hearth were a symbol of life, as was water²⁰. Also, each house had a domestic snake that guarded the house. Both Serbs and Albanians believed in supernatural beings, angels, witches, fairies, devils and specific beings such as *karakondžule*, *samovile*, *čume* and others, and all this had elements of pagan religion²¹. The custom of wearing amulets was widespread, especially among the Muslim population. These were wolf teeth, pig teeth, wolf claw, antique coins, etc. Records written by muslim hodjes were also worn as amulets, so they were placed in special triangular or cylindrical boxes and worn around the neck. An amulet, for example, was a horseshoe that was placed on a threshold or on a door. A piece of yew was a common amulet worn sewn on a belt or shirt²².

Customs related to folk medicine

The wealth of folk medicine in Kosovo and Metohija came as one of the consequences of the cultural and economic backwardness of the population. It was believed that every disease was “written”, fateful or came

through magic - from curses, evil eyes or from “intention”.²³ The disease was called “*lošetinja*” (something very bad), epidemics “*rednja*” (because it went in order), and it was considered that the disease was brought by a warm, “hot” wind. All this was treated with folk remedies, divination, sorcery, various herbs were used to treat some diseases, and in some families the skill of healing was passed from generation to generation. Folk healers (“*vidari*”) were usually women (“*vidarice*”) who were poor and used these treatments to support the family. *Vidarice* learned healing from the elderly and did not tell anyone “because the medicine will not work and they will forget it”. For treatment, they received a reward in the form of a gift or money, and sometimes they treated “for sevap” (for free). Among the Albanians, the Mohammedans practiced healing, most often by giving the sick records against various diseases. Both Serbs and Albanians called the medicine “*iljač*” (Turkish word), and they were procured by a *vidarica*, who, in addition to their use, also performed various magical acts, such as “touching” the ground, blowing in the patient’s face, whispering various “formulas”, etc. The people imagined certain diseases as some living beings with supernatural powers, which harm people. They thought of the “*čuma*” as an ugly woman with torn hair and torn suit, who went from house to house and killed people and cattle. Nervous disorders and madness were said to be an evil spirit (devil [among Serbs], “*drech*” or “*satan*” [among Albanians]), entered a person²⁴.

The villages defended themselves against the disease in various ways. In fear of the “*čuma*”, the fields in the village were plowed with a certain type of ritual. When the sheep goddesses reigned, the diseased throats were buried alive. Donkey’s milk was given to children suffering from whooping cough. For example, they were treated for tuberculosis by leaving the patient to sleep

Srba na Kosovu i Metohiji, in *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, Beograd, Etnografski muzej, Muzej u Prištini (sa izmeštenim sedištem), Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije - Мнемосыне, 2004, pp. 167–179.

¹⁹ Petar Vlahović, *Etnološke odrednice Kosova i Metohije*, pp. 220–228.

²⁰ Vidosava Nikolić-Stojančević, *Etnološka proučavanja Srba u Metohiji*, Leposavić, Institut za srpsku kulturu, 2003, pp. 83–102.

²¹ Milenko S. Filipović, *op. cit.*, p. 71; Tatomir Vukanović, *Lena samovila sa Kosova*, in *Južni pregled*, 1937, no. 4-5, pp. 198–200.

²² Tatomir Vukanović, *Srbi na Kosovu III*, p. 199.

²³ Branislav Nušić, *Kosovo*, Priština, Panorama, 2007, pp. 136–138.

²⁴ Vidosava Nikolić-Stojančević, *op. cit.*, pp. 118–120.



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, and they used various methods for treatment, as well as diphtheria and typhus. Toothache was treated with various herbs or tobacco. Medicinal herbs were picked on St. George's Day, Spasovdan, St. Peter's Day and Vidovdan. The folk doctors *vidarice* dried and prepared the plants, partly for sale on the market, and partly for the needs of their craft. There were folk pharmacies in the towns of Kosovo and Metohija („atarski dućani“) selling medicinal herbs, other folk remedies and pharmaceutical products²⁵.

Illnesses and infertility were “cured” by encircling churches with candles, although this was also done at the Kačanik turkish *turbe*, where Christians came even from the vicinity of Peć and Prizren, while Muslim women did not have that custom. In Prizren, Djakovica and Orahovac, there were turbets that “cured” various diseases. In Prizren, there was a turkish *tekija* with several turbets in the Sarachhana neighborhood, where people came because of cattle, infertility or children's diseases. The second turbe was “Karabash” (“black head” in Turkish), where the sick from fever and infertility came (Mohammedans and Christians). There were eighteen of them in Djakovica, who especially treated the mentally ill²⁶. The deaf, dumb and insane were taken to monasteries. Pilgrimages of various patients to monasteries were based on the custom in the Christian religion that certain saints cure various diseases. In the monasteries, the sick, since the priest would read a prayer to them, crawled under the life and other sacred objects. Everyone went to Serbian monasteries: Serbs, Albanians Mohammedans and Catholics and other nationalities, and well to tekijas (holy places

of Mohammedans where the hodja reads a prayer). There was a hagiographic cult of St. Petar (in Koriša near Prizren), where, in addition to Serbs, Albanians, sometimes also Turks, Vlachs and Roma made a pilgrimage²⁷. It was a famous place for the treatment of the mentally ill monastery Devič in Drenica. The patient was supposed to spend the night in the church near the grave of St. Janičije, and the sick spent a few days in the monastery. Severe mental patients were, if it was necessary, tied to a “crazy linden tree” in order to expel the “devil from the sick”. The monastery had large revenues from these vows. The special role of this monastery was the death of quarreling Serbian families in Metohija and Kosovo. Pilgrimages to the Dečani monastery were also held for various diseases, and the myth of Stefan Dečanski was transmitted (through the monastery dukes who were from the ranks of Albanians) to Albanians as well. In Nerodimlje, St. Uroš was the protector, so they made a pilgrimage to the ruins of the monastery. Famous monasteries for healing were also St. Trinity and St. Mark, and from the churches the church of St. Vrač and St. Petka near Prizren. Among the cult places were springs with healing water, for example in the vicinity of Prizren “Krkunar”, where both Serbs and Albanians came²⁸. In the village of Mušutište near Prizren was the church of St. Bogorodica, to which both Serbs and Muslims came²⁹.

The culture of the female body and the role of women in preserving customs

In the house and family, it was the woman who kept the customs, faith and tradition. The woman was supposed to serve, to be moral, to respect tradition, all religious holidays and rituals. T. Vukanović claims that women in Kosovo were more prudent than men and that they were also more

²⁵ Mina Darmanović, *op. cit.*, pp. 167–179; Milenko S. Filipović, *op. cit.*, p. 75; Tatomir Vukanović, *Srbi na Kosovu II*, pp. 470, 483–484.

²⁶ Darko Krivokapić, *Narodni običaji*, in *Južni pregled*, Oktober – November 1936, p. 337; Vidosava Nikolić-Stojančević, *op. cit.*, pp. 137–138.

²⁷ Tatomir Vukanović, *Srbi na Kosovu*, III, pp. 15, 19–20, 78–92, 93–115.

²⁸ Milenko S. Filipović, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

²⁹ *Vardar*, 8 September 1936, p. 2.



approachable and open for modernization³⁰.

The remnants of oriental life in the position of women were most evident in the Gnjilane County. The woman was like a kind of “pet”, without any rights and freedoms, the woman “was bought” and “the new boss husband tried to get out of her labor force at least the purchase price, and the rest of her forces went to have children”. How much she was bound by traditions was best told by the example of a church celebration, where men played, and women “stood on the side stiff, without words, like sour chickens”³¹. The woman in Goraždevac was very pious, very “conspiratorial” both in costume and posture³². The Albanians from Rugova did not hide their wives, but they “spoke on the road, received guests into the house even when there were no hosts”³³. In Janjevo, for example, despite the developed work and travel abroad, they were very conservative and “small-town” in their way of life. Women were even more withdrawn outside of male society. They did not leave the Turkish costume, although it disappeared³⁴. The women took part in the *prelas* (women’s gatherings) but also in the celebrations after the first wedding night. Almost only women’s jobs were sorcery, incantation and caring for the sick, as well as caring for the dead. In the Kosovo-Metohija area, it was especially developed that the girls built special girls’ housewives holes in the ground, so they stayed in them during the winter during the day and worked³⁵.

The female child was “someone else’s burden”. From the moment of the engagement, she belonged to her husband’s home and family, and the girl’s family had no obligations to her (except in the case of her husband’s

death). From the moment of marriage, a woman was obliged to contribute with her work, to give birth and raise offspring, but without the right to appropriate what she produces, even the children she gives birth to and raises. Female children did not have the right to inherit, because they passed into another gender by marriage. The woman in the family cooperative did not have the right to decide, but obedience was expected from her without discussion; after the division of the cooperative and that changed, the husband consulted with the wife on various issues, but without her right to decide. In such a traditional environment, the role of a woman was reduced primarily to the role of a mother, so a small percentage of women who did not participate in childbirth was logical. Rebeka West describes how she was very impressed by the “beautiful young woman” she met in Priština, in a clean dressing room, but she “seemed somewhat neglected because she forgot that she had to save her womb”³⁶.

The first menstruation in women occurred in the largest number at the age of 15 and 16. During this period, women normally did all the housework and field work. The sexual life of women began early, from the age of 17, when they usually got married. From the age of 17 to 22, it was also the first birth, although it was considered a shame for a woman to have a child in the first year of marriage. Research had shown that every seventh woman ate better during pregnancy. The husband did not approach the wife during the last months of pregnancy, nor two months after giving birth because the wife was considered unclean or contagious. During pregnancy, women paid more attention to themselves than usual, bathed more often and changed into clean underwear. Pregnant women usually gave birth at home with the help of their husbands and some older women, in unhygienic conditions, on a pallet, and while

³⁰ Tatomir Vukanović, *op. cit.*, II, 133.

³¹ Mirko Kus Nikolajev, *Kroz Gnjilanski srez*, in *Socijalna misao*, 1930, pp. 126–128.

³² Grigorije Božović, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 75.

³⁴ Atanasije Urošević, *op. cit.*, pp. 58–76.

³⁵ Milenko Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, in *Spomenica 25-godišnjice oslobođenja Južne Srbije*, Skoplje: Odbor za proslavu dvadesetpetogodišnjice oslobođenja Južne Srbije, 1937, pp. 460–462.

³⁶ Rebeka Vest, *Crno jagnje, sivi soko: putovanje kroz Jugoslaviju*, Beograd, Mono i Manjana, 2008, pp. 672–673.



the woman was giving birth, neighbors constantly came to “visit, console and advocate”. A professional midwife was called only during difficult births, alone or with a doctor. During childbirth, women squatted or stood because they believed that the child would come out easier that way. There were various customs during childbirth, clothed in the mystery that accompanied the birth of a new family member. Difficult childbirth was accompanied by various magical-religious actions to alleviate the pain for the mother (for the husband to skip it three times, for the mother to sit on her husband’s pants (*chakshira*), to drink water from her husband’s right shoe, which was similar with Albanians)³⁷.

When a child was born, a woman would tie his umbilical cord with unwashed hands with red thread, which she cut with a sickle. Attention was paid immediately to the child, and to the woman later. Childbirth was valued unusually much, especially males. When a male child was born, it was said “the mountain cries and the house sings”, and when it was a female “the mountain sings and the house cries”³⁸. The newborn swayed over the fire, which had a magical role and a protective formula for repelling demons („kuvada”)³⁹. Various means, amulets, garlic, tar, soot, etc. were used against spells. On the third evening after the birth, it was considered that the child was brought by “*sudjenice*” (women who determine destiny) (among the Albanians: *moire*, *fati* or *ore*) to determine his fate, and only after that was the name given. The mother was considered unclean forty days after the birth, after which she went to church with the child to have her prayer read⁴⁰. She rested very briefly, from one to (exceptionally) seven days. During

that time, she received slightly better food and “a little wine and brandy”. As soon as the woman got out of bed, she immediately did her usual housework and field work⁴¹.

Customs related to marriage and married life

Marriage was considered a necessity on which the survival of the individual and the family community depended, and girls preferred to be given where there was less “*kalabalk*” (Turkish word for fewer family members). From childhood, attention was paid to the “order” in the upbringing of children, which was reflected in the division according to gender and age. Until the break-up of the cooperatives, and even later, the parents were the main ones in the marriage process. The main concern of the woman in the family was to inquire about girls and boys who could be considered when getting married. The first sign of parental care for that was the different clothes of the young people. The girls differed in their hats, as well as in their front and back aprons, which were different from those of married women. The young men grew mustaches, shaved and wore *chakshirs*, and until then they wore shirts. The age for marriage was between 17 and 25, often later for men, because they needed time to obtain funds to cover the costs of marriage and payment of “ransom”. Usually, marriages of similar property status were concluded from the same or a nearby village. They were mostly seen as “good lineage”, and the girl was more appreciated if she was taller, and more resourceful in household chores. It was a great shame for a girl to run away for Albanians or for Albanians to kidnap a Serbian girl, which led to blood feuds. There were a small number of mixed marriages. In all these examples, Serbian women received the religion, language and costume of Albanians⁴².

³⁷ Petar Vlahović, *Etnološke odrednice Kosova i Metohije*, pp. 220–228; Tatomir Vukanović, *Srbi na Kosovu II*, pp. 212–213.

³⁸ Branislav Nušić, *op. cit.*, pp. 87–90.

³⁹ Tatomir Vukanović, *Prežici kuvade u Kosovsko-Metohijskoj Pokrajini*, in *Glasnik muzeja Kosova i Metohije*, 1964, no. 7-8, pp. 63–98.

⁴⁰ Milenko Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, pp. 475–483; Branislav Nušić, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁴¹ Mirko Bogdanović and Svetozar Barjaktarović, *Žena Kosova, Metohije i Vasojevića*, in *Glasnik Centralnog Higijenskog zavoda*, 1934, pp. 62–71.

⁴² Milenko S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, pp. 50, 141.



A “matchmaker” was chosen, who went to the proposal alone and carried the “decorated bottle” (a bottle of brandy and a silk scarf decorated with silver and gold coins)⁴³. On that occasion, it was determined how much money should be paid to the parents for the girl. One of the main marriage customs was giving a ransom for the bride (5,000 to 30,000 dinars, among Catholic and Muslim Albanians 50,000-60,000)⁴⁴. That money was given every major holiday, until the girl’s parents approved the proposal. At that time, symbols (rings and gifts) were sent as a sign of consent and given words. It usually took several years from the engagement to the wedding, and during that time, the parents and the closest relatives instructed the fiancée in domestic affairs and the obligations of married life. This referred mainly to running the household, referring to wedding customs and working in the house. Mothers especially instructed their daughters to obey and respect men. Talking about marriage, as well as sending young people to sexual life, was not considered by parents to be their duty, so it was done by the closest younger relatives, but again, men were more familiar with it than girls⁴⁵.

Weddings were usually held on Sundays (at the Turks on Thursdays)⁴⁶. The wedding was the most complex among all rituals and customs, because it included many elements from folk life, mythological beliefs, various superstitions, elements of magic, customary law and elements of oral folk creation⁴⁷. This

⁴³ Mitar Vlahović, *Etnološka promatranja na Kosovu Polju*, in *Južni pregled*, no.12, December 1930, pp. 574–577.

⁴⁴ Grigorije Božović, *op. cit.*, pp. 91–92; Milenko S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, pp.69–70; Vidosava Nikolić-Stojančević, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–72; *Vardar*, 10 February 1934, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Nikola F. Pavković, *Pravni običaji na Kosovu i Metohiji*, in *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, Beograd, Etnografski muzej, Muzej u Prištini (sa izmeštenim sedištem), Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije - Мнемосыне, 2004, pp. 114–120; Jovan Predojević, *Tradicionalni bračni i porodični odnosi albanskog stanovništva sa Kosova i Metohije u svetlu Zakonika Leke Dukadžinija*, in *Stanovništvo*, 2002, no. 1–4, pp. 129–145.

⁴⁶ Milenko S. Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, pp. 475–483; Vidosava Nikolić-Stojančević, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁴⁷ Vladimir Bovan, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–19, 39; Mitar Vlahović,

custom changed the fastest in cities, slower in towns and villages, and slowest in mountain villages⁴⁸.

After the wedding, there was a false 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 narrowness of marital relations was increased by the tradition that each married couple lives with their children in a separate room, often sharing a bed with them. Nevertheless, family morale was at a high level for everyone. Divorces were rare even if there were no births, and the couple had, on average, seven children each. The biggest accident in the marriage was the lack of children, which primarily stood out as the fault of the woman, but it was not uncommon for a man to be sterile. Such phenomena were treated in monasteries and by magic. Data from the Supreme Court of the Serbian Orthodox Church showed that the strongest marriages were in Southern Serbia (compared to Belgrade, for example).⁴⁹ The number of divorces was small, especially among Muslims⁵⁰.

Celebrating the *slavas* and holidays

The celebration of *slava* (a holiday dedicated to a particular saint) was of great importance in Kosovo and Metohija. This celebration was one of the most characteristic Serbian customs when friends and relatives gathered, “then the quarrels were reconciled and the poor were remembered”⁵¹. The *slava* and *preslava* were celebrated, usually for three days. Each house had two celebrations,

Sredačka župa, in *Zbornik za etnografiju i folklor Južne Srbije i susednih oblasti*, no.1, Skoplje: Štamparija Vasilija Dimitrijevića, 1931, pp. 43–45.

⁴⁸ Vladimir Bovan, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

⁴⁹ Vladan Jovanović, *Vardarska banovina 1929-1941*, Beograd, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2011, p. 543; Vladimir Simeunović, *Stanovništvo Jugoslavije i socijalističkih republika: 1921-1961: ukupno stanovništvo, polna i starosna struktura*. Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1964, p. 42.

⁵⁰ Božica Slavković Mirić, *Političke, ekonomske i kulturne prilike na Kosovu i Metohiji 1929-1941*, Beograd, IP Princip, IP Prosveta, 2018, pp. 408-409.

⁵¹ Branislav Nušić, *op. cit.*, pp. 170–176.



one in the spring (*preslava*) and the other in the fall or winter (*slava*). Those who celebrated the same *slava* were considered a genus. On the eve of the *slava*, the host sent a family member to call the neighbor to the celebration, and he invited his friends with a toast, which was expressed in a bottle of wine, bread, apples and basil. The celebration was in the evening before the *slava*, when rituals were performed in the house and the *slava* bread „was broken“ (cut) before the priest would come. The next day was lunch and merriment. Folk songs about Serbian heroes and historical figures were sung at the celebration and the fiddle was played. During the celebration, the host and the men served bareheaded and never sat down⁵².

Family *slava* was a custom held by Catholic Serbs, but also by Catholic Albanians. Albanians from the tribe of northern Albania had a tradition of celebrating *slava* while their ancestors were Christians. Albanian Catholics celebrated the *slava* in the same way, only they did not cut the *slava* bread⁵³. Also, Muslims went to celebrate the *slava* with their neighbors and acquaintances of Orthodox Serbs⁵⁴.

In addition to family *slava*, they also had church *slavas* (a saint to whom the church was dedicated), „assemblies“ (*sabori*) (when people gathered at the church or elsewhere for joy) and „litije“ which were worn on certain days for crop progress and fruit. Food was served at these celebrations, girls sang, and boys played knightly games⁵⁵. In late autumn and long winter nights, *prelas* were organized, primarily in houses where there were girls. They would embroider, crochet, spin or knit in company and always with a song. Until the introduction of electrification,

work was done with a kerosene lamp. The benches were lined up in two rows, the girls sat in one, the boys in the other, and they lasted until midnight at the latest⁵⁶.

The celebration of certain holidays during the year was accompanied by various rituals. Christmas was celebrated as the biggest holiday and was celebrated most solemnly. Christmas was celebrated by Serbs of the Mohammedan faith, as well as Albanians and Turks⁵⁷. The Mladenci was also celebrated, which was also celebrated by Muslims under the name „Sultan Nevrus“⁵⁸. Easter was especially celebrated, as the biggest national holiday in the spring. If the drought lasted in the summer days, then „*dodole*“ gathered, girls who walked around the village and called for rain⁵⁹. Mitrovdan was celebrated not only by all Serbs, but also by Albanians and Turks, since that holiday was considered the beginning of the winter half of the year and many deadlines were tied to it. Muslim Serbs, in addition to the holidays they celebrated as well as the Orthodox, also celebrated Mevlud, Ramadan and Kurban Bajram⁶⁰.

Among Serbs in Kosovo, a name day („imendan“) was celebrated on a holiday that coincided with the name. They did not celebrate birthdays because there were many of them in the family, so they thought that then „we would not have bread to eat“. In the years of approaching World War II, the celebration of birthdays began in the urban settlements of Kosovo, which was received by newcomers from various parts of Yugoslavia⁶¹.

⁵² Mitar Vlahović, *Etnološka promatranja po Kosovu Polju*, pp. 574–577.

⁵³ Milenko S. Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, pp. 462–475; *Idem*, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, pp. 61–63; *Vardar*, 4 January 1934, p. 8.

⁵⁴ Mitar Vlahović, *Sredačka župa*, pp. 48–51.

⁵⁵ Mitar Vlahović, *Etnološka promatranja na Kosovu polju*, pp. 574–577; *Idem*, *Sredačka župa*, pp. 45–48; Petar Denda and Pavle Dželetović Ivanov, *Suvi Do*, Beograd, Odbor za proučavanje sela, 1993, p. 32.

⁵⁶ Petar Denda and Pavle Dželetović Ivanov, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁵⁷ Milenko S. Filipović, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, pp. 462–475; Milisav Lutovac, *Gora i Opolje: antropogeografska ispitivanja*, Beograd, Srpska akademija nauka, 1955, pp. 43–44, 54–55; Mitar Vlahović, *Etnološka promatranja na Kosovu polju*, pp. 574–577.

⁵⁸ Petar Vlahović, *Etnološke odrednice Kosova i Metohije*, pp. 220–228.

⁵⁹ Milenko S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, p. 71.

⁶⁰ *Idem*, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, pp. 462–475.

⁶¹ *Idem*, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, pp. 182–183.



Customs related to death and burial

Death and burial were accompanied by special customs. Before the death, the dying man confessed and said goodbye to his family. Money was put in the dead man's mouth, pocket or belt. According to the legal deadline, the deceased was released 24 hours after his death. The residents of Kosovo and Metohija did not prepare food while the dead man was in the house, the "mešalje" (women who kneaded bread) did that. In Kosovo and Metohija, a sacrificial ram or sheep was slaughtered for the dead. After the deceased was buried, a lunch („trpeza“) was prepared. Neighbors and friends of the grieving house came to the bereaved Serbs in Drenica and Metohija, as well as to the Orthodox Serbs for a "healthy head"⁶². If the dead man had a young wife, it was a shame for her to cry, unlike the rest of the family. Everyone went to the funeral, and as a sign of mourning for the dead, the women turned their dresses upside down and did not decorate themselves. The funeral was accompanied by archaisms with a wider social and scientific meaning, which was confirmed by the rites with memorial services and a very developed cult of the cemetery⁶³. The dead man was buried in a wooden coffin, and was carried on an improvised stretcher. There were various customs related to that process (for example, in Priština, a court was broken in which there was wine and oil so that there would be no more diseases in the house). Permanent tombstones in the villages around Priština and Uroševac were mostly procured from Skoplje. Among the Orthodox Serbs in Podgora (near Prizren), a new deceased could be buried in the old grave⁶⁴.

Paid lamentation was an old custom among Albanians and was often used in Prizren, Peć, Djakovica and Priština, primarily because Turkish ethnic characteristics were accepted. It was mostly a typical sacrifice

to the spirits of deceased ancestors, which had its roots in the overall attitude of the patriarchal man towards death. Among Montenegrins and Brdjans in the Kosovo-Metohija area, paid crying was known out of ridicule as "diplanje", which meant "playing with a diple"⁶⁵.

An adult man was complained about for a year, shepherds did not play during that time and women wore black scarves. If a woman died, then only the closer female gender would mourn her. There were no particular signs of grief on the men. There was a lot of divination around the dead and there were various customs. If the corpse did not disintegrate in the grave, it was believed that he was a great sinner, so the villagers extracted his teeth and used them to restore them in the treatment of teeth (in Stari Kolašin). The widower or widow could remarry after a year, and the wedding took place in the evening and there was usually no merriment⁶⁶.

Conclusion

The population of Kosovo and Metohija between the two world wars respected numerous customs. The customary law was very important, especially among the Albanians, who resolved disputes with the help of the Canon of Leka Dukagjini. Pride and courage were the greatest virtues of the people, especially in Metohija. Folk customs were related to nature and various mystical rites. The rural population preferred to go to the rural "doctors" rather than real ones, and they used various rituals in the treatment of diseases. Usually the village doctors were women, who also represented the guardians of all folk customs. The wedding was the most complex among all rituals and customs, because it included many elements from folk life, mythological beliefs, various superstitions, elements of magic, customary

⁶² *Idem*, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, pp. 483–487.

⁶³ Petar Vlahović, *Etnološke odrednice Kosova i Metohije*, pp. 220–228.

⁶⁴ Milenko S. Filipović, *Različita etnološka građa sa Kosova i Metohije*, p. 70.

⁶⁵ Tatomir Vukanović, *Plaćeno naricanje kod Šiptara i Makedonaca*, in *Gjurmime Albanologjike- Албаноолошка истраживања*, 1965, no. 2, pp. 173–212.

⁶⁶ Branislav Nušić, *op. cit.*, pp. 136–138.



law and elements of oral folk creation. A very important part of the life of the population was the celebration of *slavas* and holidays dedicated to certain saints with some rituals. There was a lot of divination around the dead and there were various customs. The funeral was accompanied by archaisms with a wider social and scientific meaning, which was confirmed by the rites with memorial services and a very developed cult of the cemetery. Customs were slowly being lost by building a modern civil society. However, some have remained in rural areas, and have been preserved in ethnological literature as a very important part of cultural identity and heritage.

References

- Archive of Serbia, Belgrade, Fund Security Information Agency.
- Bogdanović, Mirko and Svetozar Barjaktarović, *Žena Kosova, Metohije i Vasojevića*, in *Glasnik Centralnog Higijenskog zavoda*, 1934.
- Bovan Vladimir, *Srpska svadba na Kosovu i Metohiji*, Priština, Panorama, 2004.
- Božović Grigorije, *Slike Kosova i Metohije*. Priština: NUB "Ivo Andrić", 2006.
- Darmanović Mina, *O korišćenju bilja u narodnoj tradiciji Srba na Kosovu i Metohiji*, in *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, Beograd, Etnografski muzej, Muzej u Prištini (sa izmeštenim sedištem), Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije - Мнемосыне, 2004.
- Denda Petar and Pavle Dželetović Ivanov, *Suvi Do*, Beograd, Odbor za proučavanje sela, 1993.
- Filipović Milenko S., *Različita etnološka građa*. Beograd, Naučno delo, 1967.
- Filipović Milenko, *Etničke prilike u Južnoj Srbiji*, in *Spomenica 25-godišnjice oslobođenja Južne Srbije*, Skoplje: Odbor za proslavu dvadesetpetogodišnjice oslobođenja Južne Srbije, 1937.
- Jelić Milosav, *Albanija: zapisi o ljudima i događajima*, Beograd, G.Kon, 1933.
- Jovanović Gordana, *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije: prilog bibliografiji*, Beograd, Etnografski muzej, Muzej u Prištini (sa izmeštenim sedištem), Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije - Мнемосыне, 2004.
- Jovanović Vladan, *Istorijsko, svakodnevno i privatno na prostoru Vardarske banovine*, in *Privatni život kod Srba u dvadesetom veku*. Beograd: Clio, 2007.
- Jovanović Vladan, *Vardarska banovina 1929-1941*, Beograd, Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2011.
- Kanon Leke Dukađinija*. Zagreb, Stvarnost, 1986.
- Krivokapić Darko, *Narodni običaji*, in *Južni pregled*, Oktober – November 1936.
- Kus Nikolajev Mirko, *Kroz Gnjilanski srez*, in *Socijalna misao*, 1930.
- Lutovac Milisav, *Gora i Opolje: antropogeografska ispitivanja*, Beograd, Srpska akademija nauka, 1955.
- Nikolić-Stojančević Vidosava, *Etnološka proučavanja Srba u Metohiji*. Leposavić, Institut za srpsku kulturu, 2003.
- Nušić Branislav, *Kosovo, Priština*, Panorama, 2007.
- Pavković Nikola F., *Pravni običaji na Kosovu i Metohiji*, in *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, Beograd, Etnografski muzej, Muzej u Prištini (sa izmeštenim sedištem), Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije - Мнемосыне, 2004.
- Predojević Jovan, *Tradicionalni bračni i porodični odnosi albanskog stanovništva sa Kosova i Metohije u svetlu Zakonika Leke Dukađinija*, in *Stanovništvo*, 2002, no. 1–4.
- Simeunović Vladimir, *Stanovništvo Jugoslavije i socijalističkih republika: 1921-1961: ukupno stanovništvo, polna i starosna struktura*. Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1964.
- Slavković Mirić Božica, *Političke, ekonomske i kulturne prilike na Kosovu i Metohiji 1929-1941*. Beograd, IP Princip, IP Prosveta, 2018.
- Urošević Atanasije, *O Kosovu – antropogeografske studije i drugi spisi*. Priština: Narodna i univerzitetska biblioteka „Ivo Andrić“: Institut za srpsku kulturu; Gnjilane: Knjižara „Sveti Sava“, 2001.



Vardar: nezavisan privredno-kulturni pregled.
Skoplje:b.i.

Vest Rebeka, *Crno jagnje, sivi soko: putovanje kroz Jugoslaviju*, Beograd, Mono i Manjana, 2008.

Vlahović Mitar, *Etnološka promatranja po Kosovu Polju*, Skoplje:b.i, 1930.

Vlahović Mitar, *Sredačka župa*, in *Zbornik za etnografiju i folklor Južne Srbije i susednih oblasti*, knj.1. Skoplje: Štamparija Vasilija Dimitrijevića, 1931.

Vlahović Petar, *Etnološke odrednice Kosova i Metohije*, in *Kosovo i Metohija u svetlu etnologije*, Beograd, Etnografski muzej, Muzej u Prištini (sa izmeštenim sedištem), Centar za očuvanje nasleđa Kosova i Metohije - Мнемосыне, 2004.

Vlahović Petar, *Etnološko proučavanje Kosova i Metohije*, in *Zbornik Okruglog stola o naučnom istraživanju Kosova, održanog 26. i 27. februara 1985. godine u Beogradu*, Beograd, Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, 1988.

Vukanović Tatomir, *Lena samovila sa Kosova*, in *Južni pregled*, 1937, no. 4-5.

Vukanović Tatomir, *Plačeno naricanje kod Šiptara i Makedonaca*, in *Gjurmime Albanologjike-Албанолошка истраживања*, 1965, no. 2.

Vukanović Tatomir, *Prežici kuvade u Kosovsko-Metohijskoj Pokrajini*, in *Glasnik muzeja Kosova i Metohije*, 1964, no. 7-8.

Vukanović Tatomir, *Srbi na Kosovu I-III*, Vranje, Nova Jugoslavija, 1986.

Zetski glasnik: informativni i službeni list Kraljevske banske uprave Zetske banovine.
Cetinje, Kraljevska Banska uprava Zetske banovine, 1931-1940.