

**MARRIAGES IN “PANAGJYR” (FAIRS)****Social Science**

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**Abstract**

The presence of the occurrence “Anticipated marriage”, also known and called “panagjyr”, was witnessed by some interviewed during my expeditions in the region of Kumanovo. The word is about hasty marriages, creation of "obligatory" families from the created political, social and violent circumstances of the Macedonian power with fake emancipator terms of the youth. This phenomenon, an action and process of vital importance in the creation of young families, a social phenomenon with historical character that was born and developed in certain circumstances in the first years after the Second World War. The events and the social developments in the Albanian families of Kumanovo of that time may be treated in two perspectives: positive – preservation of the national identity and negative, denial of women's rights. The paper tries to reflect and touch the problems contained in this occurrence. Everything is based on sayings and stories of the eyewitnesses, persons that lived that period, where every social action was based in two judicial codes: Lekë Dukagjini's code and religion. The big Albanian families created and regulated some kind of stability based on them. The unplanned marriages, their organization within some days set the fate of tens of youths. Even thou such marriages changed the life of the boy and girl, the woman had bigger difficulties, object of this paper.

Marriage in "panagjyr" was a social phenomenon in the region of Kumanovo and further with the Albanians of Macedonia; an occurrence born and developed in certain circumstances in the first years after the Second World War. The word, name "Panagjyr" (Fair) means gathering and exposition. *In Shkodra dialect* by changing "j:gj" and and the tonic syllable "i" tonike **panagjýr** (nearer to the Greek language, maybe Serbian: **Panadjur**). So, in the dictionary of Busetti 402 and Cordignano 139, sample: It became a "panagjyr" (fair) that no one knew what was happening. Turkish: Panayir, Bulgarian: Panagir, panair panagjurvam.<sup>1</sup> *While the present Albanian dictionary explains:* "Fair – Big bazaar, that displays different merchandise for selling, usually for many days. Such bazaar, in the past, was organized once a year in big villages on the occasion of a certain religious feast, containing singing, dances and different entertainments".<sup>2</sup>

The fairs were organized in big cities, for example the fairs in Gjilan. “...Three days, the main street was full of people that came to sell different merchandise, to buy, or just curious to see what is going on, it was a joy for the kids that could buy whistles, ride the “hulaçka” (swings), see the bear playing, the motorcycles in the alive wall! The second day was the women's day (women, girls). The singles went to see girls at the crossroad!”<sup>3</sup> However, this is not the case of such expositions or fairs. In the creation, implementation and the rules of family life of Kumanovo Albanians affected many factors, not only the Canon and religious laws, deliberately misinterpreted, but also other political and social circumstances.

<sup>1</sup>Tahir N. Dizdari – Albanian language dictionary of orientalism / Albanian Institute of Thought and Islam civilization, Tirana 2013, p. 564

<sup>2</sup>Present Albanian Language Dictionary – Science Academy of the Republic of Albania, Institute of Linguistics and Literature, Tirana 1980, p. 1344

<sup>3</sup><http://www.kohapressnews.org/kulture-arsim/panairet-panagjyret-e-dikurshme-te-qytetit-te-gjilanit>

How can we understand this? Was it denial of women's rights or "protection" of the moral and identity and the structure of the Albanian patriarchal family?

The events and the social developments in the Albanian families of Kumanovo during the first years after the Second World War may be treated in two perspectives: positive – preservation of the national identity and negative, denial of women's rights.

Motivation of the denial of women's rights:

*First*, in the Canon of Lekë Dukagjini, where in addition to the estimation of the woman and her role in the Albanian family, she was deprived from the freedom and right to choose her spouse, as in the case object of this paper.

Women, except not having the right to take decisions regarding their fate, had no right to oppose the decisions taken by the relatives regarding her future.

The Canon of Lekë Dukagjini (III<sup>rd</sup> book) says: "...The girl, *even thou she may not have parents, she has no right to think about her marriage, the right is in the hand of brothers or relatives. The girl has no right: a) to choose her fate; she will accept the one they will give to engage; b) to get involved in matchmaking, even in engagement; ...*"<sup>4</sup>

*Second*, the so-called written and unwritten religious norms. Albanians were so bound to the religion. A high percentage of the population belonged to the Muslim religion. In Kumanovo, Albanians lived with the fanaticism of a religion created by the Yugoslavian policy of the time, affected by the sermons of the imams. According to them: "*It is a sin for the youth to study in their language, especially the women. It is a sin to educate in the mother tongue and the religious one.*"

During the field research, I have many confessions showing how the educated women have been treated. The educated woman was called a prostitute – *immoral if educated, a sin to speak about her fate, everything said by the imam as a sin, remained such.*<sup>5</sup>

According to the scholars and interpreters, the Qur'an translated in Albanian language, for the decision-making on the engagement and marriage of a young couple, says: "*...According to the Muslim principles, the right of engagement and marriage belongs to the two future partners, meaning the boy and the girl. They reserve the right to consent or not to the marriage and in this case Islam does not impose any imposition or forcing. It is an obligation of the parents or the caretaker to take the consent from the boy and the girl...*"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> At Shjefan Gjeçovi - Canon of Lekë Dukagjini – Edition of the year 1933, printed in Shkodra - Third book – Marriage – Twelfth Node, pg. 10

<sup>5</sup> Confession by witnesses of that time, Vait Saiti, Azir Aziri, Mexhit Bajrami, Rexhije Rexhepi, Naime Osmani, Ibrahim Musliu, Vebi Destani, Xhemile Dërvishi, Fetanete Memeti, Milaim Halimi, Rabishe Bajrami etc.

<sup>6</sup> From the book: "Islam family right" authors: Hfz. I. Abazi, T. Bislimi, F. Ebibi dhe J. Zimeri, Edition of the year 1996, Skopje.

This proves that even the religion diverted in the interest of the local power. After the Second World War, there were hasty marriages, immediate. The goal was to remove single girls from their parents' homes. In Kumanovo this is known as marriage in fair.

Third, this was the state policy and strategy, among others, for the escalated assimilation of the national identity of the Albanian youth.

In the years 1945-1948 in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, then SFRY and Socialist Republic of Macedonia, SRM, started the Yugoslavian youth organization known as "Omladina" with the activity widely in all the country, and the Albanian youth, as part of the population of SFRY, was obliged to take part in "Omladina" youth organization.<sup>7</sup>

In Kumanovo, this organization called youths, high school and students (*with single status*) to joining the organization of Yugoslavian youth "Omladine" and make the necessary training according their program. The center of this organization in Kumanovo was in the village Pqinje. All Macedonian youths, gypsies, Serbian, Albanians, without distinction of nationality or religion, all followed the training program.

This decision was unacceptable for the Albanians, especially when speaking about the girls that were unprepared for such activity. They did not know the Macedonian language. To avoid "Omladina" and its activities, Albanians accelerated the marriages of the engaged girls, without weddings. With the understanding of the interested parties, the engaged girls were brought to their husbands' homes when the dark fell, without anyone seeing, especially the organizers of "Omladina". The participation of the youths was mandatory. Many parents that did not allow their daughters to go into "Omladina" were convicted by 3 months to one year of imprisonment.

Young girls of 15-18 years age married fast. This kind of marriage, in extraordinary circumstances and conditions, was called **marriage in fair** (*panagjyr*). For this marriage cared the head of the family, that could be the father, uncle or the big brother. Every move was very fast. Marriage, as a sacred institution for Albanians, the families had to know each other; the head was responsible for the life of the girl in her husband's family. In general and for some time the engagement by intermediate (*Albanian: msit – mësiti*), that "...habitually, as a tradition, the intermediate (*Albanian: msiti*) went home and in presence of the head and the other members of the family, gave the news..."<sup>8</sup>

At that time, Wednesday and Thursday were bazaar days, even for the "market" of girls (!). The heads went to the bazaar, met, discussed and made decisions for the fate of women, daughters

<sup>7</sup> "Omladina", as a political organization was created in December 1942 in Bihac of Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its duty was to organize the Yugoslavian youth in many important missions against fascism. Initially this organization was situated in Bihac, then expanded in all the country.

[http://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ujedinjeni\\_savez\\_antifa%C5%A1isti%C4%8Dke\\_omladine\\_Jugoslavije](http://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ujedinjeni_savez_antifa%C5%A1isti%C4%8Dke_omladine_Jugoslavije)

<sup>8</sup> Mumin Zeqiri - Popular dogma Rites and Mythology in the region of Kumanovo / Printed by Focus Print Skopje / p.187

or their sisters. Some think that from practices of this nature was created the term: “*was married in panagjyr*”.<sup>9</sup>

Except the bazaar, for accelerated marriages, the heads used the Eid feast, making decisions at the mosque, or festive visits in the village, deciding for the fate of the girls and boys, for the creation of new families. These also were called “*marriages in panagjyr*”. Such marriages happened in all the Albanian villages in the area of Kumanovo. It happened that within one-day married 50 girls.<sup>10</sup>

In such hasty decisions and actions contributed the global political circumstances of ex-Yugoslavia of after the Second World War, but there were also other factors.

It was a time when all helped each other with proposals and suggestions, in the duty of intermediate. The discussions and the interest were from both sides, from those who had daughters, and from them that wanted brides for their sons.

They discussed the marriage of the daughters, so with a short meeting they decided the future of a new family. They narrate for cases that when such decision was taken, the girl was working in the field. In addition, the moment she turned back home, she had to go at her husband's home she would marry! There were cases when the girl was working in the field and returned home in the evening, all the family gathered, and the girl understood that that night she had to marry, in a while they would come to pick her up.<sup>11</sup>

Such experiences created stress and fear in the psychology of youths, because within one day, from morning to evening, their life would change, without knowing, the girl had to go as a bride at her husband's home.

The marriage was done at night. The bride came with a horse or ox carriage. There were cases that the “marriage” was done when the groom was not home, but in the military service.\* For such cases they narrate: “*...Ehhhh the pilgrim Bekteshi was married in fair, this is what they say...*” (Albanian original version: “*...Ehhhh haxhi Bekteshi ash martue n’panagjyr ku e di pse i thojshin po qashtu i kan than...*”)

From the ongoing conversation, Xhemile Edipi narrates that her brother's marriage happened at night. “*She was given, but she came without wedding...the bride came from her father not on the street, but through the field, so they could not see her, otherwise she had to go into the army... her husband was a soldier, she came like that without husband... after two-three months he came from the army and became a groom...until then she was hiding, so that they*

<sup>9</sup>Azir Aziri, year of birth 1954, from Runica village, lives in Kumanovo. Profession, teacher of technical drawing in the elementary school “Jeronim De Rada”, Çerkez village

<sup>10</sup>Rexhije Rexhepi - year of birth 1928, from Runica village, married in Vaksınca village, housewife.

<sup>11</sup>Narrating Rexhije Rexhepi, Rabishe Bajrami, Azir Aziri, Xhemile Edipi, etc.

*could not find her.* (Albanian original version: “E dhanme ish amo erdh pa darsëm...nusjën ë prunën pi babës vet jo nëpër xhade, po arave, mos ta shohin se i mirshin ushtar...burrin nusja e kish ushtar ajo erdh qashtu, pa burr... hejji mas dy tremujve erdh pi ushtrijës qat’her hini dhandërr...a deri athere nusja ka nejt mshel, mos ta shohin mos ta din.”)<sup>12</sup>

There was a time that except the spiritual experiences, there were other problems for the brides of “panagjyrit”. Tens of girls married with the same clothes. There was no time to buy the necessary clothes according the tradition. In some places, wedding ceremonies were held at the grooms' home. The bride dressed borrowed clothing: she dressed *good "dimija"* (Albanian: *dimija*, kind of clothes) until people came for felicitations, then those clothes were sent to other bride, that married the same way. An evocation expressed with the area dialect: *"I married in "panagjyr", they came to pick me up, they brought me the neighborhood clothes, they collected the clothes in the neighborhood because they were picking up the bride, I came with the neighbor's clothes, when I went home, they took the clothes from me, and they thanked me. Every woman coming told me take my clothes, who were in better conditions... "dimija", "shalije", white "shalije", black "shalije", light and wool "june", they called them "june" on that time... they bought the cloth in Kumanovo, shops had like this cloth... later they bought me some calico, and they sew me "dimija"-s... the bride cannot wear dresses, shame, dresses must be wore with trousers, but I did not like them, I preferred "dimija"-s.* (Albanian original version: “...Jam martue n’panagjyr,...erdhën me marr, mi prunën teshat e mahallës, i kan marr teshat e grave nëpër mahall se pe marrim nusën, me tesha t’kujshive kam ardh, kur shkova n’shpi m’i murrën, ...po mbishin faleminer. Secila grue qi vike thojke na teshat e mija kush i kish ma trujtme.... dimija, shalije, shalije t’bardha, shalije t’zeza, june t’ holla e lesht, june i thojshin qerاهر...copën e blejshin n’Kumanov nopër dyqane kishte qyshjo... tana ma von mi blejtën nja di topa basëm, e mi kepën dimijat.... jo z’ban nusja me vesh fistan, marre, fistanat i kan vesh me done, po un nuk i dojshna ma mirë dimija.<sup>13</sup> Dimija, shalije and june are Albanian names for traditional clothes used by brides).

Fetanete Memeti – narrates about the marriage of her aunt: **"It was 1951-1952 when they married the girl at night. My father told that there was news that single girls must go at army or their parents would go to prison. He said - my second sister was engaged and we called and told them to come and take her at night without wedding, without white dress, without wedding traditions. They came and took her, so my aunt went bride from the village Sllupçan to the village Rramali, not from the street, but from the fields... by the wood carriage with iron wheels."** (Albanian original version: “...At koh kur i kan martue vajzat natën kan qen vitet 1951-1952. Baba jem tha erdh nji lajm që vajzat beqare të pa martume mi mar ushtar ose ose prindi n’burg. Tha- motra jeme e dyta ka qen e fejume edhe e kemi thirr mikin hajde natën merre pa darsëm, pa fustan t’bardh, pa adete të martesave. Edhe erdhën e murën dmth halla jeme

<sup>12</sup> Xhemile Edipi - year of birth 1950, in Runica village, married in the village Rahmanli. Lives in Austria, profession: Housewife.

<sup>13</sup> Rexhije Rexhepi, year of birth 1928, in the village Runica, married in the village Vaksınca, housewife.

ka qen ajo prej fshatit Sllupçan ka shku nuse në fshatin Rramali, edhe jo për udhe po nëpër ara... kerri i drunut me rrota të hekrit..."<sup>14</sup>

Some interviews regard the accelerated marriage at night with the time of removal of the veil. Vehbi Destani narrates about his marriage at night: **"In '51 the veil was removed, there was was, the veil was being removed. I took her without wedding... the carriage with a cow, a straw bale this side, a straw bale that side, covered with a sheet, the bride in the middle, they brought her home without wedding..."** (Albanian original version: "... n'pesdhet e nishin u heke perdja, ke tu u ba luft, po naj hekin perden. E mora une hiq pa darsëm... kerri me lop ni duj tall ket an ni duj tall anej mlum me çarshaf e nusja n'midis e prunën n'shpi pa darsëm..."<sup>15</sup>)

In addition Xhemile Dërvishi narrates: **"When they removed the veil, there were words that single girls were taken to army and from the fear... brought their girls that entered in puberty in people they knew for marriage without dowry, they gave them what they had, but without ceremonies"** (Albanian original version: "... n'kohën kur jan hek perdja jan përhap fjalë që vjazat që janë beqare i marrin i çojnç n'ushtri dhe kta nga frika ..... i kan qu vajzat që kanë hi në bilik i kan qu nëpër njerz që i kan njohtë i kan martue pa xhejze kush shka ka pase i ka dhanë me veti por jo me ndonje ceremoni..."<sup>16</sup>)

The Macedonian Albanians lived and live strictly tied to their Albanian identity, preserving the Albanian tradition. Support to this endurance remains the national flag, Canon and the spiritual and cultural traditions, referred generation after generation in centuries. They preserved the national ethnicity, even thou they were constantly under the Serbian-Slavic state and institutional pressure, not infrequently lied from the predications of some educated imams, in service of the official policies.

In general, Albanians respected and protected women, despite the fact that she did not participate in decision-making. The marriage in "panagjyr" was not created to discriminate her, but to preserve the moral and the traditional Albanian family. Even thou in many cases of such marriages, the bride was many years older than the groom, for Albanians in those conditions and circumstances, was more important that girls went to a good, noble, with national traditions and believers families. This was a short period of several years of a bitter reality. From what happened and the researchers' articles, we conclude that: all the decisions were taken to preserve the tradition, family and girls honor, and also the Albanian nationality from the risks over the head. Researchers of the Skopje National History Institute confirmed that Serbian girl and women were used to assimilate the Albanian population.<sup>17</sup> Hence, even this documented fact motivates the marriage in "panagjyr", temporary occurrence in the Albanian family even in the region of Kumanovo.

<sup>14</sup>Fetanete Memeti, year of birth 1966, in the village Sllupçan, married in Kumanovo. Works needle handicrafts.

<sup>15</sup>Vebi Destani, year of birth 1926, in the village Llojan, known as "Aga Vebi", from the year 1951, was appointed Head of the Municipality for the village Llojan, on duty for 36 years.

<sup>16</sup>Xhemile Dervishi, year of birth 1926, in the village Bellanocë, profession housewife.

<sup>17</sup>Institut za Nacionalna Istorija – Srpski Izbori za Istorijata na Makedonskiot Narod 1912–1914 / Skopje 1979 / p.195

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## Narrating

- Confession by witnesses of that time, Vait Saiti, Azir Aziri, Mexhit Bajrami, Rexhije Rexhepi, Naime Osmani, Ibrahim Musliu, Vebi Destani, Xhemile Dërvishi, Fetanete Memeti, Milaim Halimi, Rabishe Bajrami, etc.
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