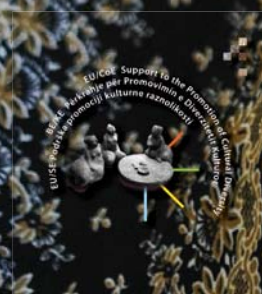


A
COLLECTION
OF
SHORT
STORIES

VENERABLE VOICES



JP - EU/CoE Support to the
Promotion of Cultural Diversity (PEDK)

Funded
by the European Union



Implemented
by the Council of Europe

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SEPTEMBER, 2012

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

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PCDK Team

Foreword

Social inclusion and the dignity of elderly people are an important part of European culture, and are reflected in the international and regional instruments of protection and promotion, including the European Social Charter.

Heritage plays an essential role in the right of everyone to take part in cultural life, which decreases social exclusion and helps to develop common experiences and foster dialogue. Paying particular attention to the social inclusion of the elderly enriches the education of youth, in communicating knowledge, experience and wisdom.

The recent history of the Balkans is often portrayed by dispute, conflict and its impact on the younger generations. While seeking to stimulate a more positive image, the parameters of contemporary life are often determined by the younger generation which, at times, may deny

the views and experiences of the past. Better understanding and valuing of heritage passed down from the older generations requires an active intercultural dialogue among the generations, giving young and old an equal voice.

This *Voices of the Elderly* publication inspires such a dialogue through stories told by the older generation from diverse communities across Kosovo*, and underlines the value of heritage practices to society. We hope that through this and similar initiatives, continued dialogue between generations and communities will contribute to the understanding of our common heritage.

Gianluca Silvestrini

Head of Cultural Heritage and
Technical Assistance Division
Strasbourg

Foreword

Audio-visual archive

We are used to hearing and saying that one picture can speak more than thousand words. But when you have both, an expressive photographic portrait and a thousand equally expressive words, you create an emotional experience that is able not only to revive past *moments* but also to turn them into unforgettable *monuments*. This is exactly the method – and the power! – of this fantastic book: by combining very intimate spoken words with great photographs a very intriguing *audio-visual archive* was created. And as French philosopher Foucault would say: *There's life in the archives!* Old habits and eternal rituals became alive in front of our eyes. While reading their testimonials we are reminded of some forgotten words and the origin of others that became a part of our everyday language... in short, our heritage is here.

But what might be even more important is the fact that there is absolutely no glorification or fake nostalgia about the past in their testimonials. If we read carefully their words and observe the wrinkles around their eyes, we understand that during our lives of births, relationships, marriages and deaths we are in fact in every period of human history experiencing

so many constraints and contradictions, so many traditional barriers and unwritten laws, that knowing the past is also the way to liberate our present from some of them. One's heritage means remembering the times when one *"would know the exact day of the caravan two weeks in advance"*, but also not to forget that there were times when a bride *"could not speak"*. She speaks now, half a century later – and her voice is one of the most powerful in this book.

Listening to the voices of the past in order to make the lives of citizens better – this could be the motto of another joint project of the Council of Europe and the European Union in Kosovo. We are proud to be a partner in such project where a personal voice is the strongest testimonial and an individual is the most reliable of witnesses. It is exactly a harmony of such human moments that is able to move other people with the power of their individual emotions – and to move things with the power of their collective experience.

Samuel Žbogar

Head of the European Union Office
and EU Special Representative in Kosovo
Pristina

Introduction

At a time when societies are geared toward youth, being young, valuing youth as their future and potential for change, the wisdom, experiences and distinct role of the elderly is often marginalised, if not forgotten. While respect for the elderly is fundamental in many communities, how much do we really pay attention to and make time to hear their voices and stories? Stories that tell of the history they have witnessed; traditions, rituals, social and political changes, conflicts, glories; stories that also speak of the speeding lifestyles of the modern day world – the arrival of television in daily life, computers, the internet. The value of taking the time and listening to the stories goes beyond the content of the story itself, and also by whom, how and in what context they are told. Sometimes the beauty of a story's simplicity as it is transmitted from generation to generation touches the hearts of many and can convey strong messages within a culture.

The PCDK project, with its focus on heritage and diversity, extended its activities to marginalised groups, including elderly from different communities across Kosovo*. Understanding the dialectic dynamics and harmony between the young and the elderly, the PCDK project tried to bring the voices of older generation into the discussion of heritage and diversity.

This publication, *Voices of the Elderly*, is a unique listening project where stories have been collected by partner non-governmental organisations in Kosovo, accompanied by photos of the individuals who recited their stories, capturing them in the faces of each author. The authors were asked to describe their memories of an important ritual, event, intangible heritage practice or asset which was meaningful to them. Some of the storytellers have unfortunately passed away since the stories were collected and their publication, but their words live on.

We have tried to keep the essence of each story spoken in local dialects, and have tried to translate them with a minimum loss in meaning. The purpose of this publication is to inspire the communities about their living treasures and their elderly citizens, and to value the knowledge, experience, wisdom and oral history that they are passing through the generations. While building the future there is much to learn from the past. That is what constitutes heritage and the stories that give meaning and richness to it.

Hakan Shearer Demir
PCDK Team Leader

Bosnian customs

Since the beginning of mankind, there has been a need for cohabitation of the two opposite sexes, men and women, and for progeny to carry on the generations. This is done by the celebration of marriage.

In those ancient times too, love would always win. That is, when the two young people noticed each other, arrangements would be made for them to be engaged as soon as possible and married by *Sheriat* law. Young women, dressed in a white-beige gown, decorated with a scarf, and their upper body partly dressed in a *mintan* cotton shirt, their heads covered by kerchiefs with braid, would meet at the spring or water fountain, keeping their herds. Women match-makers would carry messages from bachelors. Girls would schedule a trysting place, in the evening by some ditch or hill. That was where she met the bachelor and gave him a label *li cevre* or handkerchief which would serve him as a proof that she was his. He would send proposers to her family and should they fail, they would then exhibit the label. The girl's family would then accept and as soon as possible they would schedule *vade*, when should they come for the girl. The bachelor would send

nuptial envoys bringing clothes for the girl and a jewel box containing the ring, bracelet, necklace and earrings. They used a red kerchief to cover her head as a sign of her honesty. The girl would feel ashamed to appear, so all gifts would be received by her sister, sister-in-law or mother. The day before the wedding, the girl would make the henna ritual, where all the young girls gathered together with her kinfolk. They would prepare *bosca* with towels and embroidered handkerchiefs for the wedding guests. The next they, when the guests approached with their horses, she looked out the window. It was the custom to drink sherbet and coffee, and for the groomsmen to give the bride a ring, to equip her and if something should be added, for instance if short hair was to be extended by *sivet*, she would surely have *kondra*, *kat* and *peca*. In her room, *serdjia* was readied and placed in the chest and the girl wore her finery. The bride usually sat on a saddled horse decorated by two embroidered *cevrets* on its head. In the groom's house, a huge wedding celebration was prepared. The wedding and celebration were eagerly expected. The bride was then escorted to her wedding night.

FERIDA A. AT HER HOME IN VITOMIRIĆE/VITOMIRICA, PEJĖ/PEĆ, 2012 (7 SHITATORI)



Christmas

On 6 January by the old calendar, we celebrate Badnjak Day – the day before the birth of Christ, popularly known as Christmas. At daybreak on Badnjak Day, we set out to bring the Badnjak (oak log). Custom says it should be felled by three strokes. Two Badnjaks are felled and in the dawn they are leant against the doors of the house. In the afternoon, according to the old custom, straw is brought inside the house and spread for dinner to be served on it in the evening. Fat-free pie is prepared for the dinner. In the evening, the oldest family member brings in the Badnjak and household members welcome him with a sieve and grain. On Christmas Day, the head of the house wakes before dawn and sets the fire and at daybreak each house welcomes a visitor who brings Badnjak branches into the house, blessing it with prosperity and putting the branches on the fire while reciting wishes for the family, greeting the head of the house and family, and sits down for a meal. Once greetings are finished, the visitor lights a candle, the house is fumigated and wine is drunk. After all this is finished, a

meal and drinks are placed on the straw that was spread, and as long as the visitor is there the family is there with him. Every house has its visitor. To the house from which the visitor came, a child or youngster goes for a return visit. When the visitor is leaving, the women of the house give him a decorated cookie as a present, and follow him to the door. Once the visitor has set off in the morning and day comes, an ox is brought to the cowshed. The ox is taken out of the cowshed and on his right horn they place a *dashnik* – a pastry tart with a hole in the middle, in which a candle is placed and lit. When the ox is taken back to the cowshed, the tart with candle is removed and brought inside the house. During Christmas, children are not allowed to hit each other because blotches will appear on those who fight during those three days. On that day, no one should go for a visit to friends' or cousins'. The second and third days are for visits, since Christmas is celebrated for three days. Christmas is considered to be the most blissful holiday.



A story of wedding preparations

Some years ago, weddings were done in the following way. Six months before a wedding was to take place, members of the groom's family would go to the family of the bride to set the date/day for the wedding. They would agree with the bride's father whether he would be able to get his daughter ready for that precise day. The same preparations took place in the family of the groom. Additionally, they had to buy wedding clothes for the bride to wear at the wedding. Seven days before the wedding, the head of the household had to gather all his relatives to discuss the wedding. They would decide the number of men and women needed to bring the bride. They made preparations for sending boxes containing the bride's belongings, and also told the bride's father the number of wedding guests, including the number of carriages with women going to attend the bride. They had to discuss everything in great detail with the bride's father.

Three days before the wedding, wedding guests would be invited; there were no written invitations or mobile phones at the time; however, one of the relatives would be assigned to go door to door to invite people for the wedding. The wedding would start on Thursday, and it was on that very day that boxes containing clothing and jewellery would be delivered to the bride as far as they were able. Women would start making pies, as no sweets were made at the time. The wedding would last for three days. There were singers, drums and tambourines. The bride was fetched on Monday. The bride did not meet her husband until the very day of the wedding, but the same was true for men as well. The bride was brought by a horse and a carriage, later on a tractor covered all over by rugs. All wedding guests could see the bride on the wedding day, and it was on that day that the wedding ended.

KOLË NUSHI PHOTOGRAPHED AT HIS HOME IN KLINË/KLINA, 2012 (ZANA)



A tambourine woman

I used to be a tambourine woman. It is such fun to play a tambourine at a wedding and at joyful events. We used to be paid two weeks in advance to play tambourines. We knew where we had to go, and we got ready for that. It used to be so much fun back then. The ones who used to be more resourceful would hire us to play tambourine when conducting rituals, others for the wedding night. They would come to pick us up with carriages and horses, and once we reached the village where the wedding took place we would start playing tambourines for everyone's pleasure. Horses would run away in fright. However, the greatest fun was the time when the bride reached the house. Uninvited women would even show up on the third day of the wedding. They would compete with one another to see who was the best dancer. Each

recently wedded bride dancing would give a tip. I would sing a song to suit the dancing bride, but also based on the amount of the tip. I would also get as excited as if it were my own wedding.

Once the wedding was over, the head of a household would pay us the right fee, and they would even give many good things to us to send home. They would prepare horses and carriages to take us back home. We would play tambourines for as long as we passed the village.

It was so much fun. Weddings are no fun any more, nowadays. There are neither tambourines nor good songs. Back then, all brides would wear rural folk clothing. It was most enjoyable to watch them. *Perzo*, there is no fun at weddings or even tambourine playing any more.

A story of engagements in earlier times

Back then, if two people were very close pals or friends, and should the wives of the two pals be pregnant, they would give each other their word that, if one of them had a baby boy and the other a baby girl, then they would become family friends by arranging the engagement of even unborn children (during pregnancy) without the mothers of their respective children even knowing it. Once the infants were born, their respective fathers would go and visit each other, drink coffee and formalise the engagement. They would even give away some money so to let everybody know that that child was already engaged. When the girl or the boy grew up, they came to realise that they had already been engaged.

The girl came to realise that she was already engaged when the arranged friends sent money for her dowry (they would send wool or cotton) for her to be able to make rugs, carpets, clothing, bags for clothing, mattresses and pillows. The girl had to send bridal presents to the entire groom's family; even if there were 30 or 40 family members, she had to send bride presents to all of them as a sign, including complete traditional national dress to her father and mother in law.

One year before the wedding, the girl would not go to work in the fields and neither visit her uncles nor her neighbours; she would stop doing that for the sake of custom.

Three weeks before the wedding, the girl would not go out in the yard and even see mem-

bers of her household, she would even eat separately, and a bride's clothes maid would bring her food.

The bride's clothes maid would come 3 weeks before the girl's wedding and take care of her. One week before the wedding, the bride's clothes maid would dye her hair. On the girl's pre-wedding night she would dress the girl in a shift and put vernacular clothing around her waist, adding a red kerchief with coin replicas on her forehead. Following the girl's pre-wedding night, early in the morning she would go out weeping loudly and embracing all members of the household. In the evening, female guests would come and sing songs to the girl, while the girl would wept aloud, but stopped when guests sang songs about her groom's family. The bride's clothes maid would put hang up the trousseau in the girl's room, where it could be viewed by women and girls attending the girl's pre-wedding night.

The next morning, wedding guests from the groom's place would go to fetch the bride (women, men and a carriage boy all together). The bride would be transported in a horse carriage, and when they put the bride in a carriage belonging to wedding guests, two men of her household would take her and put her on a carriage, while the bride would cry aloud. When men of her household put her in the carriage they would punch her 3 times on her back, so that when she gave birth to babies, they would resemble their uncles, rather than her husband's family.

Filigree

There is a long-standing division of crafts: filigrees for Catholics; shoemaking for Muslims; copersmith work for the Orthodox.

I inherited this craft from my father, and the entire family was engaged in this craftsmanship. I used to work at home with my father, while after the Second World War, I became affiliated with the co-operative. During the Second World War, my father became a member of a partisan brigade, by force. After military service, they released him from his duties because of age. After coming back from the military, a group of 5-6 persons created a group of craftsmen working in a private house for an organisation called "Trudbenik". The owner named Llukic would bring silver to them and paid the correct fee to the craftsmen. In 1947-48, the same group established a co-operative. The following people established the co-operative: Gjergj Delhysa, Fran Gomilla, Luz Dishpalli, Nue Dishpalli, Fran Delhysa, Tadej Cuki, and some others. In order to disseminate the craft, this group of people hired some apprentices, who later on would develop into craftsmen themselves. For us of the younger generations there was a school "Ucenik u privredi" [*apprentice in economy*]. Given that there was the mine and a technical school in Mitrovica, one should have come to Mitrovica to take five additional examinations for our craft. After the establishment of the co-operative, Muslims too started to join, the only ones who could not endure the craft were the Serbs, because they could not sit in positions like us. In 1963 and onwards, I went to Rab Island [*in Croatia*] to open a seasonal filigree shop. This was because of the extreme poverty we had suffered. The renowned craftsmen were from Prizren and Skopje, in terms of preciseness and detail, so that work could be easier and fetch better prices.

Back then we knew (were acquainted with) each other and my mother-in-law. My mother was married in Ferizaj, while I was married in Prizren. Nobody would get married without having had an acquaintanceship beforehand.

Six weeks before Easter, at the time of fasting, there are no engagements in the Catholic religion. We got engaged on Pancake Day. On that very day, each Catholic household would make pancakes. Before one began fasting, during an engagement various carnivals would take place, gifts were given to children, be it money, sweets and pancakes, until

Wednesday. That Wednesday is called Ash Wednesday, as priests in the churches would throw ashes on us and tells us to think about the meaning of ashes to ashes, dust to dust. It is forbidden to eat meat on that day, fish is only once a day, and fruits and vegetables once a day. For seven days of the fast, the following could not be used: meat, animal and poultry products, only fruits and vegetables and normally fish. On Good Friday, the first day of Easter, one would eat nothing. Three days before Easter, one would visit a church, while Sunday was Easter day.

*On Thursday, called Big (Maundy) Thursday, 12 men gathered (symbolizing Christ's 12 disciples), and the priest would wash their feet, because Jesus Christ had washed the feet of his disciples.

*On Friday, called Big (Good) Friday, special prayers are said about the sufferings of Christ, his betrayal, capture and death.

*On Saturday, we sent to the church the wheaten scone to be blessed (containing cheese, eggs, salt, and garlic) which was to be eaten on Sunday morning. There is a high mass on Saturday midnight on 25/12, when Christ was reborn.

*On Sunday one would celebrate Easter, one would go to the mass, and in the church yard we would congratulate each other. The church activities were followed by lunch, and all relatives and acquaintances gathered at the home of the eldest, and after that I paid visits to others according to their age. There are some days during the year when shops have to close down, such as in Spring Whit Sunday, in Summer Assumption, in Autumn November 1st, All Saints' Day, and on November 2nd, All Souls' Day, mass and visits to graveyards; in Winter Christmas on December 25th. The rest are working days, Easter is on a Sunday according to the moon.

Eggs are coloured red on Thursday, as eggs symbolize resurrection, the colour Christ's happiness and blood. Every household has a feast; our household has Saint Nicolas as its feast, and it is celebrated in Winter, on December 6th, and everybody would receive a guest on their feast day. We don't celebrate birthdays, but we do celebrate the name-day. Children are named according to the calendar of saints; there is no celebration for women's names. Only a head of household's name is celebrated, but not names of children.



Hëdërlezi (St. George) celebration

St. George's Day is celebrated on 6 May. In reality, among the Muslim believers, except for the name of St. George, it has nothing to do with this pagan-orthodox personality, but it is celebrated as "Hëdërlezi" Day.

Whether we call it St. George or Hëdërlezi, 6 May is celebrated as the beginning of spring. So this is a pagan celebration of spring. Over time, it had gained its saint among the Christians, and was called St. George. Among the citizens of Prizren it is celebrated irrespective of their religion or ethnicity.

On the 5th of May, Prizren citizens make preparations for the celebration of St. George (Hëdërlezi). They clean their houses, as they want their houses to be clean when St. George visits them. Later they put on new clothes and go out in a green area. Usually Prizren citizens go to the old city cemetery (Karabash Baba shrine). They visit the Karabash Baba shrine, and this is why this day is also named as "Karabash Day". They also visit the shrines of Shejh Hysejn and Shejh Arbayrrahman, as well as Kemanxhi Rabia Hatun shrine, located in the vicinity of Karabash Baba shrine. They pray for luck and good health for the rest of year (until the next St. George). They leave gifts in the shrines (money or other gifts), and when leaving the shrine, they also give alms to the poor, because according to belief, charity strengthens the acceptance of prayer. On Hëdërlezi Day (St. George's Day celebration) Prizren citizens take with them (from home) boiled eggs, garlic and other pastry food, such as *gurabija*, *byrek* and *pogaça*.

On St. George's night, citizens of Prizren light fires in their neighbourhoods. They sing songs and jump over the fire. According to the pagan belief, by jumping over the fire sins are burned together with bad treatment, thus cleansing the person of the impurity. The lighting of fire also symbolizes warming of the soil. When they come back home, they foretell their future. The

future of young girls is predicted by dripping lead. This action is believed to destroy black magic, giving way to luck. Those who have cows or sheep deliver their daily milk to other people so that their animals may be even more productive.

Many years ago, says Mr Haxhi Ibraimi, in their neighbourhood Inimahall, each neighbour would bring food and drinks, and the celebration would last all night with singing and dancing by all participants. Today this form of celebration is not present, and Hëdërlezi does not have the joy of times when Mr Haxhi Ibrahimi was a young boy. On St. George's Day (6th of May) the eldest woman at home wakes up early before the dawn *ezan* (prayer) and in a cup filled with running water (from the river) puts some green branches (rose or chestnut branches). With those soaked branches or leaves she sprinkles other members of family and wakes them up, while the small children are bathed in water filled with green branches (rose or chestnuts) and eggs of different colours.

After that, neighbours get together and go somewhere to a green area. They usually go to Bajër and Bylbyldere. They sing songs, and from the dish made of green soil, they extract for each person present a *martifall* and they read it. Then they go back to their homes for the lunch of Hëdërlezi (St. George). Usually a lamb is slaughtered and cooked. According to the beliefs of Prizren citizens, the taste of lamb meat reaches its best during this day. Following this, the day continues with visits to each other and with congratulations of Hëdërlezi (St. George).

IBRAIM BERISHA PHOTOGRAPHED AT HIS HOME IN PRIZREN, 2012 (CHWB)



Life of a woman

A story about the house of Hysen Aga is told by a retired teacher named Lemane Haxhiu. She was born in 1939 in Vushtrri/Vucitrn. She had completed her secondary education in Vushtrri/Vucitrn, and qualified for High School (branch of teaching) in Prishtina. She had returned to her home town in 1960 as the first qualified teacher in Vushtrri/Vucitrn.

According to inherited traditional tales, the house where teacher Lemane is still living is 150 years old.

I came as a bride to this house.

Hysen Aga's family was a very wealthy family. My friend's uncle, whom we used to call Quz (Jonuz Aga), was married to an aunt of Hasan Prishtina. This was one of the stories inherited from ancestors of this household and it was passed down from generation to generation.

There were two houses in the yard, a house for men and a house for women.

Because they were wealthy, huge trading activities took place in the men's house where various merchants would come to avoid meeting women of the household, and that is why the

yard of the household was divided into two parts. There used to be a circular space in the middle of the yard with a 20 cm gap in the partition whereby food would be supplied with no sighting of women at the time.

Hasan Prishtina was a frequent guest to the household. Interestingly, nowadays one can even notice that the podium and/or ground floor has a 1 meter thick wall, whereas the width of the wall in the upper floor is smaller.

There was a guests' room where guests and/or merchants coming from other places would spend their nights. This family had, as I've been told, originated from three brothers as they remember. However, after World War II the family started to scatter, some of them migrating to Turkey, others died and the family began to get smaller. All that are left of this family are Avdush, Hysen Aga's son and I, a former bride to this family. This is the house where Ms. Lemane Haxhiu or teacher Lemane, as known to everybody in Vushtrri/Vucitrn, lives.

Roma engagement

To tell you the truth, we have a tradition which I sometimes say is good, but sometimes I think that it is not. We betroth our girls at a very young age, because, my friend, girls immediately blossom, and it is better for them to go to their husband than to do something shameful. When the *Mësit* (matchmaker) comes to ask for the girl, he looks her, and if he likes her, the boy comes to see her, too. If both like each other, we tell the *Mësit* how much money we want, should he decide to take the girl. The *Mësit* goes to the prospective in-laws and

discusses the issue with them, and if they agree and have the money to give, they send the *Mësit* to give us the news, and we set the date when the in-law can come and ask for the hand of our daughter. When the father-in-law comes, we give him our daughter and he leaves the money on the tray. We ask for money, my friend, because the groom might change his mind after he gets the bride and might leave her, but when he thinks of money given for her, he will have to think twice before doing so.

Kanagjeqi (bridal ritual of hair dyeing with henna)

It starts on Thursday midday, when girls and women who are next of kin are invited to make the girl cry.

At that moment, girl sits in the room corner, turns her head towards the wall and starts crying or holds *kasnak* (a part of cradle) in her hand, until all women have entered the room, when they put the scarf on her head and make her cry.

The scarf is put on by a married daughter of the family, who has a good life in her husband's family and who has children. She serves as a role model for the future bride so that she may also have a good life and children. Initially the girl opposes this, pretending that she would not like to go to her future husband. This is traditional, but nevertheless she is compelled to wear the scarf. Then she is moved into the room full of women and dresses in the clothes brought by her future husband. On this occasion, she also pretends her unwillingness to put them on, but finally she wears them and starts hugging all the women, crying and weeping and saying 'hu e hu'. She initially hugs a small boy so that her first child may be a boy. After these customs are performed, the girl goes to a different room. Women then get a chance to see her clothing brought by husband's family. This

is the time when two or three dressing ladies are assigned to take care of the girl until Sunday, when she enters the bridal car, and they receive a money reward.

On Friday, the girl goes to neighbours to greet them, crying all the while. The Friday is Women's Day, when women from different places come to see the future bride. Evening marks the start of Henna Night, and the Friday is also the day when the trousseau can be seen by women present.

In the evening, women invited for dinner by the bride's mother arrive, and after dinner the bride's hair is dyed with henna, which means that from now on she can use make-up. The bride weeps for her girlhood, while women guests sing about her, and mock her husband and his family.

This is the time when songs are sung for her family and life. Ladies dress the girl on Sunday in preparation for the wedding. When the girl leaves her father's house she cries and weeps, and says 'hu e hu'. She only stops weeping after the car departs. From now on she is accompanied by ladies in the car and the *bullan* (car boy).

ELMAZE SHAHINI PHOTOGRAPHED AT HER HOME IN GJILAN/GNJILANE, 2012 (FORTESA)



How the people would go to the mountains

Like most Dukagjini area villages, the Drini river valley villages did not have sufficient pastures.

In the Drini river valley there were families with large flocks of sheep that would usually go to the Albanian Alps for pasture. Farmers would go to the mountain at the end of May, where they would stay until October, or as the shepherds would say, from St. George's Day until Shmiter day. Before going to the mountains, they would shear their sheep, the wool would be cleaned well, and then it would be shared out in equal quantities to each family member. The share was supposed to be given even to a newborn child.

The huts where shepherds and their family members would stay were called Stane, which

were completely built of wood. During the night, the cattle would stay adjacent to Stane or close to them – this place was fenced with hedges. During their stay in mountain, shepherds would make dairy products (cheese, yoghurt, milk, cream). Due to the high altitude of the Albanian Alps with their rich and clean pastures, milk, cheese and yoghurt were of high quality. Sheep and cattle grazing in the mountains were healthy.

People staying in the mountain (shepherds and their families) were considered to be healthy as the mountain is a factory of erythrocytes.

Children and adults in poor health would usually be sent to the mountains.

LUDVIG BEKA PHOTOGRAPHED AT HIS HOME IN KRUSHEVE E MADHE/VELIKA KRUŠA, KLINË/KLINA, 2012 (ZANA)



A bride's hen night (in Rugova)

A bride's hen night was organised a day before the girl's wedding. Most were organised on Saturdays, as weddings would be held mainly on Sundays. On the Friday, they would dye girl's hair, and from that day on the girl would not go out of her room as it was shameful for her to be seen by members of her household. On Saturday evening, her female friends and cousins and relatives would come, and the girl would receive them at the door embracing and weeping. When someone closer to the girl came to the place, the girl would cry out louder while embracing her. Female guests would go back to their homes within the day, but came back in the evening again as it was the bride's hen night. When everybody was there, the girl would stand up again and embrace them all weeping, while

in the meantime somebody would quickly and unbeknown to her settle a place for her in the middle of the room. When she had embraced them all, they would take the girl and seat her in the settled place, then her brother would come into the room and put a kerchief on her head and her engagement ring on her finger (as the girl would not wear a ring on her finger until the bride's hen night). This was when they began singing to the girl and drying her hair. While singing to the girl, they praised her family, and she kept weep, but while they sang to the groom's family, she stopped weeping. This continued until late at night with singing and dancing, but at some point the singing and dancing stopped and they began preparing the trousseau.



Where is the spider's house

One day a man came to me to ask me about something. I wanted to know whether he could get the message from the story.

I asked him: "Can you tell me something?". Ask me, he said.

You tell me where is the spider's house and I tell you whatever you want.

He started to guess, but too aimlessly.

In the end I asked him to follow me. We went to the men's chamber while I opened a door for him and asked him to enter.

As he entered inside, he got wrapped up in the spider's net.

"Do you see now where is the spider's house!", I said. "It's in the room where men don't enter."



Marriage

Born to mother Sabrije and father Ahmet, we were ten family members – five brothers, three sisters, mother and father.

In 1926, father, mother and the oldest sister went to Turkey, where one of my brothers was born. In 1931 they came back to Prishtina, and later on continued to live in Vushtrri.

My father was a tailor and my mother was a housewife. When I started school, I was seven. After two years of attending school, I was compelled to stay home and help my mother in raising my siblings; I cried too much.

The extended family lives in different Kosovo towns. We would very often visit my aunt in Mitrovica and my sister in Trepca.

I got married in 1958 when I was 20. My husband was 36. Our neighbours were laughing at us, saying how come my family gave me to an old man. But he was a nice guy.

At the time we would prepare the trousseau together with the family members. We would knit and sew pillow cases and bed sheets.

When they came with a horse carriage to take me as a bride, there was also a carriage transporting girls. When I got married, times were a bit more modern and carriage horses were decorated with bundles. There were also two women tambourine players. On the way to Mitrovica, they stopped in Vushtrri close to the stone bridge, and played on the drums. At the entrance of Mitrovica, the in-laws stopped once again as there were numerous horse carriages, and Selim, the Horse Carriage Man, stopped the horses and served rakia (fruit brandy).

As a bride, I could not speak, but the girls with me in the horse carriage were shouting.

When we arrived in Mitrovica at my husband house, he took off my scarf and sent me to the hairdresser.

When I went to my father's house, he didn't speak to me because I had taken off my scarf.

I live happy today, and I have 5 children. They all are married, and I also have three nephews and 6 nieces.



Story told by the owner of a private museum

Gjon Gjergji transformed his father's *kulla* into a museum, where he keeps numerous artefacts. As one enters the museum, the stairs leading to the second floor are visible. Various cultural heritage items are kept on this floor.

The wooden *sofra* (low round traditional dinning table), wooden spoons, clay dishes, tea dishes, pots and other traditional utensils can be found in this museum. The fireplace and a saucepan hanging on a peg can also be seen. The handloom with all its parts – laying sley, shuttle, shuttle box, picker, reed, warp beam, back beam, breast beam, cloth beam, heddles and harnesses is also presented. Some items have been stored here for more than 100 years. Lamp wicks and oil lamps with tinder – used for lighting – are exhibited in the museum. The national dress woven on a handloom can also be seen. The following are the parts of women's national costumes: woman's shirt, scarf, *pshallak* (scarf-type garment tied around the waist), and shawl; while men's costumes include *tirqit* (woollen trousers), *opanga* (rubber shoes), *gogishte*, *plis* (traditional white round hat) and *shoka* (shawl type garment tied around the waist).

Dowry box, cradle, coffee grinder, iron heated by charcoal, old typewriter, old balance, *pocerrka* (pumpkin used as a water bottle), *qiftelia* (traditional two-stringed instrument), sickle, church bell, *parajka* (wooden instrument for hand washing of clothes), a very old telephone set, plough, etc. Except for the above mentioned items, the House Museum also has a rakia *hordov* (container), ladle, pan, bread container, sieve, water container, kneading trough; tongs and pipe used for smoking, rifle scabbard, griddle, *buquk* (grain container that served for weight measurements) etc. There is also a wooden cross in the Museum, which is considered to be more than 100 years old, and was used for various religious festivities. The family uses the cross for various celebrations.

The museum shelves are rich with pre and post war books. Also wooden tools such as rake, hay fork, beehive, billhook, axe, shovel, *shytini* (container for pouring liquids), etc.

In addition, there are more than 400 photos taken during and after the war. Some of the items have been donated by volunteers. The museum is visited by both local and international visitors.

GJON GJERGJI PHOTOGRAPHED AT HIS HOME IN KRUSHEVA E MADHE/VELIKA KRUŠA, KLINË/KLINA, 2012 (ZANA)



Hospitality and the rules of Oda e burrave (Guest room)

There was a tradition among Albanians when a guest was entering a house to call, “Hey, landlord,” and the landlord would invite and welcome him to our *kullas* (traditional Albanian stone house).

Unfortunately today there is no hospitality, and when a guest goes somewhere, someone from the house comes out and asks, “What do you want?” This means that today everyone is a landlord.

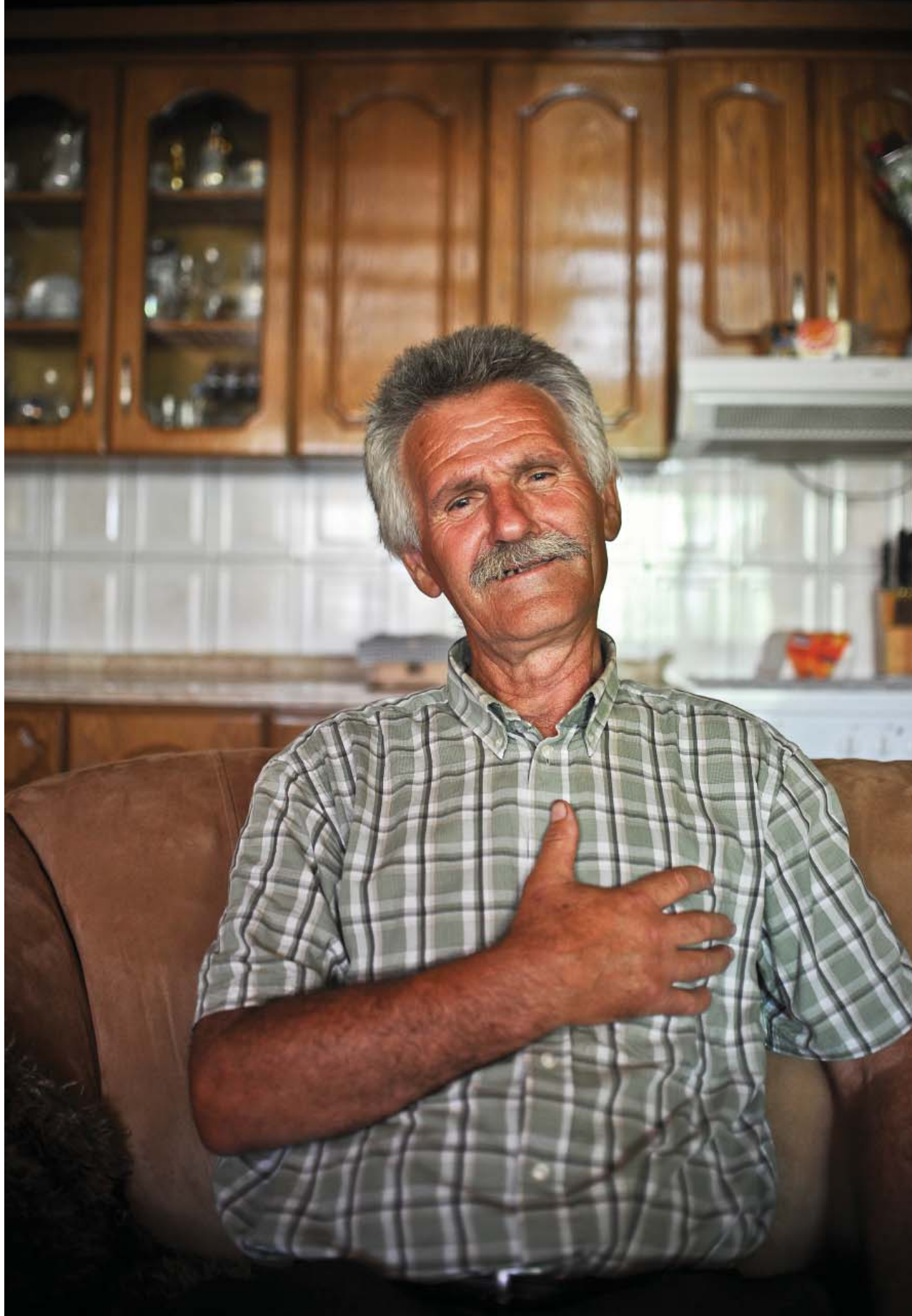
In old times, when a guest would go to his friend or elsewhere, the first word the landlord said to the guest was, “Do you have any problems, and how can I help you?” and if the guest had any problem or concern, the landlord would help and try to find a solution within his capability.

The Albanian *Oda* has played a critical role in all historical periods. *Oda* had their own rules, and many deals and agreements were struck there. In wartime, the *Oda* was a cradle of national resistance. In the *Oda* discussions were held, and *Besa* (promise) was given; word of honour and fortitude were displayed. Whenever a person took the floor in an *Oda*, others would listen to him, so that order and the spoken word were respected. When a guest came, the entire

neighbourhood would be invited to the *Oda*. They would discuss and sing patriotic songs to *qifteli* and *sharki* (national string instruments), thus preserving and maintaining Albanian patriotism.

In *Kullas* very often blood feuds were settled; *Besa* and the word of honour were given. There was strict adherence to these rules, but nowadays unfortunately the importance of the *Kullas* and fortitude have begun to decline, thus losing the great values of our forefathers, who would sit at the front of the fireplace (place of honour), the place where coffee and bread are taken wholeheartedly. Now few people have preserved these values and traditions. There are efforts to preserve them in the Dukagjini area, where *e pamja* (time for expressing condolences) should be noted with its rules and hospitality, as well as the tradition of welcoming guests and seeing them off.

When a person goes to express condolences with 30 or more men, one person expresses the condolences on behalf of the entire group, which is also a great relief for the man in charge of *e pame*. The person welcoming them then gives the floor to the person leading the group, who receives marks of honour and respect from the person in charge of *e pame*.



White Plis

One of popular tradition is the making of the white *plis* (traditional cap). Mr Naxhi Gjurgjealo, great-grandson of Jashar Efendi and renowned hatter, speaks on how it was made and how this craft was carried over as a part of family heritage. The white *plis*, during the Ottoman Empire was firstly made in Gjakovë, and later this handcraft also expanded in Prizren. Gjurgjealo has a tradition of more than 130 years, since Mr Naxhi's grandfather began working as an apprentice in a *plis* workshop at 9 years of age. He served his apprenticeship and learned the craft for 10 years.

After all these years working as an apprentice, he wanted to open his own workshop. After some time, the family decided to open it for the purpose of continuing the tradition of *plis* making in Prizren. Initially, they faced numerous problems due to the lack of tools and equipment, and the first *plises* made were quite primitive. Demand for these caps

was huge and it was coming from all Albanian-inhabited lands.

The *plis* was made in three models depending on the areas and settlements where Albanians were living. For example, the Luma area and Dibra area have the same *plises* with flat crowns. The southern area uses a *plis* with a rounded upper part and a small projection, and the third model has a less rounded upper part than that of south. The family workshop was the first one in Prizren, where white *plis* was made and sold, which can be still found on the same location today after 130 years. Mr Naxhi points out that his children and other family descendants will inherit this craft. In order to preserve this craft, we need to have institutional and international support in the form of small-scale funding. There should also be participation in international fairs aimed at presenting this very unique symbol of ours.

Mësit (Matchmaker)

Those times were difficult, father, but the word given was really a pledged word. We had a nephew in Carrabreg. His relatives left no stone unturned in trying to find him a bride, but no family was eager to give them one. He was lame. One of his legs was shorter than the other. They asked a man to go as *mësit* to Pozhar. This was a respected household, and the girl was a good looking and hard working. They sent a pair of rubber shoes as a gift. He entered their house and asked for the hand of their daughter. The family from Carrabreg was also well known. Mësit praised the would-be groom, extolling him to the sky. When he went for the second time, the girl's family granted him consent for the girl. The *mësit* departed to bring the good news to the family. After a while, a man went to the girl's father and said to him, "How unfortunate you are, how come you gave your daughter, who is like a ripe apple in a tree, for a lame man." "No, it is not possible," answered the girl's father. They continued arguing - yes,

no, yes, no. At that juncture, the girl's father ran fast and caught up with the *mësit* before he entered the village. He called him by name, and asked him to stop. "What happened," asked the *mësit*? "I would not like to give my consent for the daughter!" "Why is that?" "His son is lame." "Is this your only reason? I will immediately resolve this issue. You can go home, and I will call you!" The *mësit* went to Carrabreg, and told the son's father, "Let your son climb up a willow tree to trim it because someone told your in-laws that your son is lame." After this, the *mësit* went to the father-in-law's, took him to the willow tree and said, "This is the groom to be, do you see him?" YES. "Is he pruning the willow tree?" YES. "Is he lame?" NO. "So what we should do now?" "You can go to his father and convey my consent to him". The girl's father went back to his home, and the *mësit* went to convey the message. When the groom was finally seen to be lame, no-one raised this issue any more.

Easter

According to the story told by Mrs Lucaj of Christ's resurrection becoming a holy celebration, Christ was crucified and resurrected 50 days later.

Easter has been celebrated since the 4th century. Initially, the Church celebrated it only one day and night between Great Saturday and Easter Sunday. Later on, "the Three Holy Days of Christ's Crucifixion, Burial and Resurrection" began to be observed. The liturgical celebration of these three days begins on Great (Maundy) Thursday evening through to Easter Sunday, and is passed from generation to generation. Easter is not fixed in the calendar but falls every year on the next Sunday after the first full moon following the spring equinox (21 March).

Easter Day falls between 22 March and 25 April.

Eggs are coloured on Great Thursday only in the presence of family members as others are not supposed to see them until the Great Day, namely Sunday, comes. Eggs are differently coloured but the red colour dominates, as it has a unique importance symbolizing life, faith and arrival of summer.

Eggs were considered a very strong element of magic, and when the house was built, people would usually put them under its foundation to ward off evil, while pregnant women were used them to determine the sex of their unborn child,

and young brides had to pass through eggs before entering into groom's house. Earlier, friends coming to deliver Easter greetings would receive one egg for each family member, but nowadays this tradition is not applied and the number of eggs received as a gift does not necessarily correspond to the number of family members.

Good Friday is considered a fasting celebration, and no meat or greasy food is eaten that day, however, fish may be used. The Saturday evening represents the beginning of high mass, and it starts at midnight when the whole family goes to church, and they take the homemade bread with ayran as its ingredient. Easter celebrations start on Sunday, when numerous dishes and sweets are cooked and family friends and relatives are welcomed in celebrations.

For the sake of better understanding, Easter is: Celebration of Life & Celebration of Peace & Celebration of Light & Celebration of Joy & Celebration of Unity...etc

In recent times, youth do not observe the old tradition of Easter celebration, and they do not fast as the elderly do.

The story was told by: Viktore Colaj, aged 71, from Deçan and married in Prizren.



Preparing the bride for marriage

I got engaged at 14. I was married instead of my sister, because my father had betrothed her before she was even born, when my mother was pregnant. After my sister was born, we realised that she was mute. My father did not want to give his mute daughter to his friend's son, so they decided to give me instead. I'm two years older than my husband. I was firstly engaged and did not marry for the next three years, as I was preparing my dowry.

When the marriage date was set, my husband's family brought my costumes and clothing on Thursday. Numerous men came prior to 12 o'clock, because according to the tradition brides' costumes had to be sent in the morning and all the congratulations had to be made before lunch.

I did not see the costumes until the day I wore them when they came to fetch me.

On Friday morning they put the white scarf on me, and I began crying. I hugged all my family members; we were a huge family with more than 50 members. On Friday our neighbours came to congratulate and wish us good luck, and I hugged all women and girls present.

On Saturday morning we again had to receive guests and in-laws we invited. I went out at the house front door to receive and embrace them. There were many guests from the village who came uninvited to see the trousseau, costumes and clothing, and I received, and hugged them, crying.

My mother helped me make the trousseau. Everything had to be done on a handloom; we made rugs, woollen mattresses, blankets, pillows and other necessary items for bride

and groom. We also worked some gifts for husband's family. I saw linen shirts, with bead decorations at lapels and sleeves; I also knitted pullovers and sweaters. We also did *hyrama*, which people later on began calling sheets. When I got married, we used to call them *hyrama*, and they were crafted in various colours and models.

On Saturday after dinner, girls began singing for me, and dyed my hair with henna. There were many songs used for such occasions, but those usually sung on request would go: *oj hatiqe dil e këqyre hanen te ka ardhe vakti për me ngjite kanën, ngjitet kana me pika pika, edhe sonte bajrak ner çika*, and there were many other songs that would last for 1-2 hours, while I was constantly crying.

On Sunday I woke up early to get ready; neighbourhood girls did my make-up. I put on my *dimi* (woman's dress), corsage with lapels that were brought to me with bridal costumes and clothing, as well as a red coloured veil. Before the in-laws came, they put red thread around my shoulders, and when I saw the in-laws from the window, I cut it loose. From the moment I cut the thread I was not supposed to speak, until I met the groom. The bride had to utter her first words with the groom for their love to be stronger.

Gratë e kerrit (in-law women guests) were welcomed in the yard, I was then brought outside to meet them; they took off my red veil and gave the other guests sugar lumps, as back then we did not have any other candies like today. After this, I was standing with my eyes closed and speechless, until they sent me in the bridal car.



Engagements

A cousin or friend of the bachelor used to visit the girl's house to see her parents or brothers, and at some point in their conversation he would say "I have come on behalf of a certain bachelor to ask for the hand of your girl". In some cases a promise was made immediately, but the usual reply was that he should go and wait for a message five or six days later.

If they did send for him, he would take with him a wedding ring. They would drink coffee together, then he would give the ring to the girl's mother, and as he left, a small ring called a "chevra" was handed to him. The date of the wedding (the big ring) was set on this occasion.

If, on the other hand, they did not want him to marry the girl, they sent him a message, delivered by a friend, saying that he was not to go back.

To mark an engagement, the young man sent various gifts to the girl's house – once

agreement had been given by his own mother and the girl's mother, and with the consent of both fathers – gifts known as "nebe", taking the form of sugar and money (usually gold coins), a ring and a rose in red wrapping tied with silk. He sent more money if he wanted gifts to be sent to the girl's friends, acquaintances and distant cousins. The girl stayed at her father's house for a period of between two months and a year, during which time she was not allowed to go out. If her fiancé passed the house, she had to send presents to his house by the next day, usually in the form of cakes such as revanija or gurabija. Fiancés therefore avoided going past, so that such gifts did not give rise to expense. Between two and seven weeks before the girl moved to her fiancé's house, he sent a message confirming when the wedding would take place and when the girl would be sent for.

Serbian weddings

Traditional Serbian wedding

Our lives, as you may know, are accompanied by an abundance of various customs, and so in the past a wedding would be conditioned by a whole range of summer and winter agricultural works that had to be finished before the wedding celebration could be prepared. Once the harvest is finished and the crops are safely stored away, then when the hayfield is taken care of and the vintage season is over, the time comes for wedding celebrations. People regard marriage as a collective act of establishing relationships between two family unions.

Inviting guests for the wedding is usually done a few days before the wedding. Then the canteen carrier, a youngster from the groom's house with a canteen filled with wine or brandy and decorated with a towel and flowers, invites the guests, visiting their homes.

Above all, it is important to arrive at the wedding at the specified time. In front of the house or the building, guests are welcomed and decorated with rosemary by young people, usually girls,. Custom dictates that the guests leave the children some money for decorations. Then the guests gather in the home and are only served coffee, unless someone came from far away and is allowed a sandwich.

Serbian wedding guests are usually decorated with towels, flowers and rosemary. Cars are also decorated, as carriages or coaches once were. The wedding procession is led by a flag carrier with the tricolour flag bearing an apple on the point of the flagstaff.

Composition of the wedding procession

The best man used to be the groom's uncle, and today is mainly some other witness at the wedding. The uncle's role was once very important in his nephew's wedding. Long ago, in ancestral tribes, in promiscuous weddings, the uncle had a close relationship with the children,

and particularly with his sister's sons. In real group marriage, the uncle would take care of nephews, as the only male authority figure, because in a group marriage it was not possible to tell who was whose father.

Dressing the bride

When dressing up, bride is helped by her sisters and best friends. The bride is dressed in white, with a white veil on her head. According to rule, the bride's wedding dress is bought by her father-in-law or the groom. The bride needs to wear something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue.

A significant element of the bride's costume was the head covering. The veil had a double meaning in the bride's costume: as already mentioned, protection from evil forces, but also concealing beauty from the eyes of young men, abiding by Christian principles according to which a woman is meant only for her future husband. This is why only the husband could remove it.

Arrival at the bride's house

Shooting the apple is one of the most present customs in our areas. When the groom comes for the bride, his father-in-law fixes an apple on the highest tree in the bride's yard. The bride remains inside the house until the groom had shot down the apple using a rifle. Also, before the wedding, the bride prepares an apple in her house, in which coins are stuck and after the church wedding, she throws this apple behind her head. The man who catches it will be the next to marry.

The bride is bought by the best man or the groom, and sold by her own brother. If she does not have a brother, then it is her aunt's or uncles' son. Among our people, this moment is the most interesting one because it is when most of the fun happens.

St. George

This is the story for St. George Day that is mainly celebrated by Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian population.

The story is personally told by Mrs. Hysnije Jaha, where she describes the way how Ashkalis celebrate it.

St. George is a celebration for us, as Bajram for Muslims or Christmas for Serbs and Catholics.

One week prior to St. George Day we clean the house and everything within, including carpets, curtains and everything that needs to be cleaned. Three or four days in advance a lamb is bought. The lamb is kept well, and children get happy when playing with him and sending him to pasture.

On the St. George evening the lamb is slaughtered.

When the mill was there, we would go and take water, some nettle, some grass, we would keep one Easter egg, and on the morning of St.

George Day we sprinkle children to wake them up early, and during the day we bathe them.

We put in a bucket the mill water, grass, nettle and eggs, we bathe the children with that water, and then we dress them with new clothing bought two-three days prior to St. Georges Day.

On the second day of St. George, we have the St. George lunch, where the extended family is gathered. After lunch we go to our relatives to congratulate St. George. They welcome us with sweets and juices. On the third day of St. George, we, the grown-ups, get well dressed, too, and go out in the park, where we dance and play in our own ways until late in the evening.

This celebration is the most significant amongst gypsies (name for Roma and Ashkalis); they usually slaughter two or three lambs, and they have their own way of celebration. They usually spend a lot of money for St. George's Day.

The celebration lasts for four days.



Village festival

On 14 May every year, the village celebrates St Jeremiah's Day with a festival. A different host is responsible each year, receiving the cross and the special cake which go with that responsibility. The festival begins with a church ceremony and the cutting of the cake. When the ceremony and the cake cutting are over, the host or his son takes the cross and carries it past the front of the church, followed by children and adults carrying the church's icons and flags.

The cross-bearer and priest lead a procession around the church and then around the old log-cabin church, after which they walk round the village. People bring food and drinks out of their houses. The procession goes all the way round the village, and young people, in particular, visit the fields of wheat and maize,

as well as the valleys, stopping at certain trees bearing inscriptions, where the priest leads prayers for the people. On arrival at the old watermill and the gully by the old lime tree, the cross-bearer immerses himself and turns the cross to all points of the compass, and children and youngsters follow him into the water, splashing him. He then uses the cross to bless the food and drinks as he passes people's houses.

Once the whole village has been visited, the priest, cross-bearer, host and villagers go to the church. In the church hall, everyone thanks the host for the success of the festival, and all sit down together to share the food and drink that the host has provided.



Karabash Baba shrine

One of the most unusual stories told by the elderly of this town is the one of Karabash Baba, relating the anxiety and discomfort he had in his grave. The truth of the story's beginning may be called into question, but what happened later on is said to be proven by other people and the story spread immediately, and was told from generation to generation.

The event seems to have happened somewhere around the end of the 19th century, when Prizren was a part of Ottoman Empire. A young man from Prizren called Fetah, son of Sylejman, born in 1860, was imprisoned in the island of Malta. His family in Prizren, wife and children, were getting ready to migrate to the hinterland of the Ottoman Empire, in today's Turkey. Fetah was deeply saddened as he did not have any news of his family's fate, and his family likewise did not have any hint whether he was alive or dead.

One night, imprisoned Fetah awoke as he saw in a dream a man who introduced himself as Karabash Baba. Karabash Baba, a common name of those days, had told Fetah that he was not feeling comfortable in his grave in Prizren, because just above his grave there was an ironsmith who was forging iron just above the midriff of his dead body. Whenever the ironsmith was hammering the iron, the martyr Karabash Baba would feel pain in his navel. So he promised Fetah that he would release him from prison, if he removed his grave to a different location when he went to Prizren. Fetah, frightened by this strange dream, did not accept the offer immediately. Karabash Baba again appeared in his dream, but out of fear Fetah declined the offer and asked for more time to think. In the third instance, Fetah accepted the offer, and all of a sudden Fetah was transferred from his prison in Malta to his neighbourhood Islaana in Prizren. This transfer took Fetah and

his family by surprise, and he would very rarely speak about this.

Karabash Baba had threatened Fetah that if he did not keep the promise, he would have to face horrors in his life. After he got back to his home country, Fetah was not feeling comfortable as he was afraid to report the case to the authorities, but he was also afraid of Karabash Baba's threat, who would from time to time appear in his dream to remind him of the promise.

One day he took the courage and departed for Beledie, where after many difficulties, he obtained approval to dig up the grave. He was given the required tools and two gendarmes to escort him. Fetah's son, Muhamed, went to help him, too.

According to Karabash Baba's instructions, his grave was located in a Roma neighbourhood, in a narrow road, under the workshop of an ironsmith. It was not difficult for Fetah to find the grave. He and his son dug up the grave, and to the surprise of all the present, the lifeless body of Karabash Baba had not decomposed, exactly as preached in the Islamic tradition, that the bodies of martyrs do not decompose. The clothing of Karabash Baba was not damaged, including his black hat, on the basis of which he may have acquired his name of Karabash. Karabash Baba was known as a soldier from Horasan, and the exact year of his death as a martyr is not known.

His lifeless body was buried in Bejzade, where Fetah built him a shrine. Nowadays, the cemetery there is known as "Karabash Cemetery" and the shrine is visited all through the year, especially during the "Ēdërlezi" festivities, or the celebration of the end of winter and beginning of summer – a celebration of pagan origins.

Caravan

Caravan was the day when people would come down from the mountains. In the past, it used to be a certain date set for everybody to come down from the mountains at the same time. I remember the caravan both in my family and at my husband's place. We would know the exact day of the caravan two weeks in advance. Children would be all cheerful in anticipation of that day. Dairy products would come down earlier from the mountains. Girls would sing and chant in honour of them. They would sing about their new clothes and rosaries.

On the day set for the caravan to go up to the mountains, we would wait below the dairy farm. The next day the caravan would set off. Horses were loaded with clothing and carried small children. The lady of the house would make a pie for the journey. One horse would be assigned for her. Should she have a small child with her, she would carry the child in front of her. There would be a long line of horses. The more capable children would go on foot. Everybody would be wearing new clothes. It was noticeable which woman was more hardworking, according to the clothes she made. A herdsman would escort us all the way to the lower part of the

dairy farm. When we had made half the journey, the caravan would halt. There was a spring of water out there, and bread/food would be served. They used to call it 'a pie water spring'. Even nowadays they call it the same way 'a pie water spring', although no pie is served there any more. Back then, one could eat an amazing pie made only of cream. It was so joyous. Some would fervently look forward to setting off on the journey. It also happened for there to be children who hadn't seen their mothers for (three) months. Upon arriving home, children would run all over the field and garden while the lady of the house started making dinner. We used to call it the dinner of coming down from the mountains. One would invite ones' neighbours and relatives. Nowadays, there is neither caravan nor dinner of coming down. We have forgotten them. Persons who owned sufficient pastures in the field would also bring down their sheep. They would dye the sheep a red colour and they would hang a ringing bell on the necks of bellwethers. Everybody would know whose sheep were being brought down as they would recognize the ringing of their bells.

Kasëmbeg stream

In the eastern part of Prizren, in the foot of the Bajer forest, there is a stream called Kasëmbeg. It has abundant clean and fresh water. This stream flowed through the Kurillë neighbourhood towards the city fields. Where there was a house near its flow, a branch of the stream extend to connecting all other houses in a “network”. This is how a “large water network” was developed between Prizren houses and families.

Prizren citizens strongly insisted on the preservation of water purity as it was used for drinking and cleaning, while the children of those times would learn swimming in the main stream during the hot summer days. In the house yards, the stream was a place of games and amusement for small children. Their parents would build above the stream small mill wheels that the water flow would turn. The hands of a doll would be tied to one part of the wheel, creating the impression that the doll itself was turning the mill wheel.

The elderly remember with nostalgia the time when the neighbourhood houses were connected through backdoors. The yards were big, with the Kasëmbeg stream passing through the middle of them. Family intimacy was at its maximum level, as required by tradition, but this was not an impediment to close neighbourly and family relations, which were much stronger than now, when family intimacy is much less. One

of the traditions that would be passed from the mother in-law to the bride and from the parents to children was the protection of stream water from pollution. For this purpose, a fearsome legend is told for anyone who might spit or throw garbage in the stream. Those who would pollute the stream water were “cursed”.

Former brides and today’s grandmothers of the Kurillë and Ralin neighbourhoods tell stories about the fate of careless young brides who were not aware of the “curse” for polluters of the stream water. Among these stories is the one that took place forty years ago, of a young bride who is known by her name and surname, as well as the family where she was married. She had experienced terrible nightmares as she had ignored the advice of elderly not to wash the nappies of her first son in the Kasëmbeg stream. After she experienced the horror of nightmares she never again made this mistake. The small branches of the Kasëmbeg stream are now replaced with underground water pipes. The main stream has also been ‘buried’, and now cannot be seen in the Kurillë neighbourhood. In the Kurillë and Ralin neighbourhoods, some houses have causeways that preserve visible traces of the Kasëmbeg streambed. However in this streambed no water runs now, and only the memories when love and respect was at its peak are still alive. My family house was one of these houses.

HAJREDIN GASHI PHOTOGRAPHED AT HIS HOME IN PRIZREN, 2012 (CHWB)



Return my thing

One day while I was getting out of the men's chamber, a man hit me in the back.

I got angry, and asked who did it?

They told me it was the man sat in front of the fireplace.

I told them they should watch out for what I'll do to him.

I took a needle and entered the chamber. I said that I lost something but I didn't tell what. "The man who took it should return it to me!" All men were staring at each other.

"When I'm close to the man who did it, this man will scream", I told them.

I started to snuff around the chamber like a hound dog. Each man chuckled whenever I approached.

When I was near to this man, I jabbed him with the needle and he started to scream.

"You took my thing", I said.

He was very surprised and it was a long time before he understood that I was only joking.

ISUF AHMETXHEKAJ PHOTOGRAPHED AT HIS HOME IN ISNIQ/ISNIĆ, DEÇAN/DEČANE, 2012



Visiting for the expression of condolences

At the time, the receipt of condolences was held in the guest room and would last up to five (5) weeks. When a man or a woman died, the entire village and relatives were invited, and they would gather to discuss the best possible arrangements for receiving condolences, and whether there was a need to help and support as it might happen that the family of the deceased was poor. It was the time when yoked oxen were used.

We would assign people to spread the news and the specific venue so as not to leave anyone uninformed about what happened. Until the news was spread about timing of burial to friends and close acquaintances, at home we would divide the tasks to be carried out for the entire time of receipt of condolences, such as who would serve drinking water and tea, who would set shoes in order. Someone else would take care of horses and oxen, as we used to work with carriages and horses. We would use ox carts to pay visits to express our condolences in the village, and should somebody stay overnight, we had to disperse them in the village for their overnight stay, as they used to come from remote villages. The next day they would come early in the morning to pay their respects and express their condolences once again and afterwards they would leave.

We would start to invite people for the third day (third day prayers) of receiving condolences

from day one of the condolences; that day was intended more for children. We would buy loaves at the bakery in Peja and place them inside wicker baskets on our heads and bring them home for the third day of condolences (third day prayers). We would cook halvah (a kind of sweetmeat), and would place a spoon with halvah on the bread and give it to children for charity (normally to poor families). Then on the seventh day an imam would be invited, with all relatives of the deceased for dinner that night.

Afterwards, after the lunch or dinner in honour of the departed soul, which is called mawlid or milad (a public sermon), they would sing this mawlid and say amen and ask the deceased for forgiveness. Afterwards, people would bid each other goodbye and leave the place, but the receipt of condolences would continue. On completion of the 4 or 5 weeks for which the condolences lasted, on any first Eid Al-Fitr or Eid Al-Adha feast after the death in that family, all the friends and close acquaintances would go there for a visit and express their condolences once again, as they said that it was the second time to receive condolences (because the family would miss the deceased person during the feasts).



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