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THE ALBANIAN POPULATION IN THE KINGDOM OF YUGOSLAVIA: DEMOGRAPHIC AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

ABSTRACT: *The paper analyzes the size and structure of the Albanian population in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The population censuses of 1921 and 1931 are the main source for the research. The statistical and census materials are compared to a number of studies from the fields of historiography, ethnography and anthropogeography. A number of papers raising doubts about how objective the census results are in regard to the number of Albanians in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia are also critically addressed.*

KEYWORDS: Albanians, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Minorities, Migrations, Population censuses of 1921 and 1931

The Kingdom of Yugoslavia stretched on territories with a highly varied ethnic structure. In its provinces that used to be under Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian rule, the South Slavs lived together with a numerous non-South Slavic population.¹ The Germans, the Albanians, the Hungarians, the Romanians and the Turks each totaled over 100,000, which was a significant percentage for a country of almost 12 million people.² The minorities, that is to say, the non-South Slavic communities, according to the census of 1921, totaled 2,053,405, or 17.13%. The most numerous with more than 100,000 members each were the Germans,³ the Hungarians,⁴ the Albanians, the Romanians,⁵ the Turks,⁶ the

¹ Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва од 31 јануара 1921 године (Сарајево: Општа државна статистика, 1932), 2–3.

² Zoran Janjetović, "National Minorities in Yugoslavia 1918-1941", *Review of Croatian History*, VIII/1, (2012), 61–75; Zoran Janjetović, *Deca careva pastorčad kraljeva. Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji 1918–1941* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2005); Vladimir Ortakovski, *Minorities in the Balkans* (Skopje: 2-ri Avgust, 1998), 124–132.

³ The most numerous non-South Slavic community in 1921 were the Germans with 505,790 members. Most of them lived in Banat, Bačka, Srem, Baranja and Slavonija. In these areas, the Germans were colonized mostly during the 18th century by the Habsburg Monarchy. See: Zoran

Czechs and the Slovaks. In 1931 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had nearly 14 million people, of whom 2,067,805, or 14.84%, were members of several non-South Slavic communities.⁷ A decline was recorded in most minority communities in comparison with 1921. The Germans noted a decline of 1.15%, the Turks 11.56% and the Romanians 40.33%. The number of Hungarians remained the same. In other words, they increased by only 0.11% in ten years.

Unlike the other non-South Slavic minorities, Albanians in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia noted a substantial demographic increase in those ten years, from 439,657 in 1921 to 505,259 in 1931. That was an expansion of 65,602 people, or 14.92%. The increase in the number of Albanians was slightly smaller than the increase in the total population of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1921–1931 of 16.26%, but was higher than, for example, the increase in the number of Slovenes of 11.31%.

Albanians populated the territories that were part of Ottoman Turkey until the Balkan Wars and that became part of the Kingdom of Serbia and the Kingdom of Montenegro under the Treaties of London and Bucharest of 1913.⁸ Some of the areas in which Serbian and Montenegrin rule was established were densely populated by Albanians. Based on the Ottoman Empire's censuses of the first half of the 19th century, it can be concluded that in those areas Albanians constituted a significant portion of the population at the time the modern nation states in the Balkans were formed.⁹ For example, in the 1830s and the 1840s, in a number of areas such as the Kosovo Valley, (Albanian: Fushë Kosovë)¹⁰ Gorna Morava, Metohija, (Alb. Rafshi i Dukagjinit)¹¹, Drenica, (Alb.

Janjetović, *Nemci u Vojvodini* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2009), 382; Bogoljub Kočović, *Etnički i demografski razvoj u Jugoslaviji od 1921. do 1991. godine (po svim zvaničnim a u nekim slučajevima i korigovanim popisima)*, sveska I (Paris: Bibliothèque Dialogue, 1998), 4–25.

⁴ The second-largest minority in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1921 were the Hungarians. Most of them lived in Vojvodina. Золтан Ђере, „Скица промена етничког састава на тлу данашње Војводине 1520–1910. године“, *Истраживања*, бр. 15, (2004), 105–125. In 1921 they totaled 467,658. *Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921*, 2–3.

⁵ In 1921 in the Kingdom there were 231,068 Romanians/Vlachs by their mother tongue. This number included the Romanians in Banat, the Vlachs in Eastern Serbia and the Vlachs in Macedonia.

⁶ Borče Ilievski, „Turci u Kraljevini SHS/Jugoslaviji, demografska analiza na osnovu popisa stanovništva 1921. i 1931. godine“, *Istorija 20. veka*, 1, (2018), 35–54.

⁷ *Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession nach den unveröffentlichen Angaben der Zählung von 1931* (Wien: 1943), 10.

⁸ *Југословенска држава и Албанци*, том I, приредили Љубодраг Димић и Ђорђе Борозан (Београд: Архив Југославије, Службени лист СРЈ, Војно-историјски институт, 1998), 5–73.

⁹ Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 20; Stanford J. Shaw, “The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, IX, (1978), 325–326.

¹⁰ Let's take for example the kaza (administrative unit) of Vučitrn in the 1840s. In the kaza of Vučitrn, in 1844-45, in the town and 219 villages there were 2,831 households, 1,969 of which were Muslim, 773 Christian and 89 Roma. The kaza was divided into six nahias, in four of which (Šalja, Drenica, Lab and Kosovo) the majority of the population was Muslim (mostly Albanians). To the north of Vučitrn, on the other hand, in the nahias of Kopaonik and Klopot-

Drenicë)¹² Lab, (Alb. Krahina e Llapit)¹³ the Kačanik Gorge, (Alb. Gryka e Kačanikut)¹⁴ Polog (Alb. Pollog)¹⁵ and other neighboring regions, most of the population was Muslim and a considerable part of them were Albanians.

A telling example is the region of Golak in the kaza of Gnjilane (Alb. Gjilan), which was administratively divided into the nahias of Gornji Golak and Donji Golak. In the early 1830s, the region was almost entirely populated by Muslims (Albanians). In the 40 villages of these two nahias, 2,995 male residents, or approximately 5,990 residents in total, were recorded (assuming that the number of women was identical to the number of men). Being over 95 percent, the Muslims, an overwhelming part of whom were Albanians, constituted an absolute majority. In both nahias, 50 male residents Rayah were also recorded, which means that about a hundred Serbs lived there.¹⁶ From the aforemen-

nik, the majority of the population was Christian (Serbs). Kristaq Prifti, *Popullsia e Kosovës 1831-1912* (Tiranë: Akademia e Shkencave Shqipërisë, 2014), 273–275.

¹¹ In the kaza of Prizren in 1831, 74.58% of the population was Muslim, while 22.53% was Rayah, that is to say, Christian. (K. H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1831-1914. Demographic and Social Characteristics*, 109). In 1831, Christian population wasn't registered only in the kaza of Gora neighboring Prizren. The kaza was religiously but not ethnically homogenous. K. Prifti, *Popullsia e Kosovës*, 208–216.

¹² The region of Drenica in the 1840s was administratively divided between the kaza of Priština and the kaza of Vučitrn. In the villages of Drenica that were part of the kaza of Priština, Muslims (Albanians) constituted 90.53% of the population. In the villages that were part of the kaza of Vučitrn, Muslims accounted for 98%. (K. Prifti, *Popullsia e Kosovës*, 270, 275). Immediately prior to the First Balkan War, Serbs (Orthodox Christians) lived in only a few villages of the region. Татомир Вукановић, *Дреница друга српска Света Гора – антропогеографска и етнoлошка разматрања на терену и у народу вршена 1934–1937* (Приштина: Музеј, Народна и универзитетска библиотека, 1998), 219–354.

¹³ The region of Lab was also administratively divided between the two aforementioned kazas. The larger part was in the kaza of Priština and its Muslim population constituted 96.58%. In the part of Lab that belonged to the kaza of Vučitrn, Muslims accounted for 87.16%. (K. Prifti, *Popullsia e Kosovës 1831–1912*, 270, 275).

¹⁴ The nahia of Kačanik as part of the kaza of Skopje, in the early 1830s, was almost entirely populated by Muslims (Albanians). The nahia of Kačanik was religiously and ethnically the most homogenous part of the Skopje kaza where Muslims (most of whom were Albanians) constituted 98.64%. The nahia consisted of the kasaba of Kačanik and 20 nearby villages. In the nahia, there were 471 Muslim households with 1,824 registered male members, or approximately 3,648 residents professing Islam, 19 Roma households professing Islam and one Christian household. Hatice Akin Zorba, “1833 Tarihli Nüfus Defterine Göre Üsküp Kazası'nin Demografik Yapısı Demographic Structure of Skopje from the 1833 Register”, *Mediterranean Journal of Humanites*, VIII/1, (2018), 23–40; *Османлиски документи за историјата на Македонија. Пописи од XIX век Скопски санџак Каза Скопје 1832/33 година* (Скопје: ДАРСМ, 2020), 441–519.

¹⁵ South of Šar Planina and Skopska Crna Gora, in the early 1830s, the Muslim population, most of whom were Albanians, constituted the majority of the population in the kaza of Tetovo, within the framework of which was the large Polog Valley. According to the census register of 1833, 58.77% of the population of the kaza of Tetovo professed Islam, while 38.68% were registered as Rayah, that is to say, Christians. Nimet Ayşe Bakircilar, “Kalkandelen Kazası'nin Yoklama Defteri (1836–1842), üzerine değerlendirilmeler, An Assessment of “Yoklama Defteri” of Kalkandelen District (1836–1842)”, *Osmanlı dönemi Balkan Şehirleri*, 1, (2017), 377. Based on these statistics, in the kaza of Tetovo, in the early 1830s, Albanians made up about half of the entire population.

¹⁶ K. Prifti, *Popullsia e Kosovës 1831–1912*, 203.

tioned regions, in the early decades of the 19th century, there were many Albanian settlers in a number of towns along the Morava River, such as Ćuprija, Paraćin, Aleksinac, Trstenik, etc., where there were also Albanian settlers from the kazas of Djakovica, (Alb. Gjakova), Vučitrn, (Alb. Vushtrria), Prizren, (Alb. Prizreni) etc.¹⁷ By the time of the next census in 1844–45, certain administrative changes occurred as a result of which the two nahias of Gornji Golak and Donji Golak merged into one that was part of the kaza of Priština (Alb. Prishtinë). In the nahia of Golak, in the middle of the 1840s, in 48 villages 714 Muslim (Albanian) households were registered,¹⁸ or approximately 5,000–6,000 residents in total.¹⁹ In the census of 1844–45, no Christian (Serbian) population was recorded most probably because they left Golak earlier.

In some of the aforementioned regions, the number of Albanians notably increased after 1877–78 because when the Serbian military entered what used to be known until then as the sancak of Niš (Toplica, Kosanica, Leskovac, Vranje, etc.), Albanians and other Muslims migrated to the regions that, under the decisions of the Congress of Berlin, remained under Ottoman rule.²⁰ At the same time, there were also migrations in the opposite direction as a growing number of Christians began leaving those areas. In the early 1880s, Muslims constituted more than half of the population of the northern parts of the Kosovo Vilayet. In the kaza of Djakovica, Albanians (Muslims and Catholics) accounted for 99% of the population. Muslims, most of them Albanians, constituted 87% of the population in the kaza of Vučitrn, 75% in the kaza of Priština, 66.3% in the kaza of Tetovo (Alb. Tetova) and 63% in the kaza of Gnjilane (Alb. Gjilan).²¹

¹⁷ It is estimated that about 4,500 to 5,000 Albanians from the region of Pomoravlje settled in the then Ottoman towns in the south of the Principality of Serbia as well as in Toplica, Lab, Pusta Reka and the neighboring regions by 1834 at the latest. Урош Шешум, „Арбанаси у Поморављу 1815–1834“, уредник Рајић Сузана, *Алексинач и околина у прошлости: Зборник радова са међународног научног скупа – 500 година од првог писаног помена 1516–2016* (Алексинач: Завичајни музеј, 2016), 126, 137–139, 153.

¹⁸ K. Prifti, *Popullsia e Kosovës 1831–1912*, 267.

¹⁹ The estimate was made based on the average number of members of a household in the 1830s in the regions where the majority or a great part of the population was Albanian. For example, in the nahia of Kačanik, a Muslim (Albanian) household had 7.74 members. H. Akin Zorba, *Demographic Structure of Skopje from the 1833 Register*, 36; *Османлиски документи за историјата на Македонија. Пописи од XIX век Скопски санџак Каза Скопје 1832/33 година*, 441–519. In the kaza of Tetovo, a Muslim family had 7.63 members on average. N. A. Bakircilar, „Kalkandelen Kazasi` nin Yoklama Defteri (1836–1842)“, 357–377; *Турски документи за историјата на Македонија пописи од XIX век Скопски санџак Тетовска каза 1832/33, книга 1, том, 1* (Скопје: ДАРСМ, 2019), 551.

²⁰ Урош Шешум, „Утицај сеобе мухаџира на промену етничке и верске структуре насеља северне и западне Старе Србије (1878–1910)“, *Српске студије*, бр. 5, Београд, (2014), 79–134; Miloš Jagodić, “The Emigration of Muslims from the New Serbian Regions 1877/1878”, *Balkanologie*, (1998), vol. II, no. 2, 9–122; Риста Т. Николић, *Пољаница и Клукура антропогеографска проучавања*, Насеља српских земаља, књ. 3, (Београд: Српска краљевска академија, 1905).

²¹ Милош Јагодић, *Српско-албански односи у Косовском вилајету (1878–1912)* (Београд: Завод за уџбенике, 2009), 259.

The Ottoman Empire's statistics of the late 19th century notes the religious structure of the Kosovo Vilayet in the Salnames (Annals), which were officially published. According to the Salname for 1896, in the kaza of Vučitrn, five-sixths of residents were Muslim and one-sixth Christian. In the kaza of Gnjilane, according to the Ottoman Empire's statistics, there were 28,695 Muslims and 21,412 Christians and in the kaza of Priština there were 40,561 Muslims and 11,186 Christians. The Annal says that the residents of the kasaba of Priština speak Turkish and most of them speak Albanian, too.²² In Metohija the ratio was even higher in the Albanian population's favor. In the last decade of the 19th century, according to the Ottoman Empire's statistics, in the kaza of Prizren there were 28,309 men professing Islam and 5,112 men professing Christianity. The town of Djakovica had 11,096 residents, of whom 9,620 were Muslim and 1,476 non-Muslim.²³

In regard to the religious and ethnic structure of the Kosovo Vilayet, the estimates of numerous foreign stakeholders who had interests of their own in this part of Ottoman Turkey are similar. The Austro-Hungarian authorities, based on the Ottoman Empire's statistics as well as other observations made for their own needs, carefully recorded the ethnic structure of the residents of the vilayet. According to their conclusions, Albanians were the dominant ethnic element in the sancaks of Priština and Prizren, a fact that would also determine their policy toward this region.²⁴

The demographic dominance of the Albanian population also had an effect on the political situation in these regions until the end of the Ottoman rule. The observers of the situation in the Kosovo Vilayet at the end of the 19th century concluded that: "The Albanians have absolute power and dictate the conduct of the administration. The mighty Albanian beys independently administer the Albanian municipalities. They give the state neither soldiers nor tax."²⁵ This demographic and political state of affairs will be passed on to the Kingdom of Serbia in 1912.

The Serbian authorities' census data of 1913 also show in no uncertain terms that Albanians were an ethnic majority. The srez of Lab, which the small Serbian community left in the second half of the 19th century, was populated solely by Albanians. Albanians constituted 86.1% of the population in the srez of Vučitrn, 71.4% in the srez of Ferizović (Uroševac, Alb. Ferizaj) and 58.9% in the srez of Gnjilane.²⁶ In Metohija the percentage of Albanians was even higher in comparison with the aforesaid Kosovo areas.

²² *Салнаме на Вилаетот Косово 1896 година*, превод од османотурски Драги Ѓоргиев и Ахмед Шериф (Скопје: Сојуз на турските невладини организации во Македонија, 2012), 268–269, 290, 298.

²³ *Ibid.*, 374, 423.

²⁴ Теодора Толева, *Влиянието на Австро–Унгарија за създаването на Албанската нация 1896–1908* (София: Снепа, 2012), 546–547.

²⁵ Васил Кънчов, *Македонија етнографія и статистика* (София: Акад. изд. проф. Марин Дринов, 1996), 54.

²⁶ Милош Јагодић, *Нови крајеви Србије 1912–1915* (Београд: Филозофски факултет, 2013), 117.

Migrations after the Balkan Wars

After the Balkan Wars until 1941 this ethno-demographic structure started to change gradually. The dramatic social and political change in the Balkans that occurred as a result of the Ottomans' defeat in the Balkan Wars led to massive migrations by the Muslim communities from the vilayets that were under Ottoman rule until then mostly in the direction of Asia Minor.²⁷ The new social circumstances only confirmed the rule that in the Balkans significant political change most frequently entails ethnic shifts, too.²⁸

Once Serbia's rule was established in 1912, a part of the Albanian population started leaving.²⁹ In certain areas, the migration was more massive, especially in the wake of the intrusion of armed companies from Albania in September 1913 and the measures the Serbian military undertook in response. In Vardar Macedonia, Debar (Alb. Dibër) is a characteristic example.³⁰ According to certain estimates of the authorities, about 20,000 people, 8,000–9,000 of whom were residents of Debar, left the areas afflicted by the hostilities in September 1913 migrating to Albania.³¹

During the Balkan Wars and immediately after they ended, the migration of the Albanian population largely to Asia Minor was massive. Let's take for example several villages in Gornja Morava. About thirty households from the village of Buzović migrated to Asia Minor from 1912 to 1915. They were muhacirs³² from Jablanica settled by the Ottoman authorities in 1878.³³ In 1913 seventeen households left the nearby village of Grmovo and eight households left the neighboring village of Slatina. From a number of villages in the area, few households began to migrate during the Balkan Wars but the trend continued during the

²⁷ Vladan Jovanović, „Iseljavanje muslimana iz Vardarske banovine – između stihije i državne akcije“, *Zbornik Pisati istoriju Jugoslavije: Viđenje srpskog faktora* (Beograd: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2007), 80–81.

²⁸ Мил. С. Филиповић, „Етничке прилике у Јужној Србији“, *Споменица двадесетпетогодишњице ослобођења Јужне Србије 1912–1937* (Скопље: Одбор за прославу двадесетпетогодишњице ослобођења Јужне Србије, 1937), 428.

²⁹ М. Јагодић, *Нови крајеви Србије 1912–1915*, 299–308; Jovan Trifunoski, *Albansko stanovništvo u Socijalističkoj Republici Makedoniji* (Beograd: Književne novine, 1988), 99–101.

³⁰ According to the statistics of the Serbian authorities of the census taken in February and March 1913, Debar had 10,199 residents and by the time the situation calmed toward the end of that year the number dropped to 4,201. Мил. Ант. Вујичић, *Речник места у Ослобођеној области Старе Србије*. 81.

³¹ *Српски извори за историјата на македонскиот народ 1912–1914*, Избор, редакција и коментар д-р Глигор Тодоровски (Скопје: Институт за национална историја, 1979), 387.

³² Muhacirler – Muslim refugees from the Balkan territories that the Ottoman state lost in the second half of the 19th century.

³³ The mass migration from the village of Buzović probably happened for economic reasons, too. The Albanian population from Jablanica who settled there after 1878 illegally took possession of the land that belonged to the Binač Monastery. After the Balkans Wars they had to give the monastery its land back yet they remained to work on it as çiftçi (tenants), which was probably the reason why they decided to leave. М. Јагодић, *Нови крајеви Србије (1912–1915)*, 493.

1920s, too. From the village of Vlaštica near Gnjilane, for example, 46 Albanian households migrated to Turkey between the Balkan Wars and 1925.³⁴

From the villages of Kriva Reka in Novo Brdo, according to the anthropogeography research conducted during the 1920s, migrations of single or multiple households at a time were recorded especially during the 1920s. The most massive was the migration of the Albanian population from the village of Kotretin northeast of Gnjilane, which 32 families left between the Balkan Wars and the late 1920s.³⁵ This village, however, was an isolated case in the area.

After the Balkan Wars, the Albanian population that moved from Kačanik to Asia Minor was fairly large. Only from the town of Kačanik, which had 1,200 residents³⁶ in 1913, about 80 Albanian households migrated to Turkey from 1912 to the early 1930s.³⁷ From the villages in the Kačanik Gorge, about 30 Albanian households migrated to Turkey from the Balkan Wars to the end of the 1930s.³⁸ The anthropogeography surveys reveal that the Albanian muhajirs, who were settled in the Kosovo Valley³⁹ and Gornja Morava after 1878, were leaving the area, too. From the town of Uroševac, over 40 households of Albanian muhajirs originally from Toplica and Jablanica migrated to Asia Minor in the wake of the Balkan Wars.⁴⁰

A comparison of the census data of 1913 and 1921 best reflects the demographic situation in certain areas, that is, the Albanian population's decline. In 1913 the srez of Vučitrn had 32,440 residents, but by 1921 its population decreased by 25%, to 24,310. The situation in Drenica was similar. Its population went from 23,821 in 1913 to 19,450 eight years later, which was a decline of 18%. A considerable decrease was also recorded in the srezes of Gračanica, Podrima, Podgora, Gnjilane, etc. The towns that used to have a considerable Albanian population noted a major population decline, too. In Prizren, the decrease from 1913 to 1921 was 22.75% and in Priština 21.09%.

Characteristic for Vardar Macedonia was that Albanians after 1912 migrated more from the peripheral areas of the territories they populated. For example, their migration was more massive from the regions of Bitolj or Veles

³⁴ Атанасије Урошевић, *Горња Морава и Изморник*, Насеља и порекло становништва, књ. 28 (Београд: Српска краљевска академија, 1935), 158–161, 187, 208. From the villages in the area of Gornja Morava, 205 Albanian households migrated to Turkey and Albania by the middle of the 1920s.

³⁵ Атанасије Урошевић, *Новобрdsка Крива река – антропогеографска испитивања* (Београд: Српска академија наука и уметности, 1950), 109. By the late 1920s, 95 households from this area migrated to Turkey and Albania.

³⁶ Мил. Ант. Вујовић, *Речник места у Ослобођеној области Старе Србије*, 129.

³⁷ Атанасије Урошевић, „Качаник“, *Гласник Скопског научног друштва*, књ. XI (1932), 189.

³⁸ Јован Ф. Трифуноски, *Качаничка клисура* (Београд: Српска академија наука и уметности, 1950), 53–95.

³⁹ From the Balkan Wars until the middle of the 1930s, over 900 Albanian households left the villages of the Kosovo Valley migrating largely to Turkey. Атанасије Урошевић, *Косово*, Насеља и порекло становништва, књ. 39 (Београд: Српска академија наука и уметности, 1965).

⁴⁰ Атанасије Урошевић, „Урошевац варошица на Косову“, *Гласник Скопског научног друштва*, књ. XV–XVI, (1936), 271.

than from Polog where the Albanian population was a majority. In the srez of Bitolj, which demographically suffered a lot during World War I and in result many of its residents of all ethnic and religious background left, massive migration of the Albanian population, too, began during the Balkan Wars⁴¹ and continued during the period between the two world wars.⁴²

The statistics about the number of Muslims who left the Kingdom of Yugoslavia by the late 1930s are incomplete and differ.⁴³ Albanians were also among those who left. However, this migratory wave did not affect the coherence of the Albanian population and they continued to be an ethnic majority in the areas where they were a dominant ethnic element until 1912, too. This conclusion is also confirmed by the Yugoslav statistics of the period between the two world wars.

Albanians in the Censuses of 1921 and 1931

The censuses of 1921 and 1931 are the main source of information about the number and structure of Albanians in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.⁴⁴ Making a demographic analysis of the census data of 1921 and 1931, of the ethnic structure in particular, may in some cases be a difficult task, because the published census results concern the religious identity of the population and their native language. For these reasons, the statistics of the Yugoslav censuses of the period between the two world wars should be analyzed critically, espe-

⁴¹ Some of the Albanian-populated villages in the region of Bitolj sustained substantial damage during the Balkan Wars. Characteristic are the villages in the Gjavato Pass (between Bitolj and Prespa). In 1912 in the village of Kažani there were 123 Albanian households. The village suffered during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. A similar fate befell the village of Lera, too, whose residents moved to Bitolj. After 1918 about 40 households returned to the village, while 14 families migrated to Turkey. People were migrating from the neighboring villages of Ramna and Dolenci, too. (Архив на МАНУ, ф. Бранислав Русиќ, к-4, АЕ, 94/16, 97; Јован Ф. Трифуноски, *Битољско-прилепска котлина* (Београд: Српска академија наука и уметности, 1998), 240–251). In these villages, according to V. K'ncov's estimates, 1,370 "Arnauts" lived in the late 19th century. (В. К'нчов, *Македонија*, 239). In 1921 in the municipality of Gjavato, to which these villages belonged, 252 Albanians by their native language and 112 Turks were recorded. *Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921 године*, 88–89.

⁴² From the village of Kišava, between the two world wars, about 50 households migrated to the Turkish cities of Edirne (Odrin) and Izmir. During the 1920s, the entire Albanian population of the village of Porodin left migrating largely to Turkey. J. Ф. Трифуноски, *Битољско-прилепска котлина*, 194–196.

⁴³ Z. Janjetović, *Deca careva pastorčad kraljeva*, 69.

⁴⁴ The statistics about the ethnic/national identity of the population in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1931 were destroyed during the German bombardment of Belgrade when a portion of the processed statistical material about the population's native language by municipality was also destroyed. What survived the air strikes was the processed data on the people's native language by kaza. Following the occupation of Belgrade in April 1941, the German troops seized the census material of 1931 and published the organized statistics in Vienna in 1943 but in a very limited number of copies because the statistical material was undoubtedly meant to be of use to the German occupation authorities. B. Kočović, *Etnički i demografski razvoj u Jugoslaviji od 1921. do 1991*, I, xi.

cially when attempting to incorporate the data on the populations' native language into the contemporary ethnic categories. In the census of 1921, 439,657 Albanians were counted, referred to as Arnauts by their native language in the official census records, populating in compact groups the same areas that they did before the Balkan Wars. Albanians, that is to say, the people whose mother tongue was Albanian (Arnaut), accounted for 3.66% of the Kingdom's total population. The census statistics show that Albanians, despite the social and political change, were a majority especially along the border with Albania. For example, in the srez of Has, an area between Prizren and Djakovica, Albanians constituted 99.44% of all residents.⁴⁵ The authorities tried to change this ethnic structure by settling Orthodox Serbs, most of whom were originally from Montenegro and Herzegovina, a process that began in the late 1920s. From 1929 to 1934, 390 Serbian households were settled in Has.⁴⁶

There was a similar ethnic structure in the neighboring srez of Djakovica, where Albanians accounted for 91.45% of the total population. Characteristic is the example of the district of Metohija where Albanians were an absolute majority in all twenty municipalities, while in seven municipalities there were either no Orthodox residents or they were fewer than ten. A similar ethnic structure was also recorded in the neighboring srez of Podgora where Albanians were 81.54% and Podrima where they were 77.67%. As was the case before the Balkan Wars so in 1921, too, the Albanian population was an ethnic majority in a number of areas further into the country as well. For example, in the srez of Kačanik, Albanians constituted 97.56% of the total population. In other words, the ethnic structure remained almost identical to that of a century earlier. In the Kosovo district, which consisted of the srezes of Gračanica, Gnjilane, Nerodimlje and Lab, in 44 of 54 municipalities Albanians constituted more than half of the total population.

In Vardar Macedonia, Albanians were over 50% only in the srez of Donji Polog. As was the case with the other communities, the number of Albanians in 1921 was smaller in comparison with their estimated number before the Balkan Wars and their number according to the census taken by the Kingdom of Serbia in 1913. In the srez of Donji Polog (Tetovo), Albanians accounted for 52.4% of the total population and in the srez of Gornji Polog (Gostivar) they constituted 42.3% of the population and represented a relative majority. In the srez of Skopje, Albanians were 21.37% and in the srez of Kumanovo 17.43%. The Albanian population lived in compact groups in Kičevo, too, where they

⁴⁵ *Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921 године*, 108–109. In 1921, in the srez of Has, 6,199 Albanians were Muslims and 1,176 were Roman Catholics. A similar ethnic and religious structure was also recorded in the Ottoman Empire's census of 1844–45, almost eighty years earlier. In the area of Has, which was part of the kaza of Djakovica, 19 villages with 461 households were counted, 354 of which were Muslim households, 94 Catholic and 13 Serbian Orthodox. K. Prifti, *Popullsia e Kosovës 1831–1912*, 284.

⁴⁶ Миленко С. Филиповић, *Хас под Паитриком*, књ. 2 (Сарајево: Балканолошки институт, 1958), 39. After the occupation of Yugoslavia, the colonists were forced to relocate. After 1945, only some of them returned to the area.

accounted for 32.60%, Debar 28.4% and Struga 25.6%. In Prespa, on the other hand, they constituted only 8 percent.⁴⁷

A significant demographic characteristic of the Albanian population, according to the census of 1921, a situation that will remain the same in the census of 1931, too, was their extremely small percentage among the population of the towns and administrative centers. In the srez of Gnjilane in 1921, only 3.89% of Albanians (Albanian-speaking residents) lived in the town of Gnjilane and in the srez of Vučitrn 6.55% of Albanians lived in the administrative center of Vučitrn. The situation was similar in the srez of Nerodimlje where only 6.53% of Albanians lived in the little town of Uroševac. In the srez of Gračanica 7.30% of the Albanian-speaking residents lived in the town of Priština. The situation was similar in the towns of Vardar Macedonia, too. In the srez of Skoplje in 1921 there were 19,626 Albanians, that is, Albanian-speaking residents, only 862 of whom lived in the town of Skoplje. In this srez, only 4.39% of Albanians were town dwellers. Particularly characteristic is the srez of Kičevo in which 9,203 Albanians lived in 1921. Only 35 of them were recorded in the administrative center of the srez, the little town of Kičevo. In other words, in this srez only 0.4% of Albanians were an urban population. However, statistics should always be taken with a certain amount of reserve. According to Toma Smiljanić's field research, in Kičevo in the middle of the 1920s there were 829 Muslim and 227 Orthodox households, while 42 Muslim households were recorded as "Albanians originally from Debar and Zajas".⁴⁸ In Vardar Macedonia only 9% of Albanians lived in the towns.⁴⁹ The towns of Džakovica, Debar and Peć were exceptions considering that the majority of their Muslim residents identified as Albanians according to their native language.

Albanians, as in fact all the people of the Kingdom, had a very high birth rate and natural increase, which is why the percentage of the young up to 14 years of age was very high. In the whole Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1921, 33.94% of the population were younger than 15. This percentage in the areas dominantly populated by Albanians was considerably higher. Let's take for example the srezes where Albanians constituted over 90 percent and the young were almost half of the population. Those younger than 15 were 48.97% in the srez of Drenica, 47.74% in the srez of Lab and 47.04% in the srez of Kačanik. Little smaller percentages were recorded in the srez of Has, 33.99%, and the srez of Džakovica, 37.61%.⁵⁰ Many Albanians traditionally lived in extended families (*zadruga*). In the srez of Lab in 1913 an Albanian family had 7.7 members on average, in the srez of Vučitrn 8.9 members on average and in the srez of Metohija as many as 11.2 members on average.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921 године, 88–121.

⁴⁸ Тома Смиљанић, *Кичевија, Населња и порекло становништва*, књ. 28 (Београд: Српска краљевска академија, 1935), 390–391.

⁴⁹ Борче Илиевски, *Демографските карактеристики на Вардарска Македонија меѓу двете светски војни (анализа на југословенските пописи од 1921 и 1931 година)*, (Скопје: Филозофски факултет, 2017), 164.

⁵⁰ Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921 године, 59, 103, 122.

⁵¹ М. Јагодић, *Нови крајеви Србије (1912–1915)*, 122.

The traditional way of life in fairly large families was characteristic for the Albanian population in the early 1930s, too. This is confirmed by the census statistics of 1931 on the average number of household members. In almost all srezes and municipalities in which Albanians were in the majority the average number of household members was higher in comparison with the average number of household members of the banovina to which the srez belonged. In the Morava Banovina, a household had 5.48 members on average. In the srez of Vučitrn, which was part of it, a household had 6.89 members on average. In the municipalities of the srez of Vučitrn where Albanians accounted for about 90 percent, the average was higher still. In the municipality of Šalja a household had 7.85 members and in the municipality of Smrekovnica an average household had 7.82 members. In the srez of Lab the average was even higher, 7.20 members, while in the municipality of Dvorošte, which was part of Lab and in which Albanians accounted for 95%, a household had 7.74 members.⁵²

The situation was similar in the other banovinas, too. In the Zeta Banovina a household had 5.72 members on average. However, in the srez of Djakovica, which was part of this banovina and in which Albanians constituted 80%, a household had 6.86 members. In the Albanian-dominated municipalities, this difference was even more pronounced. In the municipality of Vogovo, part of the srez of Djakovica, in which Albanians (Catholics and Muslims) accounted for over 90 percent, a household had 8.58 members on average.⁵³ A telling example is also the srez of Kačanik in the Vardar Banovina, or, more specifically, the part of it called the Kačanik Gorge whose residents were almost 100% Albanian. In the Vardar Banovina an average family had 5.70 members. However, in the municipality of General Janković, part of which were several villages in the Kačanik Gorge, the average family had 7.11 members. A fact worth mentioning is that in this region almost no change occurred to the structure of the Albanian households relative to the first half of the 19th century because in 1831 an Albanian household in this region had 7.74 members.⁵⁴ This data shows that the social evolution and modernization of the interior parts of the Balkans was extremely slow.

The statistics of 1931 very clearly show the education structure of Albanians in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as well. The rate of literacy was extremely low even among the youngest population, in the age group of 11 to 19. In the Morava Banovina the rate of literacy in this age group was 51.9%. However, in the areas dominantly populated by Albanians, the rate of literacy among the young was considerably smaller. In the srez of Vučitrn only 19.2% of residents aged 11 to 19 were literate and among the female population of the same age the rate of literacy was 9.1%. In the srez of Lab, the number of those who went to school was even smaller. Only 9.6% of those aged 11 to 19 were literate

⁵² *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 31 marta 1931 godine, knjiga I, Prisutno stanovništvo, broj kuća i domaćinstva* (Beograd: Državna statistika, 1937), 75–76.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 117–118.

⁵⁴ *Османлиски документи за историјата на Македонија. Пописи од XIX век*, 441–519.

and among the female population the rate of literacy was a mere 3.2%.⁵⁵ The statistics about the Zeta Banovina are similar with 44.4% of the young aged 11 to 19 and only 13.2% of the girls aged 11 to 19 being literate. However, in the srezes dominantly populated by Albanians, this percentage was considerably smaller. In Drenica only 11.9 percent of the residents in the 11 to 19 age group were literate and among the female residents of the same age the rate of literacy was only 2.5%.⁵⁶ The rate of literacy was small in Metohija, too. In the srez of Djakovica, in which 15 percent of Albanians were Roman Catholics,⁵⁷ the rate of literacy was a little higher, especially among the girls aged 11 to 19. In this age group 23.2% of residents and 11.8% of female residents were literate,⁵⁸ which is a low rate of literacy but nevertheless much higher in comparison with the other Albanian-dominated srezes.

In this respect, the srez of Kačanik in the Vardar Banovina where Albanians were over 90% is also worth mentioning.⁵⁹ The rate of literacy there among those aged 11 to 19 was only 4.9%, being in stark contrast to the rate of literacy in the whole Vardar Banovina of 40.2%, while the rate of literacy among the female population aged 11 to 19 was, as expected, extremely low standing at only 1.5%⁶⁰ and was one of the lowest literacy rates in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. These statistics lead to the conclusion that the Yugoslav authorities by the early 1930s almost completely failed to eliminate the deeply rooted patriarchic beliefs in the Albanian population about the importance of education, especially the education of girls. On the other hand, the state institutions did not regard the making of this population literate as a priority either.

In 1931 in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia there were 505,259 Albanians, which was 3.62% of the Kingdom's total population. Relative to the previous census of 1921, the number of Albanians increased by 65,602, or 14.92%. The vast majority of Albanians (99.20%) lived in the Banovinas of Vardar, Zeta and Morava. Most of them – 481,770, or 95.35% – were Muslim. 21,785 Albanians who were Roman Catholics, accounting for 4.31% of all Albanians, were also counted in the census. Most of them were in Metohija, in the srezes of Djakovica, Peć, (Alb. Peja), Istok (Alb. Istg), and Podrima, in which 9,797 Albanians professing Roman Catholicism lived,⁶¹ and in Montenegro, in the srezes of Bar and Podgorica, where 6,935 Albanians professing Roman Catholicism lived. Those professing Orthodox Christianity were the smallest community among

⁵⁵ *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 31 marta 1931 godine, knjiga III, Prisutno stanovništvo po pismenosti i starosti* (Beograd: Državna statistika, 1938), 6, 59, 64.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁵⁷ *Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession*, 390; B. Kočović, *Etnički i demografski razvoj u Jugoslaviji od 1921. do 1991, I*, 156.

⁵⁸ *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 31 marta 1931 godine, knjiga III*, 122.

⁵⁹ *Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession*, 321; B. Kočović, *Etnički i demografski razvoj u Jugoslaviji od 1921. do 1991, I*, 322.

⁶⁰ *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva: od 31 marta 1931 godine, knjiga III*, 103.

⁶¹ In the kaza of Djakovica in the middle of the 1840s there were 403 Catholic families, 59 of which were in the town of Djakovica. K. Prifti, *Popullsia e Kosovës 1831–1912*, 284–285.

Albanians, that is to say, the people whose native language was Albanian. They totaled 1,688, most of whom, 1,502, lived in Vardar Macedonia, in the srezes of Gornji Polog and Galičnik, or the region of Gornja Reka.⁶²

Between 1921 and 1931, initially the number of Albanians stabilized and then went up in almost all the parts of the Kingdom. The most prominent increase was recorded in several srezes of Vardar Macedonia: in the srez of Žegligovo (Kumanovo) it was 35.5%, in the srez of Skoplje 28%, in the srez of Struga 27.4% and in the srez of Gornji Polog 24.9%. In Kosovo, the increase was about 20 percent. More specifically, in the srez of Gračanica, it was 22.5%, in the srez of Vučitrn 21.2%, in the srez of Gnjilane 21.1% and in the srez of Drenica 19.9%. A slightly smaller increase was recorded in the srez of Lab of 14.9% and the srez of Nerodimlje of 11.7%. In Metohija, the largest increase was recorded in the srez of Podgora (Suva Reka, alb. Suharekë) of 24.4% and the srez of Djakovica of 21.2%. The number of Albanians was steadily growing in the following period, too. According to certain incomplete statistics of 1939, in the srezes of Kosovo and Metohija, the number of Albanians from 1931 to 1939 went up by about 20,000.⁶³

In the srezes where the process of colonization in the 1920s was strong, the number of Albanians went up as an absolute number but declined in relative terms, as a percentage. For example, in the srez of Djakovica the number of Albanians went up by over 6,000 in ten years. However, because of the massive colonization of Orthodox Serbs,⁶⁴ the percentage of Albanians climbed down from 91% in 1921 to 80% in 1931.⁶⁵ Similar demographic tendencies were recorded in a number of other srezes, too, in Kosovo in particular. In the srez of Nerodimlje the number of Albanians between 1921 and 1931 increased by 2,500 but their share of the total population went down from 71% in 1921 to 63.53% in 1931, which was a result of the process of colonizing Serbian population in this part of the Kosovo Valley. Similar ethnic changes occurred in the neighboring srezes of Gračanica, Lab and Gnjilane, too.⁶⁶ An exception was the

⁶² *Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession*, 10, 16, 18, 20, 314, 318, 381, 390, 393, 402, 404–405. According to the estimates of Bulgarian ethnographer Vasil K'ncov, in the late 19th century, 3,221 Orthodox Albanians lived in Gornja Reka and 874 in Gornji Polog. В. Кънчов, *Македонија*, 282–283.

⁶³ Божица Ж. Славковић, „Политичке, економске и културне прилике на Косову и Метохији 1929–1941” (докторска дисертација, Универзитет у Београду, Филозофски факултет, Одељење за историју, 2014), 115–116.

⁶⁴ In 1921 in the srez of Djakovica there were 2,049 Orthodox residents. However, by 1931 the number of Orthodox residents whose mother tongue was Serbo-Croat went up by 226%, to 6,684.

⁶⁵ According to the records of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, by the end of the 1930s, 12,232 colonists were settled in the srez of Djakovica. They constituted 24% of the estimated total population of the srez in 1939. Александар Павловић, „Просторни распоред Срба и Црногораца колонизованих на Косову и Метохији у периоду између 1918. и 1941.“, *Баитина*, св. 24, (2008), 234–235.

⁶⁶ Between 1931 and 1935, when the colonization was still underway, of a total of 4,059 Serbian families in the Kosovo Valley (without the towns), 1,437 were colonists, who came largely from Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Атанасије Урошевић, *Етнички процеси на Косову током турске владавине* (Београд: Српска академија наука и уметности, 1987), 19–20.

srez of Podgora in Metohija where the number of Albanians between 1921 and 1931 increased in both absolute and relative terms. More specifically, the percentage of Albanians in those ten years went from 81.54% to 83.58% of the total population.⁶⁷ That was a result of the by far weaker process of colonization in Suva Reka in comparison with the neighboring areas.⁶⁸

While in parts of Metohija or Kosovo the colonization of Serbs changed to some extent the structure of the population, in many of the areas of Vardar Macedonia where Albanians lived, such as Polog, Kičevo, Gornji Debar and Struga, there was almost no colonization.⁶⁹ In certain srezes, the number of Albanians in 1931 dropped in relation to ten years earlier. Such were the srezes of Veles, Poreč, Prilep, Bitolj, Galičnik and Gornji Debar. In some of these srezes, the migration mostly to Turkey was also taking place during the 1920s.⁷⁰ The census statistics show that the number of Albanians decreased in the srezes of Kosovska Mitrovica and Istok, too.

Certain scholars who, among other things, also studied the Albanians in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia doubted the accuracy of the census data of 1921 and 1931 arguing that the number of Albanians (and not only Albanians) was in truth higher and that the statistics about the large minorities⁷¹ were deliberately falsified. They cited implausibly higher numbers claiming that Albanians were even twice as many as the official census results said they were.⁷² The census results in Yugoslavia of the period between the two world wars as far as the number of Albanians is concerned were deemed as “inadequate, tendentious and unreal” because, they said, in the taking of the censuses various forms of deception were used in order to show that fewer Albanians lived in Yugoslavia at the time. According to them, encouraging people to identify as Turks or ethnically undecided Muslims was also tolerated.⁷³ While there is some truth in these arguments, there are also many unsubstantiated interpretations.

⁶⁷ *Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession*, 337.

⁶⁸ Milovan V. Radovanović, „Stanovništvo Prizrenskog podgora“, *Glasnik muzeja Kosova i Metohije*, IX, (1964), 330–332; А. Павловић, „Просторни распоред Срба и Црногораца“, 234–235.

⁶⁹ On the colonization in Vardar Macedonia, see: Јован Ф. Трифуноски, *Међуратна колонизација Срба у Македонији* (Београд: издање аутора, 1991); Александар Апостолов, *Колонизацијата на Македонија во Стара Југославија* (Скопје: Мисла, 1991).

⁷⁰ The anthropogeography research is particularly helpful in reconstructing the migrations in the absence of precise statistics. J. Trifunski says that from Pelagonija, Bitolj in particular, those who migrated more were the Tosk Albanians who were originally from present-day Southern Albania. J. Ф. Трифуноски, *Битољско-прилепска котлина*, 77.

⁷¹ Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia, Origins, History, Politics* (Cornell University Press, 1984), 53–59; Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo A Short History* (London: Harper Perennial, 1999), 268.

⁷² Muhamed Piraku, „Kulturno-prosvetni pokret Albanaca u Jugoslaviji 1919–1941“, *Jugoslovenski istorijski časopis*, 1–4, (1978), 356–357.

⁷³ Hairedin Hoxha, „Proces nacionalne afirmacije albanske nacionalnosti u Jugoslaviji: izabrana poglavlja“, *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*, 51, 52, (1982), 238–239. Hairedin Hoxha estimated that 600,000 to 700,000 Albanians lived in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The census results, especially those of 1921, reveal a fairly high number of Turks (residents whose native language was Turkish) among the Muslim population in a number of towns in Kosovo and the western parts of Vardar Macedonia, surrounded by a sizable Albanian population in the villages. Such were the towns of Priština, Gnjilane, Vučitrn, Prizren, Peć, Tetovo, Gostivar, etc.⁷⁴ In this case, we are going to analyze the statistics critically with the help of the anthropogeography research of the period between the two world wars.

Becoming aware of the difference between the ethnic structure on the ground and the official statistics of 1921 for the town of Priština, Atanasije Urošević, one of the best connoisseurs of the ethnic structure of Kosovo between the two world wars, underlined: "...The Albanian settlers who professed Islam, upon their arrival in the town, joined the community of Muslim Turks. As it was believed that the Muslim faith was a Turkish faith, they began to identify as Turks and to assume Turkish national sentiments. The fact that the Turkish residents of the town and those who became Turks over time were more cultured than the Albanian settlers who were largely rural people additionally contributed to the growing number of Muslim Albanian settlers adopting the Turkish language and the Turkish national sentiments".⁷⁵ The small Turkish community left the town following the Balkan Wars and so in the census of 1921 a great many of those who identified as Turkish-speaking residents were in fact ethnic Albanians.

There were identical conclusions in the anthropogeography research conducted in Polog between the two world wars, where the majority of the urban Muslim population, irrespective of their ethnic background, still brought their identity in connection with the Ottomans and despite the new social circumstances of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes continued to identify as Turks by their native language. In regard to the actual number of Albanians in the urban areas compared with the official statistics, the analysis of Rudolf Petrović, one of the scholars who studied Polog between the two world wars, is

⁷⁴ In Prizren, according to the official census statistics, there were 9,189 residents whose native language was Turkish. They were 56% of the total population in the town. The situation was similar in Priština where there were 7,115 residents, making up 49.6% of the population in the town, whose native language was Turkish. According to the official statistics, the population whose native language was Turkish was in the majority in Vučitrn. Of a total of 4,667 residents in 1921, 1,881 (40.30%) were recorded as people whose native language was Turkish, whereas 1,112 were recorded as residents whose native language was Albanian. There was a similar situation in K. Mitrovica, too, where of a total of 10,045 residents, 3,287 people were counted as native speakers of Turkish. A considerable number of Turks was also recorded in Gnjilane, 2,013, Peć, 1,261, and Uroševac, 212. *Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921. године*, 94–111, 115.

⁷⁵ Atanasije Urošević, „Приштина антропогеографска испитивања“, *Зборник радова Етнографског института*, књ. 2, (1951), 29. In regard to the ethnic identity of some of the Albanians in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Haidedin Hoxha says: "...thanks to the Albanians not being nationally awoken yet – misled by their faith – as they attached more significance to their religious than their ethnic allegiance and as they also considered their being Muslim identical to their being Turkish." H. Hoxha, „Proces nacionalne afirmacije albanske nacionalnosti u Jugoslaviji“, 238.

worth mentioning. Concerning the number of and relations between Turks and Albanians in Tetovo and Gostivar, he said: “Among the settled Albanians, especially in the towns of Tetovo and Gostivar and their immediate surroundings, a process began of people adopting a Turkish identity largely because of the deeply rooted Islam and their living side by side with the Turks. In result many of the Albanians that live in the towns or near them identify as Turks. Therefore it has recently become difficult to distinguish between the Turks and the Albanians having adopted a Turkish identity. This difficulty makes the statistics confusing, too”.⁷⁶

The cited examples of many Muslim residents of the towns in Kosovo and parts of Vardar Macedonia identifying as Turkish-speaking people does not necessarily mean that state-orchestrated “statistical engineering” was at work because a part of this population even after World War II identified differently in various censuses under different political circumstances.⁷⁷

In the censuses of 1921 and 1931, there were also Albanian-populated places whose residents were recorded as Serbs or Croats by their native language. In the srez of Lab, according to the census of 1921, 1,544 residents professing Islam lived in the municipality of Kolić (Alb. Koliq), and they were all recorded as Serbs or Croats by their first language.⁷⁸ The municipality consisted of several large Albanian-populated villages (Kačikol, Prapaštica, etc.). In this census, this was the only place in the srez of Lab whose Albanian population was not recorded as native speakers of Albanian. However, by the time the next census was taken in 1931, the situation changed. The people of this municipality were recorded as Albanian-speaking residents as only five residents of the srez who professed Islam reported that their native language was Serbo-Croat.⁷⁹ In the srez of Podrima, in Metohija, similar to some extent was the little town of Orahovac (Alb. Rahoveci). In the census of 1921 almost all Muslims in Orahovac were recorded as Serbs or Croats by their native language. Later, scholars who studied the demography of the place said: “This does not reflect reality. It is only a result of the authorities’ policies of the time and their attempt to conceal the actual number of Albanians in the official statistics...”⁸⁰ 388

⁷⁶ Rudolf Petrović, *Polog antropogeografski prikaz* (Zagreb: Preporod, 1942), 20.

⁷⁷ As if to illustrate the “statistical confusion”, let’s take for example the statistics about the number of Turks according to the first post-war census in FНРY (Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia) of 1948. In the town of Tetovo there were 302 Turks and in Gostivar only 53. In the srez of Gostivar, where 7,705 people were recorded as native speakers of Turkish in 1931, under different social and political circumstances, in 1948, only 117 residents were recorded as Turks. (*Konačni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 15 marta 1948 godine, knjiga IX, Stanovništvo po narodnosti* (Beograd: Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1954), 440, 450). In 1953 a large number of the Muslim residents of Tetovo and Gostivar identified as Turks again.

⁷⁸ Дефинитивни резултати Пописа становништва 1921 године, 98–99.

⁷⁹ *Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession*, 193; B. Kočović, *Etnički i demografski razvoj u Jugoslaviji od 1921. do 1991*, I, 212.

⁸⁰ Mark Krasnići, „Orahovac, antropogeografska monografija varošice“, *Glasnik muzeja Kosova i Metohije*, II, (1957), 125. Krasnići says that of more than 600 Albanian households in the town about 20 were “Serbs having adopted an Albanian identity”.

people, or 10% of the residents of the town, were recorded as Albanians.⁸¹ In the villages of the srez of Podrima, there are no such examples. In 1931 in the srez of Podrima, 3,055 people were recorded as Serbs or Croats by their first language and as Muslims by their faith.⁸² In the first census after World War II, the Muslim residents of Orahovac identified as Albanians.

In the srez of Gornji Polog, in the municipality of Gorno Jelovce, in the census of 1921, almost all Muslim residents were recorded as Turks by their mother tongue⁸³ although in the Muslim villages⁸⁴ of this municipality most Muslims were Albanians.⁸⁵ Here we would also like to cite the example of the srez of Istok in Metohija, which together with the neighboring srez of Kosovska Mitrovica, noted a decline in the number of Albanians in the period between 1921 and 1931. In 1921, 14,317 Albanians were recorded in this srez, which was 71% of the total population.⁸⁶ Almost all the residents who professed Islam and Roman Catholicism were recorded as Albanians and those who professed Orthodox Christianity as Serbs or Croats by their mother tongue. However, in 1931, 2,499 Muslims were recorded as residents whose native language was Serbo-Croat,⁸⁷ which was also a reason for the number of Albanians in 1931 in the srez of Istok to climb down to 12,872, or 49.7% of the total population.

The cited examples confirm the fact that the actual number of Albanians in the Kingdom was higher than the recorded one. However, the cited examples are exceptions as in most rural areas where Albanians lived they were recorded as residents whose native language was Albanian. The estimates that the actual number of Albanians was higher by hundreds of thousands are inaccurate and not founded on the actual situation on the ground. In addition to having certain flaws as far as the methodology is concerned, the Yugoslav censuses of 1921 and 1931 provide a fairly objective picture. In regard to the number of Albanians, they are even more relevant than certain censuses taken in Yugoslavia after World War II, the census of 1953 in particular.

⁸¹ *Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921 године*, 108–109.

⁸² *Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession*, 405; B. Kočović, *Etnički i demografski razvoj u Jugoslaviji od 1921. do 1991*, I, 163.

⁸³ Of 533 Muslim residents, 526 were recorded as native speakers of Turkish, while 4 as native speakers of Albanian. *Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921 године*, 116–117.

⁸⁴ The municipality consisted of the villages of Dolno Jelovce, Gorno Jelovce, Zdunje and Lešnica.

⁸⁵ On the ethnic structure of these villages, see: Јован Ф. Трифуноски, *Полог (антропогеографска проучавања)*, (Београд: Српска академија наука и уметности, 1976), 237–244.

⁸⁶ *Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921 године*, 102–103.

⁸⁷ *Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession*, 393; B. Kočović, *Etnički i demografski razvoj u Jugoslaviji od 1921. do 1991*, I, 157.

Table 1. The number of Albanians (residents whose native language was Albanian) in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia in 1921 and 1931 in the srezes where they were more than 1%

Srez	Total 1921	Albanians 1921	%	Total 1931	Albanians 1931	%
Bar ⁸⁸	28,638	11,387	39.7	32,926	12,504	38.0
Bitolj	55,420	5,420	9.8	65,164	5,108	7.8
Veles	43,329	1,943	4.5	42,296	1,644	3.9
Vučitrn	24,308	16,972	69.8	32,248	20,565	63.8
Galičnik	11,510	2,525	21.9	12,051	1,902	15.8
G. Polog	28,082	11,881	42.3	32,666	14,845	45.4
Gora	12,817	6,375	49.7	14,127	6,630	46.9
Gnjilane	71,030	43,830	61.7	91,037	53,083	58.3
Gračanica	43,291	19,459	44.9	57,858	23,845	41.2
Gusinje ⁸⁹	10,292	740	7.2	12,698	373	2.9
D. Polog	61,533	32,253	52.4	70,983	37,645	53.0
Drenica	19,450	17,808	91.6	25,811	21,347	82.7
Djakovica	32,842	30,041	91.5	45,378	36,399	80.2
Žegligovo	53,244	9,925	18.6	66,501	13,485	20.3
Istok	20,159	14,317	71.0	25,918	12,872	49.7
Jablanica	47,529	2,632	5.5	58,322	3,195	5.5
Kaçanik	10,727	10,466	97.6	12,466	11,624	93.2
Kičevo	28,288	9,203	32.5	32,101	10,064	31.3
K. Mitrov.	26,379	7,495	28.4	30,788	5,788	18.8
Kruševo	20,618	1,292	6.2	23,570	1,335	5.6
Lab	26,243	23,434	89.3	34,797	26,926	77.4
Nerodimlje	30,721	21,818	71.0	38,383	24,385	63.5
Ohrid	29,118	756	2.6	33,066	847	2.5
Peć	37,074	26,051	70.3	44,688	27,259	61.0
Podgora	13,361	10,895	81.5	16,222	13,558	83.7
Podgorica ⁹⁰	36,135	4,530	12.5	42,904	5,005	11.6
Podrima	29,698	23,278	78.4	36,191	27,768	76.7
Poreče	16,054	1,740	10.8	18,740	1,581	8.4
Prespa	18,751	1,446	7.7	21,631	1,841	8.5
Prilep	45,773	1,817	3.9	54,480	1,114	2.0
Preševo	37,517	15,153	40.4	44,405	17,305	39.0
Raška ⁹¹	72,365	1,944	2.7	87,053	945	1.3

⁸⁸ It refers to the Bar district, which in 1921 consisted of the srezes of Bar, Ulcinj, Bojana, Kraina and Crmnica.

⁸⁹ In 1931 the total population and the number of Albanians referred to the municipalities of Gusinje, Plav, Velika and Vojno Selo, which were parts of the srez of Andrijevica.

⁹⁰ It refers to the residents of the srezes of Bioče, Podgorica and Tuzi, which were parts of the Podgorica district in 1921.

Skoplje	91,824	19,626	21.4	128,052	25,132	19.6
Struga	25,144	6,449	25.6	28,055	8,219	29.3
Has ⁹²	7,377	7,336	99.4	/	/	/
Š. Planina	33,528	9,332	27.8	46,154	19,500	42.2

Source: Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921 године, Сарајево, 1932; *Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession nach den unveröffentlichen Angaben der Zählung von 1931*, Wien, 1943.

The Demographic Pressure on Politics

The population censuses in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and in its post-war successor had political in addition to statistical significance. The authorities of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes believed that revealing the size of the minority populations could threaten the interests of the country and therefore the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a veto delayed for some time the publication of the census results of 1921.⁹³ This was particularly true in reference to the Albanian minority, the only minority that notably increased between the two censuses. The fact that the number of Albanians increased by about 60,000 in the period between the two censuses was a reason for concern, deliberation and discussion primarily for the Kingdom's security authorities and also had an effect on the politics of the Yugoslav governments in the 1930s. The Yugoslav authorities aimed to present the Turkish-Romanian agreement on the relocation of the Turkish population from Romania of 1934 as a base for the talks with the Turkish government officials. The authorities' focus was primarily on the Albanians who were compact and in constant communication with neighboring Albania and who began to nationally awaken in spite of their being politically undecided.⁹⁴

In October 1935 the President of the Yugoslav Government, Milan Stojadinović, turned to the Yugoslav ambassador to Ankara urging him to take the opportunity stemming from Turkey's policy of accepting immigrants from the Balkan countries and to make sure "a notable number of Albanians are included among the Turks" because a national and military interest was "to reduce the number of the non-Slavic population in the southern parts as much as possible so that the process of populating Southern Serbia with our population from other parts can be successfully completed. This can only be achieved through more massive relocation of the non-Slavic elements, according to a defined plan outside of our country's borders."⁹⁵

⁹¹ It refers to the Raška district, which consisted of the srezes of Deževa, Sjenica and Štavica in 1921.

⁹² During the 1920s the srez merged into the srez of Šar planina (Prizren).

⁹³ Z. Janjetović, *Deca careva pastorčad kraljeva*, 62–63.

⁹⁴ Vladan Jovanović, *Slike jedne neuspele integracije, Kosovo, Makedonija, Srbija, Jugoslavija* (Beograd: Pešćanik, 2014), 112.

⁹⁵ Edvin Pezo, „Komparativna analiza jugoslovensko-turske konvencije iz 1938. i 'džentlmenskog sporazuma' iz 1953. Pregovori oko iseljavanja muslimana iz Jugoslavije u Tursku“, *Tokovi istorije*, br. 2, (2013), 104.

Some of the Yugoslav intellectuals were of the same opinion. Vasa Čubrilović put together a paper titled “The Migration of Arnauts” or “On the Expulsion of Arnauts”,⁹⁶ which he presented in the form of a lecture before the members of the Serbian Cultural Club on 7 March 1937. Čubrilović said in his paper that he was particularly concerned by the statistics and the increase in the number of Albanians in the period between the censuses of 1921 and 1931. Although the statistics were not published, Čubrilović knew exactly how large this increase was.⁹⁷

In the spring of 1938 a number of preparatory meetings were held and finally on 11 July the Convention was signed that pertained to the Muslim population “that speaks Turkish and has Turkish culture”.⁹⁸ Two days later, Belgrade’s *Politika* reported briefly what the Turkish Anadolu agency had said, namely that “the Convention on the Relocation of Turks from Yugoslavia was initialed in Ankara”.⁹⁹ Under the Convention, 40,000 families from 45 srezes of the south of the Kingdom were to be relocated to Turkey.¹⁰⁰ The Convention also settled the financial issues and defined the period for migration (1939–1944). The children younger than 10 were not included in the total number of migrants, which means that the actual number of migrants was to be higher than

⁹⁶ Regarding the title of the paper, see: Холм Зундхаузен, *Историја Србије од 19. до 21. века* (Београд: Клио, 2009), 325; Славенко Терзић, *Стара Србија (XIX–XX век) драма једне цивилизације Рашка, Косово и Метохија, Скопско-тетовска област* (Нови Сад–Београд: Православна реч – Историјски институт, 2012), 257.

⁹⁷ Čubrilović proposed in his paper a series of repressive measures that would encourage the Albanian population to begin leaving the country in great numbers. The paper was in fact a historical and political analysis of the Albanian minority in Serbia until 1912 and in Yugoslavia between the two world wars. Čubrilović believed that the authorities should reach agreements with Albania and Turkey on relocation, primarily of the Albanian population. Being aware that such an agreement would be impossible to reach with Albania, Čubrilović said: “Turkey wishes to take 200,000 immigrants from our country... and it will be best for us if they are Arnauts.” Х. Зундхаузен, *Историја Србије од 19. до 21. века*, 326; С. Терзић, *Стара Србија*, 261.

⁹⁸ Архив на Македонската академија за науки и уметности, ф. Лазар Колишевски, к. 43, папка – 2, DSIP, d-r Aleš Babler drugu Lazaru Koliševskom. Zabeleška o sporazumu skopljenom između bivše Jugoslavije i Turske.

⁹⁹ *Политика*, 13. 7. 1938 (<http://digitalna.nb.rs/wb/NBS/novine/politika/1938/>). The report said that the Migration Commission formed for the purpose of looking into the issue of the relocation of Turks from Yugoslavia completed its jobs with a positive agreement for the two friendly and allied countries. “The delegates initialed the text of the Convention on the Relocation of Turks from Yugoslavia and the text will now be provided to the Governments. The Convention will be signed once it is endorsed by the two Governments and will become effective once it is ratified”.

¹⁰⁰ The geographical area from which the population could relocate included 45 srezes: Bitolj, Carevo Selo, Dojran, Donji Polog, Đevđelija, Galičnik, Gnjilane, Gora, Gornji Debar, Gornji Polog, Gračanica, Kačanik, Kavadar, Kičevo, Kočani, Kratovo, Kriva Palanka, Kruševo, Maleševo Mariovo, Negotin, Nerodimlje, Ohrid, Ovče Polje, Podgora, Poreč, Prespa, Preševo, Prilep, Radoviš, Skopje, Struga, Strumica, Šar Planina, Štip, Veles, Žegligovo, Lab, Vučitrn, Drenica, Djakovica, Istok, Kosovska Mitrovica, Peć and Podrim. The other parts of the Kingdom where Muslims (a population with Turkish culture) lived, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sandžak and Montenegro, were not part of the process. Safet Bandžović, „Iseljenička politika balkanskih država i pitanje muslimana (1878–1941)“, *Almanah*, br. 29–30, (2005), 202.

the initially defined one of 200,000.¹⁰¹ However, because World War II broke out shortly after, the Convention could not be ratified and implemented.

If we take a look at the geographical area from which these people were to move, we can notice that unlike Macedonia, Kosovo and Metohija had very few Turks. The census results of 1931 show that in the border srez of Djakovica, for example, only 33 of 45,378 residents were recorded as Turkish speakers, while in Drenica 16 of 21,347 people were recorded as Turkish-speaking residents.¹⁰² The situation was similar in other srezes, too, such as Lab, Nerodimlje, Istok, Gora and Podgora. In most of the srezes of Kosovo and Metohija, the Turkish population, that is, the population whose native language was Turkish was under 5% in 1931. A higher number of Turkish-speaking people were recorded in Prizren, Priština, Kosovska Mitrovica, etc.

Taking into consideration that the Turks, that is, the Muslim population identifying as Turks, were not a significant demographic and political factor and bearing in mind the area from which people were to be relocated to Turkey, the Convention clearly referred to the Albanian population. Making sure that as many Albanians as possible left the country was the crucial goal that the Yugoslav authorities sought to achieve with the Convention. The Albanian Government, on the other hand, strongly campaigned against the Convention.¹⁰³ Under the social and political circumstances in socialist Yugoslavia that were completely different, the relocation of the Muslim population (largely Turks and South-Slavic Muslims, but also Albanians) to Turkey continued in the 1950s. However, the nature of this migration completely differed from how the relocation was envisaged with the Convention of 1938.

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¹⁰¹ E. Pezo, „Komparativna analiza“, 110.

¹⁰² *Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession*, 388, 390.

¹⁰³ E. Pezo, „Komparativna analiza“, 110; V. Jovanović, „Iseljavanje muslimana iz Vardarske banovine“, 92–93. In the early 1939, the Yugoslav diplomacy, via Ivo Andrić’s writings, was of the opinion that the partitioning of Albania (as a necessary evil), resulting from Italy’s pressure, would have a positive effect on the Albanian population’s relocation. “The issue of the Muslim Albanian’s migration to Turkey would also be resolved under new circumstances as there would be no major effort to prevent it”. Bogdan Krizman, „Elaborat dra Ive Andrića o Albaniji iz 1939 godine“, *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, vol. 9, no. 2, (1977), 89.

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THE ALBANIAN POPULATION IN THE KINGDOM OF YUGOSLAVIA: DEMOGRAPHIC AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Summary

Albanians were the only minority and non-South-Slavic community in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia that noted a steady demographic increase in the period between the two world wars. Despite the emigration of one part of the Albanian community in the wake of the Balkan Wars, the ethnic structure of the areas where the Albanian population was a majority did not undergo a significant change. In fact, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes /Yugoslavia inherited this ethnic composition with an Albanian majority, which was formed over the course of several centuries. The Ottoman Empire’s censuses of the 19th century show that in Kosovo and Metohija and in parts of western Macedonia Albanians constituted more than half of the population at least since the first decades of the 19th century, that is, since the period of the formation of the modern Balkan nation states. The authorities deemed this ethnic structure as unfavorable first and foremost for the country’s security because along the border with Albania (but also in the interior parts of the country) the Albanian population constituted a sizable majority, frequently going beyond 80 or 90 percent. In a number of research papers it is said that the actual number of Albanians in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was considerably higher than the official one. However, the analysis of the census data of 1921 and 1931 shows in fact that the Yugoslav statistics as far as the size of the Albanian population is concerned

are fairly accurate. The number of Albanians was probably higher by tens of thousands but most definitely not by hundreds of thousands. This conclusion is also confirmed by the statistics of the first post-war census in 1948.

The authorities attempted to break the Albanians' demographic compactness by colonizing Serbian population largely in the srezes of Metohija and Kosovo. The colonization was meant in fact to compensate for the ethnic loss of the previous centuries. However, that goal was impossible to achieve in two decades. Realizing that the colonization was not conducive to the desired ethnic structure change, as of the middle of the 1930s, taking the example of Greece and Romania, the authorities tried in an organized manner to relocate a part of the Albanian population to Turkey. The agreement was reached in 1938 but the ensuing political and military events kept it from coming into effect. World War II and the events after the war almost erased the already small influence of the colonization on the ethnic structure of the Albanian-dominated areas. The compactness and demographic vitality of Albanians, among other things, will also be very important for their political and social status in Yugoslavia and this status will begin to steadily grow stronger after 1945.

KEYWORDS: Albanians, Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Minorities, Migrations, Population censuses of 1921 and 1931