

# **BEHIND STONE WALLS**

**CHANGING HOUSEHOLD ORGANIZATION  
AMONG THE ALBANIANS OF KOSOVA**

by

**Berit Backer**

Edited by Robert Elsie and Antonia Young,  
with an introduction and photographs by Ann Christine Eek

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This book is dedicated to Hajria, Miradia, Mirusha and Rabia  
– girls who shocked the village by going to school.

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## PREFACE

*'Behind Stone Walls' is a sociological, or more specifically, a social anthropological study of traditional Albanian society. It focusses, in particular, on the formation and evolution of household and family structures among the Kosova Albanians and was written on the basis of field work carried out by the author in the village of Isniq in western Kosova in 1975. The study provides the reader with a fascinating glimpse into an exotic world which will soon belong to the past, as the author predicted.*

*Of all the phenomena which the 'tribal' society and heroic culture of the Kosova Albanians produced in the past, few have been regarded as more unusual than the family structure itself, characterized by a strongly patriarchal hierarchy and an extended family, with typically up to 50 members living in one family compound or indeed under one roof. This type of family structure, known to anthropologists commonly by the Serbian term 'zadruga,' still occurs in Kosova today, though in a more sporadic fashion than it did thirty years ago. In the other parts of the southern Balkans it has long since disappeared.*

*Up to the 1970s, the Kosova Albanians lived in relative isolation from the rest of Europe and, despite the open nature of Yugoslav socialism, their traditional society had not been affected in any major way by globalization. The mid-1970s, however, marked a period in which Yugoslav gastarbeiters in Germany and Switzerland - many Kosova Albanians - were returning home and bringing back not only money but also new ideas.*

*The author of this book, the late Norwegian anthropologist Berit Backer (1947-1993), had the good fortune of penetrating this very foreign, though European culture just before the turning point, i.e. before it was subjected to substantial foreign influence and change. It was a time of relative political stability and social order in Yugoslavia. After years of oppression by the Belgrade authorities, the Albanian population of Kosova had finally been given a modicum of autonomy and official equality with the other peoples of the Yugoslav federation. This period was brought to an end by the Albanian uprising of 1981, which signalled the beginning of the slow and irreversible demise of Yugoslavia.*

*'Behind Stone Walls' was first submitted as a masters thesis to the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo in Norway in April 1979, but was never made available to the public at large. Berit Backer was a great friend of the Albanian people and, during the 1980s, became a leading human rights activist, in particular in defence of the cause and rights of the Kosova Albanians. Her activities on behalf of the International Helsinki Federation and her active support of Kosova Albanian refugees in Norway made it impossible for her to find time to prepare a definitive form for the publication of the thesis during her lifetime.*

*Since her untimely death in Oslo on 7 March 1993, many people have expressed an interest in the publication of this work. For this reason, the editors agreed to prepare the present edition even though they were, alas, unable to consult the author herself. It is possible that, had the project been discussed with her, the author might have made substantial alterations, amendments, omissions or additions to the original manuscript. The present, somewhat revised version omits many of the graphs and charts of the original thesis as well as much material of purely economic and statistical concern. Readers particularly interested in the economic aspects of Kosova village life in the period are advised to consult the original typescript, of which a number of copies are in circulation.*

*'Behind Stone Walls' offers much food for thought to anyone interested in the structures of traditional Albanian and Balkan society. It is hoped that through this publication, marking the tenth anniversary of the author's tragic murder, the memory of Berit Backer will live on.*

Robert Elsie

Olzheim, Germany  
Christmas 2002

## **BERITA – THE NORWEGIAN FRIEND OF THE ALBANIANS**

On the morning of International Women's Day, 8 March 1993, Norwegian newspapers were full of the shocking news about a murder the night before. The victim was Berit Backer, an anthropologist working for the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), whose dedicated work for one of the least-known peoples of Europe was very abruptly, and prematurely, brought to an end. It did not happen as a consequence of an accident, but by the sudden whim of a lonely refugee who temporarily lost his mind and stabbed to death the very person who once had helped him. The shock was immense, and even more so in Albania and Kosova when it was known that the perpetrator was a Kosovar Albanian.

Who was this Northern friend of the Albanians who, at least in Kosova, became a virtual legend of her time? After the death of Berit Backer, letters of condolence were received from many different people and organisations. The representative for The International Helsinki Federation, Yadja Zeltman, wrote of her: "Her unrelenting work and dedication to the cause of the Albanian communities fostered greater understanding for the needs of those communities, especially those in Kosova, and the need for a greater involvement of the international community in the defence of their basic human rights."<sup>1</sup> That Berit Backer was the friend of all Albanians was confirmed in many ways, as shown by these words from Macedonia: "Her death is such a loss for the cause of Human Rights that we feel we have lost one of the great crusaders for humanity."<sup>2</sup>

During her lifetime, Berit Backer accepted many commitments and had many international contacts. As she had been politically active since childhood, not always without complications, she learnt the virtue of discretion from an early age. People need not know more than necessary. She therefore divided her life into pieces, like a cake, and the people who constituted the pieces of the cake hardly knew about the existence of one another, or how numerous they were. Some of them were politically active or humanistically dedicated, others were colleagues in different projects, and still others were simply friends she spent some good times with.

After her death, Berit Backer's collection of Albanian books was donated to the library of the Ethnographic Museum, now part of the University Museum of Cultural Heritage in Oslo. An agreement with her family also made it possible for the author of these lines to gain access to the remaining material: finished and unfinished articles and manuscripts, photographs, negatives and parts of her correspondence. Although I had known Berit Backer for almost eighteen years before she was killed and had worked very closely with her at various periods, it was quite a surprise to discover how little I actually knew about her life and work. As I have been entrusted with the task of writing this introduction, I fear I may disappoint the reader. My view of Berit Backer may not coincide with his or her views and memories of her. All I can say is that, although there is still much information missing, I have done my best to describe the life and work of Berit Backer, a deeply devoted friend of the Albanians.

### **An unstable adolescence**

Not only did Berit Backer's life end in a most tragic way, but she seemed destined for dramatic events long before she was born. A young woman, who later became Berit's mother, was arrested together with a group of radical students in April 1941 during the German occupation of Norway in World War

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<sup>1</sup> Letter of condolence to the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, dated 9 March 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of condolence to the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, from the president of the Democratic Forum for Human Rights in Gostivar: Milaim Pejosi, 9 March 1993.

II. German forces found out that the young architect Ina Margrethe Danielsen happened to be the daughter of Admiral Edvard Christian Danielsen, who had managed to flee to Britain during the occupation and remained there as part of the Royal Norwegian Navy, co-operating with the Admiralty of the British Home Fleet. She was therefore incarcerated at Grini, a prison on the northwestern outskirts of Oslo, which the Germans had in reality converted into a sort of concentration camp. Her four-year imprisonment turned her into a dedicated communist.

In Bergen the freelance photographer Ole Friele Backer had photographed the invading Germans, and his pictures appeared everywhere, even abroad. When the occupation forces started to investigate his work, he was forced to flee to England, as were many others. On his arrival in London he was employed as the official photographer of the Norwegian Administration in exile, documenting the participation of Norwegian forces (including the Royal Family) in the allied war against Germany. In 1944 he was accredited as an allied war correspondent and covered the D-Day invasion in Normandy, and later the liberation of northern France. Towards the end of the war, in November 1944, he went with Norwegian troops on a British convoy to Murmansk on the Kola Peninsula. There he participated in the liberation of northern Norway, and he helped evacuate the local population which had gone through much hardship, many in hiding from the German occupiers. His photographs and the stories of his experiences as a war photographer were later published in two books.<sup>3</sup>

Ole Friele Backer met Ina Danielsen through her brother Per Danielsen, with whom he had shared many experiences during the war. They married after the war, and on 3 August 1947 their daughter Berit was born. It has been said that when Berit's father received the news of her birth in Oslo, while on assignment on Svalbard, he rejoiced as if he was the happiest man in the world. However he was unable to spend much time with his daughter as he, unfortunately, died suddenly a month later. Berit thus grew up under difficult circumstances, as she and her mother first went to live in Kirkenes in northern Norway and later moved several times, due to the mother's work documenting buildings destroyed during the war. For some periods Berit also lived with close relatives in Oslo and in Mandal.

Being the young daughter of a communist, Berit was sent to "pioneer" camps during summer vacations, and possibly as a consequence of her mother's political views, she was sometimes put into awkward situations. Children can be painfully cruel to each other, and that might have been another reason for giving her political schooling an early start. After completing secondary school she took a course at the Nansen School in Lillehammer in 1965-1966, and later, in the spring of 1968, she registered as a student at the University of Bergen. During the following years she studied statistics, social anthropology, philosophy and sociology. In opposition to her mother, Berit joined ranks with other young radicals towards the end of the sixties. Her interest in Albania was ignited when she visited the so-called "Lighthouse of Socialism" for the first time in 1969.

Another student remembers the years in Bergen, where the student movement bloomed and political discussions prospered: "Berit Backer was central in many of the exciting activities, and even those who didn't agree with her politically, enjoyed her great intellectual capacity and warm-hearted commitment."<sup>4</sup>

### **Field work among Albanians**

During her first visit to Albania, Berit was fascinated by the Albanians, their culture and their continuous struggle for independence. She therefore decided to dedicate her research, for a scholarly degree in social anthropology, to the Albanians. She prepared herself thoroughly, with the support of Professor Fredrik Barth in Bergen. Her hope was to be able to live in Albania for a year and spend part of that year on a state farm. She wished to study how this people, a vast majority of whom had been

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<sup>3</sup> O. F. Backer, P. E. Danielsen, P. Waage: "*Øya i Ingenmansland*" (The Island in No Man's Land), Oslo 1946, and O. F. Backer "Krigsfotografen" (The War Photographer), Bergen 1946.

<sup>4</sup> Obituary by anthropologist Marianne Gullestad, in the daily newspaper "Aftenposten," Oslo, 15 March 1993.



illiterate before World War II,” had managed to preserve their particular culture and language in spite of continued severe oppression from other countries...” and at the same time had turned the country into what she described as a modern state.<sup>5</sup>

The British sociologist Ian Whitaker, however, had his doubts as to whether she would be given permission: “I think it would be difficult indeed for somebody to set out to do orthodox anthropological field work over a period. It is possible that a woman might get in more easily than a man as there are still all these chivalrous attitudes to people who cannot engage directly in the blood-feud.”<sup>6</sup> The Albanian authorities politely refused her admission some months later as “the Tirana University had had difficulties with a similar case recently.”<sup>7</sup> Berit thus turned her attention towards other groups of Albanians, in the neighbouring province of Kosova, in the then Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. While waiting for permission to do field work she continued her studies, now at the University of Oslo, and also worked as a teacher and lecturer in social anthropology.

After demonstrations in Kosova in 1968 the situation of the Albanians had improved. Prishtina University was founded in 1970, and a new constitution granted the province autonomous status in 1974. Berit Backer was accepted as the first foreigner to do field work in the region for one year, in 1974-1975. Responsible for her permission to do research was the Minister of Culture at that time, the Albanian political scientist Ukshin Hoti<sup>8</sup>, but she also received much help from the Director of the University, Professor Idriz Ajeti, as well as from scholars, professor Fehmi Agani and Mark Krasniqi<sup>9</sup>.

In the introduction to her thesis, Berit Backer tells about the beginning of her field work in the village of Isniq. The detailed description of the difficulties she had as a student adapting to a new situation with a foreign people and language and, at the same time, performing heavy everyday chores, shows the respect she had for the villagers from the very start. She also explains many of the obstacles encountered during her stay in the village and the difficulties she had gathering data for her thesis.

### **Work with the media, social issues and scholarly work**

The present writer met Berit Backer for the first time in Albania in 1975. After having completed her field work in Kosova, Berit had gone to work in Durrës on the Adriatic coast, as the representative for a travel agency arranging trips to Albania for Scandinavian “friendship organisations.” She wanted to use every opportunity to visit the country but, as she spoke Albanian, she soon realised that she was constantly under surveillance and was not allowed to talk to the local inhabitants.

Back in Oslo some months later, Berit started work on her thesis, based on the information collected in Isniq. At the same time, we started planning a project to visit Isniq the following year. To finance the trip, we managed to persuade Swedish Television to produce a 30-minute film about women

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<sup>5</sup> From her application to Albanian authorities, 3 April 1973.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Whitaker to Barth 25 February 1972.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from the Albanian authorities to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 July 1973.

<sup>8</sup> Ukshin Hoti was arrested in connection with the demonstrations in Prishtina in 1981, after the death of Tito, and was later regarded by the Serbian authorities as their most “dangerous” prisoner because of his political understanding and ideological sharpness. He was later adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International, but after the NATO bombing of the Istog prison, where Hoti was incarcerated during the war in 1999, there is no trace of him. In the autumn of 2001 it was still possible to see his initials, U.H., painted along the roads in Western Kosova.

<sup>9</sup> Fehmi Agani later became the advisor of the leader of the Democratic League of Kosova, president Ibrahim Rugova, but he was killed in cold blood by Serbian forces while he was escaping from Prishtina during the war in April 1999. Idriz Ajeti and Mark Krasniqi both live in Prishtina today.

in the village, based on still photographs, but our main concern was to be able to publish a book with many photographs. As friendship and hospitality are very important ingredients in the lives of Albanians, Berit was very concerned that we should appear as honourable as possible on arrival in the village. She therefore introduced me to rituals which were important to the people we were going to meet, like phrases for greeting, including how to explain about oneself and one's family, etc.

We spent most of August and September 1976 in the village, trying our best to fulfil the plans for our project. Berit conducted conversations while I photographed, careful not to impose myself on people, but to depict their everyday lives as honestly as possible. The esteem Berit showed the many families we visited, and the patience she had in explaining to them what we were doing was impressive. The film<sup>10</sup> which we made portrays five women of the village, of different ages. It is now a unique document from a world partly closed to men, but not as changed as one might have expected.

According to some of Berit Backer's friends she really hated writing, and like many other students she had great difficulties in completing her thesis. She was also very intent on keeping her distance from the rigorous Marxist-Leninist environment at the University of Oslo. Upon our return from the stay in the Kosova village, we therefore spent a few months in Stockholm (where I was living at the time), editing the film for Swedish Television. It was broadcast in Sweden in 1977, and in Norway and Finland in 1978. We also worked on publishing reports in Swedish magazines and researched in preparation for other documentary film projects. One of these was based on the photographs which Berit's father, Ole Friele Backer, had made from the liberation of northern Norway in 1945. However, as nothing materialised out of these efforts Berit started working for the City of Stockholm on a project with immigrants in one of the suburbs, during the winter of 1977-1978.

In April 1978 Berit Backer went back to Oslo to work as a researcher at PRIO, the Peace Research Institute of Oslo. This position also enabled her to continue working on her thesis. A year later the manuscript "Behind Stone Walls..." was completed and she passed her Magister Artium degree<sup>11</sup>, in June 1979. Parallel to her work at PRIO, she also lectured in anthropology and sociology at the University of Oslo. Our plans for a book were, however, never realised, not even the "picture story" about Isniq which we put together in 1980 to illustrate the thesis, had it been published.

Berit Backer's unpublished thesis existed only as a typewritten manuscript, distributed in a very limited photocopied edition. It is a superb empirical study and one of the most important compilations of ethnographic material on traditional Kosovar Albanian village life from the 1970s. It is a pity, however, that Berit never re-edited the text in later years, as the original also betrays some of the weaknesses of a student in the process of entering the world of scholarly research.

Berit's friend and colleague Jon Pedersen has described her thesis as being "a very serious and good effort to describe Albanian rural society in Kosova and its logic, and is written independently of the Marxist-Leninist straitjacket which dominated student life in Norway in the 1970s. Berit wrote openly, being more empirical than was politically correct, and described things which few scholars had written about at that time: household organisation, gender segregation and economic adaptation. Berit Backer's thesis constitutes a good example of 'the golden age' of rural culture studies."<sup>12</sup>

Berit continued to work at PRIO, and with the help of a state research grant for 1980-1982, she began a comparative study of farming in Romania, Albania and southern Italy. Apart from one short visit to Romania, she was never allowed to conduct research there, and had to wait for almost a year for permission to work in Albania. She was finally given permission to study 'one' institution, the jewel of state farms in Albania, in Cakran outside the town of Fier, 'for two weeks' in 1981, and her efforts to do what is considered serious field work were met with an almost total lack of understanding. At that time, the Albanian population was preparing for the celebrations of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Communist

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<sup>10</sup> "Vi bär inte slöja längre..." (We don't wear veils anymore...), Swedish Television, Stockholm, 1977, 35 minutes.

<sup>11</sup> The equivalent of a Master of Philosophy, a degree somewhat more demanding than a Master of Arts.

<sup>12</sup> Mentioned in a comment to the present writer in November 2002.

Party, and Berit had to give up. Some years later, she drily remarked in a letter to a friend: “to do research in Albania is really something special. One day I’ll write a book on methodology and studies in Albania.”

### **Work for the Norwegian authorities and publishers**

The experience Berit Backer had gained in Albania in the period 1975-1981 was in many ways very discouraging. Being under constant surveillance, she had come to realise that the “People’s Socialist Republic of Albania” was no paradise and she drew a line under the political views she had held as a youth. Her fascination with the Albanian people was, however, by no means diminished, and she continued her research efforts, but from outside, turning her attention to groups of Albanians closer to home. She was also invited to give papers at international conferences and lectured in Norway about the Albanians in Albania and Kosova.

From 1980 on, Berit Backer worked from time to time as an interpreter for Albanian guestworkers from Macedonia who were living in Norway. She began by working for the immigration authorities, but later also worked for the police and for the justice administration for cases concerning asylum seekers and for lawsuits. She also translated official documents. The work as an interpreter gave Berit a thorough insight into the problems of immigration, and during the 1980s she was asked by various Norwegian authorities to participate in projects concerning immigrants in general, and immigrant women in particular, under the auspices of the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Labour. On various occasions in 1980-1983, she represented the Ministry on several committees in Norway and in the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. In 1984, the Ministry published a pamphlet based on Berit’s special understanding of the Albanians in general and on her work among Albanian immigrants from Macedonia, which was then still part of Yugoslavia<sup>13</sup>.

Looking at Berit Backer’s activities in the 1980s, it seems that she must have been working round the clock. For reasons unknown to the present writer, she decided not to continue with her scholarly research, but to make a living working in publishing. From 1983-1986 and 1986-1988 she was employed as a non-fiction editor by two of the main Norwegian publishers. In 1988, she moved on to the Department of Information at the University of Oslo to learn new aspects of publishing with the intention of setting up her own business.

Some of Berit Backer’s articles and lectures on the Albanians were published on specific occasions such as international conferences, but many were marked “not for publication.” One reason for this was the fact that she was highly self-critical. This could also be the reason why her extensive writings on Albanian matters were never published in book form. Berit did, however, once try to express her impressions of Albania in a project called “Hoxha Rules,” which consisted of several short manuscripts written in English. “Communists to Power” recounts the communist fight for power during and after World War II, but the most interesting text is “Living and Working in Albania”, one hundred pages long. It is a well informed description of everyday life in Albania in the 1970s and 1980s. From her correspondence it appears that Berit tried to interest a publisher in this project in 1985. The text she had submitted, which was only a draft and not ready for publication, was, however, mistaken for the complete manuscript and was turned down, and Berit never worked on it again.

### **Human rights work**

The correspondence that Berit Backer left behind bears witness to her close contact with scholars, writers, journalists and others who were interested in various aspects and regions of Albania, politically, economically and socially. Her growing insight also led to a more profound understanding of the abuse of the human rights of the Albanians, particularly in Yugoslavia. By 1978 she had been contacted by

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<sup>13</sup> “Slik er våre skikker – Albanske innvandreres møte med Norge” (Such are our customs - the encounter of Albanian immigrants with Norway), Oslo 1984.

Amnesty International about one particular prisoner of conscience, Adem Demaçi, the Kosovar Albanian writer who had been incarcerated for most of the period since 1958. It was well known that the Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha had no second thoughts when it came to dealing with his opponents either, but it is not known how much Berit was aware at the beginning of the 1980s about human rights violations in Albania itself.

The uprisings in Kosova, following the death of Tito in 1981, led to thousands of arrests and so many political trials that international observers became very concerned. Amnesty International contacted Berit Backer again in 1986 to ask her to inform them about political prisoners in the province. As it was becoming increasingly difficult for foreign observers to enter Kosova, she used every opportunity to go there as a private person. In 1986, she used an ethnographic conference in Prishtina, preliminary studies on the Muslim Bektashi sect in Gjakova, and visits to old friends to find out as much as possible about the general situation of the Albanians in the province.

In 1987, Norway gradually began receiving Kosovar Albanian refugees who entered the country either on political or humanitarian grounds. Berit Backer was hired in the spring of 1987 by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a translator of Albanian documents and as an advisor on questions concerning Kosova. In 1988, she was also working for the Ministry of Justice to provide information about the difficulties the Albanians in Kosova were experiencing under the policies of the new leader of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic. Berit Backer's written reports to the ministries reveal that she had connections to well-informed sources, who knew in detail what was happening in the province, even in the courts and prisons.

The British expert on the Albanians, Harry Hodgkinson, showed Berit his great respect in a letter written to her in 1987:

“It was a pleasure to meet you at Doreen and Anton Logoreci's, and a great privilege to be able to profit from your immense stock of knowledge and compassionate understanding of the Kosovars. I very much fear that we all took advantage of your kindness, and must have exhausted you by our questions and speculations. It was forbearing of you to undertake that impromptu seminar with such goodwill and kindness... When next you visit your friends in Manor House, perhaps we might arrange a luncheon party round the corner here with Anton and Doreen and Ishan Toptani...”<sup>14</sup>

Because of her work for the Kosovar Albanians, Berit Backer was contacted by the International Helsinki Federation (IHF) to participate both as a consultant, interpreter and guide for the first “fact-finding mission” to Kosova in September 1989. The report published after this journey was to a great extent based on the information gathered by Berit Backer. It details the cunning methods used by the Serbian authorities against Albanian intellectuals and politicians, in the process of reducing the autonomous province of Kosova to a mere part of Serbia in March 1989<sup>15</sup>. On the same occasion, Berit helped start a Helsinki Committee in Prishtina, the first human rights organisation among the Albanians which was tolerated by the Serbian authorities. For this she was later denounced in the Serbian press as a “Kosovar Albanian separatist”, alongside Demaçi who was still in prison<sup>16</sup>.

Berit Backer, whose name is pronounced “Berita” by Albanians, gradually received the nickname “Merita” because of the reputation and respect in which she was held by Kosovar Albanians for her profound knowledge of their people, and for her unrelenting work to inform the rest of Europe of their

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<sup>14</sup> Letter from Harry Hodgkinson, London, 22 April 1987. Anton Logoreci was an Albanian in exile who wrote “The Albanians: Europe's forgotten survivors”, London 1977. Ishan Toptani was another of the leading Albanians in exile in London. Quoted with permission from Bejtullah Destani, London.

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth Anderson: “Yugoslavia: Crisis in Kosovo,” International Helsinki Federation and Human Rights Watch, New York 1990.

<sup>16</sup> “Politika Ekspres,” 7 February 1990.

situation. She also worked very actively to introduce Kosovar Albanian politicians such as Ibrahim Rugova and Shkëlzen Maliqi to Norwegian and Western European politicians, and helped politically active Kosovar Albanians in the diaspora to organize themselves. The LPK, Lëvizja Popullore e Kosovës, is one of the oldest political movements among the Kosovar Albanians<sup>17</sup>, and Berit was one of the first foreigners to visit the leaders of this group in Switzerland in 1987. With her friends in Norway, Berit Backer also started an information centre for Kosovar Albanians in exile, continuously providing the media with press releases.

Changes now began to appear on the political scene in Albania, and Berit used the first possible opportunity to go in December 1990. Her experience there while the population was beginning to liberate itself was published as lengthy reports in one of the leading Norwegian newspapers. This made one of her Kosovar friends remark that, as it was finally possible for her to work in “her beloved Albania,” she would no longer be interested in the plight of the Kosovar Albanians. That was, however, not true. Six months earlier, in the spring of 1990, Berit had applied for a visa to attend another conference in Prishtina and found out that she had been declared a “persona non grata” in the province, by the Serbian authorities. Although she was not able to return to Kosova, her work for the Kosovar Albanians never ended.

### **Documentary film, relief work and exhibition about Albanians**

Berit Backer had always been interested in questions of migration, and when the opportunity to do scholarly research in this field emerged, she once again changed office and moved to the newly founded Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). She was hired there in January 1989 on a temporary basis, and three years later, shortly before her death, was given a permanent post. She was involved in several studies about the reception of refugees in Norway, and the clash of cultures, etc., and she very often worked much more intensively than her position demanded. For most of her time at UDI, she was, however, on leave to work on projects in Albania.

During the greater part of her life, Berit Backer had a very strong desire to tell the world about the Albanians. Knowing how effective documentary films are, at the end of the 1980s she made several applications together with British Granada Television to the Albanian authorities for permission to make a film about everyday life in the country, but with no result. Only when Albania gave up its one-party system in 1990, and began to open up to the outside world, was it finally possible for Berit to start preparing for the filming of “The Albanians of Rrogam,” in the Granada series “Disappearing World.”

Her two months’ stay in the most remote and isolated parts of the northern Albanian Alps was one of Berit Backer’s last efforts to work in the field as an anthropologist. She arrived in the deep of winter in February 1991 in a poor village during a very difficult period for its residents, in the midst of the confusion created by the transition from communism to a market economy. Berit became an eyewitness to the major conflicts caused by the redistribution of the land which had once been expropriated by the state, and of the livestock descendants of the cows, sheep and hens which had been taken from the farmers ten years earlier, in the last efforts by Enver Hoxha to “relieve the people of the burdens of private ownership.” Berit had a very mixed experience, being present when old customs and hereditary rights clashed in the fight for fair solutions for the landless farm workers.

After the completion of her part of the film, Berit Backer went to Tirana to start collecting information about ex-political prisoners who had recently been released from the Albanian “Gulag.” Berit travelled throughout Albania in the spring of 1991, part of the time together with the Kosovar Albanian photographer Hazir Reka. Within a few weeks, she managed to collect enough information to persuade the Norwegian government to be one of the first nations to start relief work in Albania. With money from the Norwegian government and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee as administrators, the non-governmental organization, Aid Norway-Albania (ANA), opened an office in Tirana in January 1992. Its activities consisted mainly of relief work among ex-prisoners and torture victims, of helping Albanian school children and of creating channels to spread information about human rights.

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<sup>17</sup> The LPK later formed the UÇK, the Kosova Liberation Army, in the mid 1990s.

At the same time as her travels, Berit Backer was working on preparations for an exhibition for the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Oslo. Together with Afërdita Onuzi of the Institute of Folk Culture in Tirana, she made an exquisite selection of dresses, textiles and other objects from their collections. After the opening in June 1991 of “Albanian Traditions” in Oslo, Berit also wrote the manuscript for a short film produced by the University, to give a background to the exhibition<sup>18</sup>.

Because of her work in the planning and administration of ANA, Berit never managed to complete her report on living conditions among ex-political prisoners. The work was, however, concluded in 1993 after her death by Nufri Lekaj, Berit’s close friend, collaborator and advisor for many years. The work at ANA terminated in 1995, and was later carried on by an Albanian information centre for human rights, active in promoting schools and the general public in Albania.

### **A generous personality**

Berit Backer always had a strong desire to have children of her own but, because she never did, and because she maintained close relations with her Albanian friends all her life, she very much wished to do something for them, either by adopting an Albanian child, or by helping some children get a good education. In 1991, she found an opportunity to adopt an Albanian child, and after lengthy negotiations with the Norwegian and Albanian authorities, the adoption was accepted by a court in Tirana in May 1992, and Berit was able to return to Oslo with her new daughter.

When it was finally possible for Berit to live and work in Albania, she began to feel very divided about where she actually belonged. She rarely mentioned setbacks in her work, but during the last years, it was obvious to the present writer that Berit had experienced things that had hurt her deeply. Her understanding of the situation in the Balkans was so acute that she often provoked people who had accepted the “official” views by the dominating Slav and Greek populations. The resistance she met while trying to report on the situation of the Albanians was sometimes so hard that she often felt that all her knowledge was worthless, and that all her efforts had been in vain. In Albania, however, people understood and appreciated Berit’s work, and she felt at home. But there, she found it next to impossible to work with the efficiency and speed she was used to.

Berit and her daughter went to Albania again, and came back to Oslo for Christmas in 1992. She spent some weeks in bed due to illness, but she recovered well in time for her daughter’s sixth birthday. Colleagues remarked about her looking amazingly well, happier than ever before, and she started making plans for the future with her daughter. But all these plans were demolished when Berit’s life ended on 7 March 1993.

When the news about the death of Berit Backer was made known, she was honoured in a most touching way. Newspapers and other media brought out articles and obituaries. Telegrams were received from leading Albanian politicians and human rights activists. Meetings were held to commemorate her, and many people paid their condolences in visits to her mother. Her funeral in Oslo was a solemn event, almost like a state funeral, in a crowded church with many Norwegian officials present together with several hundred Kosovar Albanians. They came from all over Scandinavia, some even all the way from Kosova, in a wish to gather at a quiet farewell sermon for “Motër Berita” – “our sister Berit,” as her old friend Adem Demaçi put it in his last greeting by the bier<sup>19</sup>.

Berit Backer was buried in Oslo close to where she had lived for the last year of her life, finally experiencing the happiness of motherhood. Berit’s own mother, who died three years later, rests next to her. Berit’s daughter is living today in Oslo, adopted by a Norwegian family. Avdulla Kenaçi of Albanian television produced a documentary film called “Berit Backer – Mikesha Jonë nga Norvegjia” (Berit

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<sup>18</sup> “Albania, min mor!” (Albania, my mother), University of Oslo, 1992 – 17 minutes.

<sup>19</sup> After being released from prison in 1991, Adem Demaçi became the president for the Council for Human Rights and Freedom in Prishtina until 1998, and in 1998-99 he was the political spokesman for UÇK, the Kosova Liberation Army.

Backer – our Friend from Norway) in 1993, which told about Berit and what she did for the Albanians, and included several interviews with Albanian and Norwegian colleagues and friends.

The man who killed Berit Backer, a 29-year-old Kosovar Albanian, had been granted a residence permit in Norway on humanitarian grounds. After he had studied and acquired a good understanding of the Norwegian language, Berit Backer had offered him assignments for UDI as a translator of public information into Albanian. A disagreement about one of his assignments is claimed to be the reason why he felt badly treated by Berit. That was probably the reason why he stabbed her to death, but shortly afterwards gave himself up to the police.

The trial at the City Court of Oslo was held a year later, the perpetrator having been in custody awaiting medical reports from experts. Their conclusion was that he had clear symptoms of paranoia, a serious mental disorder, probably provoked by his isolated situation as a refugee. According to criminal law, he was therefore not responsible for his actions, but had acted under the influence of a mental illness which required extensive hospital treatment. He was thus sentenced to five years of preventive detention inside the psychiatric health services<sup>20</sup>.

### **Respected and loved**

After Berit Backer's death, Adem Demaçi visited Norway, and paid a visit to her mother on several occasions. He gave his views on Berit to the present writer in 1998:

“I met her in person for the first time here in Norway... She knew the Albanians very well. She was fully occupied with matters concerning us and helped us immensely. She collected 19,000 Deutschmarks for our Human Rights Council, to be distributed to Albanians in Serbian prisons. She wrote a great deal, and gave us advice on many difficult questions... I will never forget Berit, her death was so tragic...”

On numerous occasions, Kosova Albanians have told me about their experiences with Berit Backer. Blerim was one of the first political refugees to arrive in Oslo, in 1987:

“When I came to Norway, I applied for political asylum and was brought to the police station in Oslo. I was very tired and confused, everything was so different here, everything had happened so fast, a lot of people had been coming and going. I sat there alone waiting, and suddenly there was a lady there, asking me in English: ‘Are you from Yugoslavia?’ – I said: ‘I’m Albanian, but a Yugoslav citizen.’ – ‘All right then, let’s speak Albanian.’ – ‘Oh my God!’ I thought, ‘A lady speaking Albanian here in Norway?’ I wondered, was she the daughter of an asylum seeker? No, but her name was Berit Backer: -‘Is that an Albanian name?’ – ‘No, it’s Norwegian’. Later she was my interpreter and we had very much contact with each other until three days before she was killed. I phoned her as I wished her to attend a meeting for the many Kosovar Albanians in church asylum at that time. She said she wanted to come, but she was a bit afraid: ‘Now, that I have become the mother of a daughter, I have to be more careful...’ – There is always someone among us who can watch out for your daughter, and for you too.’ – There is no danger, I am just a bit afraid, only a little, but maybe there is no reason for it...’ Oh, she helped me so incredibly, she was like a guardian angel to all of us seeking asylum. She was not only our friend, but also our guide here in Norway and she taught us such a lot...”<sup>21</sup>“

Henrik Lous, a close colleague of Berit Backer's at UDI, spoke words which reflect the core of Berit's personality:

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<sup>20</sup> According to the sentence from Oslo Byrett (City Court of Oslo), March 1994.

<sup>21</sup> Told to the writer in March 1998.

“Her professional skill, her expert knowledge in the field and the scholarly aspect of her work were particularly noticed. Her ability to understand the situation of the refugees on their own accord was distinctive, although she did not allow this to influence her objective views. This was not easy in a field so exposed to likes and dislikes. It brings out esteem, and this is how we made her acquaintance: fearless, brave, bold, tough, involved, self-critical, but also pensive when it came to humane and political considerations. Berit did not look for easy solutions, but when she did find solutions she was uncompromising! She could challenge and frustrate anyone with her provocative militance, her spirited argumentation, her ardent intensity and verbal energy. Not because there was a lack of arguments, but because Berit made demands on us...Reactions like this can cause rejection or admiration, but never indifference. Those who met Berit did not move on unaffected. We grew fond of her!”<sup>22c</sup>

Yes, there are many of us who loved her, and miss her!

Ann Christine Eek<sup>23</sup>  
Oslo, Norway

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<sup>22</sup> Obituary in the Norwegian daily newspaper “Aftenposten,” 17 March 1993.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Christine Eek is a professional photographer from Sweden who works for the University Museum of Cultural Heritage (of which the Ethnographic Museum became part in 1999) in Oslo, Norway. She made the acquaintance of Berit Backer in Albania in 1975 while trying to make a photographic report on the country and its people. Together, they visited the Albanian village of Isniq in Kosova in 1976, making a film about women of the village. Later, they worked on other projects, including the exhibition “Albanian Traditions” in 1991. Eek is currently working on a book about Albanians.



# **BEHIND STONE WALLS**

**CHANGING HOUSEHOLD ORGANIZATION  
AMONG THE ALBANIANS OF KOSOVA**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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*I should also like to mention Lubitsa who worked and lived in the school, too. Her coffee gave great encouragement on dark winter nights. And bread baked by Latif and Papidani also made life bearable.*

*Since the thesis is dedicated to my contemporaries, I shall not mention them all here. But there are other women besides those mentioned above, born in the village, who became my close friends. Cyma, Hyra, Xhevahire, Zyga, Hatixhe, Aisha were women in whom I could confide and who gave me support. And there are of course others who became my friends – warm thanks to all of them.*

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Berit Backer  
Oslo, Norway, 1979

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with household formation in a village called Isniq in the Kosova province of southern Yugoslavia. What we will try to discuss is the origin, function and development of the formerly predominant patriarchal family type in Isniq, which was typical of the whole region. The village is inhabited by people of the Albanian minority in Yugoslavia. They maintain a patrilineal kinship structure and all persons in the village, save for the in-married wives, are related to each other through agnatic links. Their families are likewise formed according to patri- and fratri-lineal extension. Some families are quite small and others larger. The men in a household, if there are more than one, are always close agnatic relatives.

When going into the field I wanted to investigate which role these families played in a larger social and economic context and to see whether there was a change taking place. My hypothesis was a conventional one: in former times when subsistence production was the prevailing way of making a living, the families developed into large multi-purpose units. Today they are becoming smaller as a result of people's expanding involvement in the economy and social system of the country as a whole. The importance and necessity of living within strong domestic units has been reduced, and there has also been an increased differentiation and integration of society as a whole.

In many ways my assumption was confirmed. But the correlation between 'modernization' and the 'emergence of the nuclear family' is not a clear and straightforward relationship. History makes its twists and turns, and people tend to reformulate the purpose of their traditional social institutions. This has meant that the large-sized families are still characteristic for this area, and that they have been partially reorganized to fit into new social and economic conditions. On the whole, there is a definite decline in the size of these tightly knit domestic units which were the cornerstones of pre-war Albanian society.

The analysis may be said to have two dimensions – one diachronic and the other synchronic. The first is mainly a historical discussion of the circumstances that created the type of family institution in question. In this part of the analysis, the 'patriarchal family' is viewed as functionally related to the community as a whole – it is seen as fulfilling certain tasks necessary for making the 'totality' work. The purpose of this part is solely to point out the particular characteristics of the society in which this domestic unit was formed.

In order to do this, a rather lengthy discussion of the social and economic circumstances of the region is presented in order to make clear the local variety of the Turkish regime which dominated northern Albania and the Kosova region for almost 500 years. It would seem that the kind of family institution which was created, was the typical product of a conquering and alien feudal structure which never obtained total control of the local communities<sup>24</sup>. This situation compelled the Isniqians to develop a social system of their own to defend themselves against the conquerors in order to counter tax collection, military assaults, social and cultural dominance, etc. At the same time, the social system allowed individual differences to emerge, since Kosova's rural inhabitants were private smallholding peasants. They based the organization on the existing patrilineal kinship structure, but made the family, rather than the lineage, the base unit of society. This resulted in a situation where the larger families were the better off in those days, both economically, socially and politically. A large family unit meant strength.

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<sup>24</sup> This is perhaps a rather broad statement to make, as there is considerable disagreement on the origin and functions of the patriarchal family structures found in the Balkans. But we risk it as a hypothesis for the village of Isniq, for reasons which the chapter on history should clarify.

Consequently, part of our concern is with changing family size. To define family types in terms of size does not indicate much about their social relations or about the modes of production. But it can be useful as an indicator of varying family arrangements. Family size may be seen as a product of two sets of factors: demography and residential rules. Fertility and mortality certainly influence the number of people inhabiting the same household, given the same set of recruitment rules. But as I will try to show, the fact that they 'had more children before' does not explain a decline in the size of families. In my view, it is the social organization which reveals the contemporary pattern of smaller household units. What has happened is a tendency to limit the degree of extension both horizontally and vertically compared to earlier times. In other words, the families tend to split at an earlier stage of their development cycle today.

The question to be posed first is, however: Were the families really larger before? This has been doubted by many and we shall spend some time on this discussion.

"We can conclude that the domestic family was never extended in any degree; so that the changes in size wrought by the industrial revolution, urbanization, modernization, etc., though significant, are small... The main changes that have occurred do not centre upon the emergence of the 'elementary family' out of the 'extended kin groups,' for small domestic groups are virtually universal. They concern the disappearances of many functions of the wider ties of kinship, especially those entering into groups such as clans, lineages and kindred." (Goody, 1972:118)

This quotation from Goody is one of several more reconsiderations of what has recently been labelled 'the myth of the large extended family in former times' (Laslett, 1972). The idea in question is that previously, when agriculture represented the predominant economic sector, the rural inhabitants lived in extended family units comprising several generations and siblings. Goody examines international statistics on family size and finds that in no country is there a *bona fide* case of more than six members to an average household.

Yugoslavia is no exception. The average household had 3.8 members in 1971 - a reduction from 5.1 which was the average size in 1921. But this does not imply that there is no deviance from the average. The *zadruga* is one of the famous types of households that has amazed scholars and travellers for its size<sup>25</sup>. *Zadruga* has become an international term for the kind of extended patrifocal household or communal joint-family (Mosely, 1976:19) found mostly in southern Serbian territory in the last and at the beginning of this century<sup>26</sup>. It may have as much as one hundred relatives residing, producing and consuming together.

The Kosova region in southern Serbia is one of the areas where this kind of household formation still is found. Several hundred households have 30 members or more (Rrapi, 1974). The average household has 6.6 members, the highest in Yugoslavia. There are municipalities with more than 10 members on average (*Zhvillimi Ekonomik*, 1974).

Doubtless there exist household formations very different from the 'global average' mentioned by Goody. There are domestic organizations which are larger than the normal conjugal family pattern. But Goody again questions the functions of these populous units. Judging from his own experience with the Lo Wili, he assumes that these large residential groups are merely a conglomerate of smaller families that have come together for certain practical purposes. They do not in his view qualify for the title 'family' or 'household' as they do not share the most basic functions like eating together.

For him the 'family' remains the conjugal unit possibly with some relatives attached to it. The *zadruga* he sees as a multi-celled version of this latter form: "... the cells coming together for protection, for administrative convenience or simply because that was the way the house had been built in the first

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<sup>25</sup> There are authors who differentiate between 'patriarchal family' and *zadruga* (Mosely, 1976: 59). The *zadruga* is seen as a more democratic and voluntary union of several smaller nuclear units with the leader elected, as opposed to a 'patriarchal' unit which is assumed to be more authoritarian. We categorize them together since in our case as in most other Balkan cases, they represent stages in a familial development rather than different types of families.

<sup>26</sup> The occurrence of *zadrugas* seems to have been most frequent among the Serbs in former times, but it was also found among Croats, Bosnians, Bulgarians and Albanians (Mosely, 1976: 60). Today it is almost exclusively found among the Albanians (Grossmith, 1976: 233).

place.” (ibid.: 110)

Because the *zadrugas* were so strange a phenomenon, they caught the attention of writers in former times. One almost gets the impression that all kinds of family life were lived within the shelters of a giant domestic organization. Goody’s argument raises two important questions. Firstly, how normal is the large extended family in those places where they do or did exist? And secondly, what is the actual function of these units?

Joel Halpern is another scholar who has gone into an examination of the southern Slav household formation of the last century. He supports the sceptics who doubt that the large extended family was ever a normal family type at any point in time: “If we give as a brief tentative definition of the *zadruga* an extended household composed of a father and his married sons and their offspring (paternal *zadruga*), or two or more married brothers and their children (fraternal *zadruga*), how many people in a given community actually lived in these types of households? What about the size of the households themselves? Much of the literature with respect to the *zadruga* seems to dwell on the exceptional case which is described in detail. Such an approach however does not help us understand the conditions under which the majority of the people lived.” (Halpern, 1972: 401)

Halpern collected statistical material on family size from the last century on various villages within Serbia. And he very convincingly demonstrates that the average family was actually quite small. He confirms the fact that the *zadrugas* represented extremes in the statistical sense: “... the complex kin relationships which characterized the *zadruga* were ordinarily participated in at any one time by less than half of the population. This statement applies not only to non-nuclear kin relationships, such as grandparent – grandchild, father-in-law – daughter-in-law, and uncle – nephew, but partly also to those occasioned by multiple siblings, e.g. older brother – younger brother, older sister – younger brother.” (Halpern, 1972: 408).

Joel Halpern’s conclusion applies to Isniq as well. The majority of the households do not contain extended families. We registered the frequency of different family types in 1975 and 1932.

The year 1932 was chosen as representative for the pre-war period. Firstly it was the earliest year found in the protocols of the cadastral authorities registering landed property. Secondly it was a year close enough for the middle-aged as well as the old to remember. I wanted to feel certain about the informants’ memories. It should be noted that the Isniqians have no tendency to boast of their ‘large families.’ On the contrary they tend to characterize the *inter bellum* families as small. My procedure was to take down all the names in the cadastral papers, some two hundred. I had them identified and thereby reduced the number to 120 families. This was due to the practice of registering land in the name of different family members because of certain laws regulating land ownership and payment of tax. Women are for example registered as property owners, very much an empty formality in that region.

Thereupon I simply asked different persons how many people lived in their family at that time. They usually calculated how old they had been themselves, and thereupon named the other members. Nobody had difficulties in remembering their childhood family setting, except for those who were part of the absolutely larger units of 50-60-70. These individuals tended to give even numbers. As such, the numbers from 1932 are not absolutely exact, but quite reliable as indicators of the general pattern of the incidence of family sizes. The average of 16 members per family may of course be biased by the inaccurate figures given for the largest units. But the most interesting point is the relative strength of small versus large families. For that purpose it is not really important whether they had 55 or 62 members, nor if the deviation is one between 50 or 70 for that matter. We do not believe, however, that the mistakes are as large as that, since the approximate size of a large family is easily remembered. Size indicates the relative importance and influence of the unit. Informants were not likely to say 70 if they lived together with ‘only’ 50 others, as somebody else might have come along and challenged the information. Although I cannot be certain of 100 percent accuracy, on the whole the high numbers were accepted by others upon some reflection and exercising of memory.

The 1975 numbers are taken from a registration made for each family noting their size, number of males, and the activities the men were engaged in as well as which lineage each family belonged to. There were 265 households altogether, when the families of the *hodja* (Muslim priest) and the village drum-beater were excepted. Neither is a Serbian widow living alone in the school where she worked, included. Strictly speaking the village therefore had 268 households, but I have confined myself to those

‘belonging to the blood,’ i.e. of the original Isnig descendants. This registration will be referred to as Registration 1.

The most remarkable change is the decline in absolute numbers as well as in percentage of the largest family units - those with 30 members or more. This group contained 22 households in 1932 (18 percent of the total), and shrank to four in 1975 (2 percent of the total that year). None of these units were particularly large in 1975, just above 30, as the last really large family (of 64 members) had divided up in 1974. In comparison it should be noted that nine out of the 22 largest families in 1932 had between 50 and 70 members.

The smallest group on the other hand – those with one to four people – represents approximately 10 percent of the total number of families on both dates. But the next category, with five to nine members has swollen from representing 32 percent of the total in 1932 to 41 percent in 1975. An even higher relative increase is the case for the third sized group, those with 10 to 14 members. This category comprised 18 percent of the households in 1932 and as many as 32 percent in 1975, giving a difference of 14 percent.

One can sum up firstly that the percentage share of each size of group is higher for the 1975 families up to the size of 15 members. After that the percentage is higher in 1932 up to 30 or more members when the absolute number of families in this group is higher as well. Secondly, close to 60 percent of the families had less than 15 members in 1932 whereas this category represented more than 80 percent of the families in 1975. In other words the normal family was not of the tremendously large and extended kind at any time. However, the *zadruga* as a family organization, producing exceptionally large units, has been reduced in importance as indicated by these figures. But the number of the absolutely smallest family units has not increased. It is the globally compared ‘middle sized group’ which has swollen in numbers, particularly those with five to 15 members.

So much for the facts and figures in Isnig. I would like to return to the discussion of what produces family types and thereby dwell rather more on the apparently deviant cases of exceptionally large families.

## **Family and Household**

So far, the concepts of ‘family’ and ‘household’ have been used as interchangeable terms, and in reality they are. The Albanian local terminology makes no distinction between them. ‘Family’ and ‘household’ used for Isnig refer to exactly the same group of people, but to ‘different systems they are part of.’ The household as a system defines people in terms of the tasks they perform. It says nothing about their structural relations to each other independent of this purpose-oriented status definition. In principle, household members may be of any kind if they take part in the organization formed around the basic management functions.

When social science literature discusses ‘family’ however, the implication is that we deal with certain relationships between people who are related by kinship ties. This is the case whether the research is within the field of psychology investigating the impact of family relations on the individual, whether it is in sociology which mostly describes the Western nuclear conjugal unit, or within anthropology.

I prefer to keep this usage and see the family for our purpose as the ‘relationship based on kinship between members of the household group.’ Any kindred outside the residential unit we shall call kin, relatives, lineage members, etc. according to need. The family thus becomes a relational term indicating an institutionalized pattern of interaction based on a set of kinship statuses. Its concrete expression, its literal ‘embodiment,’ will naturally be a concrete group of people. But as an institution it exists independently of those members. Its basis is a culturally defined set of rules for recruitment and rights of members vis-à-vis each other, codified in kinship terminology.

The household indicates the same group of people with the focus on their management, production, division of labour, income sharing, consumption, etc. The household is recruited on the basis of kinship. The Isnigians are consistent in their practice - the empirical composition of the households

mirror their rules for recruitment. All households are made up of patrilineally related males with their in-married wives. The duties to be done are defined partly from the status a person has within the kinship structure and partly by the actual economic adaptation of the family. The household in this sense is a product of family relations organized around economic adaptation and social management.

To call a household merely a management unit, would be too narrow for the Isnig case. Its purpose, when seen as a parallel system to the family relations, is to secure the reproduction of the family unit in the wider sense. This term includes procreation, raising children, and reproducing the economic estate from year to year and from one generation to the next. How this is done depends on the stage of development a family finds itself in, and the economic resources and skills at its disposition.

I follow the distinctions made by Buchler and Selby when they synthesize the different factors forming 'residential configurations.' Since this thesis deals with one very specific society – this term 'residential configurations' can be in our context translated into 'household.' They write: "Residential configurations are an end result of a set of motives, incentives and structural definitions, which, however much they may be unique to the particular community under study are reducible (hopefully in the long run) to (1) generalized set of ground rules (cultural rules by which games are played), and (2) sets of strategies (activities that are possible alternatives by the terms of the ground rules, and which are selected by the players to maximize values within the context of ground rules and their culture)." (Buchler and Selby, 1968: 68)

The cultural ground rules in our case are the recruitment rules based on kinship, the pattern of interaction which each person within the kinship structure participates in, and the rights and duties connected with each position in the kinship system. Roughly, this is the family aspect of the domestic group in question. Their resources and assets of economic, social and political kinds form the basis for the various strategies to be followed in management. Together with the family type, this will be the set of factors which a household relies on when its total policy upon adaptation and social participation is decided.

However, in this case I need a second term to handle the empirical reality in Isnig - domestic corporation. This is more than the household and more than the family. The domestic corporation has an historical dimension in the sense that it is founded at a certain point in time and dissolved at another.

It lasts for a distinct period. The domestic corporation is not materialized in one group of people, in the same way as family and household are systems participated in for one and the same group. The corporation is formed around an estate, and its full members are grown males. It may continue for generations in succession and thereby develop from one family form to another. It may likewise have been organized in several different kinds of household. It starts with one or two men and their descendants, and it continues throughout history until the unit at one point in time is divided up and new domestic corporations are formed. It is the existence and disintegration of this unit that our thesis attempts to explain. The reason for these domestic corporations to last for shorter periods nowadays must of course be sought in the concrete problems connected with household organization today. Potential inherent problems generated by the family structure appear on the surface under new economic and social circumstances.

## **Family – types, stages and forms**

The initial concern of scholars for large-sized households is not surprising: it is an extraordinary experience for a Western European to sit in a living room along with over a hundred family members. In Isnig, the village of my fieldwork, I did not find a family of that size. However, I visited the 'largest family in Europe' residing in a village about twenty kilometres away.

I felt it was an organization very different from the nuclear family structure that I was used to. First of all you do not get to know the entire family, but only representatives of it, selected according to sex, age and status. Their roles are not presented as 'dad' or 'son,' but rather something that could be translated into 'prime minister,' 'foreign minister' (party member, of course), 'minister of the interior,'



etc. The 'prime minister' or household head explained most eloquently the history, organization and structure of their particular family arrangement. He had a routine which indicated that I was not the first inquisitive outside visitor. The position of women was also dealt with as part of the orientation. They did not keep women out of the men's room! And as a demonstration of this, his wife and some of the younger of the 23 married women of the family were present during the meal, although they did not eat with us.

Organizing the members for daily routines like meals was not done by subdividing the group into nuclear units, but by arranging them in groups according to the simple and practical principles of sex and age. Elder men ate on their own. The smallest children were seated at one table in the courtyard, the adolescents at another. For a visitor it became totally impossible to get any idea about 'family roles' in the typical Western sense, as we had no idea who was whose child, wife or husband. Only at night is the conjugal family united: each married man with his wife and children have their own separate sleeping quarters. When approaching puberty, the children move out, and so does the man when he gets old.

Structurally one may say that this giant domestic unit is a conglomerate of nuclear families, but this statement needs a qualification. A person growing up in this kind of house is bound to have a different conception of close kin relations and family duties than a Western youngster rebelling against his own natal family. The latter may become bored by the same old faces year after year, whereas the former witnesses a constant change of personnel. Old people and young women disappear, children and other women come in.

On the other hand, to say that a youngster in this kind of household only experiences a wider kind of kinship network in addition to his nuclear family unit does not give the full picture. Practically all of his or her daily activities are regulated in accordance with the necessities of the whole family unit. The large extended family is not only a quantitatively different social organization, but also represents a qualitatively different lifestyle.

This is of course an exceptional family. Most households are not like this and we must therefore consider it as a curiosity to visit, but not to study in depth. As a statistical extreme it becomes an anachronism, an evolutionary case left behind and as such not a part of our study.

Let us, however, refer to Mosely again, who says "In regions where the *zadruga* spirit is strong among the peasants, any small family may, through biological expansion, become a *zadruga*." (Mosely, 1976: 23). Hammel has picked up a similar point and comments: "Seldom is any account taken of the possibility that a household can be large at one time and small at another - in particular that households may have a development cycle." (Hammel, 1972: 337) What neither Goody nor Halpern have exactly overlooked, but surprisingly do not discuss or elaborate on in their papers quoted here, is precisely the importance of the development cycle for the size of a family. Goody deals with 'average family size,' Halpern discusses distribution of family sizes implicitly as if these were representing different types of families.

An important question to be answered is: Given that there is a certain process of growth and split within families of a particular community - can the average family be promoted as the normal family, or should the type which the majority of families represents be accepted as such? If we assume that all families are in line to become a large, developed *zadruga*, would it not be natural to call this final point on the scale, the dominating norm? It is very difficult to decide what type of family can be said to be typical of any one community if these cyclical aspects are taken into consideration.

It is important to note that a development pattern for households in which all of them reach the extended family type, may generate a majority of nuclear units at each point in time. One of the authors interested in the problem of demographic constraints on family development is Ansley Coale. He has calculated that under certain conditions, among them a zero population growth, the size of an extended family will only be 75 per cent larger than a nuclear unit on the average. By 'extended family' he means a household where the daughter remains with her mother or foster mother until their death. At that point a new household is formed by the daughter<sup>27</sup>. Under these conditions the nuclear units will predominant

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<sup>27</sup> Demographers use women as symbols in their models of population growth, because filiation from women is socially an observable fact. The man's contribution to the formation of the next generation can, as we all know, be rather difficult to measure. Their reason is also that women have a limited fecundity period, and 'generations'

despite the extended family being the norm (Coale, 1965). His conclusions presuppose more than a stationary population, but we shall not go into the details of the model. He is merely mentioned as giving an example of the fact that nuclear units and small families may very well be the statistical rule, but the norm can still be an extended family. Whether it is correct under such conditions to say that the 'normal family' is nuclear or extended is a matter of definition. It is very possible that the patterns observed by us in Isniq and in Serbia by Halpern are pure expressions of regular family development patterns extending over a certain period of time. It may be that what appears in a synchronic perspective as different types of families simply are stages in the same process<sup>28</sup>. In order to differentiate between these aspects we shall talk about 'types,' 'stages' and 'forms' of families.

The 'types' are qualitatively different kinds of families which are not transformed into one another by demographic development. Examples of this may be large and small families in pre-socialist China. The better-off families lived in an extended 'type' of household, whereas the poor peasant family was of a small 'type' approaching the nuclear family.

The 'stages' are the different shapes which a family takes at separate points in a development process. Whether one prefers to name the total development after the beginning, the middle or the end of the process may be a matter of convenience. In Isniq we shall name the 'normal' family a patrilocal extended family. Most units reach this stage and their whole terminology for household and family statuses is formed in accordance with arrangements presupposing some degree of extension. It is a matter of our personal and practical choice.

The 'form' is simply the superficial difference between separate families as expressed in size and composition. In Isniq today, there are many 'family forms' indicating different combinations of size and structure. But whether they represent different 'stages' or 'types' is a matter to be discussed and investigated. The 'form' is a concept chosen to describe the first degree of superficial differentiation. For us, 'types and 'stages' represent analytical concepts of a more profound character.

What I needed to do was somehow to determine the relative influence of the development cycle in shaping the household forms found in Isniq. I wanted to know whether the pattern found could be interpreted from a demographic viewpoint as resulting from different 'types' of families or from different 'states' in the development process. Regrettably our empirical material was not rich enough to give any basis for a definitive conclusion on this point. I lacked systematic family histories. The material from former times, besides the general historical events and conditions presented in Chapter 3, consisted only of our registration of the static picture of family sizes in 1932. I had to find other methods in order to work out at least a probable hypothesis about the influence of different factors in the formation of households.

## Demographic processes in Isniq

My choice was to construct a model of an equilibrium distribution of family sizes, given a

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may for that reason be delimited.

<sup>28</sup> The extended families discussed by Coale are different from the *zadruga*, as Coale's examples deal with short-term development cycles. They stop at the point where the parental generation has disappeared, i.e. at the death of the mother. Thereupon new units are formed. In the *zadruga* case the extension is a result of patrilineation, i.e. an extension both in the vertical and the horizontal direction. It represents therefore a strategic choice. The *zadruga* results from the strategic choice in separate family units *hises* (see below) that they want to remain together. The development continues beyond what is usually discussed as the developmental cycle in domestic groups, i.e. the period of change from the beginning of one nuclear unit until the next is fully developed (Goody, 1958).

uniform development pattern and a certain population growth. I tried to test what a demographically balanced spread of families would be under these conditions. Given that this pattern, which was deduced from rather abstract and hypothetical conditions, resembled the actual empirical distribution, I felt that this would be a strong indicator of the important role played by the development cycle. I would then feel that much of the family forms found could be explained by 'stages' in a development process. If, on the other hand, the actual distribution would deviate much from the demographic equilibrium model, this would point strongly in the direction of 'types' rather than 'stages.'

It is important to keep in mind that these models do not in a strict sense explain the empirical reality but indicate and support different hypotheses about the underlying process. The explanation will in the last instance be an anthropological analysis. But the demographic aspects needed to be cleared off the ground.

I wanted to see what the pattern would look like, provided that all families went through exactly the same development process. In our model I have assumed that all families through time develop into a *zadruga*. Hammel presents this view on the development cycles of *zadrugas*: "My intention is to show that the familial *zadruga* is basically a product of patrilineal extension and patrilocality, that it seldom remained intact for more than two full generations and that it existed in the fourteenth and sixteenth century in some areas in a form not substantially different in structure or even size from that found in those areas in the nineteenth century and even today." (1932: 337) He interprets the particular *zadruga* form as explainable by depicting the development process independently from historical circumstances.

In our model I have stretched the ideal development over more than 'two generations.' I wanted to make the model as similar to the empirical reality as possible, and therefore assumed that all families develop into the most extended form represented by the largest families found – those of around 30 in 1975 and those of around 50 in 1932. In 1975 it included the family extension up to the cousin stage, implying a split in the families at the point when the initially co-operating brothers die. For 1932 it was more difficult. The maximum size in that period was about 70 persons. This could be an accidental result of fertility, and we stipulate the maximum extension to be 52 members in our model, a stage of split when the household contained second cousins in the oldest generation. The extended process of 1932 is an assumption also made on the basis of the information given by Isniqians who commented that "Before, households never split. It could happen if there was serious trouble in the family, which was very rare. It was not at all like today when families divide up just for the sake of convenience."

I assumed that each family cycle started off with a man and his two adolescent sons, and that the extended units split into these minor types of families upon division. This condition was chosen partly on the basis of our observation of how households split in Isniq, and partly on the popular conception of what happened when families divided. "The whole unit is disrupted. There is rarely any half-split. Once the trouble starts, each man wants to make it on his own."

For each generation we stipulated a doubling of the population with two sons for each male. The depth of each generation was set to 30 years, and these two conditions correspond roughly to the population growth in Kosova in 1975.

The number of women is assumed to be equal to that of men - not quite the case in this region, as men outnumber women. But the difference is negligible. Thus the total family size would be the double of the males in our model. I do deviate here from the standard use of women in demographic models. This is done because the model is based on the ethnographical reality of males succeeding each other. To design this kinship pattern and family growth in terms of women would violate the empirical reality it is assumed to reflect.

In my model it is presumed that there is a correspondence between family size and the stages of growth. This is of course not the case in reality, as fertility differs. The premise for the model can be summed up as follows:

- a) The starting point for each unit is one man with two unmarried sons.
- b) The units all develop to the same maximum state, i.e. split at the cousin stage in 1975 and at the second-cousin stage in 1932.
- c) The split results in new units of the father-with-two-sons type.
- d) Each man gets two sons, i.e. the population is doubled for each succeeding generation.

- e) All members of the same generation are born at the same time and die at the same time.
- f) All men die before the fourth generation is born.
- g) Women equal men in number so that the total number of household members will be double that of the males.
- h) Counter to demographic practice, we have taken men rather than women as the individuals in the analysis. This is done because the patrifocal extension are rules applied to men.

There are a number of reservations to this demographic presentation. But it is nevertheless useful for two purposes: firstly it indicates the distribution of family sizes when all households follow the same development pattern under circumstances somewhat similar to the empirical situation in this region. Secondly it represents a calculation taken from demography which could be used to analyse the influence of growth processes in families if properly applied to demographic material. As it is, it indicates the influence of the demographic development cycle. It functions as an illustration of how the distribution of household sizes would look if certain conditions in the model and the empirical reality had been the same. I shall comment upon these while evaluating the analysis.

If we consider the two years analysed, the 1932 model is the least useful, as our model presupposes an annual demographic growth of 2.8 per cent. The actual population increase in this period was between 0.3 and 0.5 per cent per year in the period 1911 to 1940 (Islami, 1974). This gives a doubling of the population over a period of more than one hundred and fifty years, and not each thirty years as the model assumes. The low population growth, almost a stationary population, means that some households would increase in numbers whereas others would remain the same or even decrease or die out. The uneven number of family members may therefore be a result of disparate growth rates in each individual family, and not of a development process with subsequent split.

We know, however, that they must have divided up, as the initial three brothers had produced another 120 households by 1932. But the occurrence of split and the reasons why, were probably of another nature. What we can deduce from the demographic knowledge is more that demography in the sense of overpopulation within the households cannot have been a pressing problem. Low growth rates are usually a sign of both high fertility and high mortality. This supports the information from the villagers that 'in former times the households never split.' Their problem would rather have been one of producing enough male labour power.

That points to another weakness in the model, as all males actually are assumed to survive until their 75<sup>th</sup> year. If we accept this as a hypothetical model for distribution of family sizes for those men who actually reached mature age, it can serve as an illustration of how the distribution would have been. On the whole though, I think that their problem was not one of split, but of growth. If they managed to produce enough men, they obviously chose to remain united because of external circumstances which are illustrated in the high representation of households in the largest group from the empirical registration in 1932.

The demographic situation is quite different in 1975. The mortality has gone down and the population growth increased.

The natality, fertility and population growth in Kosova were as follows in the post-war period (per 1,000 inhabitants):

Year	1948	1953	1961	1971	1973
Natality	37.9	42.2	41.7	37.5	35.3
Mortality	14.1	20.6	12.1	08.2	07.9
Pop. growth	23.8	22.0	29.6	29.3	27.4

(Sources: *Zhvillimi ekonomik* for 1948-1971, *Statistical pocketbook* for 1973)

The increase is not dramatic - the population is close to stable during these years. Consequently our model for the equilibrium distribution in 1975 is closer to the empirical reality. It presupposes an annual population growth of 2.8 per cent which was approximately the case from the sixties onwards. However, the lowered mortality must have influenced the picture. A lowered mortality means that more

children in each family reach adulthood, and consequently raise the family size by vertical extension. It means more children per married couple, without necessarily changing the structural composition. If the model had been corrected for the increased mortality, its number of small families would have been lower.

This again explains the number of small families in 1975 which cannot be explained in terms of a development cycle beginning with one father and two sons and continuing until the death of the sons. Some families split up at an earlier stage, thus producing an overweight of small units. The difference in percentage between small families in the model and the empirical distribution - as far as these can be compared - is one of 13 per cent. The opposite is the case for the large families - they are in a smaller number in the empirical distribution than in the model. From this we must assume that there are more factors at play than one uniform development process forming the pattern of households found in Isniq today.

In Western society we are so used to families dividing up when the children reach marriageable age, that it only seems odd when this does not happen. In the Isniq case the riddle is the opposite, i.e. why do not all families grow large? They are all part of one and the same development process - following the same rules of patrilineal extension. Why do some families interrupt this process whereas others just continue to stay together? Why do some grow large whereas others do divide up before reaching the *zadruga* state? The focus must be on the process of split - since the growth is easily explained by the rules. They all follow the same development until, for some reason, they do not find it opportune to stay together any longer. Therefore, the problems to be dealt with in the following chapters are these:

1. Which household pattern is generated by the rules for residence and recruitment in Isniq?
2. How can households at different stages in their development adapt and utilize their total resources?
3. Which internal factors in the organization invoke a split?
4. Is there a tendency to differentiate for economic reasons between small and large families?
5. Are the smaller households of today a product of an historical development towards small nuclear units typical for industrialized societies?

## **Fieldwork**

Some comments upon my fieldwork are in order as it had its vagaries due to my being a female visitor and a foreigner in Isniq and even in Kosova. There are three aspects I would like to comment upon: my personal experience, the process of understanding what was going on and data collection. The fieldwork can be divided into three periods: the first three months of isolation, the next half year of happy company interrupted by one month's stay in Albania as a tourist guide, and the last three months of systematic data collection. This is of course oversimplified, but useful for structuring the following comments.

I arrived in Kosova in September 1974. Three months were spent in the provincial capital, Prishtina at the Institute of Sociology. Most of the time was used learning Albanian and reading about the culture and society. This was also the time in which I waited for the research permit. I got the permit early in the new year, and travelled to Isniq. In the village, the director of the primary school very kindly put three rooms at my disposal in one of the wings on the second floor. These were actually his own premises: a bedroom, a kitchen and a small entrance hall - but he had a house in the village and preferred to stay there.

Initially a parallel study of another village, Bellaçevc near Prishtina, had been planned to compare and contrast with Isniq. It was a village inhabited by the workers of the Trepça mines and their families. However, after a ten-day visit to Bellaçevc, when I became so exhausted that I almost fell asleep during an interview with a family, I realized that I did not have the mental and physical capacity to get to know both communities sufficiently in depth.

Exhaustion and isolation were the characteristics of the first three months. Just a couple of hours of contact completely exhausted me. This was probably partly due to the very new milieu for me in addition to using a new language. Two other factors also contributed: I was very concerned about behaving correctly and this prevented me at first from even going out on the village roads for fear of what people might think. I had of course grossly overestimated the 'patriarchal' view of women, but it took a while to understand that no one found it strange for me to talk to anyone I met on the road.

It is not completely true that I had three months of isolation at the beginning: some of the teachers at the village school, Hajria and Kekë, invited me home, and Hasan, the student of English who first introduced me in the village, did also. Likewise, the families of Selim and Tahir on the first floor soon adopted me, too. Both of these men taught me much of what I know about the village - both history, culture and economic adaptation.

With their wives Hyra and Cyma I had a good time. They rescued me from one of the greatest obstacles to my fieldwork in the beginning - washing clothes. They both had washing machines - a novelty in the village. Since their husbands were both teachers, they had been allowed this luxury. But they had also worked for it themselves. Both had done embroidery work to earn money for kitchen equipment.

On the whole, housework was a burden at the beginning. Nobody realizes how much water is used for washing clothes, the house, dishes and oneself until it has to be carried in buckets all the way up to the second floor. In my kitchen I heated it on the wood-burning stove and subsequently started off trying to keep up the standard of the local homes. All houses are kept meticulously clean. Cleaning and tidying up is what the women spend much of their time doing. There is never an object out of place in an Albanian home, never dust accumulating in corners or on shelves, never an unwashed cup. I could not manage housework properly, as the work to be done in a single person's household is in principle the same as in a larger one. For my part the open doors downstairs and the generosity were accepted with gratitude. I almost ended up living with them.

I would like to mention a small but crucial problem which I encountered in my fieldwork, since it illustrates clearly the kinds of apparently minor, but nevertheless crucial obstacles which can arise. It concerns the wood-burning stove. It was not in proper working order, and as I arrived in winter my movements became restricted by the fact that in order to have any heat at all, I had to keep it constantly alight - otherwise its smoke filled the whole kitchen, which then became uninhabitable for at least an hour. Thus each morning when I stoked the fire, I became so choked by smoke that I had to run into the other room and lie down for another hour while the air cleared, the smoke started to escape up the chimney, and the stove heated up. During my visits locally during these months, I had to keep running home to feed the stove several times a day to prevent the repetition of the early morning routine. I never liked to explain to my daytime hosts what I was doing for fear that it would seem like a complaint about my living accommodation, which otherwise was very good. As the bedroom was cold, so I always worked in the kitchen.

All these first people I got to know were the 'intellectuals.' I wanted also to know others, but this was very difficult. I talked a bit to some of the older people, but was never invited home by the families at first. Everyone I met boasted about Albanian hospitality, but it wasn't until spring that someone broke the ice in this respect: Bajram. He was the first person who, seeing me on the street, spontaneously invited me to dinner. I felt so relieved. That was the beginning of getting to know others, too. With the arrival of spring, people started to get out more, and suddenly they were accessible. Since I was a woman, there were no household rules as to how to treat me as a guest. And since they saw me with certain people, they assumed that I was well looked after. This was true, but for me my acquaintances were too special. The villagers, of course, could not realize this. They thought that well educated people would be the best company for me.

In addition I was rather reserved, being particularly careful at the beginning not to ruin my moral reputation. It was only later when the group of women to whom this thesis is dedicated had become my friends, that the difference in behaviour between educated women and ordinary housewives dawned on me. At that point I was able to relax. But until then I was the foreign student girl living alone in the school. People sometimes greeted me with a nod and hoped that I was reading a lot. I became desperate at not being able to explain what I really wanted. They knew I was writing a book about the village, but

not what kind of book. At the same time, I did not want to impose myself on them.

The impression that they also were reserved was correct. It later proved that many had been suspicious of me as a foreigner. They are used to the concept of a 'spy' or 'agent' - which can mean anything from someone peeping into family matters, to CIA agents. Many thought I was a spy at the beginning, as they told me later, and some thought so right up to the end. What kind of a spy was never clear - just a 'spy.' This is not so strange in a community where any kind of questions asked by social scientists could be thought of as unusually inquisitive. Bearing in mind their somewhat troubled history, inquiries about social relations had often been made with malicious intent in the past.

In addition, this is a culture where discretion is important. Much communication is carried on in what is characterized as a very restricted code. People (i.e. men), know each other right from childhood. They only need a few words for mutual understanding. But underlying seemingly simple remarks, there is a deep knowledge of each other and any other person under discussion. Merely a nod or a lowered voice may convey the opinion of the speaker to the others. He may say 'very good' but everybody informed about him knows that he really means the opposite, but chooses to put it that way.

For insiders this is no riddle, but for outsiders it becomes difficult to unravel the conceptual world of the Isniqians. So much is left unsaid, and it is inconsiderate to ask too much. Only little by little is the art of interpreting the verbal and the non-verbal learned by an outsider. Often this is done through violating the values of the society. After a while, the correct meaning of a reserved 'very well' becomes understood. It means just as often 'very bad.' To break the code is not easy, as those who know it don't see it as a code but as a straightforward language, having been trained in since childhood.

## Data Collection

The second period went very well. Sometimes when the village was bright with greenery and the warmth filled the air, I felt I wanted to stay there forever. This was the time when most of my 'cultural learning' took place - I started to break the code.

Imagine standing on the village road with a group of men. A boy comes by quickly riding a horse and passes the group. They stop their conversation for a moment and look at the boy. Then they exchange some glances and continue the conversation.

This is a very common occurrence in the village, and socially it may change in significance from one time to the next. We shall look at this in three phases: a) the period of identifying instrumental actions, b) learning the social organization and c) understanding the cultural significance.

1. Identifying instrumental action - or the tourist phase. The first time the boy on the horse passed the anthropologist, the reactions were something like the following: 'Oh dear, he has no saddle. This must be dangerous.' He rode very fast, so the feelings aroused were natural from the cultural background of the observer. Events are seen as being different from home. The next thought that entered the mind was 'Perhaps he is taking some message?' Or 'Perhaps his father needs the horse for transport?' After some time I learnt that when boys ride horses through the village in the evening, it means that they are taking them home after work. When they ride in the north-south direction, it usually means that they have been up in the woods cutting timber. Likewise other things that people 'do' is understood during this phase. When people are seen with sheep early on Saturday morning, it means they are going to market. When a man walks with his wife behind him, they are on their way to visit relatives. The routines of the household are also understood - when people eat, how they get their food, when work begins, etc. One gains a skill in guessing what a person seen at a certain place at a certain time most probably is supposed to be doing, and what purpose it has.
2. The next phase - learning social organization. Here the understanding of the boy on the horse deepens. That the trip is not merely a pleasure, although obviously enjoyed by children, becomes clear as the participation of children in their parents' work is learnt. Likewise the relations

between husband and wife are understood. One learns to know the difference between a sister and a wife from the way they accompany men. What is a polite way of greeting people also becomes clear, and whether to stay for a while longer or not when visiting is also understood. But still the full meaning of the separate actions is not conveyed, as this implies the knowledge of individuals and their personal situation.

3. Phase three - the interpretation of events in terms of norms and cultural concepts. This is the 'breaking of the code.' In the instance of the boy, this means recognizing him as Ahmeti. The men stop talking and glance at each other, because Ahmeti is not supposed to ride the horse that day. The family should be up in the mountains. This means that extra jobs in the forest have been distributed or that something has happened to the old grandfather who is ill, which has forced Ahmeti down from the mountain. If the boy is there, the father must also be around. Perhaps he is at the hospital in Deçani? The glances between the villagers convey what they think about all this.

For a foreigner this minimal verbal communication can present a real problem. It is absolutely necessary, yet equally impossible to know people that well. I came to the point of having a general notion of what behaviour was expected in which situation, and sensed if something was wrong. But I couldn't sense what was wrong, except with certain people whom I learnt to know very well. For these persons the reactions of their closest relatives, although pretty well concealed – merely a tone of voice or a word not said – gave a message to me as well.

In most other cases I never really understood what was going on, unless someone took the time to spell it out to me in detail; and the problem was that they did not understand my need for this.

I received answers like 'We do not like to talk about bad things' or 'We think too much discussion just creates trouble' as a response to my queries, which soon taught me as a newcomer not to ask. I just let people talk, and much of the time, even when I got to the point where I fully grasped the language, I could still not grasp the subject of the conversation. To interrupt for clarification of the social context by asking 'who is that?'; or 'when was that?'; or 'where did it take place?' was irritating both to those engaged in the conversation and to myself.

The problem was most strongly felt in connection with understanding the men's world. I sat with the men in the evening altogether about ten times. Among families whom I knew well, it was different: they permitted me, and even some of the women as well, to mix with the men. But I was forbidden from the important men's gathering. Thus my knowledge of this part of the household's dealings was incomplete. I therefore do not know exactly the train of their discussions nor how subsequent decisions were made. That is why so much of my information on the family and corporation relies on quantitative data in addition to whatever people told me in my personal communications.

Most of my time during the two last periods was spent drinking coffee and talking (participant observation). I had a good time, but felt a failure while in the field since none of my planned activities materialized. This was partly due to my own confusion - I did not really understand until those last months what was needed of the data - and partly to the hospitality of the villagers. Their generosity in inviting me into their homes was a mixed blessing as I, as a guest, had reciprocal obligations.

This meant, among other things, that giving work (going home to write up field notes) as a reason to leave was not acceptable. It took me a while before I realized that it was actually insulting to give work priority over good company; that anything other than work would have been a better excuse. The result was that I gave up typing out field notes after a while. During one period I was so engaged socially that I gave up writing notes at all. I just resigned myself and accepted the role of a kind of visiting sister, daughter or cousin who had to subordinate herself to the routines of the family.

There was, however, some kind of system. In the autumn I realized that quantitative data was needed. Until then, I had learnt their history, the geography of the village, some social rules and the economy. There was a need for data on the households. Thus I collected what is referred to later as Registrations 1 and 2. Registration 1 has already been explained.

Registration 2 was done for 65 families registered at the cadastral authorities as landowners. I came up with 96 from the first selection which I reduced to 65 by identifying the household heads. In this last registration, all members of the households were noted down, their name, age, occupation, education



and income if in salaried jobs. Their kinship position vis-à-vis the others was also recorded. In addition I registered the property of the family: land (both fields and meadows), animals and agricultural machinery, if they had any.

To illustrate how useful these quantitative data were for me as a social anthropologist, I shall give one example. During the first part of my fieldwork, I did of course ask people about what kind of family arrangements they had at home – whether they lived in large extended families or had founded nuclear units of their own. It seemed to me that almost everyone I met was part of an extended family. There were a few who were not, but these were rare exceptions. When I started to count the number of small and nuclear units, I found to my surprise that they numbered almost half of the families. My very honest and sincere impression reached by straightforward participant observation was wrong.

After some minutes' reflection, it occurred to me why. In the village, the observed unit had been individuals. I had talked to people on my way about their family business. Since larger families tend to have far more people than smaller ones, the percentage of the population which lives in such units is of course much larger than the percentage living in extended families. Probably many of those I talked to were brothers or cousins of one another, although I was unaware of it. In addition, the larger families were often more socially active and influential, and consequently their members were more likely to come into contact with me. They could afford, without much drain on their resources, to invite me to their homes. Although I had thought this through, I hadn't followed through to the rather obvious statistical phenomenon which I only discovered later.

It is therefore important for anthropologists to include the most basic descriptive statistics. It is not so easy by mere observation of social entities to generalize about proportions. Although case studies are very valuable for in-depth understanding, it is also of interest to know how typical these cases are. If the universe to be generalized about contains more than one hundred units – as in Isniq with its 268 households – one needs to count. A mere estimation by observation is bound to render a biased impression of the quantitative relationships. This is a rather imperative statement, but I think it holds true for most field workers of studies of the kind I was making.

Collecting data was not easy because the villagers got bored by my questions. They would rather engage in more interesting conversation on topics ranging from clothing to lifestyles in other countries. I felt the same, too. But it had to be done, and I had to deal with the displeased expressions on my friends' faces when I had to leave them or just pass them quickly in order to get on with my study. This last period therefore became less pleasurable, but I learnt a lot. People easily took it personally if my time did not permit me to fulfil the reciprocal obligations involved in a friendly relationship.

This was a constant problem during my last months: I constantly felt I was neglecting people. After a while I realized why: the network of families which I visited regularly was much wider than theirs. I had had to get acquainted with as many as possible of the 268 households, which meant that I was really stretched beyond my social capacities. Furthermore, to develop a relationship with an Isniq family sufficiently so as to be a regular visitor gave the expectation that this would be a lasting relationship.

In addition, I was a single person in my household. Other households had several family members who could share in the family's social contacts. They never took on more obligations than they could manage. Hospitality in Isniq has its own fixed pattern. Certain families visit each other and a number of other households outside the village. They do not run around to every household as I did. With those with whom they have contact, they keep all the social obligations expected of both host and guest. This dilemma of getting close to people - which felt so wonderful - contrasted with my inability to maintain the relationship, and it almost tore me apart. I can still see the confused expression on some of their faces when they asked why I had not visited them for a while, and my answer was that I had so much to do and to follow up. This could only have meant to them that I preferred someone else's company.

When all the previously mentioned aspects of village life are learnt, one has to sit down and start the analysis. I did not learn it all, and consequently had to choose an angle which did not presuppose all this knowledge. What I learnt was first and foremost the practical matters of daily life. My analysis of the family and household therefore relies heavily on the economic data. This is also done because of the hypothesis I had about the reason for change in family patterns. The basic grounds are economic, but with it go social and cultural change as well. People must conceptualise altered circumstances before they change their household situation, as for example choosing new strategies for making a living or deciding

to separate from their brothers.

The chapters of this book are structured as follows: the second chapter provides a general introduction to the province, the village and the households. The third chapter deals with the historical circumstances which brought about the family type referred to here as the 'patriarchal family,' as a short term for many properties inherent in this type of organization. The fourth chapter explores the social structure of which this family organization is a part and how it has changed in the later years - depriving it of some of its basic functions within the wider social realm. The fifth chapter attempts to present some of the dilemmas these people find themselves faced with as part of a nationwide Yugoslav society. It does not attempt to provide a full analysis, but is added to complete the picture of family and household change.

## 2. ISNIQ: A VILLAGE AND ITS FAMILIES

### Once upon a time

Once upon a time - perhaps three or four hundred years ago - three brothers from the Shala clan in Malësia e Madhe (literally: the Great Mountain Land) north of Shkodra in present-day Albania, had to flee from their home region. We don't know why, but they had 'fallen in blood' with some other families there.

They walked up the mountain towards the east, and came down on the other side into the Plava region of Montenegro. In one of the villages they were attacked by a dog, but a girl came out to rescue them. They were all tired and one of the brothers could not go any further. He stayed in the house of their rescuer and later married her. Thus the people of Veliku village are actually Albanian, but they became Montenegrins at a later stage. 'So close are the Albanians and Montenegrins.'

The two other brothers continued further over the mountain and one of them, Lek Vuka, who had brought his three sons Nik, Prek and Vuk, arrived in the hills just above Isniq. There he settled in the cave called Shpella e Bojkut after the Bojkaj who were already living in a village on the mountain's slope. Where the third brother eventually settled is not known.

The area which today is Isniq was empty bushland at that time. It was owned by the Bey of Peja<sup>1</sup>, Çefatin Begu of the Lullolis. In those days there was no Albania and no Yugoslavia. The whole territory belonged to the Sultan. But his men never managed to rule the high mountain areas of Albania or Montenegro. The population in those places remained Christian. So the three brothers were Catholic when they came to Shpella e Bojkut, while the Bojkaj were 'Serbs' (in other words, Serbian Orthodox), but still Albanian because they belonged to the clan of Thaqi. Another household lived near the Bojkajs, the Blakajs, and they were Catholic, of the Krasniqi clan.

One day a band of Montenegrins from Lugit e Gushit robbed a girl from the Bojkaj. Some say she was the daughter of the Bey, who had been sent to the countryside to recover from poor health. The Bojkaj took up her defence, and Lek Vuka and his sons came to their assistance. They fought very bravely and Lek Vuka was killed as was his eldest son, Nika. They succeeded in driving the intruders away, but the girl was killed in the battle. At the place where she died is a stone called the 'Guri i nusës' (the stone of the bride).

When Çefatin Begu heard about the bravery of the three brothers, he came and asked: 'What can I do to reward your great courage?' But the two remaining brothers said: 'Nothing. We are much obliged, but it was our duty. We are of a brave and honourable breed and could not have acted otherwise.' The Bey insisted, however, and in the end it was agreed that they should be allowed to settle on the land now called Isniq on condition that they convert to Islam. They hesitated for a while, but eventually gave in and finally built a mosque to prove their sincere intentions. Their own dwellings, made of branches, were not very impressive: they were small sheds, *kolibe* (meaning 'nest,' such as are used only as dogs' kennels today).

After the Shala brothers had settled, the news about the newcomers reached the neighbouring village of Lebusha. The Lebusha men sent a boy to find out what kind of people they were. The boy hid

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<sup>1</sup> Peja is the Albanian name for the town called Peć in Serbo-Croatian. On international maps this latter designation is used. In this work we shall use the Albanian terms where no standard English name is in established usage. Kosovo, an Albanian spelling, is called Kosovo in Serbo-Croatian.

in the bushes and watched the fires. If the smoke ascended straight towards heaven, they would not multiply, he had been told. But if it crept along the ground they were bound to grow in numbers. The boy reported that the smoke covered the entire ground, and the Lebussha decided to attack and conquer Isniq. However, before going to battle, they had to consume a proper meal, so a *laknore* (a pie filled with nettle or spinach stew) was prepared. Since it was too hot, it was set aside to cool down, and before the pie was cool enough to eat, the people of Isniq had multiplied so much that they could not be conquered. That is how Lebussha was prevented from conquering Isniq - because of a pie. From that time the Shala descendants increased in numbers until today they number almost 500 houses within and outside the village<sup>2</sup>.

## Going to Isniq

Contemporary Isniq is one of the larger villages in the Autonomous Province of Kosova<sup>3</sup>, with 2,700 people and 265 households. It is, except for one family of gypsies, purely Albanian and of the Muslim faith. (The Bojkajs moved into Isniq territory and converted to Islam, too). It is located in the district community of Deçani in the western part of the province. Kosova borders on Albania to the west, Montenegro to the northwest, Serbia proper to the north and east, and Macedonia to the south. Deçani is one of four districts on the Albanian border.

The village itself is situated on a fertile plain Rrafshi i Dukagjinit, often called Metohija (Serbian for 'church land') and is approximately 450 m. above sea level. Between Isniq and the border lies only the half-deserted village of Beleg, and beyond that the mountains rise into the steep alpine landscape of Namuna or Prokletija. The peaks go up to a height of 2,656 m. This inaccessible territory continues into the Albanian districts of Dukagjini and Malësia e Madhe, which are considered to be the places of origin for many Albanians in Yugoslavia<sup>4</sup>. In contrast to the dry and pitted limestone landscape of Montenegro, the Albanian 'alps' are covered with woods in the belt between 1,000 and 2000 m. Above that zone, valleys with excellent grassland stretch for kilometres. These are used as summer pastures.

Foreigners going to Yugoslavia rarely pass by Isniq, a village on the main road between the towns of Peja and Prizren. This is not because the area lacks attractions for visitors. The landscape is marvellous and local life 'colourful' and 'exotic' to a Western European - with horses, donkeys, market places of all kinds, national costumes worn in everyday life, handicraft workshops, interesting villages, oriental towns and local folk dance festivals, etc. Quite a number may pass through other parts of Kosova on their way to Greece or Macedonia. Few realize where they are, but may vaguely recall a poor-looking region near the northeastern border of Albania. Only a very few of these travellers find this part of the country worthwhile exploring, but those who do, may get to know the area around Isniq.

The region is regarded as marginal. This is reflected in the contemptuous look on the face of the

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<sup>2</sup> Not all will agree with this version, but it is impossible to arrive at a consensus. Some of the old men, when queried on this version of Isniq's origin responded that the author was too ignorant to understand these matters. Traditionally the history of Isniq is the responsibility of men, not young women.

<sup>3</sup> The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) is composed of six republics – Bosnia/Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia – and two autonomous provinces – Kosova and Vojvodina – both part of the Serbian republic. Kosova province is again divided into 22 municipalities, being the smallest administrative unit. Yugoslavia has a population of 26,956,000 and Kosova 1,328,000.

<sup>4</sup> The Albanians number 1.3 million in Yugoslavia and are the sixth largest nationality out of 24 listed in the national statistics. In Kosova this minority is in the majority, making up 73 per cent of the population or close to one million. The second largest group is the Serbs numbering approximately 200,000 or 18 per cent. In Deçani commune the Albanians number as many as 22,472 or 94 per cent (These numbers are from the Population Census of 1971).

young lady behind the counter of the travel agency in Belgrade, upon my requesting a ticket for Peja: "What - a ticket for Kosovo? - You must ask at the railway station." She has not been in the region, and has probably never recommended it to any foreign tourist seeking advice about places to visit.

Those who want to go to Isniq have several choices. If a more scenic route is desired, they may take a 14-hour bus ride from Dubrovnik, or other places along the coast. The route passes through Titograd, the capital of Montenegro, and here one transfers to the bus bound for Peja. A picturesque ride of ten hours awaits the visitor. The road follows the Albanian border through an impressive mountain landscape slowly curving its way up to the Chakor pass at 1,800 m. above sea level. This is the point on the road where Montenegro ends and Kosova begins. At the top, the bus makes a halt at a café and the traveller may have coffee or enjoy the view. One looks down upon the Montenegrin territory which they have just left a few kilometres away. A bit further towards the southwest the Albanian peaks of Shala where the Isniqians originate can be seen if the weather is clear. On the other side, the Albanian inhabited Rugova Valley covers endless kilometres.

As if to demonstrate that they are Montenegrin and not Muslim Albanians, who predominate on the other side of the mountain, the owners of the café keep a couple of pigs roaming around the houses. Their constant snuffling in the sand in search for edibles is watched scornfully by passing Albanians. Their opinion is legible on their faces when they spit on the ground not far from the animals. 'Sheep are cleaner and stick to uncontaminated grass.' On the mountain slopes in the distance flocks of sheep owned by the Rugova shepherds can be discerned. Pigs have a general connotation for the Albanians of being either 'dirty' if tame, or 'evil' if wild, as in the common proverb: 'There is no forest without swine' (*s'ka pyll pa derr*). Its implicit meaning is that 'there exist no places without bad people,' and is often given as a Solomonic answer to questions about various social relations.

After passing the narrow gorge at the mouth of the Rugova Valley the bus enters Peja and stops at the bus station. From there the local bus service carries natives and visitors to the many villages in the area as well as to the other major towns of Kosova: Prishtina, the provincial capital, Mitrovica - the main industrial site in the northeast, Prizren, the Turkish-looking centre to the south, and Gjakova, considered to be culturally the purest of the Albanian-dominated centres. It is not the largest of towns with its 20,000 inhabitants, but boasts of possessing a certain monopoly of the best of Albanian cultural and political traditions.

Another and much more business-like manner of reaching this part of the world is to travel by train or plane from Belgrade to Prishtina. From there the bus ride takes two hours to Peja. As late as 1974 this direct connection between the two towns did not exist, and travellers from Prishtina had to make the trip by going round to Prizren in order to reach Peja. The Peja-Prizren road, passing Isniq, on the other hand is the historic old commercial route connecting the Aegean Sea with the Adriatic coast.

## **Kosova**

Kosova, once the centre of the medieval Serbian kingdoms, with Prizren as the capital, has become today truly a peripheral area of Yugoslavia. As a region it is one of the poorest in the country, despite important natural resources such as lead, zinc, nickel, manganese, magnesite, lignite, kaolin and the raw materials for cement making. These resources constitute on average 27 per cent of the federal and 52.6 per cent of the republic's resources. (*Kosova dikur e sot*: 1972: 506).

As indicators of the relative differences in the standard of living in the various parts of Yugoslavia, one may use the GNP, or 'social product'<sup>5</sup> as the Yugoslav equivalent is called, illiteracy

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<sup>5</sup> The 'Social Product' is defined in the following way: "The social product is shown as the sum of national income and depreciation for the replacement of fixed assets of productive economic activities." National income is also defined: "National income represents newly created value in a given period. The computation of national income includes economic activities participating in the production of material goods. Non-economic activities

rates and caloric intake averages.

The regional variation of ratings on the scales is quite clear<sup>6</sup>. Slovenia, the most developed region, resembles Austria more closely than the southern parts of Yugoslavia. In 1972, it had a relative share in the social product of 186, the average being 100, whereas Kosova had only 33. Slovenia's illiterate population was almost nonexistent whereas close to one third of Kosova's inhabitants could not read or write in 1971. Likewise, the percentage of animal calories is high (31.8 per cent for non-agricultural families and 33.8 per cent for agricultural ones). In Slovenia, the peasants eat more 'meat' than non-peasants, whereas the opposite is the case for Kosova. The total amount of calory intake is not particularly low, but for agricultural families, animal calories constitute only 8.7 per cent of the diet compared to 18.6 per cent for the non-agricultural families. The peasants lead a relatively meagre existence and base their diet more on milk products than meat from the animals they might keep.

Only in the degree of urbanisation is the disparity between the areas low: Kosova with 26.9 per cent, but Slovenia with only 37.7 per cent. The reason for this relatively low urbanisation must be due to the fact that no concentration of land in the hands of a few is possible in Yugoslavia. The Constitution sets a limit of 10 ha. per household, and the population may thus survive on its small holdings. Heavy migration from the countryside, stemming from mechanization of agriculture common to other countries has not occurred here. Small scale peasant family farming remains the norm in Yugoslavia. An attempt to collectivise was made in 1949, but abandoned in 1953. Since then only 15 percent of arable land has been designated as 'social holdings' i.e. as belonging to cooperatives or similar communal enterprises. (1,508,000 ha. out of a total of 10,046,000 ha. *Statistical Pocketbook of Yugoslavia* 1974.)

There is a different situation in Kosova. To draw an oversimplified picture one could divide it into three zones: western, eastern and the middle region. The western communes of which Isniq is a part, have a prosperous subsistence economy which provides for basic needs, but which lacks industrial development and natural resources. Consequently the 'social product' is low. The eastern communes are the ones with the most industry as well as a developed tertiary sector, and a greater monetary output. But the land there is not as good, and lacks water and irrigation systems. Therefore, people consider this a poorer region, since industry does not absorb all the surplus labour. The middle region consists mostly of dry hills and has neither fertile soil nor industry.

The main road from Peja cuts through the upper part of Isniq some ten kilometres south of the town. With its 40,000 inhabitants, Peja is Isniq's main urban centre. On Saturdays a large market is held where everything is sold from horses to wedding dresses, and it covers almost the whole of the old central part of the town. The market is divided into subsections according to the products sold: 'The wood market,' 'the women's market,' 'the dairy market,' 'the carpet market,' etc. From four o'clock in the morning, horse-carts are seen streaming towards the town in order to secure a good place to trade. Later the buyers arrive, sometimes by horsecart, often by bus or even by car. An important group of customers is of course the population of the town itself. Most housewives, both in the town and in the countryside prefer to purchase the goods offered at the market rather than those offered by the retail shops. In the market they may choose between different qualities and at varying prices. In addition to the market place, Peja has some larger shops for industrial goods including a department store built in 1976, hotels, cafes, restaurants, banks, high schools and a hospital. It also has some industrial works, the most important being a car factory which is part of the 'Zastava' concern. This car is the Yugoslav manufactured Fiat, and the Peja branch employs approximately 2,000 men assembling parts of the vehicle. It is doing well, and is also well managed according to popular opinion, and is expected to expand in the late seventies.

Another important place is the municipal centre called Deçani. Isniq is separated from this half-

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such as state administration, craftsmen rendering personal services, liberal professions and similar, are not included in the computation of the national income." (*Statistical Pocketbook of Yugoslavia* 1974: 177).

<sup>6</sup> It should be mentioned that awareness of regional problems has increased, and in 1971 a federal fund was created for the improvement of the less developed regions. For Kosova the sum was 20 million dinars for that year (*Zhvillimi Ekonomik*: 1974). A considerable amount of construction work commenced and investments were made in the urban centres during the seventies, which are not reflected in the above cited figures.

town/half-village by the Deçani river. The centre is one kilometre further south on the road. It has a population of only 3,000 but provides important services: here we find the secondary school, post and telegraph office, communal administration, some shops and a minor market for foodstuffs each Wednesday, besides some cafes and snack bars (*qebabtores*). The few industrial enterprises of Deçani are neither large nor very well managed. It also has a newly built polyclinic with a small maternity ward, which is much preferred by the Isniqians to the hospital in Peja, which is old and less sanitary. The medical personnel in Deçani are known to the local population, and often give better service than the Peja doctors and nurses.

## First impressions

Isniq looks like a typical village with two roads crossing each other in the centre. At the junction is a small square with a mosque and the old cemetery. A couple of shops are also located here. Isniq has five shops in all, selling luxury goods like coffee, tea, alcohol, biscuits, sweets, chocolate and lemonades, but also flour and sugar. In addition some of them stock textiles. Along the roads in the central area the houses are so closely packed that they make the roads seem walled off from the houses. Each house is surrounded by walls two metres high, preventing passers-by from observing family life in the courtyards behind. Most of the buildings in the centre of town were erected during the second half of the nineteenth century, and are of the type known as *kullas* - fortified stone houses without windows looking onto the road. This was done mainly for military purposes. In more recent years, newly founded households have moved into the surrounding fields and outskirts of the village. The heavy stone architecture of the *kullas* is of excellent craftsmanship, and they may be up to four stories high. But with their very closed appearance, they give a visual impression rather contrary to the Albanian custom of hospitality.

In wintertime the village looks sombre. The roads turn to mud, the houses are damp and the weather cloudy and rainy. There is not much snow in the lowlands as the temperature fluctuates between 0 and 10 degrees centigrade. It gets dark soon after five and from then on the village belongs to the dogs. They are let loose at sunset, and roam freely about the village. The best ones are of the local Sharr race, somewhat like a Labrador retriever in size and a husky in appearance. They are kept as sheep dogs and trained to fight wolves and bears. When led they are held in strong iron chains. Those who wish to take a stroll after dark arm themselves with a stick or stones, but still the creatures are rather terrifying to visiting anthropologists. Making spontaneous visits is rather risky. The dog is the first to welcome the stranger, and if one is not expected, it will not be tied. This is naturally a good safeguard against thieves and other intruders.

The number of dogs has been reduced drastically in the seventies, according to the villagers. This is partly due to the fact that fewer people need them for herding and partly because stray animals are killed by an officially employed dog hunter. The villagers themselves flatly refuse to kill any dog or any animal, unless it is to be eaten. God, nature and human dignity do not permit the unnecessary slaughter of living creatures. It is only acceptable to fulfil basic food needs. This rule is strictly kept: even the life of a dying animal is not shortened by human hands.

The winter lasts from October to April. On the arrival of spring the village becomes as pleasant and beautiful as it was dull in winter. The striking feature of summer is the all-encompassing greenery, and the many activities taking place everywhere. There is seemingly no lack of water, and Isniq gives a superficial impression of prosperity and abundance. The inhabitants are generally proud of their village, but comment rather ironically: 'Isniq is fine: the people are peaceful, we have fantastic scenery, the water is fresh and the air clean - but there is no work here.'

The people are healthy, and taller than in most parts of Kosova. They vary from the blue-eyed blond type to the black-haired and dark-skinned. Usually one sees only men in the road, as married women are not expected to move outside the courtyard on their own. The middle-aged and younger generations wear western clothes, whereas most of the old keep to the traditional garments with white woollen trousers and the white cap. The trousers are very tight, but are cut in a particular diagonal fashion

for comfort, both for horse riding and for sitting cross-legged on the floor. The women wear three different types of dress: modern clothes worn by young girls and educated wives, Turkish trousers of machine-made material, and the traditional costume of handwoven white cotton. Some of the younger members of the household may change into long skirts for indoor activities, whereas street clothes are the type in fashion at the moment. The girls seem to prefer trousers to short skirts, probably because these keep the legs covered. Modern skirts make sitting on floors and on the ground a bit complicated. In most houses this is usual, though women sometimes sit on very low stools. The national costume which is handwoven and hand-sewn is used by few of the younger women in everyday activities. Most of the old keep to it, but the young tend to change into Turkish trousers which are more practical. The costume of the village is of white cotton, and difficult to keep clean. More use it only on special occasions like weddings, feasts and social visits.

The way of dressing is not only a question of an aesthetic preference for the Western style as it is against indigenous clothing. It carries a symbolic meaning of an ideological profile on the women's situation as well as religion and ethnicity. Modern garments diminish the differences in appearance between Albanians and other Yugoslavs, just as it makes it difficult to distinguish between separate local communities. This distinction was important in earlier times.

The traditional domain of women, that of the courtyard, is no longer the only sphere of operation for educated girls and wives. They may pass freely through the village and greet people they know, although hanging around is not exactly the proper thing to do. Since this is a Muslim as well as a 'patriarchal' society, the confinement of women to the shelter of the house and courtyard has been strictly practised until recently. This *havale* (lit.: veil) or seclusion is still expected from ordinary housewives today. The real veil was removed after the war, but the social veil is still there despite changes in the position of women<sup>7</sup>. The new trends are manifested more in the differences between generations than in alterations in a single person's life.

## Education

Resistance to education was not a problem only for the girls in the early years after the war. The older people did not want anyone from the younger generation to go to school because they were afraid that they would adopt Serbian customs. From bitter experience they opposed any attempt to split Isniq, i.e. by giving the young ones a different upbringing. Their slogan was 'unity is strength,' and they interfered in any differences between the families in the village.

They kept an eye on everything for the common good - the strength and reputation of Isniq identical to the 'blood.' This attitude has completely changed now. Today the most striking characteristic of the village is the high number of students. People tend to see education as the highway to modernisation. This is particularly the case since the status of the Albanian language improved in 1968 in the schools and administration, and a university was opened in 1969 in Prishtina.

This view on education as the road to social mobility and improvement in general has been more or less accepted by the old as well. But what to study and to what purpose is not always agreed upon, as comments from Ali Musa on the usefulness of learning English show. Ali Musa is the oldest man in the village. People claim that he is more than a hundred years old, but Ali, being somewhat more critical,

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<sup>7</sup> The expression *Nuk kam havale* (I don't have a veil) in the social sense is the unofficial declaration of women's liberation used sometimes rather demonstratively by younger females. The Party headed the campaign against the real veil, whereas the social liberation of moving freely in the men's public sphere was started some ten years ago by a group of five to six girls now in their thirties, who went to school. They met great resistance in the village, but with the support of their families, insisted on continuing their education and thus expanding their territory.



insists that he is only ninety-three. At any rate, he seems to be the only one old enough to dare tell 'dirty jokes' at a men's gathering with the *hodja* (Muslim priest) present.

I went to visit him at the beginning of my fieldwork with two students of English as interpreters. As was common for most old men and also for many of the younger ones, on encountering an unknown woman, he addressed the boys, apparently ignoring me. After a while he asked:

- What kind of language do you talk with her?
- It is called English, father Ali. It is a very widely used language, spoken by millions of people all over the world.
- Is that so? Tell me, who talks this English around here?
- Nobody really. It is not spoken in Yugoslavia.
- Well, of what use is it then, when you can't communicate with people? Not even in Belgrade does it seem to help you! You two should learn proper Serbian, then you will know how to get around.

The two views expressed in this dialogue reflect the opposing social orientations represented by different generations. Ali is illiterate. He was a sharecropper for the Turkish bey as a boy. After the First World War he joined the national hero Isa Boletini (also of the Shala clan) and fought the Montenegrins. With the event of the inclusion of Kosova into the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, he returned to Isniq and became the family shepherd. His family was never rich, but did reasonably well. Because he was a manual labourer most of his life, he became part of the village 'intellectual' elite only in old age. Today he has a high status because of his age, his good memory and his quick wit. To challenge Ali in a verbal competition is one of the amusements of the men's gatherings. He is rarely beaten.

His view on the utility of learning languages stems from his own experience. To master foreign tongues has been a necessity for the Albanian minority; he himself learnt Serbian. But for Ali this is an oral art. It is a question of being able to cope with social situations, for example, not making a fool of oneself when visiting the city.

For the younger generation these practical problems are real, too, but they choose their subject of study as members of a large-scale modern society. Teachers of English are needed as Yugoslavia becomes more integrated into the international scene.

This dimension of social life is not part of Ali's world. He knows that it exists, but it does not interfere with his daily existence. Isniq, his family and their social relations are important to him. He is oriented towards the local community and its various problems. The era when Isniq was a political corporation has formed his consciousness. A career was then made contingent upon support from a strong united group of men - either the household or the village. What was good for Isniq was good for each individual. People met the world as representatives of these collectives, family, village, clan or nationality, depending on the context. A large number of men in the family was the key factor in social success.

The two students have grown up in an individualistic society where it is possible to have a career. Education, skills and social contacts outside the local community are the main qualification for 'making it' - not family reputation.

### **Source of income and professions**

The motivation behind the strong desire for education is said to be a desire for knowledge. Young Isniqians want to abandon the illiterate and ignorant state of their parents. This is only half true though, since this desire does not produce the same results in other villages. These villages have fewer students per adult person. The main difference between Isniq and the other villages we know is that the average size of land holdings is much smaller in Isniq. The problems in obtaining local unskilled wage labour

may be said to represent obstacles equally great for all communities<sup>8</sup>. The chance of getting any kind of salaried employment for persons lacking vocational training or higher education is next to nothing. This is partly due to the fact that the tertiary sector, including administration, health and the education system, has been improved and widened. It has absorbed educated labour, whereas industrial investments have been much smaller and have tended to go to capital-intensive undertakings, thus employing a comparatively smaller number of workers.

Isniqians have resorted to education - a fairly secure investment in future income - or migration, mostly to Germany. The latter alternative meets the need for cash, which arose when Isniq became part of the monetary economy.

While only four men are known to have had salaried employment before the War, this group now accounts for one fourth of all the men. They may work either in the village or in Peja and Deçani. Half of them are migrant labourers temporarily employed abroad. In addition to this group who are already employed, there is a group of prospective wage earners: the students. They represent another 13 per cent and thus almost 40 per cent of the male population may be expected to have some kind of salaried employment in the future.

Half of the male population over 18 years of age are 'peasants,' i.e. either cultivators or shepherds. Not all are fully occupied on their own estates and may be employed as day labourers in agriculture and construction. As in most peasant societies, there are a number of activities people engage in which are only indirectly connected with cultivation. Most males are involved in finding different sources of income on a part-time basis to supplement the household's agricultural income. Some hire themselves out with their horse, tractor, power saw, etc. on an income-sharing basis to an enterprise. Other may engage in more or less illegal trade in tobacco, wood, etc. Four households have invested in workshops (two carpentry, two sawmills). Finally, one owns the maize mill. The village contains a bakery as well, but it belongs to two brothers from the Has region some kilometres further south. In this region the men specialize in baking bread and have set up bakeries all over Yugoslavia. In another area, Dragash, they are specialists in making sweets and cakes. There is a tendency to occupational specialization for different groups. Urban Catholics are silver- and goldsmiths, gypsies are blacksmiths and Albanians from certain areas in Macedonia traditionally specialize in construction. Today this demands masonry, but earlier construction workers were the masters in building *kullas*.

The remaining tenth of the men in the village are classified as 'old' and 'others,' this last category comprising people doing military service and those in prison. Strictly speaking, both of these groups should be listed along with the active peasant part of the population, and would increase this group to about 60 per cent of the males. Thus Isniq is still a village in the agricultural sense of the word. But a whole range of urban professions is represented, complicating the picture somewhat. There are professors, teachers, employees with university degrees, an engineer, a shop manager, functionaries in the municipal administration, two directors, clerks etc. Only one important category is missing - an agricultural specialist in either agronomy or veterinary medicine. Such a person would be useful to the local economy. This lack reflects the general indifference towards agriculture as a worthwhile activity. It is a necessity to provide the daily bread, but apart from that no one expects to succeed within that sector.

### **Traditional adaptation**

When one tells other people in Kosova that one has been to Isniq, the comment is sometimes: 'You don't really know Kosova. Isniq is a well known village because of its wealth. It is different from

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<sup>8</sup> It is said that a particular quota of jobs in the centres is given to each village. This is not officially so, but each local community tries to propel people into the administration in order to provide necessary contacts for acquiring jobs and other services.

the rest of the region.’ In my opinion this judgment is only partly true. It is a reflection of a former reputation which derived from a prosperous subsistence economy. The soil is very fertile and people used to have large flocks of sheep. Today, however, the land is much too scarce to allow anyone to be really wealthy. The average holding is 2.4 ha. (reg. 2), and it has to support an average family of 10 members (reg. 2 and 1). What counts today is not the agricultural sector, but other sources of income like wage labour. Most families continue their agricultural activities, but it is a primarily subsistence agriculture. Few invest in that sector. It is managed in much the same way as before.

The traditional adaptation is a combination of cultivation and animal husbandry. The customary crops are maize, lima beans (*pasulj*) and pumpkins, all three sown at the same time. Ecologically this is a sound policy, as the beans bring nitrogen back into the soil, and the leaves of the pumpkins protect the soil from drying out. The maize is used for bread and fodder. The whole plant is utilized, as the stems and leaves provide fodder for the cows. Newly harvested pumpkins provide food for human consumption, older pumpkins are only used as fodder. In addition, crops harvested as hay are used for winter fodder.

The village has an old irrigation system bringing water from the Deçani River to the fields. But the amount provided in summer is not always adequate as the river dries up after the snow has melted. There are strict regulations about the use of water, and each village connected with the river, as well as each family, has its particular day when the minor canals leading into the individual fields can be opened. The relatively small amount of water in July and August makes cultivation of horticultural crops such as peppers, impossible on a large scale. They usually buy vegetables from farmers nearer to Peja who can manage these as successful cash crops. Cow dung is used as fertilizer. Human faeces are also used via canals leading directly to the fields dug from underneath the outdoor toilets. This arrangement prevents the accumulation of excrement and is thus a hygienic and practical method of its disposal.

Drinking water was traditionally brought up from wells, but in recent years piped water has been brought from the upper parts of the Deçani River to the village. Most families have been able to afford to install taps in their courtyards. The wells and taps are all individually owned; there was never a ‘village water pump’ where the women could meet. The only ones who have outdoor social gatherings are the men. They meet in the mornings.

The day begins early in summer. Most people are up by five o’clock. First, one of the women rises and lights the fire in the kitchen. She puts the bread for breakfast into the oven. The old men and the unmarried boys who sleep in the men’s room roll up their mattresses and bedclothes and go into the courtyard or the kitchen to wash their faces and hands and clean their mouths.

While the women stay at home to tidy up the house and get the children dressed, the men move out into the square in front of the mosque. This seems to be the only time when all the men in the village gather. They hang around for a couple of hours, if they do not have to set off to market or go to work. During these morning sessions the exchange of labour is organized. People decide who will till whose fields. Other appointments are made for joining each other on a visit to the town, selling animals or purchasing vegetables. News is exchanged. After seven o’clock they slowly move back to their homes to eat breakfast. When the men have left, the square fills with children going to school, and the teachers arrive at the village primary school<sup>9</sup>. After breakfast people go about their serious business - usually by about eight o’clock. In peak seasons, and if the tasks include distant travel, they start earlier. Work usually begins at seven o’clock for those who are employed in the neighbouring centres of Deçani and Peja. They may pass by the morning gathering on their way and join the conversation and merrymaking for a while before continuing.

Parts of the mountain regions are used for summer grazing. At 1,800 m. above sea level, summer cottages have been built in clusters representing the different lineages. There are four different pasture areas some kilometres apart. These are situated above the timberline. The lower belt consists of oak and higher up, pine. The trees are tall and solid. Timber is cut for local manufacturing in Deçani, but mostly exported out of Kosova.

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<sup>9</sup> The school is large and a centre for smaller satellite villages as well as for Isniq. The number of pupils is around 500. There is also a small health clinic with a nurse on duty everyday and a doctor twice a week.

The whole western part of Kosova is surrounded by high alpine mountain landscape<sup>10</sup>. Traditionally, the whole area bases its economic structure on transhumance. Sheep herding is the most important sector, and the flocks served as the basic fixed asset for the peasants in former times. The mountains are divided between the villages. For example the Isniq people have exclusive usufructuary rights in 'their' areas, although the ground formally belongs to the state. The state collects a tax on all animals sent up during the summer.

The professional herdsmen live up to six months a year in the mountains - from the time when the snow melts until winter sets in again. This is usually from mid-May until the beginning of November. The families stay approximately two months. Female labour is needed in milk production.

People get close to one another in the mountains. There are no high walls to prevent communication. Women of neighbouring families are actually seen carrying out their duties. There is much less of *havale* at the *stan*<sup>11</sup> as the mountain cottage area is called.

Although electricity was introduced into the village in 1962, the only source of light in those mountain cottages is the fireplace in the middle of the room. Along the walls are shelves used to store milk products. Few couples have the privilege of separate houses. Usually the whole family sleeps on a platform at one end of the room.

The old tradition of labour exchange without the use of money is still alive here. When someone needs a cottage, the men join together and build it. It used to be the way houses were built in the village in the past, too, but after the War they started to pay those who helped.

Many people find it pleasant to live in the mountains despite the simple conditions. But those accustomed to the 'restlessness of civilization' find life too slow there. Likewise women might find the price in heavy housework too high. Children are born and babies must be kept clean in the same way as in the village, and this is not always easy. Some members of the family have to remain in Isniq to see to the agricultural tasks there. At least one grown male must remain, but an increasing number tend to spend summers in the village. They try to send the children and old people to the mountains, because it is considered to be very healthy. The summer may be unpleasantly hot in the lowlands as the climate is typical of inland areas with large fluctuations in temperature between the seasons.

### **The household: distribution in space**

The border region of the public world is the 'room for men' (*oda e burravet*) or 'guestroom' (*dhoma e myzafirit*). The everyday Isniq abbreviation derives from Serbo-Croat and is *sobe* with the simple meaning of 'room.' This room is part of every house and is usually built on the top floor with a separate entrance as close to the gate as possible. The inner courtyard is not seen from there, and the women may continue with their activities undisturbed by visitors. When a man arrives unexpectedly the custom is for him to stand by the gate and shout out the name of the host. A child will appear and inform the visitor of the wanted person's whereabouts. If the visitor is to wait, he is shown into the *sobe*. While guests are present, only men remain in this room, and food is brought to the door by the women. A slight knock signals to a younger man inside, who brings the food in. The table is low and round (*sofra*) and is placed on the carpet-covered floor. They sit either directly on the carpet, on sheepskin or on cushions. The host cuts the bread, and gives each person a piece. Then they all start eating out of the common bowl in the middle. Meat is distributed separately to the men according to their relative importance. Piling up

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<sup>10</sup> Gjerovia, the highest peak in the Prokletij range can be seen from my kitchen window. It ranks as the eighth tallest mountain in Yugoslavia. The third tallest is found further south as part of the Sharr range.

<sup>11</sup> *Stan* is the common name in the southern part of the Balkans for these mountain resorts (see Campbell 1964; Vucinich 1975).

food in front of the guest is a sign of hospitality. Although complaints are always made of how little a guest consumes, he is not really expected to eat it all. The remains go to the house folks waiting in the kitchen for their turn. After the meal, the table is cleaned and rolled away like a wheel.

The rooms vary in size, as some will hold as many as a hundred men whereas others only hold twelve to fifteen. The structure is much the same from one building to the other. On the wall opposite the entrance is a fireplace. Along the walls mattresses are strewn, and cushions as back supports. Closest to the fire are the places of honour. The men seat themselves at whatever distance from this centre accords with their place in the hierarchy. In the *sobe* serious discussions take place, as well as spare time activities like watching television and playing chess. Most common are dinner parties just for the pleasure of having a guest (*me thierr nē darkē*). The guest rooms are the social centres of the village, and a certain amount of competition takes place over which is the most generous and popular. To have an open guest room (*oda e çellur*) is highly esteemed. A family investing in this hospitality can expect respect from the village. Patterns of ‘visiting-circles’ are formed, and some men never go to certain people’s houses to sit in the guest room. Being a guest also implies certain attitudes of gratification towards the host, and is not easily combined with rivalry and fractionalization.

In the lower regions are the kitchen and living rooms. The kitchen is the centre for the women. It is often equipped with benches, or three-legged stools. The whole family tends to gather there at certain times in the day. This is the more relaxed heart of the house with children roaming around and all kinds of activities going on while people talk. The men look in now and then, and may sit down for an occasional meal, or to have a chat. It is rarely decorated and often there is only a mud floor. When there are guests, the women must wait until these have left. Something from the kitchen might always be needed. It may get very late, and the last woman may be found sleeping on a stool with her head in her arms.

Each couple with children has its bedroom *çilere*, furnished with the trousseau the wife brought on her wedding day. This is her ‘home,’ and is elaborately decorated. She talks of it as her own, and the husband moves out of it at the time of life when he no longer enjoys sexual intercourse with her. He moves to the men’s room, where he sleeps with the older boys. Likewise, elder daughters go to sleep with their grandmother in her *çilere*.

The old style *kullas* have the charm of irregular individuality. But they are often dark and cold in winter. They are built of stone without proper windows. Instead there are small openings, sometimes with iron bars. They are said to prevent enemies and unwanted suitors from entering. In modern brick houses they install glass pane windows, and there may be such accoutrements as modern stairs, floor coverings and plastered walls. They are generally warmer and easier to keep clean. The standard differs according to the wealth of the family, and often they are completed in stages. The family may move in as soon as the rooms are covered by a roof. New techniques like armoured iron may be utilized although the social structure behind the plan of the house is the same as before. The room for men is there, as well as separate entrances for men and women. Some individuals put quite a lot of effort and energy into creating new and functional solutions to old social dilemmas.

Most new houses are symmetrically built with one half being a mirror reflection of the other. This is done in order to facilitate a future split in the family. By putting up an extra inner wall the building can be vertically divided and can contain two new independent households. This construction for future needs must be combined with present functional requirements like the seclusion of women. How can a house be built in order to provide a sheltered courtyard both in a present day family setting as well as for two potential new units? The new buildings are constructed to make this kind of solution possible, whereas the old *kulla* is impossible to divide vertically.

## Household organization

The term *shpie* in Isniq has the double meaning of ‘house’ and ‘household.’ Whether it refers to the building as such or to the social group is understood from the context. No distinction is made between

‘family’ and ‘household.’ They are conceived of as synonymous. The Albanian language has a word for family (*familje*) but in Isniq terminology the family is referred to as *shpie*. Since the domestic group is a household based on close family ties, *shpie* correctly denotes a single social phenomenon. On the analytical level we need, however, to distinguish between two different aspects of the domestic unit – the kinship system ‘family’ and the domestic organization ‘household.’

In order to understand the structure and organization of the domestic group the following rules governing recruitment and residence must be known:

1. *Descent* is patrilineal, and defines the membership of a kinship group. The right to the offspring belongs to the father and his family.
2. *Affiliation* is recognized from both the mother and the father. A man will refer to his agnatic relatives as *gjak* (blood) and to his maternal as *dajët* (mother’s brother’s group). A married woman’s natal kin are called *gjini* (this also means ‘sex’ in the sense of ‘gender,’ i.e. the sex of a child). The term *dajët* refers to the maternal relatives of a woman as well. But in the context of her husband’s family, a wife uses *gjini e nënës* (mother’s kin) so as not to confuse this group with other *dajët* who are connected with the household.
3. *Marriage*. There are no prescribed partners for marriage, but exogamy is practised. This rule applies in theory to the localized lineage, but is usually extended to the whole village community when different kinship groups are settled in the same place. This is recognized as a social paradox, as the rule should apply to the ‘blood’ only. Marriage prohibitions also embrace maternal kin to the seventh grade. In practice this means that a son or a daughter cannot marry any close maternal relative, *dajët*. Most clans accept inter-clan marriages, if no direct patrilineal descent can be traced. An Isniqian can marry other Shala people, if they do not stem from the ‘three brothers.’
4. *Residence* is patrilocal. Upon marriage, a woman moves out of her natal family and her village to that of her husband, whereas a man usually stays with his father until the latter’s death. The group of agnatically related men thus formed, composes the core of the household and constitutes a corporation founded around a common estate.
5. *Inheritance* rights to the estate are reserved exclusively for male descendants. Women have no claim to either their father’s or their husband’s property.
6. *The property of a woman* is *paja* (indirect dowry, see Goody 1973). It consists of a trousseau which her husband’s family has paid for. Money and/or goods are given to the father of the girl, who transfers this in the form of a dowry to his daughter. It should not be confused with bride price, serving the purpose of compensation for loss of female labour<sup>12</sup>. *Paja* consists of a wardrobe suitable for a married woman and equipment needed to settle in the male’s household such as clothes, cushions, towels, etc. Productive property like land, animals or tools is never part of it.
7. *Labour tasks* are strictly gender-defined. The activities of men, their work and social life, constitute the public sphere of the village. They interact with all the other male inhabitants, and with persons outside the community. The women are confined by their tasks to the private sphere of the household and courtyard. They socialize only with females in the households of their husbands’ closest agnatic kin. The network of a wife consists primarily of her *gjini* and extends to different families in the region related to her through female relatives.

The household in Isniq is a male-dominated unit with strict divisions between the sexes in the areas of kinship categorization, social rights and duties, distribution in time and space and participation

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<sup>12</sup> The practice seems to be somewhat different in the North Albanian area. Payment as compensation to the father has been reported from Mirdita in Albania (bulls) and from in Yugoslavia (money). In both these places the women participate in agricultural work in the fields. In southern Albania, in the Tosk linguistic area the dowry is the common way to provide for the establishment of a couple. In these regions there is no clan organization.

in different fora. All the men in the village have known each other from childhood, whereas the wives are of 'alien blood' and have a restricted knowledge of the village and its people.

The traditional Albanian family is called a 'patriarchal household' in the full sense of the word. When the term patriarchal family or household is used in this text it refers to this traditional family organization, which is more or less the present structure of the families.

### Household structure

These rules codify the *shpie* structure. But they also exist as conceptualisations in the minds of people about how social form is generated. In this context, however, the categories have been translated into the language of social anthropology. There are no exceptions to these rules. The conceptual map is a reflection of the actual groupings in the landscape. The 'household,' the 'family' and the 'house' may therefore be seen as different systems representing variations upon the same basic structure – that of the patriarchal family. These variations represent aspects of social life:

- a. Cultural categorization enabling one to distinguish between different types of members and relate them to each other by rights and duties.
- b. Their statuses are again connected to particular functions in the household, i.e. positions in the household.
- c. The physical distribution of people in space is also a reflection of the patriarchal principles of organization.

The social structure is based upon the components of sex and descent. These biological elements are given a cultural content and are reformulated in the social concepts of *gjak* (descent) and *gjinie* (sex). The structural arrangements in a family are ordered in accordance with these social concepts. As abstract concepts they are very vague, but when put in a social context they become loaded with meaning. The sex division defines persons with and without rights in the common estate - men and women. On the social level this is manifested in the different private-female and public-male spheres of interaction. These domains are physically separated.

Descent divides women into groups belonging to the 'blood' and those of alien 'blood,' i.e. sisters and daughters versus mothers and wives. On the male side, descent makes it possible to distinguish between generations as well as to determine the degree of closeness between men of the same generation. In the social organization this is manifested in the division between different *hises* within each *shpie*. A *hise* will be discussed later, but may at this point be translated as 'a man with his descendants and their wives and children' (a household of two married brothers represents two *hises* but if their father is alive the family is counted as only one *hise*).

From these two concepts we get the 'elementary structure' of the patriarchal household - the men, women of the blood, and women of alien blood.

This basic structure is the same - whatever the size of the family. Larger families are only duplicates of the smaller units - extended horizontally and/or vertically. When age is added as a third structuring element, persons who are in the same genealogical position can be differentiated.

Within the family system general statuses are formed - operating in sets like father/children; husband/wife etc. (see chapter 3 for further implications of the kinship structure).

There is another kind of status though, which is relational but defined by the structure of the household as an organizational unit. These we shall label 'positions.' They are purpose-oriented and directed towards the fulfilment of tasks. These 'positions' may be held by persons for shorter or longer periods. They are not identical with kinship statuses, though holding a position depends on which category in the kinship system a person belongs to. Household and family are not, as must be remembered, separate social phenomena, and the household structure borrows connotations from the kinship system. The 'position' may be compared to the post of 'manager of a firm' for example. This is

a status, as it defines rights and duties vis-à-vis other people. But it is created by the organizational requirements and secondarily defined as rights and duties vis-à-vis other members of the group. This is not the same as the role content of a status; as one may argue that ‘earning money’ is essential to the Western father role. The ‘positions’ are derived from the functions necessary to make the household work. They are not always present in an actual household, as these functions depend on the number of people and the economic adaptation, but as a conceptual scheme, they have become standardized for the whole village.

### Positions in the household

*Burrat* means ‘the men’ and is the term used for designating the full members of the corporation. It includes both married and unmarried males, provided that they have reached working age.

*Zoti i shpies*, literally: ‘lord of the house,’ is the position of head of the household. The other men in the household are usually called *burrat*.

*Plaku*, ‘the old man’ or plural *pleqtë*, refers to the oldest generation and the formal property owners. The complementary term for the younger generation is:

*Djemi*, ‘the boys,’ and used in this context only with reference to elders. It is often applied as a short way of denoting a corporation and its internal authority structure. People may talk about ‘*Alia dhe djemt e tij*’ (Alia and his boys)<sup>13</sup>.

*Robtë*, ‘the house folk,’ also meaning prisoners, includes the rest of the household besides the men, i.e. women of all categories and children.

*Gratë*, ‘the women,’ denotes the married women of a family, but when used in the general sense ‘*Hajd, shko me tregue graet!*’ (Come on, go tell the women) it has the general meaning of all women, as unmarried daughters also will be present in that section of the household.

*Baqica* is the female equivalent to the household head. She leads the work of the married women, and has particular duties herself like cooking dinner and preparing agricultural products. The production and storing of the *bylmet* (dairy products) is one of her important tasks. The men have refined tastes for these foodstuffs. She milks the cows, but not the sheep which is a male occupation. She has definite duties, and has to have grown children, as her time does not allow for childcare. If the family consists of several *hises*, she will not be the wife of the *zoti i shpies*. This is a precaution taken in order to avoid concentration of power in the household.

*Magjetorja* is the ‘wife on duty.’ This is a position held by the other women five to seven days at a time and is rotated. Her duties include the daily baking of bread, as the men demand fresh bread for breakfast. This is a labourious task, since bread is the staple food. She is also responsible for cleaning the dishes and the house. The family eats from the same bowl, but has individual spoons and forks. A *magjetore* in one of the larger households commented that she was ‘very happy they did not eat from separate plates. Imagine washing twenty-seven plates three times a day!’

*Plaka*, ‘the old woman,’ is the wife of the old man, usually the mother-in-law of the:

*Nusjet*, ‘the brides,’ who are newly married women still in the bloom of their youth. It describes the youngest of the married women, possibly with one or even two children, but still not totally incorporated into the household. They have to prove themselves and are given the most unpleasant tasks. They are lowest in rank of the household, and may be ordered about by all the others.

*Vajzat*, ‘the girls,’ are the adult unmarried women. Their position is different from that of married women, as they are not expected to partake in household work. But they may be asked to do so by their

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<sup>13</sup> The term for son, *bir*, and daughter, *bijë*, is less frequently used in connection with the household structure. *Bir* is used as the personal context of kinship when son and parents are involved, like *O, bir i nënës, më ke prish zëmërën* (Oh, son of mother, you have broken my heart), or *Je bijë e keqe, nuk e don babën* (You are a bad daughter, because you don’t love your father).



mother. They are also responsible for younger sisters and brothers, but not for the children of their brothers. Their status is higher than that of the *nusja*, and as the sisters of the husband they may demand services from her.

*Fëmijët* are children under age. Boys and girls lead a fairly similar existence, but the boys start to frequent the men's domain from the age of eight. This gives certain privileges in the form of food, and a higher self esteem, as they are permitted in areas where neither the girls nor the women may move freely.

These terms refer to positions in the Isniqian and northern Albanian household. In the smaller 'modern' families these categories do not operate. In a household with one man and one woman it does not make sense to talk about *burrat*. The terms are appropriate in an extended family organization, but most domestic groups do eventually move into this stage. How it will be in the future is less clear, as the modern nuclear unit is becoming a more and more common phenomenon.

At a certain stage in its development the household thus consists of a group of agnatically related men - father with sons or brothers - with their wives and offspring. The economic basis is the estate. Members of this unit are exclusively those of the 'blood' i.e. grown males.

When seen as an ongoing concern it is a corporation. To the estate belong all the productive resources of the family as well as the income provided by its members. Land as well as buildings and other durables and means of production are considered common property. The unity of the estate is personified in one male - the *zoti i shpies* responsible for the major problems of household management. The head of the house has the decisive voice, but the power is more in the hands of the mature males as a group than concentrated in the hand of the head. These men are not necessarily old, so 'gerontocracy' would be an incorrect term to describe the household structure, although it does give a true picture of the traditional village structure. The household authority could perhaps be labelled an 'agnatocracy,' if a name is needed.

The head of the household is elected by all the men, and does not inherit the position. Qualities like 'justness,' 'level-headedness' etc. are expected from him. The good *zoti i shpies* is a man in control of himself, who is impartial, honest and incorruptible. He is also of fully productive age and should set an example by his work. On reaching old age, i.e. when he is no longer fully productive, he retires, and joins the *pleqësia e fshatit* (village elders), a group of men with experience, knowledge and time to take care of community affairs, and to debate laws, regulations and matters of social conflict.

The boundaries between different households are very clear, as they result from the distinct rules for membership in the household organization. The different 'houses' and their estates are easily distinguished from each other socially, legally, economically and physically. The division of a domestic group results in a total disruption of the unit. Land and assets are divided, new buildings constructed for each new unit, and the family members distributed. The division of the household represents a transformation from total unit with collective management, to an absolute division of all resources, rights and duties. The tightly knit corporate nature of the estate and the household has its corollary result in non-rights as against other members of the agnatic group and the village. The inclusive structure turns the household into a very exclusive unit.

### **The household as an economic unit**

The estate involves the property and property relations. All productive property is formally owned by members of the oldest generation of the household and transfers upon their death to the male heirs. If the family splits up, each man has the right to an equal share in his father's estate as well as an equal share in the wealth accumulated during his own lifetime.

The seniority principle implies that the final decision about the continued existence of the corporation is in the hands of the elders. No one has ever succeeded in obtaining his share in the land before the death of his father, against the will of the old men. Cases have been discussed in the *pleqësia* and even taken to court, but without success for the young would-be separatist.

*The corporation* is the organization concerned with the management of these resources, and deals with the household as a running concern. Only the men are full members. The statuses linked with the corporation are the 'positions' which define among other things, rights and duties in the corporation as a management unit. On the other hand, legal rights in the estate as property are defined by kinship. As long as the corporation is in existence these rights are only potential individual claims. To make the corporation work, they have to be disregarded. If a person insists on his rights in the estate, it means that he challenges the whole existence of the corporation as such.

Because these property rights, management functions and rights in the household are not always in correspondence, a corporation in the full sense of the term can perhaps not be said to exist. However, as long as the domestic group remains together, it may for the purposes of production, income distribution and management be considered as one, i.e. a group of members who have equal rights as against the world. All assets are treated as collective property. No one for example has a private plot of land. Tasks are divided according to skills and to the needs of the household, and private interest plays only a secondary role. This 'collective principle' is the basis of the corporation, and private individual rights come into question only upon the dissolution of the corporation. The management of the estate by the corporation relies on a negation of the potential conflicting interests defined by inheritance rights.

*Income.* Each grown male is considered as contributing an equal share to the running of the family, regardless of the actual income his labour may result in. A man's contribution is valued in physical terms, not by monetary calculation. What he gives is his labour; the monetary returns are not taken into account. The income is pooled and distributed according to need by the head of the household. A part goes to consumption needs and another part to various investment funds. With the cash saved, the family may buy durables or means of production - sheep, a tractor, etc. It does not matter whether a man is a student, an agricultural labourer, a foreign worker or a local employee - his share and contribution is considered equal to that of the others. No monetary value is placed on a man's work within the *shpie*.

Women are not part of the corporation and have no rights in the estate, nor are they required to pool their resources if they have any income. Whatever each wife may obtain from handicraft production or selling products like eggs, nuts and berries is her own. She may spend it freely on her children or on presents. Strictly speaking, the responsibility of a woman is limited to her own nuclear unit. She has to bring up and support her own children, whereas her husband as a full member of the corporation is also responsible for the other children in the household.

The degree to which women have rights to the income reserved for consumption needs varies. Women are necessary for reproduction, and what they need to fulfil this function is provided for. As a minimum they receive board and lodging plus some kilos of wool to provide their own children's clothing. But in some families the responsibility of the corporation for the *robtë* is interpreted as being wider and covers clothing and personal social expenses as well. Whatever the scale of the support may be, any person in the household is entitled to equal maintenance and provision for basic needs. Accordingly, a man with many children will represent a higher total drain on the common resources than one with fewer offspring. Each boy is provided for until he is assumed to be able to take care of himself, that is, until he gets married. The household pays the expenses incurred by marriage, but often the young man may try to save and accumulate some means of his own in order to speed up the process. In Isniq it is the boys, not the girls, who are eager to get married. It gives them adult status and a private life not experienced before, like a separate bedroom for their own sexual gratification and the acquisition of personal belongings and symbolically the emerging wealth that may develop into their own estate in the future.

*Division of labour.* To be a man is to do certain things that women cannot do. The same is the case with women: they perform tasks which cannot be executed by men. In this way gender is a basic criterion defining recruitment to positions in the *shpie*. Within each sex group, age becomes the decisive factor. It operates at each point in time, and is the mechanism which allows for changing roles during a person's lifetime. Gradually both men and women acquire greater autonomy as well as influence in wider social circles.

*Male work.* The men as a group have a complementary division of labour. They are all considered equal partners contributing to the estate. The relative importance of sending money from Germany and of ploughing the land is not evaluated; both may be necessary and support each other in the joint venture

which is the household. A family includes members involved in any number of income-generating activities which supplement each other. There is no sharp division between a 'peasant family' and the 'family of a professional man.' The tendency is for them to split, but a household may just as often include an illiterate shepherd and a university-educated professor.

The responsibility of the men is to provide the family with its basic needs, maintain the estate and provide money for investment. Their jobs are conceived of as 'labour' whereas the women are said to 'just hang around.' When they talk of the labour force (*fuqi punětore*) which a family has, it is implicit that this is a question concerning the men.

*Female work.* Women are responsible for secondary production, for reproductive tasks like bearing and rearing children, and for keeping their own nuclear unit clothed. They are only seen in the fields for a couple of days during harvest time when there is a shortage of labour.

Basically the division of labour between the women is parallel as opposed to the complementarity of the men's labour. They do the same kind of job. These do not supplement each other, and are separate both in terms of the group they benefit and in terms of participation. Only the *magjetore* duties are done by all and are the women's contribution to the estate as such, but it is still not a complementary function, as it is performed by all of them in turn. The only position occupied by women which approaches the type of position occupied by men is the *baqica*. This is a position which contributes to the others' existence well outside her nuclear family, and is performed as a specialized role. The other roles as housewife are alike. The *baqica* - the 'housekeeper' - is usually an elderly woman half integrated into the corporation. The children of the *baqica* are grown up, and her children are members of the estate. Thus her feeling towards the *shpie* is one of solidarity and obligation not felt by younger women. The latter may feel like strangers producing offspring for an unknown and sometimes hostile family.

The association of gender with certain tasks and behaviour patterns was so strong in traditional society that anyone wanting to switch between the two spheres would be socially defined as a member of the opposite sex. Cases of men drifting into the women's domain are unknown. They are, after all, the privileged group. But the opposite has occurred. In cases where a woman chose to do a man's work, i.e. agricultural labour, managing a household of her own, moving freely without *havale*, etc., would have to deny her sex. This was done by swearing perpetual virginity, thus negating one of her most important functions, that of bearing children. She would also dress in men's clothes. She could then act as a man and sit in the men's room as well as join the fora where men met.

The pattern of household organization used to be quite rigid, but in recent years amendments in the practice have been adopted. Men are allowed to control the use of a car. A car is for all practical purposes private property usually in the hands of the one who wanted it and who contributed the money for its purchase. Upon division of the estate, however, it is again considered common property and its value divided equally. Some wage earners who should have contributed their total salary to the household in return for the work performed by the other men are given permission to keep a sum for themselves. Or perhaps they just keep an amount for private use without revealing their exact salary to the others. Those who work in town are expected to have higher consumption needs involving cash. The Isniqians, like other villagers from Kosova, dress very meticulously when in town to avoid looking like a *fshatar* (villager). Some monetary concessions are made to their vanity. Students also require special clothing. They try to save their city garments by changing when they get home. Nevertheless proper trousers and jackets are needed for their university life.

Another change concerns women. Those of the women who have taken salaried employment, may be required to give their money to the household. Only as 'professionals' do men and women actually have the same kind of jobs as, for example, teaching. It is typically a change deriving from modern lifestyle imposing itself on the village, and not a transformation of the old peasant way of life as such. The woman who gives her salary to the family, however, is not considered to give a supplementary contribution to the household and is not rewarded with easier housework. Because the tasks of the women are so closely linked with their own nuclear units, the housework of a working female is no one else's business. Likewise, to distribute her duties among the other housewives would mean increasing their burdens without increasing their monetary returns. The income goes to the master of the house, and whether or not the wives will get any of it is uncertain. By having salaried employment a woman contributes to the estate, but it is not thought as necessary to relieve her of housework. The men have little

understanding of the actual burdens involved in this activity anyway, and can see no reason for helping her out. This is unlike the case of say a male teacher who will give a hand only during peak seasons. Otherwise he is accepted as a full contributor by virtue of his professional work. This question is also one of ideology, since most men will try to keep peace in the family by not accepting 'privileges' for one woman.

*Management and decision-making.* In Isnig the term *fshatar* does not denote the back-bent peasant constantly wearing himself out on the land. As the householders of family farms with independent economies, there is a whole range of activities to be organized, decided upon and managed. The *shpie* is a multi-purpose unit and the tasks involved in running it represent a total social existence. Hard physical labour is only one part of it. These activities include anything from tilling the land and engaging in commercial bargaining, to practising social diplomacy and giving emotional support to members of the family.

The household is both an economic and a social unit. Food production includes sowing the maize and cooking the meals. Cash is obtained by selling at the market or by wage labour. The future of the younger generation must be secured, and involves important decisions about education and marriage. Socializing, political participation and relations with guests are planned, and connections established and maintained. Ceremonies, celebrations and rituals must also be taken into account.

For a city dweller the most striking feature of Isnig life is the excitement created by all the daily tasks. Village life is not boring. On the contrary, thousands of things seem to happen at once, and there is never enough time to follow them all. This is partly due to the transparent nature of village life and partly to the integrated nature of people's existence. Something happening in one family may have consequences for a whole range of other individuals. The 'total' relationships which most people have to each other make the interaction complex and loaded with social meaning beyond the actual issue in question. To manage a household is thus a delicate affair involving both economic skills and social manoeuvring.

The major fields of decision making may be grouped under the two headings: economic activities and social policy making. These two may again be subdivided *ad infinitum*, but may roughly be divided into three subcategories:

Economic administration:

- a. Distribution of labour tasks;
- b. Planning and management of productive activities;
- c. Disposal of income.

Social policy making:

- a. Deciding on authority structure and household organization;
- b. Framing the degree and nature of social participation;
- c. Designing an ideological profile of the family.

These categories are rather broad, as each of them contains activities ranging in a scale from daily routine to long-term planning and challenges to the basis of the corporation as such. The body responsible for decision making does change with the relative importance of the matter. In daily routine work, each person may be said to be responsible for the particular duties assigned to him or her. The framework is the organizational structure and division of labour which is partly a product of tradition and partly a pattern adopted by each separate household. A shepherd is responsible for management of the flock, and a *magjetore* gets up in the morning to bake bread without anyone telling her to. Since everyone is acquainted not only with their own work, but also with each others', the execution of the daily routine work usually poses no problems.

*Leadership.* When it comes to making special decisions about everyday matters, the head of the household is responsible. He decides when to start sowing, when to migrate into the mountains, when to slaughter a sheep, if a reception for guests should be held, when to repair a fence, etc. His particular desires may be anticipated by the others, as the family in most matters has a common ideology. This ideological profile is also the moral and social character which a household wants to project to the village.

It may have a political content as well, but generally this ideology represents the view held by the *zoti i shpies* of what constitutes a 'proper way of life.' It was his programme when elected by the other men to this position. In these matters he may be quite autocratic. If he is a man of traditional values, he may refuse girls education beyond the compulsory eight years, even against the will of their father. If he is a hard worker, everyone knows that everything should be done at once. If he prefers women to stick to their own domain, he will certainly not want them to smoke. If he takes pride in hospitality, the women will assume that he wants the kitchen to take the initiative and prepare dinner for any guest who may show up.

The exact area of his authority varies from one family to another. Generally it can be said that the head's domain is: a) administration of daily duties and income, b) decisions concerning productive tasks, c) representing the household in the community both in person and through ideology. He lays the foundation of general policy and social involvement in village and family affairs.

In questions concerning the estate as such, he is no longer the sole authority. These are the concerns of the collectivity of males. Investments, changes of economic adaptation, major economic transactions such as purchases of land and animals, etc., are for all purposes the common decision of the corporation. But theoretically, the head of the household may follow a policy contrary to the others' ideas in these matters. He is formally entitled to do so. But neither in former times, nor today, would a household head be inclined totally to oppose the others, as it would place the whole existence of the corporation in jeopardy.

The absoluteness of his authority also depends on the genealogical position of the head of the household. There is a difference between the one and two *hise* situation. If a family is at the one-*hise* stage, i.e. with a father/sons constellation, the old man has the final say. But few of the old cling to their leading role beyond productive age. The fact that a father has given way to a son as leader in the house means a real decline in the old man's power. He is literally preparing himself for the future spiritual existence, retreating gradually from the profane matters of this world. But a father will usually be an ally of one of his sons, most often with the head of the household whom he himself has promoted as a successor. Through the younger man his policy of household management may be continued, although he himself does not hold the office of *zoti i shpies* any more. An alliance like this is very strong, and few can oppose it. Even if the father does not agree with the successor's ideas, he will usually support him for the sake of respect for traditions which say that the head should have real authority.

The one to be promoted as a successor is likely to be one of the oldest, though not necessarily the oldest, as various skills are taken into consideration. The difference in age between brothers may be as much as twenty-five years, and the father may feel closer to the elder in views on management. This difference in age has become an important factor in village life, as it may represent almost a century of socio-economic change. The rapid transformation of the society in the last 10-15 years has given new work and educational opportunities. The difference between brothers may be one of education and profession as well as of age and life experience. The younger men more easily enter into conflict with 'tradition.' They may have acquired self-confidence in school, and this contradicts the meeker role they are expected to play.

At the point when the household changes into what can be called a real and voluntary corporation between equal parties, i.e. brothers and/or cousins, the situation changes. Some of these families are reluctant to appoint anyone in particular as a formal head, since the power balance may be fairly equal. They may insist that they want a more democratic style in the family. A master of the house in such a situation has to be particularly careful to balance the different interests. There are as many potential demands as there are individuals, and innumerable conflicts may arise. The rigidity of the family organization seems to increase with size. Few concessions are made to individual peculiarities. In these families the individual has to submit his personal wishes to the good of the collectivity. That is the prerequisite of making the organization work, and the potential reason for its disruption.

The position of head of household can be reached by almost any man during his lifetime. If he is not selected from among his equals in an extended family setting, he may settle on his own with his sons. To be a full social person in the village means to be a head of a household, because in all kinds of assemblies only one male represents each *shpie*. A head of a small and perhaps poor family is then the equal of the head of a large and powerful household.

Almost every man seems to strive to become 'master in his own house.' They remain with their brothers for a time in order to accumulate the material and human resources necessary to found a viable unit of their own. After a while, they want to divide the estate and optimistically settle down to enjoy the work of industrious sons. To have sons is not only a security for one's old age, but also the means of reaching a position where one is a full social participant in village life.

*Rules for division of property.* As already mentioned, the basic rule for dividing inherited property is an equal share to each of the sons. The acquired property is also equally shared upon the dissolution of the corporation. Years of adulthood are counted. Anything a man might have contributed like money for a tractor, is taken as a donation to the common estate. No particular extra share is given upon partition to the person actually bringing in the money. Those rules, resting on the same principle of an equal share to each man, are formulated thus: Inheritance is divided on *hises* whereas acquired property is divided on *fuqi punětore* (manpower). These rules remain the same whatever the size or structure the household might have.

But equality before the law does not necessarily imply economic equality. In theory, brothers will come out the same from a division of the household. But when the sharing parties consist of several *hises*, the outcome for each of these is not the same. The share in inheritance is counted from the point in time when the corporation or household was founded, and because of unequal demographic growth in the different mini-lineages, they might end up with quite different resources when finally dividing up. Some men may be part of a rather fertile branch of the family, and thus only receive a small share per head, whereas another man may be the only heir in a long line of descendants.

If the household were to divide in three, i.e. three groups of brothers, a different result would be the case when dividing items they had contributed themselves. In that connection, the 'three' brothers would come off the best. If they were also much older than the others, they would have even larger claims to the acquired goods. The eldest would have provided investments for the family at a time when the others were dependent.

Both these principles of dividing property equally create as many complications as their simplicity is striking, which will be discussed later.

*Women and property.* A woman has no rights in any estate either from her father or from her husband. This is the traditional local rule, and thus deviates from the Koranic conception of a woman as counting for half of a man. In a few legal disputes the Koranic rule has been used to challenge the village law, but this has been a fictive use of women in order for one man to secure the estate of another. It is never used in order to claim any share for a sister by her husband. No woman, in the present situation, would even dream of opposing her brothers by demanding inheritance from her father. According to Yugoslav law, things are of course different - women are formally equal to men. But in local practice this set of rules is never taken into consideration at all.

The woman may inherit smaller objects from her mother, but most women use their 'dowry,' consisting of a well-equipped trousseau on marriage, during their lifetime. Few leave any valuables upon their death. The things that were given to them either have been worn out, or have been given away or sold. But in case there are items left, like the bridal chests, a few pieces of jewellery, carpets, blankets, etc., it is the property of the grown-up daughters if all smaller children have been raised and provided for. The daughters may keep them or sell them at the market to tourists to provide for their own children's education or other needs. A cultural drain on old handicraft products has been part of the price of a modern existence. Since styles change, it is a lost tradition.

### 3. CONJECTURING THE ETHNOGRAPHIC PAST

*“Happiness comes from light and shadow on the mountains, from green things in the spring. It comes from rest when one is tired, from food when one is hungry. It comes from singing together, and from walking on hard trails and being stronger than the rocks. And there is a kind of happiness that comes to a man in battle, but that is different. For us marriage has nothing to do with happiness.”*

Lulashi, headman of Thethi in Shala, to Rose Wilder Lane in 1923.

#### ***Ashtu është ligji - such are the rules***

One Albanian cultural characteristic is the omnipresence of rules and regulations. There is a rule for everything: how to govern a village, how to solve family conflicts, how to approach an enemy and at what time of day, how to treat dogs, how much to pay under what circumstances if a beast is killed, how to run a household, what duties each member has, in which order to eat, in which order to serve coffee, how to greet strangers, acquaintances. You name a problem and there is always some customary way of solving it which is codified as a standard, accepted rule.

Consequently when people in Isniq are asked why they do this or that, the answer is often “*Ashtu kemi ligji*” (These are our customs). When we ask ‘what customs?’ they look surprised and add a row of synonyms: “*zakonet, doket, tradita, kanuni - a din që tash?*” (Our customs, conventions, traditions, the code - do you understand now?). The visitor may brighten up and ask “Oh, you mean the Code of Lekë Dukagjini?”<sup>14</sup> And they will patronizingly inform you again that you have mixed up the plain of Dukagjini where they live with the region in Albania called Dukagjini. That was where Lekë worked. “*Jo, neve kemi kanunin e katundit apo ligjin e fshatit*” (No, we have the village code or village law).

Referring to a rule in this sense is a common way of explaining social phenomena. To answer ‘These are our rules’ is a way of saying ‘this is the way we have agreed upon doing things.’ The kind of answer where the concept of ‘law’ has a very wide meaning, is common both in Isniq and in Albania proper. In reality these rules are not a legal code in the way we understand it in the West, but merely a customary way of doing things.

A law, *ligj*, in this terminology covers therefore everything from the bills passed by the Yugoslav parliament to customs practised at the village level. Actually the villagers differentiate between the three legal systems which govern their lives. First there is Yugoslav national law *ligji i shtetit* (state law), secondly there is Muslim law (*sheriati*) which is consulted on special occasions, but we are not quite clear about when or by whom. That aspect of Islam seems to have little impact on the daily life of Isniqians. The influential set of rules in the village is the customary code which reflects the predominance of ‘blood,’ i.e. patrilineage in their traditional social structure. As an example it is worth mentioning that marriage with a father’s brother’s daughter, which is permitted by the Koran is abhorred by all northern Albanians as immoral, i.e. incestuous as well as physically damaging. They themselves are exogamous at the patrician level.

Their own legal traditions are in many ways similar to the more famous Code of Lekë Dukagjini,

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<sup>14</sup> The most famous customary code of the Albanians.

and it is quite obvious that a substantial mutual influence has been going on. But influence is a different matter from the question of which set of rules a certain group of people acknowledge as their authoritative code of conduct.

The Code of Lekë Dukagjini is a very sophisticated and elaborate set of rules that governed parts of the northern Albanian territory. It used to be a customary code which was unwritten and subject to constant change as popular legal practice developed. But from 1913, parts, as it existed in the area of Mirdita, were written in installments for Albanian periodicals by Shtjefën Gjeçovi, an Albanian Catholic priest. His work was completed by Franciscan monks after Gjeçovi's murder in 1929, and published as a whole in 1933. Many scholars consider this edition represents the basis of the Code as it functioned in the whole of northern Albania (see Hasluck 1954; Whitaker 1968). However, this is not the case.

The Isniqians follow their own set of common law. In the northern mountainous parts of Malësia e Madhe (The Great Mountain Land) people apply the Code of the Mountains (*Kanuni i Maleve*) and in other areas of Albania other sets of laws were applied: *Zakonet e Mus Ballgjinit*, *Kanuni i Labërisë*, *Shartet i Idriz Sulit*, *Kanuni i Skënderbeut* (see Ivanova 1960; Pupovci 1971, 1972; Zojzi 1956).

It is the 'Law of Lekë' which has gained international attention, mostly through its being recorded, which includes examples of variations in local practice. It was probably the strongest and the most far-reaching code in northern Albania, but its origin is not really clear. In reality it is a product of popular legal practice and cannot be traced to any particular person (see Pupovci 1972; Hasluck 1954).

It is named after a certain Lekë Dukagjini, but nobody really knows for sure who he was. Some think that he must have been the close companion of the national hero Skanderbeg who lived in the 15th century, but this is not certain either. However, it is known that these two men carried on legal debates, among which was a discussion on the value of a man's life. Skanderbeg is said to have insisted that the payment of blood money for an important man should be greater than for a less influential figure, whereas Lekë Dukagjini is said to have opposed this, as Albanian traditions had always been 'Man for man and blood for blood' (*Njeri për njeri dhe gjak për gjak*) (see Hasluck op. cit.: 159), or as it is said in the *Kanun i Lekë Dukagjinit*: 'The price of a man's life is the same whether he is bad or good' (*Çmimi i jetës së njeriut ashtë një, si për të mirin si për të keqin*, *Kanun i Lekë Dukagjinit*, para 887, p. 83, Prishtina 1972). The view expressed by Lekë Dukagjini gained favour and this principle of equality of all men (not women) has since then been the foundation of customary laws all over northern Albania.

Another fundamental characteristic is the non-state character of the codes. The operation of the law is put into the hands of the people themselves, for example, the right to take blood revenge for certain offences. It does not presuppose any organized authority above the local communities and the individuals themselves. The duty to enforce, for example, the rules of blood revenge is therefore in the hands of the offended party and not the task for a third party like the state to fulfil. But the types of penal action of which blood revenge is only one, are not arbitrary and subject to individual discretion. There are clear rules about what to do under which circumstances. The traditional Albanian society was very disciplined.

The edition of Father Gjeçovi states that 'The door of Gjonmarku is the base for the code' (*Dera e Gjomarkut ashtë themeli i kanus*, para 1126). As the answer from Isniq shows, this is not the case there. The Isniqians insist that they are their own lawmakers. The old men are the ones to state what is right and wrong. But in cases of inter-village conflict where old men from different villages do not agree, they have to submit to the decision of the *Oda e Junikut* or the 'Men's room in the village of Junik.' In theory this is still so today, but cases have not gone far for years. It was a more common practice in the pre-war period. The *Oda e Junikut* is an institution whose leadership is confined to one particular family in that village. If these men could not agree either, they should then consult the 'Door of Gjonmarku' mentioned in *Kanun i Lekë Dukagjinit*. Whether such consultations were ever necessary we do not know, and neither do the Isniqians. And they continue to insist that they follow their own rules, made by themselves.

*Ligj* in Isniq is not written, and it exists in the heads of people, particularly in those of the older men who have had time to learn it all. If a person does not know, he or she can ask someone knowledgeable on these matters.

All these rules are explicit and collectively acknowledged as valid for everyone. Not only should they not be broken, but they should be actively followed. They provide prescriptions as well as prohibitions. Many of them relate to hospitality and how to treat a guest, others to the correct manner in which to show respect to in-laws. There are customary ways of arranging a marriage, with socially



sanctioned infractions. There are also very detailed prescriptions on how to defend one's honour in different situations, including the appropriate punishment of offenders.

The *ligj* covers virtually everything from table manners to the penal code. In Western societies there are, or at least used to be, table manners as well, but they have a lesser status from those of proper conduct in the Isniq community. In Isniq there is an unequivocal conception of both correct and disgraceful behaviour, at an ideological level. These modes of behaviour are 'canonized' into collectively approved social rules.

Altogether these laws or rules cover such a wide spectrum of individual and social life, that they are not all formulated in detail. Much exists as tradition with no sharp differentiation between customs and explicit rules. An institutionalized practice has also an imperative character. This part of the *ligj* is learned through socialization into the community.

Perhaps all customs are not consciously codified. But if they are broken, and thus seen as wrong, especially where the deviance is conceived to be damaging to the community, sanctions are applied.

For example, Isniqians never intermarry within the village. If anyone attempted to break this practice, the community would ensure that the wrongdoers were punished in some way. Before the war they used to burn the house and slaughter the animals of a man who attempted to break this rule of village exogamy. Today this would certainly not be done, as the official Yugoslav legal system has taken over the authority to punish people. But the offender would certainly suffer in some way. Customs seem to be explicitly formulated as rules in cases where there is doubt or dispute. At that point the knowledgeable elders sit down and try to agree upon an interpretation of traditional law.

The code of conduct is supposed to be known and followed by everyone. There are clear-cut ways of doing things and imperative ways to socialize with people, which are not openly discussed or disputed. This means that everyday encounters are not tests of the premises, and do not function as debates about the principles. They do not produce compromises around which cultural norms are acceptable. This function is delegated to those who know, whereas the common man does his best to prove that he knows what everyone is supposed to know.

Up to this point the customary law has been commented upon only vaguely. This is defensible as it still exists as a code much in the same way as it used to before the Second World War. But this is at the level of ideology. As a conceptual structure of rules about interpersonal relations in the widest sense, it is not much altered. What has happened in recent years is not an extensive amendment of the rules, although some modifications have taken place. Customary law has been in a defensive position since Socialist Yugoslavia came into being, and the basic change which has taken place is a replacement of the old traditional laws by the modern constitution and legal system in general.

For example, in the case of inter-village disputes as mentioned above, the appeal 'court' is the *Oda e Junikut*. But the rule remains as a dead letter out of use. Inter-village relations today are in reality governed by the municipality system of Deçani. The *Oda e Junikut* has no social function anymore. This seems to have happened with a lot of the provisions which deal most directly with administrative and political structure. The duty to take revenge is a practice now dead and buried in Isniq. Few probably would regret that, but it indicates a fundamental development in governmental and authority structures in the society of Western Kosova. The rule is still there. If asked, people will say that a primary duty of a man is to kill the murderer of a brother, son or father. "We have to fight!" But nobody does so any more. Courts, judges, police and prisons have taken over the handling of crimes. People know the traditions and their rules, but on the level of social interaction they do not practise them all anymore.

What is alive today of the old legal customary structure is more what could be termed 'codes of conduct.' This is the field where the public law code cannot prescribe any particular behaviour – it represents in a basic sense their 'culture.' And as such it seems to be very strong and with a tremendous capacity for survival, because at that more private level it concerns the identity of the people as an ethnic group.

To refer to rules is to state what is 'Albanian' as opposed to 'Serbian, Montenegrin,' etc. In the post-war Yugoslavia we think that this question of ethnic identity has functioned as the framework within which the necessity of keeping certain traditions and their rules alive has been placed. 'These are our customs' has been a defence against an increasingly more imposing macrostructure. Formerly it was to a large extent conceived of as a Serbian dominance. It is very characteristic that since 1968 when the

hegemony of Slav culture was reduced in Kosova, and the Albanian language and culture appreciated, the attitude to change and modernization in the form of, for example, university education was drastically altered. The possibility that 'Albanianness' can be recodified and expressed in terms of participation in modern institutions and social settings produced by industrial society has been accepted as an alternative. The existence of the country Albania has of course also contributed to this. Nobody in Isniq doubts that Albania is Albanian in a very fundamental sense, whatever their opinion about the regime might be. Albania's stubborn independence, combined with a strategy for industrialization and development in general, has definitely had an impact on the image of how wide a span a redefinition of an Albanian cultural identity may be

The peculiar thing about all this is not the fact that Isniqians try to express their identity through referring to their customs, which is done in most parts of the world. The particular thing about it is the close connection between the concept of custom, tradition, and that of the *ligj*, e.g. law. It endows customary ways of behaviour with an imperative status. To identify culture with law is a very self-assertive way of saying 'What we do is right and the way it is done is how it ought to be done.' This self-confidence bears witness to a society which was self-contained and relatively egalitarian on the village level. 'A man's life whether it be good or bad is worth the same.' It is the product of a society with no direct interference at the local level from ruling circles of another class (Krasniqi 1972).

The Albanians were subject to the Turks. In the Kosova region practically everyone converted to Islam. But even Isniq seems to have been without Turkish influence in village affairs. The Turkish system had its stronghold in the towns. The domination started after the conquest of the Balkans at the Battle of Kosova in 1389. Their administrative structure, which will be described later, allowed at the beginning a high degree of local autonomy (Stavrianos, 1958: 114). The villages elected their own leaders. All the other officeholders were appointed centrally. Their system was based on a feudal military aristocracy - *spahis* - who were granted fiefdoms in the conquered lands which were claimed as property of the Empire.

The *spahis* came from a stock of distinguished Muslim warriors, who were thus rewarded by the Sultan. They had in return to defend the territories of the Porte. They were first called 'Lord of the land' (*sahibi erz*) but later during the 16th century also 'lord of the raya' (*sahibi rayet*). (Raya was the term for the conquered subjects.) (Pollo and Puto 1974: 103). The power of the *spahis* grew and their positions as well as their property *timars* grew and soon became hereditary (Stavrianos 1958: 86). To counter the potential personal power of the *spahis*, the Sultan created a parallel system composed of administrators directly appointed by the centre. These were originally non-Muslim slaves. They also had land granted in order to support themselves, but their holdings followed the office and never became hereditary (Stavrianos, loc. cit.).

The aim of the Turks was to extract rent and tax from the subjugated peasantry in order to keep the system intact. The kinds of dues differed according to which type of holding the peasants were living on, but common for all was the tithe – one tenth of the agricultural production. The Christian *rayas* were worse off as they had to pay a head tax, i.e. a sum for each male (*haraç*), (Ali Hadri 1974: 14).

Some significant exceptions to the administrative procedures were found in the mountainous areas where the Turks could not subjugate the populations. This was the case in northern Albania where "the Ottomans encountered so much resistance that in the mid-sixteenth century they granted complete autonomy and tax exemption in return for contingents of fighting men." (Stavrianos 1958: 101). Each family should contribute one boy to the service of the Porte, and these Christian youngsters joined the ranks of the Janissaries (Ali Hadri, loc. cit.).

Their kinsmen, however, continued to live even more isolated lives than before. Since the Turks declared the valleys and the plains as the property of the Porte, and donated them to their royal vassals, the population could no longer use them as winter pastures. They had to retreat into the mountains where they developed the so-called Albanian tribal system.

### **The so-called Albanian tribal society**

‘ ... one of the outstanding facts about the Albanians is their lack of national solidarity. This is precisely one of the points that render them most instructive for anthropological study. Here, within Europe, is a population of about one million that never achieved a national state in the modern sense...’  
(Lowie 1947: 506).

The existence of a traditional social structure based on kinship in northern Albania has caught the attention of many Western scholars. This together with the blood feud and the traditional legal code has aroused the enthusiasm of ethnographers.

A fully fledged tribal society in the middle of Europe had been found. The people assigned to the role of ‘tribesmen’ are the mountain dwellers of northern Albania who managed to some extent to remain independent of the Turkish feudal system, as opposed to their less fortunate countrymen who were serfs under the *beys* on the lowlands and in the valleys. These ‘tribal’ *Ghegs*<sup>15</sup> have been described in detail although they were a minority<sup>16</sup>.

One problem with the Western sources is that there is little agreement on what a ‘tribe’ is and which groups of people constitute which tribe. These sources are most valuable for ethnographic information. But the brave field workers have not been too concerned about a precise terminology, and those using their material in an attempt to analyse the social organization in question (as for example Whitaker 1968 and 1974) suffer from this. The organizations which usually are confused are:

1. the *fis* which is nothing more than a patrilineal descent group. It may develop into a clan, or it may represent only a small local lineage. From this for example is derived the word for relatives *farefis* meaning ‘seeds of the *fis*’; and
2. *bajrak* a political administrative unit created by the Turks in the 17th century (Rahimi, 1969: 21). It is important to note that this institution has nothing to do with the kinship organization whatsoever. It was named after the place and not the clan.

An example of how a *bajrak* becomes a clan and a tribe is to be found in an account of how in 1907 leaders in Kryezetit were fined a hundred sheep and an oxen for giving prejudiced judgement. In the edited *Kanun i Lekë Dukagjinit* this is mentioned in an appendix with examples of the practices of the Code given by the original editor Gjeçovi (Gjeçovi, 1972: 123). The social unit in question, named Kryezetit, is there called *flamur* which is the Albanian word for flag, i.e. a native term for *bajrak*. This incident is reported by Hasluck and the *flamur* is translated as ‘tribe.’ She refers to an appendix which is missing in her book, but obviously she had planned to include a translation of Gjeçovi’s text (Hasluck, 1954: 122).

The same incident is recorded by Whitaker, but without reference to a source. He calls the unit ‘clan’ and changes the name to Kryeziu and sets the date at 1908 and not 1907 (Whitaker, 1968: 259). As far as we know, no one else ever refers to any ‘clan’ or ‘tribe’ by the name of Kryezetit or Kryeziu. On Hasluck’s map it is placed on the coastal plain west of Mati, which indicates that it is on ‘feudal’ territory and should be at most a *bajrak*. When Whitaker changed it to the ‘clan of Kryeziu’ he may have had another source or simply have used his judgement, a) knowing that this could in no way be a tribe, and b) assuming that Kryezetit, being a most unusual clan name, must be the same as Kryeziu. This is the name of an old and well known feudal family from Gjakova in Kosova with the title of *beys* but

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<sup>15</sup> The terms *Gheg* and *Tosk* indicate speech groups in North and South Albania respectively, but their languages are close enough to qualify as dialects. Some words are different, but on the whole there is no difficulty in communication between them. The division between the two groups is supposed to be the Shkumbini River in the middle of Albania.

<sup>16</sup> Coon (1950: 4) making an expedition into northern Albania in 1929-30 estimates the ‘tribal *ghegs*’ to have consisted of a population of 250,000 of whom 160,000 were Muslim and 90,000 Catholic. The total population of Albania according to the 1930 census was 1,003,124.

represented as ‘clan chiefs’ of northeastern Albania by Julian Amery (Amery, 1948: 28). Amery again, a liaison officer to Albania during the Second World War, is a much-read source on the society of northern Albania, and much used by Whitaker.

A third system also appears - that of territorial divisions. Sometimes smaller areas with cultural homogeneity are mistaken for tribes for lack of any other descriptions. This is particularly common in the case of Mirdita (Hasluck, Lowie) the heart of the area under the rule of Lekë Dukagjini’s law.

Many of the writers about Albanian society are aware of these distinctions. But in their eagerness to see the northern Albanians as a tribal society they freely use the concept of ‘tribe’ without pointing to any corresponding entity on the empirical level, besides those social structures mentioned above.

We shall give some examples. M. E. Durham, the great expert on Albanian traditions at the turn of the twentieth century, gives the following definition: “The Albanian tribe (*fis*) descends from one male ancestor (or several).” She operates with eight main tribal groups with a large number of tribes, which again are divided into *bajraks*. Hasluck who has collected a wide selection of local variations of the ‘unwritten law’ is less clear. She never defines a tribe, but has 28 of them listed on her map. Some others are mentioned in the text (Hasluck, 1954).

Lowie identifies a ‘tribe’ with a *bajrak* (Lowie, 1947). Another expert on the ‘tribal society’ is C. S. Coon who describes ten different tribes subdivided into *bajraks* (Coon, 1950: 7). A fourth important ethnographic source on this society is Vera St. Ehrlich who does not list any number of tribes, but defines a tribe in the following way: “The *fis* (tribes) live in geographical proximity, often in valleys separated from each other by forbidding rocky mountains.” (Ehrlich, 1976: 247). Whitaker is more correct in his translation of *fis* by ‘clan,’ which Lowie also uses. But both are confused about which groups actually were clans. The former calls Mirdita a ‘clan’ (op. cit.: 255), whereas the latter refers to it correctly as a region (loc. cit.)<sup>17</sup> but writes on the other hand about the Shala tribe which ‘embraced mainly two clans which intermarried.’ The Shala as a region contained two different *fis* or clans called Shala and Shoshi. The Shala *fis* was again under the leadership of two *bajraktars*. Shala and Shoshi intermarried, but not the two *bajraks* of the Shala *fis* (Lane, 1924: 194).

One reason for the confusion is due to the material itself. It is difficult to structure the Albanian society into orderly categories. Under the heading of tribal society is concealed a substantial variety of social forms which differ both territorially and historically. To design one model of the northern Albanian social structure as being valid for all times and all places is virtually impossible, although some basic characteristics are common throughout history and across local communities (Rrok Zojzi, 1962: 17).

Our purpose is to understand approximately how one particular region, that of Shala in Malësia e Madhe, was organized at the time when the ‘three brothers’ left, which we assume was at the end of the 17th century. In order to do this, and to understand the further development of the patrilineal structure in Isniq, some basic distinctions must be made between different levels of social organization in the North Albanian community.

## The *fis*

When Albanians themselves discuss the social structure of the *malësorë* they call it a *shoqëria*

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<sup>17</sup> Mirdita is a region. To deal with it as a ‘tribe’ or ‘clan’ because of certain natural boundaries and uniformity in dress, is as absurd as calling the people of a similarly isolated area in Norway, Setesdal, the ‘tribe or clan of Setesdal.’ On the social structure of Mirdita, the sources are personal communications from Professor Zef Mirdita and Gjergj Rrapi from the University of Prishtina. Similarly Kolë Shtefnji gives a short outline of the structure of Mirdita. Out of a total of twelve *bajrakë*, three were called *bajraks* of the *fis* and did not intermarry. They were the founders supposed to be related to Shala and Shoshi. The story tells of three brothers who migrated from Malësia e Gjakovës. The eldest took the saddle (*shalë*), and the second the sieve (*shoshë*). The youngest inherited nothing and said ‘*Për mue kjoft e mirë dita.*’ (For me there is nothing but good day.) (Shtefnji, 1963: 275).

*fisnore* (a *fis* society). As a general term in Albanian *fis* means a patrilineal descent group (Dojaka, 1974: 44; Marmullaku, 1975: 82; and Hasluck, 1954: 131). It is usually described as a group of related households tracing descent in the male line from a common ancestor. This group may be very small as in southern Albania, where there is a shallow depth in the genealogy of a patrilineal group, and large in certain areas of Kosova where they mention *fis* as a group of families within a village comprising at most ten households (field notes from a visit to the village of Bellaçevc near Prishtina).

But it may also develop into a clan subdivided into lineages localized in one or several places. This is the case in the area called Malësia in the North. These groups are the only ones that could in any way qualify for the description 'tribal.' The most frequently mentioned clans like Shala, Kastrati, Hoti, Bytyçi, Shoshi, Kelmendi, Shkreli and other groups as Gashi, Krasniqi, etc. are found there (Rrok Zojzi, 1962: 41; Durham, 1928: 19). These groups were also called *male* (mountains) as geographical designation and were sometimes identical with one *fis*. People from these clans migrated to Kosova and founded localized lineages as in the case of Isniq.

This clan region can be said to end roughly where the valley of the River Drin divides it from the next region called Dukagjini or Leknia (Rrok Zojzi, 1962: 31). Here begins the area where the canon of Lekë Dukagjini reigned, whereas the Malësia people had their own code called *Kanuni i Maleve* (Code of the mountains). In this region areas like Mirdita, Dibra, Merturi, Has, Berisha and Luma are situated. The *fis* organization is more complex than in Malësia as there are many *fises* meaning local lineages.

Because of this wide variety of usages of the term *fis*, it can only be translated as a 'patrilineal descent group' or shortened to 'agnatic kin.'

The Isniqians insist that they come from Shala, but exactly which part of it they do not know. But their original land was later donated to the church (Keq Tafa). This migration must have taken place some 11 to 12 generations ago, which means approximately 350 years ago. That places it in the 17th century. This myth of the origin corresponds well with other information. Durham visiting Shala was told that eight houses in the region near Abati belonged to the original inhabitants *anas* (lit.: indigenous) as opposed to the *të ardhurat* (the new arrivals). The remnants of the *anas* were said to have moved to Deçani, which might mean Isniq (Durham, 1928: 26).

This took place in a period of overpopulation of the mountain regions. The Turks had confiscated all plains and valleys and donated them to their office-holders *spahis* and *beys*, so they could no longer be used for winter pasture by the mountain dwellers or as agricultural land either. The *anas* were assumed to be agriculturalists, whereas the *të ardhurat* were nomadic shepherds originating from Bosnia (Zojzi, 1962: 22). According to one author this latter group arrived in the 15th century, probably as a result of the Turkish conquest. On the whole, this invasion caused a heavy migration of the Balkan populations. Kosova lost a large portion of its Serbian population, and the Albanians retreated into mountainous areas. Both Durham and Zojzi (op. cit.) report how, for example, the *të ardhurat* in Mirdita had left their home in the Rrafshi i Dukagjinit in order to escape the war, particularly the Mount Pashtrik area near Gjakova.

Some of them participated in a second migration to the Shala region, and settled in Leshnica. These were the original groups of Shala and Shoshi referred to above. Later the Gimaj and Lekaj joined them. These people kept their customs from Gegënia and also their costumes (Zojzi, 1954: 42).

At the beginning, the *anas* and the *të ardhurat* seem to have led a symbiotic existence as they utilized different areas. But when land became scarce and the population grew, the *anas* were overrun by the *të ardhurat* who had an efficient *fis* system.

In the 17th century, people started to migrate down to the lowlands again, both to the western and the eastern plains (Zojzi, op. cit.: 40; Zamputi, 1959: 5; Coon, 1950: 47). From Shala they went to the Deçani area (*Kosova dikur e sot*, 1962: 628). Those who migrated were said to be the *anas*. The indigenous population of the region is supposed to have been 'small and dark' according to Durham, who also found the Shalas she met in Danj of that type. Physiognomy is not much to go on, but the Isniqians are definitely less 'small and dark' than all other Kosovars, with an amazingly large number of 'tall, blond and blue-eyed' people. They themselves say that they descend from the Pecaj (according to Keq Tafa) or the Gimaj (according to Miftar Dauti). The Pecaj seem to have been among the Shalas who came from Mirdita, whereas the Gimaj was the group from the same area who joined them later.

We have analysed this story from Isniq thoroughly as it demonstrates the high degree of migration which actually took place in the northern Albanian territory due to the Turkish invasion. It is

likely that the forefathers of the Isniqians settled in three different places in the early Turkish era, which also seems to be the case for most other groups. Without understanding the historical conditions created by the Turks, it is practically impossible to grasp how the local organization was generated, despite the fact that Turks did not necessarily interfere on that level. For the Shala people this was a set of conditions they had to adapt to. The Turks represented the limits to growth and expansion for the different communities. The Turks represented the conditions that contributed to the formation of the patriarchal societies. The mountain dwellers may have lived in isolation, but not without influence from outside.

### **The *bajraks***

From the period immediately prior to the Turkish conquest, all trace of the Isniqians is lost, but very probably it was also a period of mass movement and migration. The times were not much more settled than during the Turkish era, and some believe it was even more insecure as the region was subject to a continuous succession of invading armies punctuated by wars between local feudal lords (Stavrianos, 1958: 112).

When the Turks arrived they literally cut off the heads of this native aristocracy and erected their own feudal order. In the mountainous areas they created the *bajraks* previously mentioned. These were administrative units, whose duty it was to furnish the Turkish army with additional military forces, so-called *çetas*. The leader of the *bajrak*, the *bajraktar* (standard bearer) had the duty to call one man from each house in time of war. His formal responsibilities related only to warfare. He became the link between the central power and the autonomous local communities. This office has often been mistaken for that of a 'tribal chieftain' as the real power of the *bajraktars* was quite substantial in certain areas. This was notably not a sign of a further developed tribal society, but more of a local differentiation which took the power out of the hands of the traditional village authority - the *pleqësia*. A strong *bajraktar* meant a community leaning more towards a feudal type than that of a lineage society (Ivanova, 1960: 99). The really powerful ones were found not in the most typical areas like Shala and Shoshi, but in the Dukagjini region in places like Luma and Dibra, where these men had privileges and lived at a much higher standard than their somewhat poorer countrymen (Amery, 1948: 20; Hasluck, 1954: 112; Coon, 1950: 30). They are called notables, nobles and feudal leaders. The title of 'standard bearer' which is the meaning of *bajraktar* was won mostly in battle, but thereafter it became hereditary from father to son, or some other close relative if there was no successor, or if the sons were too young to take office.

For the lowland territories the Turks created the above-mentioned *timar* system which later during the 17th century changed to *çifliks* or tenants on sharecropping contracts. They worked the land and received half the production if they provided animals and implements themselves, and one third if they provided their labour only (Rahimi, 1969: 29).

The *çiflik* system seems to have taken over at the end of the century, which coincides with the defeat of the Turks at Vienna in 1683. At that point their heyday was over, and the empire slowly deteriorated into local feudal holdings. In the case of Albania this process, which included constant rivalry and strife between different feudal lords, culminated in the creation of the two great *pashaliks* - that of Ali Tepelena of Janina and that of the Bushatlli - with their seat in Shkodra at the end of the 18th century (HPPSH, 1969; Pollo and Puto, 1974; Kristo Frashëri, 1964). The titles which the different power holders gave themselves were *pasha* and *bey*. *Bey* had originally been the position of headman of a *sanjak* or *eyalet* - the two main territorial divisions - but was later taken by important feudal families which no longer were anybody's servants but their own.

There was also a parallel Turkish administration, but it had little influence in comparison with the power of the local *beys*. This led to the expansion of the holdings of these feudal lords and to the subjugation of increasingly more peasants under the *çiflik* system. The *beys* and *pashas* fought each other - with the peasants as soldiers sometimes in alliance with the Porte, and at times against it (ibid.).

To counter the dissolution of the empire, the Porte had in the end to take measures against the power of the local lords, which resulted in a set of reforms in 1839, given the name of *tanzimat*. In

accordance with the *tanzimat* the property of the local feudal aristocracy was confiscated and put under the control of the central power which was represented by a new set of administrators sent from the Porte. The old *beys* were replaced by *mutezarifs* of Turkish origin. They continued to levy tax from the peasantry and invented an increasingly larger number of dues to be paid. The kind of fees and taxes to be paid was decided locally except for the obligatory tithe to the state. In addition they instituted the *nizam*, a 7-9-year period of military duty for all grown males (ibid.).

The peasantry thus became formally free, but the tax burdens, lack of male labour, combined with low prices for agricultural products, made them bankrupt, and many had either to migrate or to settle as *çifçi* on the Sultan's land. It was not long before the aristocracy had been able to buy the liberated area and build themselves up again, and at the turn of the century they were in reality back in power. But they were then in opposition to the empire, which led to various uprisings and alliances against the supremacy of the empire.

Among the Albanians several national movements grew up against the supremacy of the Turks. They were mostly led by Albanian *beys*, although this group was split, but had popular support from the peasantry and the artisans. Best known is the League of Prizren of 1878, an alliance formed in present-day Kosova, and at that time the 'Vilayet of Kosova.' One man from Isniq even spoke at that meeting, Shaban Sadiku. Two other men, Isuf Haklaj and Sali Fasli Kukleci are supposed to have held the flag when Kemal Bey Vlora declared the republic in 1912. The above-mentioned (Chapter 2) Ali Musa likewise fought the Turks and the Montenegrins under the leadership of the Kosova hero, Isa Boletini. Isa was himself not a feudal lord, but only an *agha*, an honorary title given to persons from the upper strata of the peasantry. Besides that, he was of the Shalas, i.e. 'almost from Isniq.' But his compatriots were from the *bey* families in Gjakova, Peja and Prishtina. Let us recapitulate the main outlines of historical events:

1389	The Balkans area conquered by the Turks at the Battle of Kosova;
15th century	Albanians take up resistance under the leadership of Skanderbeg and keep the Turks out for half a century until Skanderbeg's death in 1468. Migration takes place into the vacant areas of the Albanian mountains by other Albanians from the Dukagjini plain, as well as by Bosnian nomads from the North.
16th century	The conquered territories are divided into <i>eyalets</i> and <i>sanjaks</i> ruled by representatives of the Porte - <i>beys</i> of various rankings as well as other officials. Military defence and the maintenance of the civil order as well as tax collection is carried out by <i>spahis</i> , military men who are receiving land holdings in conquered territories. The holdings are <i>ziamets</i> and <i>timars</i> , hence comes the <i>timar</i> system. The <i>spahi</i> position becomes hereditary and their power increases.
1603	Important gathering of resistance in Dukagjini in the highlands of Albania, which sends representatives to Venice to ask for assistance.
17th century	The <i>timar</i> system slowly deteriorated to <i>çiflik</i> , i.e. private estates of the feudal landholders. The central power slowly loses control. The mountain dwellers are granted tax exemption and the <i>bajraks</i> are created. The peasants who live in the mountains feel the shortage of land, and people start to migrate down to the plains. The Isniqians arrive from Shala.
1683	The Turks are defeated at Vienna. Decline sets in.
18th century	The empire disintegrates and the <i>pashaliks</i> of Janina and Shkodra are created at the end of the century. The peasants on the lowlands become <i>çifçi</i> , i.e. tenants with sharecropping contracts. They are tied to the land, and are no longer free to move.
1839	The central power initiates the <i>tanzimat</i> reforms, and confiscates local feudal properties.
19th century	The peasants go bankrupt on their small plots and become <i>çifçi</i> once again. The feudal lords with the assistance of the peasantry resist the Turks, particularly after the <i>tanzimat</i> , and are able to build themselves up. The greatest of them benefit from the reform.
1878	The 'League of Prizren' is founded as an expression of Albanian national ambitions.
1912	Albania is proclaimed independent.
1913	The Turks leave Kosova.
1914	After the Balkan Wars, Kosova was defined as part of the Serbian kingdom, founded in

	1898.
1918	The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes is founded.
1929	The Slavic kingdom becomes the 'Kingdom of the Southern Slavs' or Yugoslavia. Important land reforms are carried out.
1945	The Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia is created.

## Economic conditions

What was the life of the highlanders like? There is little documentation of the situation prior to the last century, so we have to draw on those later descriptions. But one man has tried to look into the conditions in the 17th century.

Injaz Zamputi (1959) attempts through drawing on different ancient sources on these areas to reconstruct an economic basis. He describes the mountainous regions as poverty-stricken due to three main factors: 1) land shortage, 2) lack of manpower, and 3) low productivity. We shall go through these and see what additional information there is in other documents like travel reports and monographs. We have already described the land shortage resulting from two historical issues: firstly that all the good agricultural areas in the lowlands were taken by the Turks, and secondly that the mountain zones became overpopulated, also due to immigration. This second aspect - lack of manpower - may seem to be in contradiction of the first, but shortage of land which means overpopulation, may very well go together with a lack of manpower if the latter feature is due to death of men in wars and feuds.

The mountain people were victims of constant attacks by the Turks until the 17th century when the empire gave in and created the *bajraks* which granted autonomy and tax exemptions. Thereafter the mountain dwellers seem to have been continuously engaged in battle against the Turkish military leaders, the *bey*s and amongst themselves. For many, 'death in battle not in bed' was the ideal, as Hasluck tells about the pride of a Shala *bajraktar* none of whose predecessors had died in their beds (Hasluck, 1954: 116). Statistics for the last 120 years confirm the high mortality due to armed struggle (Izmet Elezi, 1959; G. Giordano, 1898).

The local feuds have been mostly over resources like pastures and water. The protection of the family and the general rules about the right of revenge for certain offences, have naturally also played a part. But the predominance of the economic motive seems more likely as most incidents of feuds both inter-village and inter-families reported from Isniq have been over property and resources rather than 'honour.' With the neighbouring Gashi they fought over water, pasture and forest land: *për ujë e bjeshkë*.

Rose Wilder Lane, who travelled to Shala in the 1920s tells that the Shalans jealously guarded their territory to prevent strangers from settling (Hasluck, 1954).

The mountainous landscape of Shala was not able to provide a livelihood for a larger population than was already there. There were not many of them, only some few thousands, and the land was useful only for pasture, as it consisted of mountain meadows and woods (Hasluck, 1954: 5).

These mountain feuds have been mentioned by many, and the northern Albanians have become notorious for their blood feuds. Another traveller in the second half of the 19th century describes a second drain on the male population – that of 'labour migration' or service in the Turkish military apparatus: "It is in fact no exaggeration to say that the only occupation of the Ghegs in their own country is fighting with one another. They emigrate with facility, for the ties which attach them to their families and dwelling places are but weak; and those who seek their fortune in other parts of Turkey easily gain a living by their intelligence which, though it finds small room for display in their native mountains, is really very great." (Eliot, 1908: 395).

This began in the 15th century and at that time it was also combined with the provision of slaves for the Turks. Their administrative and military apparatus was, as previously mentioned, based on non-Muslim slaves to counteract the power of the local Muslim *spahis* (Stavrianos, 1958). According to the sources of Zamputi (Catholic church documents), some areas were obliged to give slaves, and Gashi, being Christian, is mentioned. This may be the same as the duty of the Christian *rayas* to donate one boy



per house to the Turkish army, mentioned by others. He also quotes a source (a traveller, Mark Kryeziu, in 1638), as saying that the better-off families were regular slave traders and would sell anyone to the Turks, except their own children (Zamputi, 1954: 14). After the stabilization of the *bajraks* around 1700, no one seems to have referred to the slave trade in these areas, as the duty of providing contingents of fighting men under the leadership of the *bajraktar* supplanted it. These 'tribal' areas furnished the Turks with a substantial number of men. The Albanians were known as ferocious soldiers, but more of them died in transit due to exhaustion and hunger, than in battle.

These were the commoners, whereas their leaders rose to more honourable positions. Eleven Albanians became 'grand viziers,' i.e. the 'right hand' of the Sultan (Stavrianos, 1958: 85). A Muhammed bey Dukagjini, one of the originally Christian noble Dukagjini family, became first *sanjak bey* in Serbia and thereafter in 1553 pasha of occupied Egypt (Zamputi, 1959: 10). Another Muhammed *bey* in the Turkish service founded the Albanian dynasty which ruled Egypt until Nasser overthrew it in 1953.

How the mountain people actually made a living is not described as thoroughly, but they all had animal husbandry as their main occupation. This seems to have been more or less the only means of livelihood in Malësia, whereas the Dukagjini people who had brought agricultural traditions with them from the lowlands where their ancestral home had been, combined it with crop growing. 'The mountain dwellers go for the tail of the sheep whereas the Dukagjinis go for the handle of the spade,' is a proverb quoted by Rrok Zojzi (1962: 35). Their diet, which lacked agricultural products, was supplemented by gathering blueberries and chestnuts (Zamputi, 1959: 6).

An important supplementary source of income was *hajduk* activities, i.e. the robbing of commercial caravans that passed through the Albanian highlands. According to Zamputi's sources, this was a strategy for survival, rather than a pastime (Zamputi, 1959: 8). These robberies have become notorious with other travellers in that area, as most of them describe their fear and suspicion towards the local population, as they ventured into the tribal zones, to inspect the state of the Turkish occupied areas.

One of them wrote: "Of all the haunts where the cowardly brigand firing from his ambush plunders the industrious and defenceless, none is now more notorious than the northern corner of Dukagjin; and here the Porte cannot even keep up the show of order which elsewhere whitens the sepulchre of freedom" (Mackenzie and Irby, 1877: 63, vol. 2). That was particularly a comment on her travels in the Isniq areas, but others have described similar reactions in other parts of North Albania. These *hajduk* activities bear witness to the lack of control that the Turks had over the Albanian territories even in lowland areas like the Dukagjini Plain. Elsewhere in the Turkish areas they obviously had succeeded in defeating the *hajduks*, as she gives the following description of the part just south of the Kosova region: "Here and there on the road we perceived some small ruins but heard that they are not old, only *kullas*, which, till lately were tenanted by the *hajduks*. Instead of the *hajduks*, their next of kin, the *zapties* (Turkish patrol: BB) now hold a *kulla* on the highest point of the pass." (Mackenzie, 1877: 136, vol. 1).

Zamputi mentioned that the booty of the robberies was not the private income of the *hajduk* himself, but was given to the village elders or the headman of a lineage. He thinks that unequal distribution from this surplus-bringing activity contributed to social differentiation. Particularly in the Dukagjini area where most caravans passed, there developed a privileged strata. Some elders and *bajraktars* were given tribute by the peasantry (Zamputi, 1959: 19).

The degree of social differentiation seems to have varied from place to place as well as the degree of control of the Turks. Shala was according to Lane (1923: 43) an egalitarian community which did not know private property. 'How can anybody own a house or the ground?'<sup>18</sup> It was divided into two *bajraks*, one in upper Shala around Thethi and the other in lower Shala. The *bajraks* seem to have become convenient categories for the subdivision of the *fis*. It is characteristic that the categories literally grew with the social group. When the *fis* becomes too extensive, new subdivisions have to be found. In Shala,

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<sup>18</sup> This is partly countered by two facts: firstly Hasluck mentions that the 'upland meadows of Okol in northern Shala are owned by various wards of the Thethi – one by each.' Hasluck, 1954: 112). This may be a question of the customary right of usufruct rather than property - in the sense that they were free to do whatever they wanted with it.

these were identical with the *bajraks*. The *bajraktar* was not in a privileged position; he got a double ration of food and money in case of war, but had no more property than others (Hasluck, 1954: 123).

But the *bajraktars* were of course endowed with prestige and respect and they came to function as local leaders. The *bajraktar* had no legal power. That was in the hands of the *pleqësia*, the old men. But the *bajraktar* seems to have been the representative in relation to the outside world, as he was the appointed contact with the Turks. In some areas there came to be a privileged position as in Dibra, Lura and Luma. In Mirdita they had no *bajraktars* according to our sources, because of the leading family there: the Gjon Markus or Mark Gjonis, depending on which was the first name. The title of the head of this family was 'captain,' but he also called himself 'prince' at times (*prenk*).

Otherwise the autonomy of these mountainous regions seems to have been maintained throughout the Turkish regime, and the descriptions from most British travellers at the end of the 19th century indicate a fairly free position. 'Wherever in the empire can the subjects sit and negotiate with the power, rifle in hand?' (Eliot, 1908). One of them remarks on the situation when he entered Shkodra, the capital of the northwestern Vilayet of Shkodra<sup>19</sup> in the 1890's that: "This establishment (Turkish police, BB) is marvellously polite to the armed natives who cross the bridge bristling with rifles and daggers and smoking contraband tobacco, but asserts its authority by ransacking the baggage of harmless tourists." (Eliot, 1908: 385). "There is a Turkish Governor, a few troops, and a customs house, but otherwise Turkish law and institutions are not recognized ... No taxes are paid except the tithe and that only occasionally, and more as a friendly act than a debt which can be claimed of might ... the *vali* (governor BB) is assisted by a Tribal Council, composed of delegates from the chief tribes, who meet at Scutari (Shkodra, BB), and are consulted by him." (Eliot, 1908: 390).

Later the control seems to have been strengthened. As another traveller who went to Shkodra somewhat later narrates: "All that the gendarmes have been able to do so far is to insist that rifles shall be deposited at the police post outside Scutari before the owners enter the town. This explains what at first puzzled me - why the men in the street of Scutari (Shkodra, BB) and in the Scutari bazaar were decorated with belts full of cartridges and yet no guns or rifles were in evidence." (Edmonds, 1927: 276). This confirms what Isniqians have recounted about entering Peja. They had to give their rifles to the police (*zaptie*) at the entrance to the town.

### Land, labour and surplus in Isniq

As mentioned in the Introduction, the problem in former times seems to have been one of breeding enough male labour power. The population growth was low, and some families and villages were lucky enough to 'grow' whereas others did not multiply. This is exemplified by the fact that there exist four families in Isniq which are not of the Shalas. We have the same tendency to talk of Isniq as 'coming from three brothers,' when strictly speaking all but these four families do. These families, the Bojkajs, were already there when the Shalas arrived, and they were of the Thaqi *fis*. They never grew any larger than they were at that time. When asked, they insist that none of their kin migrated. They just did not 'grow.'

The same is true of Lebusha, a much smaller village than Isniq is today. It 'did not grow' as the

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<sup>19</sup> The *vilayet* was the new territorial division that succeeded the old *eyalet* after the *tanzimat* reforms. The *vilayet* comprised other territories than the old *eyalets* as the Turks made an attempt to mix Albanians with other nationalities in order to counteract a united national resistance. It was the experience with the self-made *pashaliks* that made this measure necessary. The *vilayets* containing Albanian inhabitants were those of Shkodra, Monastir, Janina and Kosova, the latter established as late as 1868. Because of Kosova being a centre for Albanian national movements at this time, the Turkish administration headquarters were moved several times, first from Prizren to Prishtina in 1878 and after that to Skopje in 1888. It was at this point redivided into six *sanjaks* - among those that of Peja. The *sanjaks* were again subdivided into *kazies*, one of which was the *kazie* of Peja with 190 villages. One village was Isniq, as Deçani belonged to this division (Rahimi, 1969: 5).

legend told in Chapter 2 accounts. Good fortune for a village or a lineage in former times was to have many men, to grow and grow. And this has become the tragedy of today, because the relationship between the two main factors of production - land and labour - have been reversed. In the past, land was plentiful and labour power scarce; today the opposite is true. The scarcity of land is part of the cause of the economic crisis in Isniq. The population increases at the same rate as that of any developing country, 2.9 per cent annually. There is a legend explaining land and land ownership in Isniq:

“When the same three brothers mentioned earlier arrived in Isniq they were granted land which at that time was uninhabited and uncultivated.<sup>20</sup> These regular battles went on into this century. The last fight with the inhabitants of Deçani was in 1920, recalled by Rexhep Sylja. It was not the most dramatic and dangerous one, as only about fifty men were engaged on each side. The Deçanis won, and no one was killed. The two parties were lying on each side of the river shooting at each other with rifles. They can tell of another battle much more damaging to their village during the last century, when the Gashis attacked and 300 Isniqians were left dead on the roads. This battle was over water from the Deçani river. The winter had seen little snow, and this was followed by a dry spring, so that by summer there was hardly any water left to share. Traditionally the villages bordering a river take turns in flooding their fields through a system of channels made long before records were kept.”<sup>21</sup>

But the Isniqians conquered their mountain territories which were and still are used collectively with customary usufructuary rights granted to the different lineages over different areas. This is the only context in which the three main lineages of the village, the Canaj, Prekaj and Niklekaj have any social function anymore. These three groups occupy three different ‘mountains’ or actually areas in the same mountains.

Whereas the large parts of the Shkodra *vilayet* managed to keep their autonomy and tax exemption, the *vilayets* of Kosova and Monastir were under much harder pressure from the Turks. ‘Odysseus’ writes that: “In these provinces the Porte is loath to admit that the Albanians are entitled to exceptional treatment, and consequently endeavours to subject them to the general regulations respecting military service and the payment of taxes.” (Eliot, op. cit.: 301).

The *çiflik* system continued there, and approximately 40 per cent of the land was in the hands of the feudal families with the peasants as *çifçi* (Rahimi, 1964: 28).

One of the really large feudal land holdings seems to have been that of the Begolli family of Peja. For all practical purposes Isniqians did own their own land. The *bey* managed to extract various forms of rents from the neighbouring Lebusha, but Isniq remained independent. The same was true for the village of Strelc. There was a difference between peasants who paid only a tax, and those who paid rent to a landlord as well. Isniqians were among the former group. They were not under any kind of feudal

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<sup>20</sup> A village existed prior to the arrival of the three brothers, with the Serbian name, Istinići. We learn this both from villagers today, and from Hammel (1976) who analysed the census data from the Deçanski Chrysobulle of 1330 (charter drafted by King Stefan Deçanski). According to the villagers, Isniq at that time was situated further towards to the monastery of Deçani, which was where the Bojkajs originally lived. They were already settled there when the monastery was built in 1327-35, as the family contributed with 12 kosaq (four hectares) of land to its site. All the names mentioned by Hammel are Serbian, and the Bojkajs say they were ‘Serbs,’ meaning by that of the Serbian Orthodox faith. But they insist that their nationality was Albanian, as they belonged to the *fis* of Thaqi.

<sup>21</sup> The battle is retold by Mackenzie: “In the year 1844 there was a drought, and the Albanians of Detchani and Streoc turned the river upon their own fields and meadows so that no water reached Istinitzi (Isniq, BB). So the Albanians of Istinitzi go to a point above the monastery where they could turn the course of the river on to their land ... The next day the Albanians of Detchani and Istinitzi both arise, and in the quarrel eight Gasha fall. The Gasha, infuriated, go to Malesia ... and call their tribe to revenge. The Malesians collect more than 1,000 guns, and proceed with the men of Detchani to the village of Istinitzi ... The Malesians, as they come, fire at the village and fall upon the houses; from the houses the fire is returned. Fierce bloodshed begins. Many are killed by shots from the houses, but, regardless of the bullets the Malesians come on like raging wolves, tear and burn down the whole village. The Istinitzians are slain as they run, like terrified wild beasts, from their burning houses, and in a few hours more than 300 corpses fall, while of the Malesians scarce ten escape unwounded.” (Mackenzie, 1877: 339, vol. 2).

contract, i.e. *çifçi* of which there existed three main forms: a) sharecropping contracts, b) mandatory contracts, i.e. payment of a fixed sum of cash for the land, and c) agricultural seasonal labour paid in cash or kind (Rahimi, 1964, loc. cit.). But they paid the tithe, at least now and then. This was by the end of the century collected in cash. Merchants came along and converted the products into cash, which again was transferred to the *bey* (see also Krasniqi, 1975b).

There is an old song about the *bey* in Peja (Asllan Pasha, probably living around 1830, *Kosova Dikur e Sot*, 1973: 148, or HPPSH: 449) who came to collect rent. He gathered five *bajraktars* and rode to Isniq on a white stallion. But there they were attacked and the *bajraktars* killed. Asllan himself was captured and beaten by a Tahir Dervishi (a Mulaj according to Isniqians) and was so worn out that 'Lebusha seemed seven hours away.' The song ends with the *bey* coming home and being scolded by his wife for going to Isniq. By being taken a prisoner he shamed her among all her female friends (D. Shala, 1973: 253).

The Isniqians admit that the incident took place, but deny that they composed the song themselves. They accuse the Gashis again who 'wanted to make the relationship with the *bey* even worse.'

When Isniqians migrated to other places in Kosova they became *çifçi*, because according to them people started to move to Istog, another commune, in the second half of the 19th century as *çifçi*. Some were even granted land holdings there as a reward from the Turks (Isë Bajrami). According to the official history (HPPSH), this was the period after the *tanzimat* reforms when the peasantry had difficulties in managing on the land they had. In the case of Isniq, it may coincide with the point when they reached the borders of their own village and had to expand into other territories. Historians (Rahimi, 1969: 27) also confirm the fact that there was still plenty of uncultivated agricultural land in Kosova during the 19th century available to be taken.

It is important that land was no problem during the Turkish period, and the surplus population could migrate to vacant land. That is how 'half of the village lives outside Isniq' as they say. The arrangement was usually that a family established two households, one in Isniq and another in Istog. These two counted as one and the same family, and they had close relations. There was for example, only one head who might live in either part depending on circumstances. When land reform started, around 1926, it was no longer permissible for families to possess land in villages in which they were not residents. This led to the formal registration of Isniqians in other communities. Some returned, whereas others remained in Istog. However these distant relatives still have grazing rights in the mountains, and a few families use this right, taking their herds up in the summer.

The land reforms included the settlement of Montenegrin colonists into Kosova, probably to pacify the area. Six such families came to Isniq. They belonged to the middle and upper strata of the village, but were not much richer than the others, and did not have much more land. What really created a problem was the confiscation by the Deçani monastery of the upper part of the village in 1927, which made 40 families landless (M. Dauti).

The period between the two world wars, called 'the time of the Serbs' is generally characterized as very bad. People had nowhere to move to, and were mostly poor. Of the 128 families in 1932, one informant, Miftar Dauti, characterizes 41 as 'poor,' 44 as 'middle' and 33 as 'rich,' and 10 were 'very rich.' His definitions are as follows:

*Poor*: they either had not enough land, or no land at all, neither were they able to obtain land on sharecropping contracts. They had no animals, and had to sell their labour power, i.e. survive as day labourers (*argatë*). Among the poor were also families who might have sufficient land, but lacked labour. The poor who could not find day labourers within the village had to migrate to other places and work for the Serbs and Montenegrins. Often they went long distances to do road maintenance work for the state.

*Middle*: they had sufficient land and wealth, i.e. a house, implements and animals. They could produce their own food, but no surplus.

*Rich*: these houses had a lot of labour power, and also sufficient land and horses. They produced for the market and employed seasonal day labourers. ('Very rich' is not defined.)"

It is important that all of the 22 families having 30 members or more at that time are classified

as 'rich' by Miftar, although five of them border on being 'middle.' There are three lineages that dominate this group of more wealthy households: Mulaj, Haklaj and Balaj have 15 out of the 22 families. These 15 are not identical with the village leaders at that time. All those mentioned as leaders were not particularly well off in the 'Serbian' period. But no poor family could ever work itself up into the leading strata, as it could not afford the expenses for hospitality that went with such a position. Likewise those with a leading role require time off from manual work. Some people were able, with the assistance of the family collective, to sit with the other men in the *odas* and learn both history and law, as well as engaging in political intrigues. But wealth did not automatically give a position of influence. Typically enough the answer was, when I asked about who was rich: "The man who is hospitable. We recognize no other form of wealth." Thus a man had to prove himself both as a wise and knowledgeable person and also as a socially responsible person, which meant giving hospitality and keeping an open house. One person mentioned as 'rich' in that sense is Murat Kadrija, the last of the *bajraktars* in Isniq. Everyone agreed that he had no more wealth than others, but his house was constantly open to visitors and he never denied a guest anything. He was living before and through the War, and secretly joined the Communists in 1943, though he never held an official position.

It is of significance that *bajraktars* in Isniq never had great importance. They had a certain standing in war, but the important position was that of *prijës i katundit* or *kreu* or *kryeplak* ('leader of the village,' 'head,' 'main elder' – they are used synonymously) (Mann, 1948). Two families seem to have alternated as traditional leaders until the Serbs got the upper hand over the community: the Tafajt and the Kukleci (Keq Tafa). When we asked people about positions of authority in recent history, answers were a bit confused. But all seem to agree that the Tafajs were hereditary *kyreplaks* (main elders) in Isniq. The Kukleci seem to have taken over now and then when particularly talented men appeared in their ranks.

The first of these was Kamer Kuka, from whom the name Kukleci stems. He is said to have lived some 200 years ago, though one, Coli Tahirsylaj, speculates that it is more likely to have been less than that, as he was the village leader when Asllan Pasha came to collect the rent. This was around 1830-40. He is six or seven generations removed from the living group of males. His grandson or great grandson who, it is unanimously agreed, was the greatest man of Isniq, was Shaban Sadiku (mentioned earlier), who spoke at the League of Prizren meeting in 1878. He was *prijës* (leader) of the village. Shaban Sadiku also became a wealthy man, as he owned 30 hectares of Land in Isniq, another 30 hectares in the village of Dubovik and 150 hectares in the village of Prokall. What he could not work himself, was given out on sharecropping contracts. According to his descendant Selim Kukleci, he was granted the land by the *bey* after saving the *bey*'s life. This great grandson of his, Selim, was the first to graduate from university from the village in 1965.

Another well-off family is the Januzaj family whom the same Coli Tahirsyla referred to as *spahis*. They were granted land by the *bey* in exchange for collecting the tithe in Isniq. They gathered a tenth of the production, and converted it into cash which was passed on to the *bey*.

A descendant of this *spahis* (probably the wrong title) was a certain Shaban Hoxha 'with schooling in Stambolli,' i.e. educated in the Muslim school in Istanbul. That is why he was given the title of a Muslim priest. His adherence to Islam cannot have been very strong, however, as he is one of the few men known to have tasted liquor in the pre-war period. He rose to be chairman of the Strelle municipality of which Isniq was a part, in the 'Serbian' time between the wars. He was also a village leader during the war, but only with administrative functions. His son was one of two persons who graduated from the secondary school before the war, and this boy later became the editor of *Rilindja* (Renaissance) – the daily newspaper in Prishtina. Shaban Hoxha is also one of those universally respected men, although he was in the 'service of the Serbs.' Anyone using him as a historical source will be believed.

Under the Serbs a new position - *miftar* - was created. This was the head of the village council consisting of 18 men, representing different lineages. He was assisted by two others, *odbars*, serving as 'secretary' and 'treasurer.' Typically enough, the Serbs picked someone for the job who was not from the traditional leading strata. Muhj Mehmeti of the Ahmetxhekajs held the position from 1924 to 1944. He was also *këshilltar*, representative to the communal assembly in Strelle. It seems, however, that men from the Kukleci and Tafajs served either as *këshilltars* or *odbars*, but as to which, is not really clear. Various others are also mentioned in these positions, as well as part of the 18-strong village council. It was the *miftar* who had the power. The village council merely served as mediator in interpersonal conflicts.

According to Isë Bajrami, this ‘democracy’ of the ‘Serbian’ period was rather fake, as all the *këshilltars* were illiterate. The administration and police were in the hands of the Serbs and Montenegrins. The Albanian deputies became mere hostages in the system. This was a very hard time for the Albanian population, as they were considered a very grave threat to the unity of the southern Slavs. In Kosova, the *beys* had been of Albanian origin, and the whole group was therefore associated with the Turkish regime. Consequently the Serbian authorities attempted to pacify and colonize the area by settling approximately 17,000 Slav families in the territories inhabited by Albanians. In Isniq, as already observed, they were not very powerful, but in neighbouring Lebusha they acquired more land, and Albanians were their tenants.

Likewise the Yugoslav government signed a contract with the Turkish government for the resettlement of Albanians and Turks in Turkey. This resulted in a colony of Albanians of some hundred thousands mostly in the cities of Ankara and Istanbul. The Isniqians tell about terrorization of the Albanians by the gendarmerie, and cultural discrimination. There was a policy of attempted assimilation towards those Albanians who remained residents. In the few schools that existed, the language of education was Serbian. A few from Isniq went to a school in Strelle (all general historical information from Ali Hadri, 1975).

We have given these detailed accounts of various personalities of the village an extended treatment to illustrate the degree of stratification prevalent at the time. But the rise and fall of families seems to have been quite rapid due to the fact that land was distributed by partible inheritance, i.e. all sons got equal shares. If we take the Shaban Sadiku family, and the Kukleci again, four sons inherited his property. Two got Prokall, one Dubovik and one Isniq. He, along with the son Rama, shared the 30 hectares in Isniq. Rama, too, had two sons, one who was killed in war. The second, Rexhepi, had nine sons who shared approximately 26 hectares, i.e. an average of 2.8 each. Likewise this Rexhepi had a very hard time working to make a living for himself and his large family, so his participation in local politics was limited. Today these nine are not particularly wealthy. But the three youngest by Rexhepi’s second wife secured an education and have, after some trouble, obtained permanent employment.

Some were rich, others poor, but within Isniq itself, everyone in principle had equal rights. Outside Isniq, however, during the Turkish period, some were ‘half feudal,’ whereas others worked as *çifçi*. Ali Musa (mentioned above) settled as *çifçi* in Istog commune, working for a landowner from Isniq. Later he returned to the village to become the family shepherd. This movement between different settlements seems to have been the common practice at that time.

### **The political economy of the patriarchal family system or the patriarchal mode of reproduction**

The people from Isniq originated from Shala, and apparently kept a *fis* system as superstructure, but differed from their remote relatives. Rrok Zojzi sums up: “The groups in Malësia had their economic base in animal husbandry and performed agriculture as an economic sideline ... whereas the groups on the coastal plains and on those of the coastal plains and on those of Kosova and Rrafshi i Dukagjinit had from the beginning their economic roots in agriculture, and animal husbandry served as an additional activity. ... The groups in Malësia and Leknia (i.e. Dukagjini, BB) retained much more markedly the remnants of the *fis* system, whereas the groups on the plains both east and west, had a family society with various origins from *fises* combined with territorial unity” (Zojzi, 1962: 24).

What we loosely would label the ‘patriarchal mode of reproduction’ is precisely the ‘family system with *fis* origin but combined with territorial unity.’ It is a way of organizing economic and social activity on the fringes of a feudal system. The mode is dependent on the family or household as the base unit in the wide sense, which means that all social functions performed were organized with the family as the point of departure. The social structure of the community was the aggregate result of these domestic units and their common activities and decisions, and there was no overriding authority or organization which was delegated functions in which the families had no say. In the *fis* society, or a society based on kinship, the important social level was lineage, as this was the property-controlling group. Likewise Shala

society comprised and united several local communities.

We have avoided the concept of 'mode of production' because it is difficult to isolate a production and reproduction unit, outline its social dynamics and call it a 'mode of production,' when many of the social and economic conditions under which this 'logic' is established are given by an overriding structure of a feudal system like the Turkish. Perhaps the Malësia was autonomous enough to qualify as a separate 'mode of production' - we do not know, but Isniq society certainly was not. Its relation to land and labour and lack of opportunities for expansion and development were determined by the strength and weaknesses of the Turkish system, at the same time as it kept its internal autonomy. This means that we agree with those who have criticised attempts to establish 'modes of production' that have as the point of departure a single economic unit like Sahlin's 'The domestic mode of production' or Chayanov's general concept of a 'peasant economy.' But we think that the levels of production and reproduction have been confused in these cases, and see the absolute necessity of descending to the 'single unit level' in order to analyse the particular dynamics which are generated by the conditions created by a larger society as well as particular constraints and determinants which these social units produce themselves. In this we try to follow Meillasoux who is the one to point out the importance of reproduction in societies where human labour is the dominating force of production. He discusses it for 'tribal systems' (Meillasoux, 1975 and 1972) but the model can very well be applied to all kinds of 'labour-based economies.'

Isniqians created and lived in a social and economic dynamic of their own, which must be analysed as such. They were largely independent of the Turkish feudal order but at the same time limited by this society.

It is also important to note that the way we thus use 'reproduction' is wider than the general concept used in anthropology (Goody, 1976). We do not only include the reproduction of humans, i.e. demographic phenomena, but have in mind the conditions for reproduction of the society as a whole. This includes what have been called the domestic development cycles, i.e. how an economic unit maintains itself over time and over crises presented by nature and uneven development of available manpower. Since we deal with units which are combined production and reproduction units, as well as units of consumption, the reproduction or 'problems of maintenance' of these units deal of necessity with all these aspects. They can in this case be separated only analytically. Empirically on the other hand, many of our 'problems of reproduction' will deal precisely with the reproduction of human labour, and thus cover much of what, for example, Goody has been studying. This is made evident by the analysis of what was important for the economy, i.e. human organization rather than technology.

What we label the 'mode of reproduction' can thus be defined as: 'The way an economic unit maintains itself and possibly expands, i.e. simple versus expanded reproduction under a certain mode of production.' Depending on the economic system, this reproduction with its cycles may comprise large segments of interacting economic units, or isolated small-scale units. The manner in which the economic units are reproduced is partly dependent on the overriding 'mode of production' and partly on the particular conditions of the unit itself. In one mode of production many modes of reproduction may be found.

In capitalism the two aspects of reproduction - those of capital and human labour - are separated, although interdependent. In a peasant society such as this, these two aspects are 'organically' integrated, and several factors are natural in kind, e.g. demographic growth and yearly cycles. In other words the forces of production are 'given,' not man-created like capital, in the form of machinery. The two important cycles in this society are what we shall call the long and short-term reproductive cycle or the yearly productive cycle versus the generational cycle. In the first, manpower is a constant, and is managed so as best to utilise the resources, whereas in the second, manpower as such is the variable, and the resources have been adapted themselves to the growing number of humans. In the short run, the problems are to make the given set of human beings survive on and produce on a set of resources, whereas in the long run the group of humans changes and the resources have to fit it. If there is population growth, this means that the resources have to be increased.

One problem of long-term reproduction is that of inheritance, and the possibility of employing surplus labour in other sectors of the economy. The short-term problems are often difficult to understand with reference to a limited situation. Why some families consume more or save less than others is often

not understandable from the immediately given discrepancy in social values. But if seen in the light of the long-term reproductive cycle where future income has to be secured, the reason for being 'stingy' may be quite logical, and not in contradiction to social aspirations and participation.

If we want to understand the problems of the 'patriarchal mode of reproduction' we have to take time into account. We think of the period when 'families never split,' approximately around the turn of the twentieth century.

It happened of course that some households were divided, but not as today 'when they split for the sake of convenience or because the women say so!' There had to be pretty serious trouble before they would part from one another. One experienced a split in the village perhaps 'once every ten or twenty years.' It was a sensation and a tragedy, according to the inhabitants.

Some households just remained small, whereas those which grew larger felt themselves privileged and blessed with many strong and healthy males. Everyone agrees that labour power and men in particular were the scarce resource in those days, rather than land. Many sons meant wealth.

We have some fragments of information about the families from that time. Of the twenty-seven lineages existing today we know the following fifteen and the number of families belonging to them in the period 1900-1910. The first number is from that time, the second from 1932, and the third from 1975.

	1900	1932	1975
Balaj:	1	6	17
Ahmetaj:	2	5	13
Ahmetxhekaj:	2	5	12
Bojkaj:	3	4	34
Hakaj:	1	1	3
Haklaj:	3	12	30
Januzaj:	3	6	13
Tahirsylaj:	1	3	11
Kukleci:	2	5	0
Tafaj:	1	2	6
Osëdautaj:	1	6	24
Osmonaj:	2	2	7
Tishukaj:	1	1	10
Pajazitaj:	1	3	10
Zukaj:	1	1	4

Or, 25 *shpies* from around 1900 became 64 in 1932 and 173 in 1975. We take these numbers as verification of the fact that they did not divide much in earlier times. Most households included a considerable number of males. Some of those who were smaller may be explained by the fact that occasional splits did take place. After all, the three brothers had bred some 50-60 households altogether during the first 200 years. The rest may be explained by the 'lack of growth,' i.e. the birth and mortality rates in some families were more or less stable.

What we want to do now is to look at the logic of why they wanted a household to keep growing. We shall try to suggest why they stayed together. They themselves give one main reason: defence purposes. Although we have not described all the armed turmoil in which Isniq was involved, the preceding pages may have given some idea of the usefulness of having several strong men in a family. The *kullas* - fortified buildings clustered in the centre and protected by high walls - bear witness to uneasy times. These were mostly built in the second half of the nineteenth century. Before that they had wooden buildings, log houses, and Isniq was burnt to the ground twice in its history. After the last time, during the strife with Gashi, retold by Mackenzie, they started to copy the style of the Turkish military forts (Krasniqi, 1975a).

The implicit assumption in the following is that the optimal domestic unit sought by all is the largest possible extended family along patrilineal lines. There are six main elements of a structural kind that make this kind of domestic unit optimal:



1. Self-sufficiency
2. Physical division of labour
3. Human beings as the main force in production
4. Land as private family property
5. Wealth transferable through partible inheritance
6. Control over own surplus.

The first three concern the more technical aspects of the production process, and the last three deal with property relations. Together these lay the foundation for the particular relations of production within the patriarchal family - aimed at, preferably, an expanded reproduction of the unit.

*Self-sufficiency.* Not only the community, but the household as such was, for almost every purpose, a completely self-sufficient economy, save for weapons and bullets. They also bought salt, sugar and coffee at the market if necessary, and some of their men's clothing.

They bred their own animals, the plough was wooden (*parmend*), they gathered building materials, including chalk for mortar, for their houses in the vicinity. Implements, utensils and furniture were all produced by the household, even wagons. The wheels had no tyres in those days. Sheep produced wool - even women's dresses were made of wool. Depending on the surplus, they would of course buy either linen or silk from market, produced in other Albanian areas. Silk came from Shkodra, but it is unknown where the linen came from. They produced their own tobacco, and made fire from flint stones and moss. Candles made from animal fat, either bought in Peja or homemade, provided light. Torches, also made at home, were also a common source of light. The present-day stove was non-existent. Fires were made in the middle of the room. Pots and pans had to be purchased. Each man was given a gun on reaching 18 years of age - these, like the men's clothing, were purchased. Salt was of course critical, and though not expensive, it provided a way for the Turkish authorities to control communities dependent on animal husbandry.

*Division of labour.* This multiplex production led to many specializations within each household, and they needed many different specialists. For primary production based on a combination of animals and crops, they needed at least one cultivator (*bujk*) and one shepherd (*bari/çoban*). These had to be two separate individuals, as the herds were in the mountains during half of the year. In addition there were several other functions to be filled: a) Head of the household - administrator, who was responsible for marketing as well as purchasing whenever necessary. He was the representative of the household on various social occasions. b) Carpenter - craftsman who made all the implements and household utensils. These two positions were often combined with either of the above, though ideally they would not be held by the same man. If we add one man as a fighter and at least one extra in case of the death of one of the others, there are five, and if we include an old man to participate in village social and political events, there are six different roles. No wonder they preferred big families. This 'organic' division of labour was of course not only a product of, but also a prerequisite for the family co-operative. When tasks are divided according to type, no one can claim that the work of one is worth more than that of any other. They are all equally dependent on each other, and whether the agriculturalist or the shepherd is more important, provided each does his job conscientiously, is impossible to measure. Once products are marketed, things start to change, because the products of one man's work bring greater value than another's. This can produce status differences within the family, but they may still be dependent on each other.

In other words, we think that a kind of family-subsistence economy is essential to keeping a household together as a large extended unit. The household must take care of the production, circulation and consumption of values. If it gets involved in a wider economic system, it loses control over one of these economic functions and can no longer regulate the material conditions to every member's satisfaction.

*Humans as the main force in production.* They had animals, including draft animals. Few had horses in the nineteenth century - instead they usually used bullocks. But this still requires a fixed amount of human labour: a man must accompany the bullocks. They may save energy, but they do not save labour in the way that machines do. Bullocks cannot replace human beings. As already mentioned, the plough was wooden - *parmend*. Harrowing was also done with the use of animals. But the tedious hoeing and thinning was done by hand. Likewise all the secondary production for wood and wool work was

performed by humans in the household with the assistance of simple implements.

The consequence of this was that men and of course women were needed not only because the land/labour ratio was positive, but also because there were so many other things produced by the household itself. The more people they had, the more they could produce when land was not scarce. Wealth depended on having enough productive workers. Therefore a large family was advantageous in order to fill all the different functions. By having many members, a family's wealth had the advantage of both quality and quantity in its production of goods.

An added advantage was that they thus avoided the consumer/producer crises discussed by Chayanov. An extended family had a high probability of making use of people of all ages, including a sufficient number of productive members. A nuclear family, however, could not be certain of sufficient labour power for its basic needs.

*Property and the control of surplus.* The fact that the land and durables were the property of the producer in Isniq during the Turkish era, and that they did not have to give away any surplus in the form of feudal rent or interest on loans, made the peasant interested in producing a maximum surplus. This equal property structure also meant that the only possible road to success was the household's own production of surplus, converted into social contacts through hospitality. We have seen how most of the influential men came from the better-off strata, although not necessarily the richest. Individual success depended on the backing of a household which could produce a surplus of both animal and crop products. The rules of hospitality set, and still do set, certain minimum requirements for the treatment of guests, which every family fulfils. Those who cannot afford more, will simply limit their socializing to their nearest relatives and neighbours. Thus for a household it was the total surplus which it could produce that counted at the village level, not the relative productivity per man/woman. It is often said that the *robtë* (house folk) of the larger families led a much more meagre existence than those in smaller units, as the head of the household used the surplus for entertainment. The women and children were the ones to pay the price. The more people in the house, the more there were to feed. But it also meant more rations to cut down on in case the social occasion required it. Even today the largest households and those better off in many ways are not those with the greatest consideration for their women. Their kitchens are as simple as in any poor family, and their women as hardworking. The larger families probably also had a higher relative surplus, since they could engage in a wider range of activities. But in agricultural and husbandry activities alone, it was not much more rational for two or three men to work together than one alone. They formed working parties only for hoeing and weeding in order to complete a whole field at one time and thus ensure even growth. This was done mostly by exchange labour, as no one seems to have started to pay the *argat* (day labourer) until the twentieth century. If they could not manage in this way, they gave the land out on sharecropping contracts. Some may of course have paid in kind if they had too few men to return the labour received from others.

The social structure as such which was built on the household as the base unit and one man per house as the system of representation, encouraged the pooling of forces to promote the house through one successful male. This could either be the head of the household, respected as a careful manager and as a generous host. Or it could be a wise old man with expertise on village policy, a respected mediator, advisor, judge, etc. in cases of conflict. Whatever a man's reputation, he still needed the material base of a solid house.

In general any person's status in the community depended on the house from which he came; a well-known personality would reflect credit to the rest of the household. But status was also dependent on his position within the house. It was a basic dilemma for a 'commoner' whether to be of low status in a large and powerful unit, or master of his own, but poor house. And here the question of defence also comes in, because a 'commoner' wanting to found his own little family, would be very vulnerable to attacks both from neighbours and from strangers. He would simply not be able to defend his property in the literal sense of the word. This kept families united, besides providing the economic disadvantage of not co-operating with others. It therefore seems that those who split in the old days, split from very large extended units composed of perhaps several groups of brothers into smaller extended families of only one group of brothers. But someone would always be the poor unlucky one who had either no one with him, or very young brothers.

The effect of partible inheritance. This rule worked well as long as the partners were brothers -

they all had the right to an equal share in their father's property. For this reason they might as well pool resources, as no one would be better off by himself. But on the cousin level, this created problems, as each brother would have an unequal number of male children. These groups of brothers would thus inherit differently depending on how many there were. Although the property was treated as the common source of income as long as any domestic unit was intact, this potential property division represented a conscious choice for each single individual to remain in the collective or split off. It seems that as long as land was no problem, i.e. before the twentieth century, and as long as they could acquire more land with a growing family, they stuck together. But once the land shortage became felt, i.e. after the 'Serbian era' began, this potential of internal conflict undermined the system. Families started to break up. It is worth noting that this was after all the feuds between *fises* had ended. The last was around 1920, and according to Sahit Shala, the *fis* leaders came together under the oak at Lluca and *lidh bësen* (made a truce). This held from that time.

Thus pressure from outside in the form of military attacks, combined with internal pressure from unequal shares in the property, seem to have been the signal for the decline of the patriarchal family.

The concluding hypothesis, given this particular structure, is that in the end, it is the availability of land with the ratio of land to labour which is the generating factor in economic and social change.

#### 4. RELATIONS OF BLOOD, MILK AND PARTY MEMBERSHIP

In Isniq today, the two major bodies of influence are: the elders (*pleqësia*) and the party (*partia*) or the 'League of Communists' as the official title is. In popular village speech the League is always referred to as *partia*. *Pleqësia* is partly a remnant of the traditional hierarchical structure in the village, and it has been in constant competition with *partia* over authority and influence since the war. In the immediate post-war period the *pleqësia* dominated, but today *partia* has won the game. The rivalry between them is no longer bitter. Today's competition centres more on lifestyle, solutions to minor social problems, etc. In the formal political power structure, the *pleqësia* exerts little influence. *Partia* is the unchallenged authority, and as such today, it lets the older people operate in their sphere of competence – knowledge on family matters, village customs and the like. *Pleqësia* guards Isniq's reputation vis-à-vis other villages.

This shift in power was not solely the product of a political game, with the party as a more capable competitor. It is also the result of general development in the economic and social fields. The party represented 'Yugoslavia,' and *pleqësia* local traditions. The party became the symbol of modernisation, and national integration. The *pleqësia* stood for 'Albanian ethnic identity.' But as Yugoslavia developed, Isniq too came into contact with industrialised society and urban values. The ideas represented by the *pleqësia* seemed out of touch with reality, since it derived from a nationally based social structure.

This process has not been without problems. Indeed it has been very painful at times. The roots of the conflict originated in the past. From 1912 onwards, when the Albanians in Kosova were incorporated as part of the 'Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes,' they were resentfully guarding their culture and society against what they felt was a Serbian chauvinistic policy in Kosova. They had reason for mistrust. For example Vladan Georgevitch, the Serbian Minister President who negotiated the partition of the Balkans on behalf of his country published a book, *Die Albanesen und die Grossmächte*, Leipzig 1913, claiming to have made some extraordinary findings. In the introduction to the book he wrote: "dass sie als gewalttätiges, arbeitsscheues, völlig kulturloses Volk gänzlich unfähig sind, einen selbständigen nationalen Staat zu bilden" (that as a violent, lazy and completely savage people, they are totally incapable of forming an independent national state). He likewise informed his readers that there were people with tails living in the Albanian inhabited areas, up to the twentieth century. This was influential on the general attitude towards the Albanian minority in the 1920s and 1930s.

Isniqians were also confronted with repressive measures taken against them by the Serbian army in response to their rebellion in favour of joining Albania. More than twenty Isniqians were killed at that time, and their animals were confiscated.

The official policy in the period between the two world wars was one of assimilation of the Albanians. They had no schools in their own language and illiteracy was almost universal. Health conditions were poor and there was little economic investment in the area. The "governments of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and later Yugoslavia, consistently followed a policy designed to 'correct the national compositions of the old Serbian area'" (Marmullaku, 1975: 138). One measure, as mentioned above, was the settlement of Slavs in Kosova. Many thousands of families of Montenegrins and others of Slavic origin were given land. In the four municipalities of Peja, Ferizaj, Mitrovica and Prizren 228,080 hectares of land were sequestered (loc. cit.) for them.

There seems to be little reason to doubt that the wish of the Kosovar Albanians, at least up to the end of World War II, was to be part of Albania itself. One should bear in mind that their province had been a centre of Albanian national movements in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. Continued repression under the Serbs served to enhance the wish to distance themselves from their new country.

This ‘Serbian period’ made the Albanian population rather hesitant to join the resistance movement led by Tito. It was impossible to know at the time which would be worse - Italian and later German repression - or Serbian supremacy. The Italians had given the western regions of Kosova to Albania which fed their earlier hope of rejoining their fatherland. The aim to reunite with Albania was also manifested within the ranks of the Communist-led partisan movement which managed to gain Albanian support after 1943. In a declaration of that date, the objective of joining Albania is said to have been reached through armed struggle against the fascist invaders ‘joining with the other nations of Yugoslavia and with the National Liberation Army of Albania’ (quoted by Marmullaku, 1975: 145). This standpoint was, however, modified later following a letter from the Yugoslav Party’s Central Committee expressing disapproval of the open attitude (loc. cit.) The question was left untouched. Not until the Fifth Brigade of the National Liberation Army of Albania approached Yugoslavia, did men from Isniq join the armed fight against the Germans.

The Isniqians were not hostile to the Communists, but rather hesitant as the movement was considered to be Serbian rather than Albanian. There were some three or four party members in the village who were protected by the rest and who could work clandestinely against the invaders. A typical attitude of the Kosovar Albanians seems to have been indifference. There had always been foreign masters in their region – why bother so much about these new ones? The Isniqians measure their historical periods by who was ruling Kosova at the time. There is the time of the Turks, the time of the Montenegrins, the time of the Austrians and the time of the Serbs.

The immediate post-war period was not easy either. The schism between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union occurred in 1949, and subsequently relations with Albania were broken. The Albanian minority was put in a very difficult position, as they felt loyal to their ‘fatherland’ as well as to Yugoslavia. At that time, their demands included the right, as a minority, to use their own language, to read their own literature and history, and to use the Albanian flag along with the flag of the Federation. Each republic has its own flag, and the Kosovar Albanians wanted theirs, too.

To label the conflict as one of ‘traditionalism’ against ‘modernism’ would be too superficial. It was also a political controversy among people who believed in socialism, who might have supported Tito, but who disagreed about matters in Kosova. At that time, the Minister of the Interior was Ranković, who was to be expelled in 1966, for, among other things, his responsibility for misdeeds committed against the Albanian minority.<sup>22</sup>

He was head of the secret police, and people tell how this institution harassed them, tortured them and even assassinated some of them. Two people from Isniq were killed. This period of oppression took place in the 1950s and reached a peak in 1956 when “... the secret police in Kosova brought violent pressure to bear on the Albanians to collect firearms – from the many families who possessed them. It was then that Albanian families in Kosova started to migrate to Turkey (as long as they declared themselves to be Turks, they could enter Turkey without any trouble). It is estimated that some 15,000 families took up residence in Turkey” (Marmullaku, 1975: 148). Some fifteen individuals from Isniq fled to Albania in that period.

The situation is merely mentioned to give a background for the existence of factions in the village. There was a certain scepticism towards the ‘League,’ its methods and intentions. This political controversy was mixed with local personal rivalries, and the two aspects are not always easy to separate. Ideologies tend to use people for their objectives, as individuals use ideologies to attain their goals.

The old men’s authority during the postwar period derived from the traditional social organisation. They held positions within the kinship system which originally paralleled the political structure. The ‘Party people’ on the other hand rarely came from families with traditional influence, and they tended to be younger men and were not readily taken seriously by the villagers. They relied on the

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<sup>22</sup> That Ranković was an unpopular figure is shown in the libellous song about him from this time:

Rankoviç, Rankoviç	(Ranković, Ranković
Kemë mendu si kommunist	We thought of you as Communist
Ti na dole si qenë me bisht	You turned out to be a dog with a tail
Puna jotë s’ka qënë hiç.	Your work was worthless.)

external power of the Yugoslav official apparatus. Their trump cards were their contacts in the administration, among political authorities and the police.

In some respects the difference between *partia* and *pleqësia* is not considered very great – as one young man commented: “The old men and the Party may disagree – but one thing they have in common – both stick their noses into other people’s business.”

### **The traditional social structure: blood**

The North Albanian kinship system, which extends to Isniq, is a segmentary lineage system with agnatically related males residing together in various localities. A further discussion of the nature of this so-called ‘Albanian tribal society’ was given in Chapter 3. Here we shall merely explain the categories relevant in the village today.

The segmentary lineage system exists on two levels – as a genealogical chart and as a conceptual structure of social groups. Its ideological bases are the genealogies going back to the three original brothers. These have depth of 11-14 generations. Practically all households contain a man who can trace the successive generations back to one of these ancestors. The genealogical chart provides categories for today’s social relations. Organisational levels are formed in a hierarchical structure corresponding to genealogical inclusiveness. These levels structure social groups that vary in scale and function. When regarded as a kinship group, Isniq – part of the Shala clan – is a ‘localised clan segment.’ On the organisational level this is the most inclusive category. But the fact that Isniq acts for certain purposes as a corporate group within the wider community, is not necessarily in the common interest of the ‘blood.’ Neither is it conceived as such by them. The village is a ‘local community’ with interests vis-à-vis the outer world, independent of kinship relations.

The self-definition of the village as a ‘clan segment’ versus a ‘rural community’ within Yugoslavia, is debated. People today tend to see themselves as inhabitants of Isniq and not as clansmen. Or, as they express it themselves: “We are all of the same clan, but today it means nothing.” Before, particularly under the Turkish regime, clan relations were used directly for political purposes. At that time, the Shala identity had another significance. The Isniqians regard their Shala ancestors as brave and heroic, but usually add jokingly that “there are not many heroes left today.” The opinion is that one cannot distinguish a man of Shala, from, for example, one of Berisha or Thaqi. Behaviour and morality depend on the personality (*mvarët prëj njeri*). To be from Isniq today means primarily to come from a particular village. But one of the peculiarities of this village is the fact that the population is all descendants of three brothers.

This however, does play a role at the social level, because in certain social matters, i.e. marriage and interpersonal relations, institutionalised practises deriving from the clan system are still alive. The village is exogamous, and the traditional rules are applied to settle disputes. On a certain informal level, in matters concerning the separate families, the clan aspect of the village serves as a frame of reference and an overarching structure for interaction. But this never takes the form of united action defined in terms of kinship.

The next level is that of the maximal lineages stemming from the three founding brothers – Canaj, Niklekaj and Prekaj. These three main divisions in the kinship group are merely conceptual categories today. The younger people hardly know which of them their families belong to, but the old historians are informed and have the chart in their heads. They insist that the maximal lineages constituted political and social groups around the turn of the twentieth century. At that time the village was governed by a village council (*pleqësia*) with representatives from each of these lineages which are usually referred to as a *mahallë* or *lagje*. These two terms mean ‘neighbourhood’ or ‘quarter’ and derive from the fact that the geographical settlement in the village once followed kinship lines. All the Prekajs lived in one part of the village and the Canajs and the Niklekajs in other areas. This again illustrates the overlapping terminology linking geographically located groups and kinship segments. The term is the same, but in content there has been a shift from emphasis on kinship to one on locality.

Each of the representatives in the council was responsible for his own relatives' actions, and he would assemble them for discussion on matters of concern to the lineage. This could be mobilisation for battle or economic action like house building etc. It is worth noting that the number of households included in each of these lineages was much smaller than it is today, and thus the group was a unit whose members the leader knew and was able to control. The Canajs, for example, to which the Haklaj families belong, had only some twelve households. The old one says that they can remember when the Haklajs were only two *shpies*. Today they are thirty. There seems to be a certain correspondence between scale and social organisation. Extensive lineages are less integrated than smaller ones.

The next level is that of the minor lineages *bark* ('womb' or 'stomach'). There are twenty-six of these 'wombs' in Isniq, and each contains from four to thirty families. These are real organisational units, and seem to have taken over many of the functions that the maximal lineages performed before. They are integrated groups, not in the political sense, but rather in the social sense whereby the households within one lineage have social obligations towards each other. They also cooperate in performing services for the wider community. These functions are much the same whether a lineage has four or thirty households.

There is a partial exchange of goods and services between the different households, for example assistance in house building, exchange of agricultural labour and loan of animals, seed and sometimes money. It is difficult to refuse help to anyone of the same minor lineage. The older men may remember when they all lived in one house, and shared everything. But the relationship is expected to be reciprocal, although delayed exchange is accepted. In this way the exchange differs from the distribution *within* the household. There goods are contributed according to ability and redistributed according to need. The choice that brothers make as to whether to remain together within one *shpie* or to split up is a choice between different systems of kinship obligations.

They also share certain village duties such as sending representatives to solemn occasions, like funerals. If someone does not take his share, there are subtle ways of sanctioning him. The following is an example. During the Muslim fast of *Ramadan*, the *hodja* (Muslim priest) goes from one house to another and eats the evening meal with the men of the family and their lineage relatives. The *hodja* is an important man, and this meal should be elaborate and include three courses. The *hodja* covers one or two lineages each year and all the men of one lineage join him for prayer and the meal each night until he has been to all the households in one *bark*. In one of the lineages whose turn it was to entertain the *hodja*, one man flatly refused to receive the *hodja* and the rest of the men. The head of the household had retreated to a mountain cottage during the fast, and the younger males could not arrange a reception without his consent. The other families became embarrassed and angry, and decided to teach him a lesson. They simply told the *hodja* that he was heartily welcome to the mountains, since the man was unfortunately unable to get down to the lowlands. The *hodja*, knowing nothing of the conflict, accepted the generous invitation. Then they sent a message to the mountain dweller that the *hodja* had been invited. Since he could not directly refuse a visit from the *hodja*, he had to go through labourious preparations for a dinner in his cottage. This was almost impossible, given the meagre facilities of the cottage. He also had a hard time keeping the room warm, and had to bring up extra blankets, cushions and mattresses to make it comfortable for the guests. The '*Hodja* in the mountains' story provided entertainment for many weeks. Part of the fun was due to the idea of the *hodja* having to go into areas where he usually never treads. A *hodja* moves around in the safety of lowland roads, not in hilly, chilly rural areas. The double-edged humour of the situation made people roar with laughter.

Usually the relatives of the minor lineage celebrate together and assist each other on all major social occasions. These events may be religious feasts as in the above example, weddings or just dinner parties. Being the closest group of agnatic relatives the *bark* are obligatory participants at all larger gatherings. Even if there are strong political and social differences, people try to retain close relationships within the *bark*. This is accepted as moral and desirable by the village. But it may create some complications at times, when a person has divided loyalties. One example of this was the occasion when a young man in the village was going to celebrate the completion of his new house. The man, let us call him Ahmeti, was the son of a famous Communist in the village who died after World War II. The boy was educated and no one knew where he would settle. When he finally chose to stay in Isniq, it called for a celebration. 'League' members were very proud and were invited as a matter of course. But at the same time Ahmeti was from a lineage containing one man who was not so popular among 'League' members.

This man also had to be invited. The get-together evoked rather mixed feelings, as Ahmeti could in no way exclude either of the two opposing sides. They solved it beautifully, however, by staging a most elegant show of Albanian politeness and good manners. Everyone drank, joked and cheered. They complimented each other on the happy occasion. Tears were shed and toasts were drunk to the memory of Ahmeti's father. It all ended with dancing and the burning of shirts and handkerchiefs appropriate on such events. It passed off as a most impressive folkloric evening. There was absolutely no sign of animosity: it even resembled a happy reconciliation, but once home, one of the more cheerful guests commented wryly: "What a joke, what a stupid spectacle."

To what extent the minor lineage keeps together, beyond the more general obligations that they have, depends largely on size. No family can manage without some closely related households to turn to in case of advice and need. This group often corresponds to the *bark* as many of them have less than ten households each. This group of the closest agnatic relatives is usually referred to as *vllazniet* (brotherhood), and is associated with closeness and assistance. It overlaps with the minor lineage in most cases, and the term *bark* and *vllaznie* denote aspects of this social category. On the other hand, if numerous, the minor lineage may also be called a *mahallë* or *lagje*. The *vllazniet* will in that case consist of a subdivision of the minor lineage, i.e. a minimal lineage. The *bark* term is thus reserved for contexts where there is talk about descent, whereas *vllazniet* and *mahallë* are used for groups uniting for different social obligations.<sup>23</sup>

The minor lineages are distinguished by separate surnames which all members carry in addition to their own personal name and their father's name. When someone is referred to in conversation, people may use either the lineage name or the father's name as a designation in addition to the first name. This practice makes it complicated for an outsider to understand exactly who is being discussed, but there seems to be a system to it. A man will often identify himself by his lineage name, for example Ali *Balaj*, being the strong old man of the Balaj lineage, or Rustem *Osëdautaj*, being an elected representative to the Provincial League Assembly from the commune. The most common practice is to call a man by his father's first name. This is certainly the case if the father was well known. It is also a question of identification since older men are better known than young males. If a person is called solely by his lineage name, no one will know which 'house' he is from, unless he is a well-known figure himself. Young boys have to give all their three names in order to be placed, and even their grandfathers' names at times. To refer to persons by their last name can also be a demonstration of respect and deference. Someone may call a young man Bajram Tishuki, i.e. Bajram of the Tishuki lineage, recognizing him as a publicly known figure whom they know. Others and perhaps the older people, will only call him Bajram Sheqiri, thus referring to the son of Sheqir, finding Bajram himself of no special note. People who are rivals in some respect often refer to each other by using the father's name, thus reducing the importance of the opponent. In those cases the rest of the village may call both opponents by their lineage names, as they are well known.

The lowest level in the kinship structure of Isniq is that of the *hise*. This has been mentioned before as a category of people relevant at the household level: in practice this often consists of a nuclear family. Traditionally the concept of the nuclear family was reflected in the term 'a-man-with-his-wife-and-children.' In modern social science literature, the nuclear unit is usually called *familja e ngushtë* (the narrow family) as opposed to the *familja e madhe* (the large family) used for the extended unit.<sup>24</sup> The *hise*

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<sup>23</sup> The most common way of designating the people belonging to the *bark* is perhaps *kushëriet* or cousinhood, when the group is wider than those who really could be included in a brotherhood. It is the *kushëriet* who is invited for dinner, etc. This lengthy discussion of terminology is necessary in order to clarify definitions which are often imprecisely given in general literature concerning Albanians. Some writers mention *vllazniet* as a minimal lineage, others leave the category out all together. Usage varies from place to place, and above all the terms are not totally consistent with social reality. It is therefore difficult to give a single, social institution for the term *vllazniet*. The *vllazniet* may also denote brothers within one household when it is useful for a certain purpose. Or perhaps one could say that these terms in varying usage represent an attempt to standardise the reality of a complex and inconsistent social structure.

<sup>24</sup> This is also common practice among other Balkan groups.



is a 'living patrilineage,' i.e. all the descendants from a living man including wives and children.

Natural demographic processes often mean that a father may die while his sons still have small children. At that point each of his sons will be the new head of separate *hises*. That is why most of these units are nuclear families. But in theory a *hise* may have four generations and contain several nuclear units. The transformation period when the household changes from containing one or two or more *hises* is the critical period for the household. This is the point when the family changes from having a clear, formal hierarchical structure, to consist of several units which are in principle equal to each other.

The *hise* is not a very common word in everyday conversation, as it is most relevant in matters of inheritance. The inheritance rule is formulated *Toka ndahet sipas hiseve* (Land is divided into *hises*). 'Land' actually includes all durables left upon the father's death. The *hise* is a unit associated with property rights, and economic viability. Usually when a *hise* wants to reside alone, the villagers express it in terms of a man 'wanting to be alone with his wife.' Or if there is strife in a family actually consisting of several *hises*, it is expressed as 'brothers who disagree.'

This structure of increasingly more inclusive patrilineally based units, was the foundation for the traditional leaders. To make a career a man would first have to climb to the top of his household, then to exert influence within his *bark* and finally be the representative of the *mahallë* on the village council. Having one of these positions meant that he also had a base for operations in the wider society outside the village. Strangers who came to a household would come into contact with the household head. The most distinguished persons were the ones to greet outsiders and in general represent Isniq vis-à-vis the world. Either they would act on behalf of the whole group in conflicts with other communities, or they would be selected as mediators for individual families who needed advocates in intricate social conflicts. Being a respected elder implied that the person, in addition to having a prosperous household as a backing, also knew traditions and laws intimately. (This was discussed in Chapter 3.) Today, the first function – that of representing the village as a political group – has been assumed by the Party and related institutions. The latter function – that of mediating between conflicting families – is still in the hands of the *pleqësia* although the Party organization prefers to limit and control this part too. The legal code on which the elders base their judgment, may in some cases be contrary to Yugoslav law.

### **The branch of milk – the female negative of male positive structure**

The geographical result of the localised lineage organisation is separate communities with permanent resident males, without any direct kinship links uniting them. The solution to this problem is, as any anthropologist knows, the 'exchange of women' to create alliances between otherwise potentially hostile groups. Whereas the household is woven into a fixed pattern of relations within the village, each family is autonomous in its choice of in-laws. As such, it acts on its own behalf and not that of the village or lineage.

Access to other communities and families through women were the only bonds extending out of the village in earlier times for these monolithic patri-groups. Typically enough, the term for an in-law is *mik*<sup>25</sup> - a word used for 'friend' and 'guest.' The paradox of a patrilineal organisation is that the more consistent it is, the more dependent it becomes on the network the women which are able to create through their contacts.

There is, however, a difference between sisters and wives in their relative usefulness for this purpose. As the saying goes: "When we are evaluating a prospective son-in-law, first we look at his personality, then his family. But when a daughter-in-law is selected, the whole family on both sides is examined first, then the girl." There is a stress on the wife's family, compared to that of an out-married sister. The wife's relatives are treated with more formal respect, and as the quotation goes, examined

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<sup>25</sup> *Mik* (plural *miq*) covers all affinal relations through sisters, daughters and wives. The family of a mother, i.e. a male ego's cognates are called *dajët* – i.e. 'the mother's brother's group.'

much more closely than those of a brother/son-in-law. Ideologically this may be explained by the contribution to the blood which a wife's lineage represents, but this is not a very adequate social explanation. The reason must be that a family ends up being somehow more dependent on this group than on the one a sister marries into.

The only explanation for this seems to be the importance of the wife's network. If the woman is seen as a 'subject' and not an 'object,' in other words analysed as a social person, despite the fact that she has no formal position, the difference is easy to understand. The contacts between men would then not only be a result of an initial exchange with the woman as the symbol of the alliance, but of a continuous maintenance of these relations by her. Then it makes a difference as to what kind of households she may frequent freely without *havale*.

The 'Albanian tribal society' is usually described as one of the most patriarchal in the world. We shall try to show that Isnig, a part of this society, could not be explained nor exist if women were merely objects of exchange linked in a formal power structure. Women move upon marriage. Their children belong to the husband's family. And that is as far as it goes. Women are neither objects in the exchange as such, nor in the further maintenance of the relationships between families. Marriage involves a match between a boy and a girl of whom *neither* has the right to decide whom they will marry. The decision lies with the family – women as well as men. But their influence differs. Who has the final say depends in reality on the relative strength of personality. To be sure, the final result is that the household with a core of men gains another agent of reproduction. But the fact that a woman moves upon marriage to the family of her husband, cannot be generalised to a model of 'wife-exchange' between groups of men.

In our analysis of Albanian society as it exists in Rrafshi i Dukagjinit, we shall not examine neatly structured groups, nor alliances between these groups linked through various affinal bonds. We shall attempt a third approach to see Albanian society as consisting of two separate but interdependent spheres of interaction – that of men, and that of women.

This is done because it seems logical to look at them as substructures in a society where the division between the social world of the sexes is so sharp. It is also necessary in order not to reduce women to mere objects of exchange where girls disappear upon marriage, and wives slide into the secluded kitchen regions. On the other hand, we find it too extreme to view the male and female spheres as separate worlds. They are complementary halves governed by the same set of rules. As such they are both autonomous and interdependent. The dependency relation is also a power relationship, as the patterns formed are potentially contradictory. Certain social measures are taken to see that these structurally based dilemmas do not develop into social conflicts. The measures are subjugation of women, seclusion and legally a secondary status. They are potential 'Trojan horses' within the household, and have to be prevented from acting out that potentiality.<sup>26</sup>

We have given an outline of the male side of the kinship structure and spheres of interaction. The result is an orderly pattern of localised patrilineages. The men are loyal to their 'blood,' but so are the women. Their attachments are transferred to the 'blood,' i.e. from brothers to sons during a woman's lifetime. Simultaneously she is attached to women who again are attached to their 'blood.' The brother-sister relationship is a very close one. The brother is the only man of her own age she has been really close to, and whereas her father gives her away upon marriage, her brother's role is to protect her. There are many stories of how brothers have sheltered and defended their sisters against unfair decisions made by the rest of the family. Nowadays these stories tell of how he gives her money and keeps her hidden when she escapes to get an education or to break an engagement. When sons come of age, they are the ones to protect their mother who has defended them while young. A man admits to crying upon his mother's death, but not upon that of his wife.

A newly wedded young wife has the closest emotional relationship to her own consanguineal relatives. The difference is that while a man's family is in the village where he lives, hers resides somewhere else. She does not know the women of her husband's village, and has no legitimate reason to socialise with them, unless they belong to her husband's closest agnatic group. He on the other hand, has grown up in the village and knows it well. In addition, her relationship with the other women is

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<sup>26</sup> Bette St. Denich (1974) found the same basic dilemma in Montenegrin patrilineally founded households.

potentially one of competition. She is a threat to the mother-in-law, who depends on her sons' support, and to the other wives. Wives are all tied to their respective husbands and children, and not united in a joint venture like the corporation. On the contrary, the more married women and the larger the household, the less important is the new young wife.

The wife is not only a competitor for the attention of husband against her mother-in-law but also against the other men. There is always joking and often embarrassment if a man shows attention and affection for his wife. The old openly say that depending on the support of a woman is shameful (*marrë*). For example, preferring his wife's bed to the company of males in the men's room shows weakness in a man, understandable, but unforgivable. The Isnig ideal of a man is not the Don Juan and eternal seducer – on the contrary. A flirt is considered unreliable, whereas a man who keeps women at a distance and treats them with 'respect' is an honourable person to be trusted in public affairs. To fall in love and to be interested in the opposite sex is a phenomenon everyone remembers from their youth, and it is accepted as something to grow out of. But until that happens one cannot be taken seriously. To let spontaneous inclinations interfere with serious family business like marriage, was unthinkable in earlier times. A boy who was in love, and wanted to approach the girl's family would never admit this to his father. He would tell the mother, who in diplomatic terms and stressing qualities of the family would mention to the father that she has heard about a fantastic girl as a partner for the son.

The word for 'whore' is *kurvë* and is used for men as well as women. This accusation is of course harder on a woman than a man, but a male whore is considered to be contemptible also. A man should be in control of himself and not give in to 'dangerous' feelings like anger, sexual desires, etc. The honourable man is stoic, but preferably with enough humour to smooth out any tensions.

A common entertainment among women, at least when foreign anthropologists are there, is to find out whom a woman loves the most: her mother or her husband.

'My mother' is the proper answer. Some are honest when they reply in this way, others lie, and still others may shock the circle of chatting women by admitting that they feel closer to their husbands. The older women will stress in particular the self-sacrificing nature of mother's love, which deserves to be returned. The youngest and newly wed wives may agree with them, whereas the middle-aged group tends to include the black sheep who disagree.

Likewise when women state the ideal number of children, and quite apart from the fact that most women bear as many as their fertile period allows, the common answer is 'four.' Two boys are needed, in case one should die, leaving no one to work. The other two should be girls, because a girl needs a sister. Otherwise she would be alone in the world without anyone of her own generation to confide in or to seek comfort from in times of despair.

The culturally accepted group for women to move in, without *havale* is thus her own kin group, as in the case for the men. At least one month a year is set apart for 'holidays,' which means that she goes to stay with her mother. In addition she pays frequent visits to other female relatives on occasions like births in the respective households, ceremonial visits, weddings and funerals, or she may just want to see them casually. She usually takes her children with her. In that way they get to know their maternal relatives. These, in relation to the *married woman* are: 1. *nënë* (mother), 2. *motër* (sister), 3. *gjyshe* (grandmother [maternal]), 4. *teze* (mother's sister), 5. *halë* (father's sister). Everyone gets to know these five categories of women personally during childhood, and maintains at least some formal relation with them as an adult. Often they have strong emotional attachments.

We mentioned earlier that the rule of exogamy extends as far as the seventh link of maternal relatives, which in practice implies that none of the girls or boys in these households are marriageable. The social result is a maximal spread of the families from which the women come. Theoretically, married women could come from the same village, but generally this is also avoided. So each of these categories of female relatives represents five different communities.

If the child accompanying her mother is a girl, she will be familiar with these households and in turn add to the visiting circle of *her* mother. In principle a woman brings a network of contacts with eight communities as a wedding present to her husband. If all these acquaintances are alive, she can and should be able to see them casually when she wishes. There may be fewer households if some of these women are dead, or no longer as close. There may even be more, since there are often more than just two girls in a family.

A boy becomes familiar with the same women as his sister, but will also get to know the men, although it will not be his mother who makes the link for him. When he marries, he does not bring these connections as a social resource into a new household. On the contrary, he receives a new set of them through his wife. The 'mother's brother's group' (*dajet*) is important to a boy, but these relations are not transferred to his wife's family in the same way, as she provides him with her family network. A daughter is 'given away,' and they try to secure for her a comfortable home and a considerate husband. She does not move freely among the other women in the new village until years later. As a young bride, *muse*, a stage that lasts for some three to five years, she is constantly under review. She has to prove herself as a mother, i.e. bearer of a son, and as a housewife, *amvise*. She cannot take many liberties and has to be subservient and constantly at the beck and call of all the other members of the household. She is permanently performing in order to win the approval of her new family. In the first years, she cannot be any resource or provide any influence for her brother. His only access to her must be through her husband. He depends on his own relationship with the latter to reach the other men of the household.

The husband, on the other hand, has direct access to several households where he accompanies his wife. He usually does not stay long, and leaves her with her relatives. As such, the wife is a constant source of information about other communities. She is well acquainted with them and their inhabitants from innumerable visits from childhood onwards. Through the confidences of the other women she can obtain information and even more importantly, can understand all the social implications involved. She will never know her husband's village in the same way, and consequently much of the men's talk does not make sense to her. She shows little interest, and does not provide much news for her brother about things other than affairs in her own household.

Through his wife, a husband may approach and influence the men there, as she again will use her female connections to drop hints about business. In that way a husband is not in the same way dependent on her brother for relating to other male relatives of his wife, as is the case in reverse. The maternally linked male relatives of his wife live in separate communities. They may be contacted without the brother's knowledge and without offending him. By contrast, should the brother contact the husband's male relatives, this would be offensive to the husband.

The female sphere of interaction is very strong, and is seen partly as independent of the nature of the relations men have with each other. A wife may be forbidden to see her brother, but never her sister and mother. Male affines may not see each other at all, but the women continue to socialise. The contacts are not only a question of men being able to utilise affinal links symbolically created through 'exchange of women': in that case there would be no reason why the tendency is to stress the family of the wife more than that of an out-married sister. If the woman were a mere object, the men would have a symbolic excuse for dealing with each other once the alliance was formed. The reason why the wife's family is more interesting is because she maintains that connection. She keeps the line hot, and potentially useful.

### **Crossing family boundaries – male and female interaction**

To grasp the importance of women as ambassadors to other communities, one must understand the constraints on male interaction across family and kinship boundaries. We shall start the discussion by an illustrative account of the procedures of marriage negotiations given by a man in the village, Miftar Daut Pajazitaj. He is a man with a humorous attitude towards village life as well as an interest in ethnography.

We let Miftar talk, instead of asking for a case history, thus obtaining a much fuller picture. Arranging a marriage involves so many people and unofficial fora for bargaining, that a single person cannot follow it all. As will be clear from the account, the action and exchange of information takes place in different villages and settings. Inquiries and agreements are made very discreetly, and persons present in one setting are excluded from other contexts. The negotiations involve a chain of interaction where front stage and back stage are separated, and access to the back stage on one side prevents a person from getting information from the other side. We have observed different parts of these procedures in

connection with different marriages, and could have put it together into a coherent whole. But Miftar's account also describes the male encounters which are events to which not even females from abroad have access.

One evening after having tried to answer various questions about arranging marriages, like 'If A does this, what will B do?', Miftar found it difficult to provide comprehensive replies out of context, and said: "Now you listen, and I shall explain how the whole thing works. You take it much too seriously. The first thing you have to understand is that this is a game they play to make a good impression upon each other, and of course they get to know the other party. Otherwise they would not spend all that time."

He continued: "It starts with the family of the boy. When he comes of age the mother gets worried because he runs about the roads at night with other *rrugaçë* (street boys) doing nothing. Who knows what they have in mind or will think of doing? In the bedroom she will address her husband: 'Don't you think it is time for Enver to settle down?' But the father who is responsible for the wedding expenses will brush the problem aside: 'He can wait, there is time enough.' But she is not dissuaded that easily. The mother will start searching for a suitable virgin in the surrounding villages, if the boy has not hinted already about whom he would like for a wife. The mother is the one to do that job, because her husband and the other men have no idea about prospective brides. They never frequent women's quarters in other villages. Of course he may have arranged a betrothal while the boy was a baby, with a friend who had a baby daughter. This used to be the customary way of confirming friendship. They might even engage two infants in the womb, hoping they would turn out to be a boy and a girl. But that no longer happens; now they wait a little longer. It is best if the young can choose for themselves, but that is not so easy if they are out of school and cannot meet anyone of the opposite sex. In any case the parents have to decide if it is a suitable alliance.

The mother will signal to all her sisters and aunts and other female relatives that the time has come for her son to marry. Through all these contacts, there will emerge some suitable alternatives. If he agrees that they are worth looking into, she will start further inquiries into the families of these maidens through her family connections. She will use all kinds of excuses to attend weddings, receptions, funerals, etc. in order to inspect the girls herself. The girls are unaware of any investigation, but remain present during the visit, as family etiquette demands. But in the corners the women sit and whisper to each other: 'What do you think?' 'Well she is not exactly beautiful, but looks nice. I would say she has good manners.' 'But listen to how beautifully she sings!' 'Yes, that is true, and she has a lovely personality, so they say.' etc. After a period of searching, the mother and her relatives may settle on a particular girl. Rumours will slowly reach the family of the girl that 'Someone is inquiring about their daughter.'

Again the mother addresses the father, who might give his consent. 'Yes, that house I have heard about. It is morally quite acceptable. I had better inquire about those men, if you can find out if they will agree and how much they want.' The father inquires further about the male relatives of the girl. Are they hard-working and ambitious? Are all her father's brothers morally acceptable? Do they keep their word? Do they ever cheat people? What kind of house do they have, etc. And the women discuss the girl at length: 'Yes, they say she is a hard worker at home, but I have heard that her morals are not impeccable.' 'No, no, she is all right. Perhaps not as quiet as other girls, but you don't need to worry about her morals. There's been nothing specifically wrong said about her. She is a nice girl and works hard, and that would count much more once she becomes your daughter-in-law. Don't you think your son is capable of watching her?' 'Well, yes of course he is, but you know, people talk.' 'No, they don't talk about her. Everyone likes her. Don't worry.' etc.

Then the unofficial negotiations between the older women of the two families begin. The boy's family will send a *plakë* (old woman) to make careful inquiries at a home near to that of the girl, probably the household of one of her uncles. 'What does he think? Would Qamil give his daughter to Miftar's son? Would the uncle perhaps recommend Enver to them?' The uncle or his wife may either scornfully answer: 'Who do these people think they are to ask for Qamil's daughter?' or they may say 'Well, I don't know, but I don't think they would let her go yet.' Under no circumstances would he say 'Fine, I'll do my best,' although inwardly he may be delighted to see the arrangement through. If he is positive, he might add: 'No, I think it is too early. She is such a fine girl, strong and healthy, a good worker, kind to her sisters and brothers and much too close to her mother to leave yet.' The uncle or his wife will then unofficially approach one of the girl's parents. Then slowly back and forth through the female connections, the whole

thing is arranged. The girl's father has also intimated how much he thinks Miftar should pay for the trousseau.

When all the practicalities are settled, then come the formalities. At that point, the men take things over. The most respectable men of the boy's family dress in their best, put on clean headscarves and pass 'by accident' through the village of the girl's family. Just as casually they will happen to drop in at her father's house, accompanied by someone who knows the father. This person, probably the intervening uncle, can take them there in a natural manner 'just for a visit.' 'Oh, Qamil,' he shouts at the door, 'You have guests. Will you let us in, or not?' Well settled into the *oda* (men's room), they all greet each other: 'How are you? Are you a man? Perhaps you are tired?' And the father will urge one of the boys to serve coffee. They are treated very well, and later food is served. A three-course meal is compulsory on such an occasion. But the whole time they will only converse about the weather, the last market day, the harvest and so on, pretending that they have no idea why they are all together. When night comes, they are asked to stay over, still not touching the essential subject matter. They sleep, and eat again in the morning. Finally the visitors will comment: 'Well, we had better leave. May God give you plenty. It was nice getting to know such an honourable house. Thank you very much, bless your hospitality.' But the host will protest: 'No, you can't go yet; stay for another night.' 'Thank you very much again, may your honour increase; but we must leave.' 'No, not at all. There is no question about it; you must stay at least for another meal.' The guests will mumble among themselves: 'Well, it looks as though we cannot get away that easily.' So they stay on.

Then at the end, just before the final departure, one of the distinguished elders of the boy's family will clear his throat: 'Actually we had some business in mind.' 'Oh, really' says the girl's father 'What can that be?' 'We have heard that you have a daughter who is of marriageable age. We happen to have this good and brave relative, Miftar Daut Pajazitaj of Isnîq village who has a very fine son, Enver. We had thought that your daughter would be a suitable wife for him. Of course your daughter is much better than this boy, and much too good for that family. Your house is of course much above the humble family of Miftar. But they would take good care of her.' Despite this humility, they don't really mean it at all. 'Out of the question' says the father 'it is much too early to think of marriage for her' and off they go.

Again the women are set in motion. Was the refusal serious? Probably not. It would be worth another try. Some months later, the men call again, and this time are rather more direct. And the answer changes to 'I have to think about this. You have gotten to know our family, but what do we know about your son? You must wait.' Unless the women have been informed that there is no use trying to visit for a third time, the answer is 'yes.'

Then comes the difficult part – how much does the father demand for the trousseau. 'As you know, the family of Miftar is a humble family. It is honourable, with good morals, but not very wealthy. How much would you demand for your daughter?' 'I do not sell my daughter' says the father, if he is a good man. 'But she deserves a proper outfit. We'd better talk about it later.' Then the women discuss it all over again, back and forth ti-ta-ti-ta-ti-ta, etc. The girl's mother will insist: 'You must not be too lenient. Our girl is not going like a beggar to that family. They have to pay at least five million dinars (old dinars: approx \$2,000). Otherwise she will not go there.' A message about the price is sent to the boy's father, who has to accept whatever is demanded. The discussion between the men is never about money before the promise of betrothal has been made. Afterwards, the father sets a price to be paid for the trousseau. For the boy's family, who have had learned from the women what the sum might be, it is a question of judging beforehand whether the prospective in-laws are honest. But they can never be sure until the father of the girl has spoken. They can hope he is a modest man, and will not demand a price which will ruin the other family. But some just ask for more and more, so that people have had even to sell land to cover the expenses. To break an engagement because of the price is shameful. And it will start rumours about the dishonesty of the household. In addition they might risk starting a feud with the girl's relatives. It is very damaging to one's reputation to change one's mind after pleading for such a long time. In the end, the marriage is arranged, and everyone cries as the girl leaves her home.

Miftar's account is only one version of how marriages can be arranged. He mentioned the old practice of men who exchange children in marriage as a token of their friendship. Other families who get to know each other may also agree on sister exchange. This is the case if the family wants to avoid paying a high price for the trousseau. A girl's father may also take the initiative and offer his daughter to a family

he knows as a sign of gratitude or appreciation. But the usual way is for a boy's family to start the search for a suitable bride. They may have had a particular girl in mind, but it is not always certain that her family will agree. It is often the women who are the ones to express preferences in these cases, because it is they who will be working and interacting most with the newcomer. If men have full information about each other's households, they may of course arrange the whole alliance between themselves, but when this is not the case, women are indispensable for information and back-stage manipulation, as they can deal more freely with each other.

When men meet they are bound by obligations as representatives of their families, and even to a certain extent, their village. They have to behave with dignity and be careful not to offend the other party. There are traditionally very detailed rules about how guests should be treated: the kind of greeting to give them, the kinds of food to serve them, and the obligation to protect them. A household will go out of its way to demonstrate generosity and a polished facade to any arriving stranger. Even an enemy has the full right of protection by his host. Families in feud enjoy exemption from the threat once they are seated in each other's houses. Likewise, under traditional law, a man is bound to avenge any guest who is killed while under his protection.

The interaction is relaxed and entertaining. Social skills are highly developed in face to face situations. As the previous example of the party involving the two opposed groups demonstrates, they are capable of putting on a show. People who may be otherwise on hostile terms, are capable of enjoying each other's company heartily if they have to. It depends on the definition of the context. If the framework of the encounter is clearly set in a 'non-hostile' atmosphere, people behave accordingly. To a great degree, structural relations, the context of a situation, and the rules defining proper behaviour in each of these settings, takes precedence over personal dislikes. It is not always possible for a person to live up to this, but everyone is expected to set aside his personal bitterness or grudge against others if the situation requires it. What is most stressed in Isniq culture is the submission of the individual to the culturally defined code of behaviour. Thus persons from unrelated households rarely exchange intimate confidences. If individuals from different communities and families become such close friends that they feel able to confide totally in one another, traditionally they would perform a ritual to become 'blood-brothers.' This would be done by mixing a little blood from each of them, and placing it in a sacred place, for example at a war memorial or on a stone with historical significance. They would then swear an oath of solidarity at that spot and thenceforth their brotherhood relationship would ensure mutual assistance for the rest of their lives.

In contrast women feel free to clasp each other and to pour out their pain and their pleasure. They are related and know one another intimately. Men also can visit their own female relatives in times of trouble and may seek comfort and emotional outlet. On a couple of occasions men came during the day to see women in Isniq while the husbands were away. These were men in mourning who had lost a son, and they came to cry. At home these men had to act bravely and maintain control of themselves, since the rest of the house was stricken with sorrow. But with their female relatives they could let their tears flow freely and weep out loud.

Women act in the same way when tragedy strikes: they rush to comfort and assist one another. A sister will probably come and stay for a while to take care of the children while the mother is in mourning. A daughter goes home to arrange the funeral of one of her parents together with her brothers. All females related in any way to the deceased gather and stay together for the *vajtim* (mourning ceremony). Up to two hundred women may spend three days together crying and wailing. The same network is also mobilised for celebrations such as weddings, circumcision and the first cutting of a baby's hair, etc.

The connections which women provide for men are of course transformed into friendly relations between men themselves, who need and use them. Thus a wife's relatives may be the ones who provide a loan, assist in trade, find a job, etc. But once a service has been rendered, a mutual and balanced exchange is expected. The relationship is in the long run assumed to be reciprocal, and no one accepts a constant unequal exchange between in-laws unless the giver gains in moral or political support.

The general pattern is that men deal with men, and women with women across family boundaries. But the interaction is of a different nature, as has been described. Men have to be certain of the loyalty and response of the other party. The women are useful to ensure this, as they may elicit reactions to

requests for assistance. Woman may be the people to initiate any specific contact between men. A man loses face if his request for assistance is refused. A woman could find out the probable answer more smoothly without anyone being offended. In commercial transactions, for example buying horses, which is a major investment, the guarantees for honesty and fairness are the potential social sanctions that the two parties may mobilise against each other. Women may be the ones to know ‘someone’ who knows the horse dealer because she happens to have a sister married in that village. This sister-of-the-wife’s relative may then act as a mediator in the transaction and thereby witness any unfairness from any side. He will, so to speak, put his personal honour as a guarantee that everything is dealt with in a proper manner.

To have an in-law in town is likewise very useful if this person has some kind of connection with administration. He may intervene and mediate with authorities on all kinds of questions, from getting a passport to obtaining tax exemptions. Women are often the persons to beg their relatives for help, as the men may be too proud. A mother may be so worried about the mental state of her unemployed son, that she will go crying on her knees in order to induce her brother to help. He can hardly refuse such a plea.

### ***Dajet* – the mother’s brother in Kosova**

From the point of view of the conjugal couple, the reasons why the network of an in-marrying wife is more important than that of an out-marrying sister, are easy to understand. Each family accepts responsibility for both sons and daughters. According to (northern) mountain Albanian traditional law: “Degrees of relationship result from blood or from kinship. Degrees of relationship by blood result from the side of the father; degrees of relationship by kinship result from the side of the mother. Relationships stemming from the side of the father are called ‘The Tree of Blood.’ Relationships stemming from the side of the mother are called ‘The Tree of Milk.’ (*Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*, articles nos. 698-700, p. 142). When children are born, two kinship groups have contributed to their formation: that of the husband as well as that of the wife. Both of these groups feel and recognise duties towards the children. The duties are of different kinds, as the father’s group is the officially recognised descent group. The mother’s side has duties connected with their nephew/niece as individuals, and there is no honour of the blood involved. This means that they can be more lenient and take more account of the personal needs of the boy/girl and thus at times defend them against their own agnatic group.

The rights of the *dajët* ((mother’s brother’s group) are not clearly spelt out in the *Kanun*. Actually *daja* is not mentioned at all, which has led authors relying on this source in their writings to underestimate his position and slightly misunderstand the role of women as well. (Hasluck 1954 and Whitaker 1976). However, some of the rights and duties between *daja* and *nip* (nephew) are codified. This concerns the more extreme cases when revenge is involved. In Isniq the *nip* has a duty to avenge his *daja* if no one else who is closer can do the job. In a neighbouring area, Rugova, the revenge obligations are mutual.<sup>27</sup> This of course is a more exceptional situation, but the authority of the *daja* may even be recognised as being above that of the father under certain circumstances. Formally a father cannot oppose the decision of a *daja*, but in reality the latter cannot interfere too much in family matters without risking severance of the family connections. Exactly how the rights are defined is not clear to us, but we can give one example of how the *daja* authority was acknowledged as being superior to that of the father.

In a neighbouring village, two young boys had gotten into a fight and one of them was seriously wounded. The father wanted revenge, and the *dajët* were summoned in a hurry from Isniq, to decide on the matter. They found that the boys were too young to be taken seriously, and gave the verdict that the other family should be forgiven. The father would not, or could not, allow for such a concession to the other family, but had to submit to the will of the *daja*. Since it was not their blood, the *dajët* could be more lenient in this case. Were the father not to accept the judgement, it would mean that the *dajët* themselves would have to punish him if he took revenge on behalf of his son. In this situation the father

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<sup>27</sup> Personal communication from Anton Çetta, Professor of Albanology at the University of Prishtina.



would be opposing not only the other household, but his in-laws as well, which is too much of a challenge. Nor did he lose face in the community because he was not the one who made the decision. The shame, if any, would fall on the *daja*. However, for a *daja* there was no real shame, as he did not fail to defend his own blood, but only his sister's son. So probably all parties felt quite satisfied with the arrangement.

Also the *daja* is expected to have personal contact with the children of his sister, help them with money if needed and defend them socially if necessary. A girl who does not get an education from her father may escape to her *daja* who will help and assist her in most cases.

The reason why the authority of a *daja* is accepted is because the *daja*'s love for his sister's children is assumed to be great. There are no real restrictions on his emotions in the form of conflicting loyalties to his agnatic groups and the child. His area of interaction with nephew/niece is clearly defined, and it does not interfere with descent group policies. He can have a relaxed and comfortable relationship without risking anything on behalf of the group of blood which he represents. A father who is too lenient is so to the detriment of the other males of the group, whereas a *daja*'s relationship to his male relatives does not suffer from his closeness to his sister's children. He is a nice uncle who comes to visit them bringing sweets and showing interest in their life and schoolwork. He never scolds or beats them, because disciplining and raising them is the duty of the agnatic group.

Seen from the husband's family, the wife's family can interfere in their own affairs through the offspring, whereas in reverse, the relationship is seen by the *daja* as a personal one with the offspring of his sister. The group as such does not threaten him, as they do not harm him in any way. But the welfare of his sister's children is of importance to him, and that of his sister, too.

### **The formal political organisation**

It is necessary to link kinship structure with the formal political apparatus on the Isniq scene. Kinship still functions as a basis for social influence, and the political organisations create informal as well as formal connections. Membership of an organisation may lead to a connection which may, in turn, replace the informal relations traditionally provided for by the kinship networks.

Before we go on to a discussion of the varied impact of politics and kinship on social life, a brief description of the official political structure is necessary. Since we are dealing with a village, we shall include information about the political structure directly relevant at this level.

As a village, Isniq is defined as a 'Local Community' by the Constitution. The 'Local Community' is recognised as one of the self-managed base units within the Yugoslav 'self-management system.' Other designated 'self-management interest communities' are formed at work sites, schools, etc. These local level communities manage their affairs and resources which are not covered by the formal Yugoslav administrative system. The 'Local Community' is not recognised as a 'socio-political' organisation, i.e. it is not part of the governmental system of the country, but is a purely self-administered local unit.<sup>28</sup>

The governmental system has at its base the 'Commune' and the 'Communal Assembly' (this is the Yugoslav term for what in English would be called a municipality). These assemblies are elected by popular vote. The 'Communal Assemblies' elect the provincial and republican assemblies. The 'Federal Assembly,' which appoints the Presidency, is partly elected by the 'Communal Assemblies' (Federal Chamber) and partly by the provincial and republican assemblies (The Chamber of Republics and Provinces). (Source: Yugoslav Survey no. 3, vol. XV, August 1974. Special issue on: Constitutional System of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia).

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<sup>28</sup> The importance and tasks assigned to this level vary according to whether it is on a localised level, i.e. 'Local Community' or on a work site. At work places it is part of the noted Yugoslav system of 'workers' councils' which have an important socio-economic role.

In addition to the constitutional governmental levels, there are various political organisations of which the most important are 'The League of Communists' and 'The Socialist Alliance of the Working People' (shortened here to 'The Socialist Alliance'). The 'League of Communists' is thus not conceived of as a 'party' as it is in most other East European countries. However, in many respects it plays the role of a traditional communist party. It has no formal constitutional rights to positions in political institutions or in elections. Its role is defined as one of political leadership, '... as the initiator of the National Liberation Struggle and the Socialist Revolution, the League of Communists is the conscious advocate of the aspirations and interests of the working class. It is also the leading organised ideological and political force of the working class and all working people in the creation of socialism ...' (Yugoslav Survey, op. cit.: 52).

As part of the constitutionally defined system of government, the Socialist Alliance is assigned more influence. It is seen as 'the broadest platform for the socio-political activity of the working people and citizens and all organised socialist forces in the socialist system of self-management. In the Socialist Alliance, the working people and citizens, the League of Communists, other socio-political organisations and all organised socialist forces realise political unity and unity of action.' (op. cit.: 52)

The Socialist Alliance in other words, is what is often called a 'mass organisation' or a 'front,' in which the communists co-operate with and act as a leading force for the rest of the population. The most important task assigned to the Socialist Alliance is perhaps the nomination of candidates for all the elections. It shares this responsibility with the trade unions. It has chapters corresponding to the territorial divisions of Yugoslavia, and the nomination of candidates takes place at the level at which the election takes place. The communal organisation nominates for the communal elections, and the Provincial Assemblies of the Socialist Alliances make the final choice of nominees for the elections at higher levels.

In Isniq, as elsewhere, there is a base organisation of the Socialist Alliance whose meetings are usually attended, traditionally, by one man from each household. Practically, 'everyone' is a participant in this organisation. Its meetings, however, overlap with the 'Assembly for Electors and Citizens' which is the gathering of all members of a Local Community. When a meeting is called by the drum beater in the village (*topanas*), it is understood as a 'village meeting' (*mbledhja e fshatit*). Whether it is a Local Community Assembly or a meeting of the Socialist Alliance never seems to be quite clear to the people. It appears simply as a general gathering to discuss village affairs, like mending the roads, digging the piped waterlines and other practical measures to be taken.

Formally the village is headed by the Local Community Council (*këshilli i fshatit*). The council members in practice overlap with the leadership of the Socialist Alliance. Formally the two boards are different with separate chairpersons, but their members and influential persons are the same.

When villagers are asked about the administrative structure of the village, they tend to say that the Village Council is the same as the Socialist Alliance's leadership. They admit that there is an appointed 'leader of the village,' i.e. chairperson of the Local Community Assembly, but 'he is not important.' This confirms our impression that in reality it is the Socialist Alliance which acts generally as the politically unifying body in the village. The leaders are in turn the influential people within the League of Communists, so despite the lack of formal rights the League of Communists or *partia* is for all practical purposes the power-holding group in most senses of the word.

### ***Pleqësia* again**

There exists, however, another formal institution called *këshilli i pajtimit* (peace council) or a conciliation panel. This is an institution linked with the Yugoslav constitutional system for the settling of disputes between individuals before they are brought to court. It is appointed by the village council and has the sole function of mediating between members of the local community. In popular speech it is just called *pleqësia* since the members are the 'old men.' Thus the *pleqësia* is also a legally recognised

institution besides being the traditional term for the leadership of the village.<sup>29</sup>

*Pleqësia* thus refers both to a formal constitutional institution and to informal gatherings of elderly people with acknowledged wisdom in social matters. The same people get together for the formal and the informal gatherings, and the borders between the institutions are not clear cut. The formal *pleqësia* does of course fit very well into the old structure, and the representatives of the *pleqësia* tend to give a wider definition of their powers of decision making than the legal system actually provides for. The definition of what the *pleqësia* can and cannot do is the only remaining bone of contention between the 'old men' and the 'Party.' This competition has changed from a real competition for power in the immediate post-war period to a fight over rules of conduct in the social life of the citizens. The villagers have traditionally followed their own village law, which was described earlier. Thus the *pleqësia* settles conflicts according to Albanian village tradition. They try to be authoritative when it comes to questions of correct behaviour. Although they have no formal sanctions anymore, their social influence derives from the authority they have as the source of knowledge about rules of proper conduct. An Albanian should, among other things, be 'loyal' and not a 'traitor.' This basic moral tenet can naturally be defined differently in various contexts, and the *pleqësia* has, or at least had in earlier times, the authority to define what 'treason' and 'loyalty' are.

The main area in which the League tries to limit the influence of the *pleqësia* nowadays is not in its use of traditions and old rules as the basis for giving judgement in a conflict, but the sanctions it uses to enforce its verdict. It has no formal power to punish the wrongdoer, which it had before. Thus only moral pressure can be used for its purposes, but it is supported by most of the other members of the community since there is fairly unanimous agreement about the fundamental justness of the traditional laws. This is also true of the 'party people.' But the League stresses that penal authority rests with the police and the courts.

*Pleqësia* has difficulty in asserting its influence when totally stripped of social and economic sanctions. To illustrate its various ways of operating and the ways in which they are different from those of the League, we shall give some examples of subjects of dispute in the village in recent years.

The last time the *pleqësia* was able to back a decision with social sanctions seems to have been about seven years ago when it adopted 'the law of the girl.' Around 1970, the price for a trousseau had risen above 5,000 dinars (equal to 50,000 after a decade). The old men of the village found this almost alarming as 'good men tended to ruin themselves on their sons' weddings.' They came together and discussed the matter and decided on certain measures to be taken in order to stop this inflation. They made some rules to be followed for marriage arrangements. The first was that no one was allowed to pay more than 5,000 dinars for a bridal trousseau. The second was that the trousseau should not be exhibited when the bride arrived, as this would make other women envious, and they would demand more themselves. The third was that whenever a bridal procession came to the village to fetch a girl, they should be served only coffee. These parties used to consist of more than a hundred men, so it is very understandable that the expenses could be quite high.

The old men 'legislated' specific punishments for those who broke the rules. The first one to resist the order was a central 'party member.' He both paid more for his wife's trousseau than was allowed, and also displayed it after her arrival. *Pleqësia* still had some power at that time because it fined him two cows. The animals were slaughtered and the meat given to the 'poor,' as is the tradition in such cases. But since then the League has strengthened its grip. First it seems to have been able to replace many of the persons in the *pleqësia* of that time, and secondly it saw to it that no one was sanctioned anymore. General economic development was on its side, as the 'old men' had not foreseen the inflation in Yugoslavia, and made the maximum payment a fixed price. It became impossible to provide a full bridal outfit for the sum of 5,000 dinars. Secondly, they did not take account of the fact that Isniq is exogamous and that it would need the agreement of the other villages who provided brides, to make the rules work. It remained an attempt to counter a modern development by traditional means, and it failed.

In 1975, the old men again came together to pass judgement in a case where two brothers almost

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<sup>29</sup> *Pleqësia* also has a third meaning: 'board.' One talks about the *pleqësia e shkollës* which means the school board.

‘fell in blood’ with each other over the partition of land. Again they gave their opinion on the just solution, and had obtained the *besa* of the two brothers that they would respect whatever judgement the old men might give. But one of them did not like the decision reached by the old men, and continued the strife. Then the old men again wanted to apply social sanctions, and proclaimed that both brothers would be ostracised and boycotted until they had reached an agreement. This was too much for the League of Communists, and they told the old men that they had no such power. They could attempt to mediate, but they had no right to force their opinion through. This was the duty of the courts. The villagers find it very damaging to the reputation of the village when cases are brought to the public courts, as this indicates that Isnqi is unable to keep peace and harmony within its own ranks.

### **Division of power between *partia* and *pleqësia***

There is a basic difference between *partia* and *pleqësia* in terms of the sources of their power. The League members monopolise the connections between the village and the official administrative and political centres, whereas members of the *pleqësia* have to base themselves solely on the reputation and respect they can build up in the village as persons with skills and knowledge in social affairs.

The core group in the Socialist Alliance who are members of the League of Communists are today mostly younger men who cannot command respect in the village on grounds of personal merit or a longstanding trust in their families. They gain their influential positions through membership of political organisations.

There are two decisive factors which affect the status of the young communists: their reputation in the village as well as their complete acceptance by the leadership of the municipality. Amongst the present group of political activists, no one seems to be particularly controversial. But people tend to be somewhat sceptical about their declarations that they are dedicated to serving the people and the common good of the working man. They are suspected of being more concerned about their own aspirations than about the cause of Isnqi or of humanity generally. They are even accused by some of being more eager to ‘escape from the village mud’ (*me ikë prej lloxi*), than to help others.

Many of their duties take them out of the village to meetings in the Deçani centre. Much of their policy making also requires connections with municipal authorities through whom they try to promote the interests of Isnqi. Thus they make friends and contacts outside the village, and their style of socialising becomes rather different from traditional village ways. They act more according to the general Yugoslav cultural pattern of going to cafes to meet other men. In this way they act more as individuals than on behalf of their kinship group. Some people regard them as badly behaved as they do not observe the rules of traditional hospitality to the same extent as other households in the village. They are not regarded as ‘honourable,’ as local leaders ought to be. This does not mean that they are unqualified household managers - on the contrary some of them are quite successful in both agricultural and professional spheres. This is demonstrated through the large modern houses they build. But they make and maintain social connections in a different manner from the traditionally influential people. Sitting in cafes and restaurants and attending meetings is their alternative to the elaborate dinners and receptions which others use to develop contracts and good reputations. To maintain internal village influence they participate in dinners and hospitality, but their orientation is outside the village, and their conduct seems to be shaped by this fact.

The ‘party people’ are thus the mediators between the village and the external political system. They are the middlemen one approaches in order to obtain favours from the municipal authorities. As such they are in a key position to promote or counter the interest of single individuals in the village. For example, since there are so few vacant positions, to get a job needs some extra influence, which means that it can be dependent on the intervention of the League on behalf of the job seeker. Even some League members seeking salaried employment have been unable to obtain it.

Some of them participate in local activities, and help organise the youth with theatre productions, organise the pooling of labour for the laying of water pipes, and negotiate on behalf of Isnqi on the

periods of use for the irrigation water. Although this is appreciated, there are certain reservations. People want to be sure that goodwill is used by their leaders for the benefit of the village and not just for their own.

There is one advantage in having the old men as leaders as compared with League members: they are the ones who really care what happens. Their social orientation and interest is Isniq and its reputation. Since they cannot promote their careers outside the village, they keep a sharp eye on what is going on inside it. And they have more subtle means of pressure than direct interference in community affairs. As one example we shall quote a younger man telling about the way the village acquired the new minaret for its mosque. It has to be said that the minaret is a beautiful piece of stonework crafted by an Isniq man. He taught himself the art by taking down the old one, stone by stone, and then figuring out the construction technique for the new one. However, not everyone felt that a new minaret was the greatest need of the village at the time: 'I can tell you, the only real activists in this village are the old men. They have years of training in social intrigue, and if they agree to achieve something, they behave like one fist with all its fingers working for it. Take for example how we got the new minaret which they wanted. They came together, discussed the matter, agreed on collecting money and started staggering around the village leaning on their sticks. They knocked on every door and demanded 100 dinars. One of them came to our house and asked for a contribution. As you know, we don't like directly to refuse assistance to any fellow man, nor do we ask an old man to leave. So what he did was to sit and sit, and talk and talk until we paid up. You can imagine what would have happened if it was me coming to him to collect money for a library or a film projector for the youth. He would have chased me away from his house immediately. No, the old men are the only ones who can accomplish anything effectively around here.'

This is a bit exaggerated, since it was told as a good story about the peculiarities of village life. The political activists also do try to improve matters. They are working to get the municipal authorities to finance asphalted roads in the village, on the grounds that these serve as a transportation network for other villages. They managed to get electrification in 1962 and piped water in the 1970s. There is also a new clinic projected for 1978 which is a medical centre with a permanent nurse and doctor visiting twice a week. A room in the old building of the 'cooperative' is used for this purpose today, but the hygienic conditions are not satisfactory. Isniq's school building was recently extended.

### **The patriarchal triangle**

Three social frameworks have been described of which the Isniqians are a part: a) the segmentary agnatic lineage system, b) the outspread affinal network and c) the political institutions linking the village to the national community. The patrilineage has gradually lost its importance throughout this century. It was once the basis for a solid social and political corporation, but has been reduced to a category of kinsmen practising exogamy and sharing certain other cultural traditions. Its function within the wider society as the structural basis of social contacts and political mobilisation withered away as other and more competitive institutions entered the scene such as a local administrative structure and political organisations at the village level.

The loss of functions has also narrowed the range of influence of the *pleqësia* leadership. From playing the role of village leadership, it has become an institution which has incorporated the mediation of inter-family affairs into the new political system. It still exerts some informal impact on the values and cultural ideals held by villagers. But even this part is withering away as the modernisation of society at large continues to have an impact on the village. What seems to be happening is a reformulation of the cultural identity of the villagers, slowly alienating them from their traditional institutions.

The logical counterpart or substructure produced by the patrilineal system is that of a female network of contacts which are relations maximally spread throughout the region. These were the only legal links with other communities in former times. Women in this social structure had key positions in contrast to the potentially isolated patrilineages, and this female parallel structure had to be reduced in importance as much as possible.

It could potentially become a competitive power structure as women held crucial connections in their hands – those leading to alien ‘blood.’ The women were not only symbolic signs in the communication between men, but the active agents in these contacts. Consequently this female social structure, as a channel into other local male power groups, was kept as strictly subordinate to the patrilineal corporation. Through the mutual interest of all the local patrilineages, the potentially increasing influence of the whole network, but not the women as individuals, was suppressed. The women as active social agents were needed, but their connections were carefully controlled by the patrilineal organisation.

The social elements that kept this double-sided structure together were: a) patrilineal descent, b) village exogamy and c) inheritance in the male line. These three factors which we shall label the ‘patriarchal triangle’ produced a social pattern of tightly knit agnatic groups. The males become the subjects in society at large, and in social interaction this resulted in strict control of the women’s movements. The logic in limiting the influence of women was not only an issue of personal threat to the power of the males. It concerned the existence of the whole system. By removing one of the elements in the patriarchal triangle, the whole social construction would collapse.

Hypothetically one may imagine that descent was recognised bilaterally. This would immediately blur the clearly defined borders between separate groups of men. A man would have to share his loyalty between two groups - an unhealthy situation for a corporation literally fighting for its domains. An internal insecurity about who owed loyalty to which sub-group within the system would result. Equally, if patri-inheritance were dropped, potential internal friction between in-laws would weaken the necessary strength vis-à-vis the world. Then ‘strangers’ would come into the community, and kinsmen would be too far off to mobilise in case of strife. If they received property from the women through marriage, they might even side with her kin in cases of conflict. Thus all these three elements must be functional for the total structure to work. This is not only a matter of functional compatibility between the parts and the totality, but also one of instant interests for the actors and power holders in the game – the men. It would cause disruption of their family world if these organisational principles were amended.

It is therefore easy to understand the seclusion of women and the restriction of their movements to households without marriageable men. A society such as the Isnig community is not only a patrilineal society, but stresses the importance of ‘blood’ as well. This implies that they expect the social *pater* to be identical to the biological father. With such a conception, society renders itself particularly vulnerable to potential confusion created by infidel women.

In this community, women have one particular strength with regard to the male structure – that of mixing with other patrilineages. By ‘sleeping around’ they could literally mess up the whole neatly ordered patrilineal segmentary system. It follows logically then that adultery was punished most severely, whereby the offended male, be it father, brother or husband, had the right to kill both woman and lover.

One could look at it the other way round: one of the strictest controls over women was over their reproductive potential. This structure was so rigid that the slightest deviance caused enormous trouble. Consequently, the concept of ‘blood’ was promoted as the first principle of moral conduct, and was used to subjugate women. By controlling their movements, the society was able to keep them in a submissive position which did not challenge the system as a whole. Women became a scarce resource to be acquired from outside. It was the women’s reproductive potential, not that of the men, which was limited. Keeping a firm hold on them, and thereby on the next generation of men, was indispensable both to the family and to the community.

The social structure is seemingly the same today in the sense that the kinship rules are kept as guidelines for personal interaction. But this is partly a facade since many of the practices have suffered the same fate as the obsolete paragraphs of the traditional code – they no longer function. The emphasis has shifted, and it is probably only a matter of time before the structure as such deteriorates. At present, the flexibility of the framework is still wide enough to be recodified in order to adapt to the changing circumstances.

As already mentioned – the corporation no longer exists; but the village does retain exogamy. Inheritance is accordingly divided between males, and descent follows the male line. But this is not incompatible with the present situation. The main change is that of paying more attention to in-laws than before. Contacts with the outer world are much more frequent and in-laws come visiting at the expense of internal socialising within the village. The lifestyle of the ‘party people’ is the model of this new

development. Today generosity towards affinal relatives can be afforded because the patrilineage is no longer the bulwark for each individual family's survival. They might have a greater need of assistance from an affinal relative than from another villager.

The Isniquians are aware that they live within a wider context within present-day Yugoslavia. This has made the mutual assistance of in-laws indispensable. And this, in turn, helps raise the status of women, as it becomes most important to treat a daughter of an in-law well. Another consequence is that young people are increasingly permitted to choose their own mates. Because parents might be illiterate and less oriented in the modern market for suitable sons- or daughters-in-law, they tend to trust their educated children to make the choice themselves. After all, these, or some other in-law relative, might be better informed concerning the success or failure of a prospective partner than the peasant parents.

Because the affinal network is slowly taking precedence over clan solidarity, there is no immediate reason to alter the rule of exogamy. The rule serves the new purpose. But it is no longer a question of the village as a corporate group securing its outside contacts, but rather of individual families or even individual men establishing a good family connection.

This also makes it quite logical to stick to the patrilineal descent. But as the families tend to become smaller and labour power is less in demand, the rule may be weakened. There are voices in the village who insist that in case of divorce, the official Yugoslav preference to leave the children with the mother is a better solution.

Neither do we believe that the control by men of productive property will change very soon. Land is becoming an increasingly scarce resource. There are implications here for the indirect dowry system, in which the man's family pays for the wedding. If this practice changes, and the women provide more of the settlement costs, land might be given as a dowry, as has been happening in other parts of the Balkans (Mosely, 1976: 49).

## 5. A LOAF ONCE BROKEN CANNOT BE PUT TOGETHER<sup>30</sup>

### The process of the split

All households that split up justify the split by economic concerns. The justifications they give can be grouped into three categories:

1. The division of inheritance,
2. Unequal contribution to the common estate,
3. Unequal drain on family income.

There are some disagreements over problems of leadership, family policy, etc., but the main reasons for breaking up the *shpie* and the corporation remain economic.

#### *Category 1: The division of inheritance*

This case involved a lineage which consisted of one family that had never split until 1954, when it divided into six smaller families. As the members had lived together for many generations, there was a problem in dividing the land and wealth equally among the sons. The lineage of the household head had not increased over generations, but was still entitled to half the land. He, however, did not want the family to divide up since some of his prestige in the village derived from his being head of such a large and prosperous family - 50 members at the time.

Two of the men agreed with him in not wishing to divide; they were part of the line which had increased and would only get one sixteenth of the property, which was almost useless. The others, two brothers in particular, who would get three hectares each, would be rather better off and were therefore eager to split the family. One of these brothers had already found a position as a shop assistant and would be able to feed his own small nuclear unit very well. It became clear, as the potential claims to the inheritance surfaced, that the advantages of pooling resources could no longer keep them together. Typically it was the part of the family which had found a source of monthly income, which felt safe enough to press the matter. There were also differences concerning the leadership of the household, some claiming that the present leader was no longer as fair and free from corruption as he used to be. There were also rumours that some of the men had put aside money for their own use, thus breaking the rule of handing all of their income over to the family unit. But the decision to split was almost entirely related to the issue of land ownership.

This illustrates the dilemma at the cousin stage. The 'equal division of inheritance among brothers' works as long as the group of men who are sharing the assets are brothers, but once the household becomes a more composite unit, the fundamental interests differ. With groups of cousins sharing their fathers' parts of the estate, if one group of brothers is big, the share per male will be very small. Thus having many brothers is an advantage in a complex household as long as the household in question remains intact. In the men's room, all men of suitable age and status have a vote. With many men, one group or actual lineage within the household may dominate on questions of policy, but once the

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<sup>30</sup> Proverb from Shala about household division.



household splits up, they are disadvantaged because they receive only a small portion of the property.

### *Category 2: Unequal contribution to the common estate*

Regardless of the size of the inheritance, the property acquired during the lifetime of the men involved is supposed to be distributed per head and not by line or *hise*. No matter what a man contributes to the house, he has the same right as everyone else to the investments made during the period of his adulthood.

As long as the economy was at subsistence level, there was no problem as there was no difference in the value of one man's work from another's. This changed when money became involved and it became possible to measure how much each individual had contributed to the family. There were also, potentially, disciplinary problems involved in the earlier system. The fact that some members are more industrious than others is always an influencing factor for an economic unit. But other than that, the jobs were dependent on each other and all tasks were functionally integrated. The cultivator depended on the herder for milk, meat and manure; the herder on the cultivator for grain to make food, etc.; and they all needed someone to represent the family to the outside world, and to manage the economic resources of the family. They could still measure who did more and who did less in terms of time and productivity, but products had no price, only a function.

Today both products and labour have their prices. All may work equally hard, but the migrant labourer undoubtedly brings in the highest income. But the rules state that, in case of division, he has to share his income with the others, including all their investments. The peasant who stayed at home is considered equal to any other working male of the family. This problem is the cause of most family controversies today. The question of inheritance is a concern throughout the lives of the members, but the issue of investment and distribution among the family members is a problem which is more acute and which changes from year to year.

There was a case of conflict over acquired property which came up in the old men's council, *pleqësia*, during my period of fieldwork, mentioned in Chapter 4. I shall now explain the economic basis of the conflict between two brothers, who each had the right to half the land. Both of them had children, but the elder brother had five sons, all but one of whom were working. The younger brother had one teenage son at school and some younger children. The elder brother's sons wanted to split from the other half of the family, but since income from their labour in Germany and from local jobs in Yugoslavia had contributed to the construction of a new house, to the purchase of horses, tractor, a car and land, they demanded a division according to the contributions which had been made. This was contrary to the traditional rules whereby equal shares would be given to the six men of the younger brother's family and the two of the older one's family. As we explained, the younger brother was not successful in his case with the traditional council, and the property and assets were divided between the grown males. The conflict was said to have continued and the two halves of the household are not on speaking terms with one another.

In the above case, the old men made no changes to the rules. They felt that the weaker part would be left with so little, that taking away the acquired property would leave them without the means of survival. But in other similar cases, the rules may be changed; for example where some of the men go abroad and can pay for the education of the younger ones. In this case, the educated members not only got their education from the family, but also had the right to their share of any property which the workers were able to invest in during their stay abroad. This could be a parcel of land which the migrant brothers would need very much on their return. This means that, besides the inheritance from the father, the educated brothers who lived on the income of their migrant brothers, still had the right to a share of the land purchased by the migrant brothers. There may have been some kind of silent agreement about how they would share the property in the future or, at the very least, the educated brothers with better opportunities and contacts would pull strings to obtain jobs for their returning siblings.

### *Category 3: Unequal drain on the family income*

This involves the consumer/producer balance in the particular form occurring in the extended family. Whereas the larger unit may find an even balance between dependents and providers, this is not the case for each *hise* within the family. One man may have many young mouths to feed while his children are going to school. Another may have grown-up sons whose employment brings in money. This imbalance may cause a split. The most capable *hise*, that of the man with two working sons, felt they were feeding everyone else. They refused to pay anymore, calling the other part of the family, who could do nothing but a little agricultural work on the side, parasites. The family divided into four smaller units which all had striking differences. The *hise* which initiated the split seemed to have put some money aside and was immediately able to invest in a new house. The others came off much worse. The problem has a tendency to accelerate the division process before the actual economic necessity arises. A man with grown sons may feel that there is no good reason to provide for other children in the household, since when the latter children grow up, they will probably not ensure that his direct grandsons get an education. Who calls for a split and when it is called for, becomes a sort of game of calculation between the household members. For example, A believes that B will, at a certain point, demand a division of the family. This makes A decide that it would be better to split right away before making further investments and consumption. This occurs in families of a multiple *hise* variety, because as long as the household is one *hise*, the old man is unlikely to listen to a question concerning the sons' cooperation. It is when the old man dies that the problem arises.

Next comes the question of who contributes most to the wealth and who is the greatest burden on the family. If the brothers are still very young, this is not a problem, since any self-respecting man caring about how he is perceived in the village will make sure that his siblings are provided for. The brothers try to complete their father's work, but once this is done, their main interest is becoming a household head themselves, bearing in mind the economic calculations involved in dividing the unit.

As previously shown, it is the ones with the most resources who stay together, while the others who have no direct advantage from the cooperation, will leave. In the end, however, they do not manage any better. The relative shares in the property also plays a part at the cousin level. At this point, blood solidarity is very weak, though even they may continue as a united household since there may still be some assets even for those who would otherwise have the advantage of working alone. The most important asset is actually the awe and respect which large households enjoy. They represent harmonious and peaceful relations and evince even-tempered individuals who do not quarrel. Such homes can afford to provide dinners without concern for the expense. If the households can continue to use their economic resources for social prestige, they may very well stick to the old way of living. But the values of the younger generation, who find this aspect of their lives unimportant, are different. For them careers and outside contacts are the important factors.

### **Reactions to division in the family**

The emotional effect of a split family naturally differs from one person to another, depending on what future awaits them. The split never comes as a surprise to men, since they have already discussed it and started to plan for their separated existence. They are thus prepared for what is coming, at least mentally and emotionally, since they have taken the decision themselves. Women, on the other hand, are often shielded from the shocking 'truth.' The usual practice seems to be to break the news to the women when the decision has already been made. They think there is no point in worrying the women unnecessarily. Thus the wives receive the message about the family division as a *fait accompli*.

Since the conflicts between men are not by necessity accompanied by parallel antagonism between their wives, this can be a rather traumatic experience for the latter. One woman in the village developed a psychosis when she heard what was coming. The sense of isolation created at being left alone with her husband and adolescent daughter made her lose her wits and she became incapable of work. Although she was later cured by the *hodja*, who wrote an inscription from the Koran on a piece of paper which she wore on her chest, she still felt extremely sad about the situation. Her husband, with a salaried

job and only one child, had felt he was feeding all his peasant brother's children, and was most eager to carry the decision through. "I didn't want to split from the others at all. I got along very well with all of them. Now the work will be harder. I'll have my hands full all day long, without a moment to spare. It is much better to have family members around so that you can visit other people and leave the children at home. There is always someone there to look after them. Now there's no one to help me with that. But it's what my husband wanted. Everyone wants to set up on his own nowadays."

With the traditional structure of women's work, which means that the women take turns in being the wife-on-duty, spare time is created. The work involved in a small and large household are in principle the same. When a woman resides in a small nuclear unit, however, she is burdened by tasks otherwise shared by several women. The women do not mind working very hard as much as they regret having no time off allowing them to travel to relatives or visit close neighbours. Women in nuclear families may not be able to visit their natal families for years, not because her husband forbids them from travelling, but because time does not permit them, since leaving the household chores undone is unthinkable.

As far as the division of labour goes, most women praise the advantages of the extended household. The shift system is much preferred. The first thing a girl asks about when she hears news of her engagement is always how many other women there are and how they work together. This is a crucial question since the mother-in-law and the sisters-in-law will be her close companions for life. She truly marries the whole household when she marries one member of it. However, concerning influence and decision making, women often prefer to be alone with their husbands who are more likely to listen to them if they are not subjugated to the influence of the other males in the family. Once the men have taken a decision, the women have little influence in the matter. Newly wed wives, being the lowest ranking, may feel oppressed by the family collective. Thus the choice for married women is between exerting more influence on family policy by being alone with their husbands, or enjoying the comparative advantages of sharing the labour with their sisters-in-law. Their preference will depend on how autocratic the family is. If their ideas of good family policies and organisation are not followed, they will want to separate. This might be for the future of their children, whether they should attend school or not. Or it might concern the rights of the women in the house. If they receive nothing but a few kilograms of wool, they may prefer to live with their husbands and have the husbands provide for the whole nuclear unit, even though the increased housework will leave the wife in question no time to make handicraft products to support her own children. In one case, a family denied a mother, whose breasts had dried up, extra milk for the baby. She had wanted her husband to separate from his brothers.

A woman, now in her late forties, described the situation of a newly wed bride in one of the large households in the immediate post-Second World War period: "When I came as a bride, I was 17. I knew nothing about the household to which I was sent, but I had heard that it was a large and prosperous one. I have no idea how it happened that I, from a poor family, was married off to one of their sons. My father arranged it all; he probably thought, as everyone else did, that contacts with wealthy houses were useful. To go as a bride is bad enough, but additionally, I was ill, my arm was swollen and I felt terribly embarrassed. I didn't dare to look up at all. My trousseau was also very meagre and large households pay less to equip incoming brides. It was sufficient security for the future, that the family was well off. I can tell you that life as a young bride in a large, wealthy family is not an enviable position. The men eat well and can sit in the guestroom. The women receive very little. In smaller families women receive a share of the income, but in the larger ones we received only food. I had to provide everything for the children, my husband and myself. Each year I was given some wool from which I had to make clothes for us all. A neighbour got hold of a Singer sewing machine and I was allowed to use it and worked a great deal on that machine. Long into the night we sewed bridal dresses and other garments. We were so tired, you couldn't believe it. And no one even thought of giving us young women a little more food or some material. The older women had an easier time as their adult sons gave them a little extra now and then, but the young ones were absolutely helpless. If it had not been for my husband, I would have gone mad in those first years. My mother-in-law was actually quite nice to me. She assisted me despite the fact that most mothers-in-law would never do that. As my husband was her only son, she wanted me to feel at home. My husband was better than the other men in the household. Most of them were quite conservative concerning women, but he always asked my advice when we met in our room at night. He really loved me, and I respected him very much. My husband later became a member of the 'Party,' which was not

very popular with his family. He was expelled in 1953, not because he disagreed with the Party, but because he refused to have my veil removed. He didn't dare to because of the other men in the family. The members of the Party used to go up to women on the street and tear their veils off by force. I can tell you that, many a time, the villagers were close to bloodshed. I remember the first time I went out without a veil. I felt it was the most embarrassing thing I had ever done. But you get used to it. It was a good reform.”

This was just after World War II. Things have changed, but in principle the dilemmas are the same. The men compose the core of the corporation, and the women are ranked according to the age and position of their son or sons. Young women nowadays are less timid and sometimes voice their opinions. They have one strong weapon - not gossip, but humour. They do not dare to speak badly about other households to any extent, but jokes are acceptable. Those who take these remarks seriously are considered unstable, not a flattering characteristic. Thus wives may joke about how nice it would be if their husbands spent some money on household utensils instead of agricultural implements. Or they put it this way: “Imagine if I told my husband what to buy for the home! Imagine me ordering him to install running water!” The husband would probably not hear this, but his younger brother or his mother might and would serve as messengers. The men decide family policy, including even the wife's style of dress. It is they who decide whether their wives should wear traditional costumes or be allowed to wear Turkish trousers. Like many married men around the world, they may permit their sisters or daughters to wear such clothes as trousers, but would find it highly inappropriate for their wives, even if the wives are only a couple of years older than their sisters.

Women's influence today is not so much the result of rebelling housewives as is the influence of education among girls. The fact that they can excel at school has changed the notion that ‘Women do not have the head for intellectual matters’ which prevailed before. In 1975 more girls than boys were attending the secondary school.

The idea today that everyone wants to be on their own, *çdokush për vetën* (each one for himself), is not only a result of various economic and social processes, but also the general trend. This ideal, held by the more ‘modern minded’ in the village, derives from the other parts of Yugoslavia, where extended family units are now quite rare. To be capable of mobilising a strong contingent of fighting men, as Isniq used to do, is totally irrelevant to social life today.

To understand this and how new ideas became established in the village, it is important to grasp the social situation of the peasantry. From the time of the Turkish conquest onwards, there has been a marked division between urban and rural Yugoslavia. The Turks enforced this cleft by setting themselves up in the urban centres with little care for the peasantry. The feudal lords were not landed aristocracy, but town dwellers levying dues and taxes on the rural population. These two worlds were separated in every way: language, style of dress, adaptation and occupations. The towns were places of elegance and refined tastes, where people used gold, silk and other expensive materials. In the countryside they used wool and had their own, often peculiar customs, including blood-feuding. There was, and remains, a clear difference in status between townspeople and those from the country.

People in Isniq do not want to be looked upon as ‘dumb’ and ‘ignorant’ peasants any more. Idealism has been a strong motivating factor in the decision to obtain education, starting with the ‘Enlightenment through Education’ Movement which swept the village in the 1960s. Almost everyone who went to school and later to University, studied Albanology. They learned their own written language and, by producing teachers, there seemed to be a way out of illiteracy and a lack of comprehension. This objective has now been fulfilled and there are enough primary and secondary school teachers in Kosova to teach Albanian language and literature. Later the vogue was for medicine. The young people wanted to contribute to improving public health. These two subjects are still popular, but now they also think that economics and technical subjects are needed. All in all, there has been a strong drive to overcome the isolation of the village.

Thus education has had a tremendous impact on the village. It has linked Isniq with the rest of the country, not only by the knowledge disseminated about the rest of the world, but also directly through the establishment of new contacts. For those who go through the educational system, the contacts they make outside the village are also more valuable than those they maintain with the people residing in the village.

Migrant workers feel different from the rest of the villagers. They consider that the villagers often talk nonsense because of their lack of knowledge. On the other hand, they face the problem of not being taken seriously themselves as they are young and beyond the pale of village society. They may be right in decision making, for example about technical matters, but for the other members of the village this may be irrelevant. What counts in the discussion is not necessarily the 'correctness' of information exchanged, but more how it functions within the village social situation. The migrants often feel that others ignore them, and sometimes even consciously isolate them. Their newly acquired knowledge of interpersonal relationships or of what life is like in Germany, can seem irrelevant to villagers, making the migrants feel ill at ease, even bitter sometimes. They become bored at having to sit and listen to the village talk without a chance to disagree openly with what is said. If an old man insists that the earth is flat, it is not polite to contradict him. A few might do so, but most prefer to avoid conflict.

This may seem strange, but this represents some of the essence of the Albanian style of communication. To behave properly in Isniq means first and foremost to be polite and to avoid conflict. The manners and ideals of the people there are not unlike those of the English gentry - one must suppress emotions and anger, and deal evenly with others. Unlike the English gentry, however, they are acutely aware of the dangers involved in spontaneous reactions or aggression. Thus the polite behaviour. Since Albanians are known for their blood feuds, strangers are puzzled by their very gentle and pleasant manners. Outsiders might imagine that blood feuds would go hand in hand with wild, rough behaviour, yet on the contrary, Albanians induce a feeling of complete trust.

It seems to work this way: the possible danger of feuding and revenge is always there - it has happened before, it can happen again. So the duty to defend oneself if there is some offence is always in mind. Once a quarrel starts, it is carried through to the end and no outsider intervenes. Once the protagonists start down the road of conflict, there is no way out. They will not submit to the opponent and will defend themselves. Animosity and offensive behaviour are generally absent from daily life in the village in order to avoid open conflicts.

The reason that insults and offences are dangerous, even lethal, is not necessarily because of the personal feelings of an individual. It is a result of social values imposed upon the unfortunate person who is expected to defend his and his family's honour. We shall give a brief illustrative example of a blood revenge case. In 1953, one villager was killed by another. At the time, the victim had three sons. In 1960, when the sons had grown up and the murderer had still not been punished, the elders of the lineage were concerned. In 1963, they assembled the lineage, which came up with a proposal for the sons. They said they would hire someone else to avenge the murder of the boys' father. The sons accepted this until the elders warned them: "If we do this, you must pay with your land and we shall declare to the village that your father never bore any sons." The threat meant that they would be social outcasts, no one would invite them to social gatherings again, and if they did, the lads would be constantly subjected to taunting because of their cowardliness. The second son felt such extreme pressure that he grabbed an axe, and went off and killed his father's murderer on the spot.

Thus, revenge is not necessarily a voluntary action by the offended party, but rather the result of tremendous social pressure from the rest of the village. The social values of honour and pride do not mean that each man is socialised to become a brave and fearless hero who would never hesitate to fight. On the contrary, he may be scared out of his wits, but he is faced with two almost equally bad alternatives: committing a murder or being completely ostracized. His personal preference may be to avoid a fight, but he would never express this in public. If something shameful happens in a family, it is kept a secret in the village, not only because of the shame itself, but also so that the village does not force the family into actions which they do not wish to participate in or to face continuous taunting.

I was of the impression that it was social pressure which forced men to defend their honour. Later I came to realize that this was one and the same thing. Early on, I was amazed by the fact that, as I had understood it, the Isniqians had no concept of 'honour.' They had the word 'shame' which I soon learnt about, but 'honour' was never discussed. This seemed curious from a Balkan population. However, the term *indershëm*, which I had thought meant 'responsible,' turned out indeed to be 'honourable.' In fact, they did talk a lot about honour and sometimes also about shame. The confusion between 'responsible' and 'honourable' came from the fact that the word was almost consistently used in connection with qualities such as 'good management,' 'taking care' and 'assisting others.' I also learned that one of the

terms for thanking someone was ‘May your honour increase’ (*Të rrite ndera*). To be honourable means to be generous and responsible in Isniq society. Basically it means to give things to others, to be overwhelmingly generous, to be just and to assist others in all difficult times. It also has the more conventional meaning of defending the blood, although they rarely talk about it in this way. The daily reference to honourable actions is not so dramatic. If an honourable person proves his virtue in relation to his closest agnatic relatives, it means he is behaving as a good master of the house or a wise lineage elder. Honourable also implies certain economic means, for example, material expenditures connected with performing honourable duties. This has been observed in other communities, too (Davis, 1977: However, there is no ‘honourable strata’ in the village like the Seigneurs of Southern Italy (op. cit.). Honourable is not a term used for systematic social ranking in the community. To be *shumë i ndershëm* (very honourable), a man must have performed some exceptional deeds, like taking revenge or enduring economic hardships without being stingy. It is easier to attain honour status as the head of a large family than of a smaller one since one has more funds to spend on gaining influence. Holding a political position does not exclude someone from honour, but honour cannot be gained specifically from the position in question.

To be honourable also means to be reliable in the Isniq world, where people often have to invent solutions for their daily problems, solutions which may not be entirely consistent with the true values of honesty or reliability. Much social business is carried out by means of connections and contacts. The difficult art of being honourable is thus a balance between obtaining benefits and ethical values. There is, for instance, constant pressure to assist and favour close relatives and friends over outsiders, yet there is also pressure to give priority to guests. To be honourable involves doing both: helping the nearest and dearest and, at the same time, not giving them more than anyone else. This problem can only be solved easily if both personal and material resources are in plentiful supply.

Women no longer have any honour to defend except that of their male relatives. They are only concerned about their morals. To be immoral is the worst shame for a woman. This does not only mean to sexual fidelity, but concerns the whole range of women’s duties.

## Love and marriage

Marriage used to be a serious business in Isniq - the only way of establishing inter-village network contacts. It was important that no random phenomena such as love should influence family alliances. Love was an unfortunate inclination of the young and inexperienced, and was definitely not expected to decide the future of a household. Love and falling in love were part of the culture, but not linked to the solemn arrangements of a household. Love and marriage existed apart from each other, almost as two antagonistic poles.

Women may tell of having a boy friend while they were young, but at the same time, they will reveal that they never expected to marry him. Even if they were completely heartbroken at their arranged marriage, they would never have dared to oppose the arrangement. A boy might have attempted to get a particular girl as his wife, but he could only succeed by obtaining the consent of both their fathers; and in the past, few household heads would have considered the feelings of a young man as more important than the practical arrangements of the family. Furthermore any boy would feel too ashamed to discuss his feelings with an agnatic relative. He might even feel embarrassed to discuss them with his mother who served as a communication link between the children and her husband in such personal matters.

Love was accepted as a weakness of the female sex for which women needed to be safeguarded all the more. Although everyone knew about the strength of love and sexual desire, it was considered to be unimportant and unmanly. A man who was very attracted to women, who was a flirt or who fell in love, was considered to be a weak person, and not entirely reliable. People often called him a ‘fool’ and considered him vain for not controlling his emotions properly.

This had consequences on women for, besides their having to behave morally, a phenomenon which has often been described in Balkan and Middle Eastern literature, there were other criteria which

were essential to being a decent female. It was taken for granted that a woman would have nothing to do with other men than her husband throughout her life - punishment for adultery was to be shot. The other major aspect of being a good wife was to be hard-working from the moment of marriage and, as an older woman, to be a good housekeeper, always loyal to one's husband. Ideally as they grew old together in a relationship of mutual support and in caring for their family, the wife and husband would draw together emotionally. Men appreciated women's loyalty especially as confidantes, and the latter were careful not to divulge secrets to other women. There was great contempt for women who slandered or gossiped about others.

Emotional or amorous relations between the sexes could be obstructive to the old family structures. A woman had emotional ties with her own kin and perhaps secretly with an outsider, but both were potential rivals for the agnatic unit into which she married.

Almost all emotional display occurs between members of the same sex, only rarely between the sexes, with the exception of the mother, and in some cases the sisters. Children are considered an entirely different group, all being treated equally with playful hugs from men and women alike, irrespective of whether they are boys or girls.

The behaviour of young girls is important not only for their own moral reputations, but also for those of their families. Should a girl have a boyfriend, especially if they have a sexual relationship, the whole patriarchal structure is threatened, the control of reproduction being the key to social alliances as well as labour. Through such a relationship, the girl indirectly interferes with the family business decided upon by men. In fact she double-crosses them in one of the most important domains. The result is naturally that girls are greatly discouraged and directly hindered in meeting young people of the opposite sex.

Today, this has changed for those who go to school. There, the pupils have a chance to meet young people of the opposite sex and to form their own opinions about individual character. For girls still confined at home, this is not a possibility. They can only be contacted through their parents. On some occasions, a young couple may meet in advance, but in most instances they meet for the first time on their wedding day.

Some girls may give their future partner a photo of themselves. To get hold of the picture of a girl means to a boy that he has a token of her interest and love. Thus, the distribution of photographs is a significant activity, and girl friends may become lifelong enemies if one of them betrays the other by giving her own photograph to the potential suitor of another. The girl whose photograph is seen, has little chance of denying the apparent situation, and if it becomes known, she is under great suspicion since it is supposed that there is 'no smoke without fire.' Since few girls have a chance to correct the image that a boy has of her, because of the lack of direct communication, a simple photograph may function as 'proof' that there is something. And friends of the boy, if interested in that girl, will withdraw either because she is 'ruined' or because she is already the property of their friend. For a girl to give her photograph to a boy is equivalent to admitting her interest in him, unless the other party is a close relative.

The appropriate conduct of a husband towards his wife is of the same nature as correct behaviour in general. He is supposed to take care of her, treat her with respect and not beat her 'unnecessarily.' To lose one's temper is generally considered a sign of an imbalanced mental state, and men who tend to take their frustrations out on their wives are not considered honourable. On the other hand, a man is not expected to spend much time with his wife, and couples who talk much to one another or are obviously happy with one another are mildly joked about: "Look at him, he loves his wife more than his mother and sisters." It is accepted behaviour by a man meeting friends or relatives not to mention his wife. It can create some embarrassment if she is mentioned in the company of men. Male friends never enquire about the health of each other's wives, unless they are close friends of the family, nor would they amongst outsiders. Unlike the way they speak of their mothers, men speak of their wives in a condescending tone, but that does not necessarily reflect a difficult marriage situation. It only confirms that they have the upper hand. Likewise, women speak without emotion about their husbands, never daring to criticise them unless they suspect their husbands of having mistresses, which might be a matter of discussion with a very close friend or relative. Normally it is considered improper for a woman to admit to loving her husband and, if asked what he is like, she would say with non-commitment: "Oh, yes, my husband is very good."

The woman's domain is quite autonomous with boundaries set by the men. Women are left alone

and are well treated as long as they stay within these limits. Socially, being a woman is basically an occupational status: to bear and rear children, cook and care for the house, to perform certain tasks connected with secondary production and to ensure that the household runs smoothly for the men. A man can take pride in a well-managed household. When he heads the household, his wife becomes the main housekeeper. Their roles are complementary, though the duties are distinctly divided.

### **The phenomenon of Sworn Virgins and the future of sex roles**

The institution of the 'sworn virginity' has been taken note of as one of the many curiosities of northern Albanian culture. Sworn Virgins are only mentioned in one paragraph of the *Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini* where it says: §1228 *Virgjinat (fëmnat, qi veshen si burrë): S'veçohen prej grásh tjera, posë qi janë të lira me ndëjë nder burra, porsë pá tager zânit e kuvendit.* [The Virgins (women who dress as men): They are not distinguished from other women, except that they are free to associate with men, although they have no right to a voice in the assembly]. They are thus identified as 'those who dress like men.' By associating with men they are also permitted to move around freely in public spheres. Their rights are limited with regard to legal participation though, including claims on property.

The status of a Sworn Virgin may be chosen by any woman who for one reason or another prefers not to marry and, in exchange, to accept the tasks and burdens usually assigned to men. The custom was current in Western Kosova until the generation which was adult before the Second World War and, as such, some of them are still alive today. No one remembers there ever having been any in Isniq, but a couple of them were living in neighbouring villages.

The main reason for choosing this lifestyle was the dilemma faced by a woman when being separated from her own family, in particular if she rejects the man chosen to be her spouse. The two cases I was informed about were caused by separation from the natal family. One of the women was an older sister, left responsible for her younger siblings upon her parents' death. As the remaining family would have married her off, she chose 'virginity' in order to secure her younger brother's rights.

The usual given reasons for swearing virginity are: a) family matters as accounted above, or similar problems such as having no one to avenge a murder; then a Sworn Virgin is given this task, b) she may prefer the company and lifestyle of men, c) she cannot stand the man she has been promised to, and in fear of revenge from his family, does not accept anyone else and swears perpetual virginity. This saves her family from the difficulties of breaking off the engagement.

Whatever the reason may be, the structural aspects are the same in order to cross the boundary between a the female domain and the male world. Socially she has to change her sex, which is expressed symbolically by wearing men's clothing. If all the conditions are fulfilled and she denies her female existence sexually, socially and in every other way, she is accepted in the men's circle and is free to engage in social activities with them, smoking, drinking, etc. This is an unusual solution to a dilemma which many women are faced with.

There is no complementary role of the Sworn Virgin amongst men. They do not turn into females in the same way. This may be partly explained by the fact that their existence is in no way threatened if they do not submit to the institution of marriage. There are some men who choose not to marry. They live alone, cook for themselves and work in agriculture. But these men are still part of the male world.

Since the position of men and women, though complementary, is not equal, it is not surprising that there is no parallel solution for men. It is threatening to the patrilineal power structure to have women interfering in the various tasks and duties of men, but not *vice versa*. The women's world is not confused by a man cooking for himself. He is merely slightly ridiculed for it. Certainly no man would choose to become a woman.

But sex roles are still quite influential on the destiny of a girl and may be felt as an obstacle to the realisation of her personal aims. There are still girls who claim that they want to be boys since boys lead a much freer and more independent existence. Some girls may make this known publicly and begin to act as boys. They are easily accepted by the other pupils and, according to my observations, have close



and relaxed relationships with the other girls. They escape the suspicions of immorality which girls are faced with who wish to be attractive to boys. Since male honour is not challenged by these few unusual girls, people are not too concerned with their behaviour. In the cases we observed, the children were wearing school uniform and the only difference was in the cut of the blue coats.

The 'women's movement' is a rather delicate issue in Kosova, especially in Isniq, because Albanian customs in Kosova differ from those elsewhere in Yugoslavia. In the other parts of the country, this results in disparaging comments such as: "Albanians sell their women," "Albanians may shoot their women if they want to," "Among Albanians, a woman is worth less than a donkey," etc.

Customs differ even within Kosova. Only about 50 kilometres away, in the district of Has, women work in the fields while the men specialise in bread baking, commuting to various places in Yugoslavia where they have set up business. This is usually a family business where the youngest members tend the bakery at home. The village bakery in Isniq is run by two brothers from Hasi, and a topic of their banter is the different way women are treated in the two villages. Isniqians insist that their women are better off since they do not have to work like horses in the field, whereas the bakers maintain that they treat women much better since they are not confined to the courtyard, but can go freely, even to trade at the market. The Hasi women are easily recognised in the market place by their almost Indian looking costumes. They tend to be the middle-aged women who go to market and they are much more likely to look people, even strangers, in the face. Isniqians respond to this by commenting that Hasi women are nothing but cattle, since they are bought. The husband's family pays for both the trousseau and *sitnic* (money given to the bride's father). The baker, on being questioned about this, responded after a silence that this was natural since the father had to be compensated for the loss of labour of his daughter.

In the end, both parties agreed that their own arrangements were better than those of both the Serbs and the Albanians in Macedonia, who follow the dowry system: "If someone there offers his daughter on the market – it is because they don't put any value on their women. They have to give them away along with a car or a house or a large sum of money. They don't care at all, especially since the daughter constitutes an additional expense while living at home."

Educated girls often feel emancipated by asking that no money should be transferred upon their marriage, and that any expenses should be shared equally by both families. Since they may already have had jobs themselves, they insist on providing a substantial part for their own trousseaux, thus neither burdening their own families nor those of their fiancés. Many would prefer to marry without bothering with a trousseau, but that is not practical since the practicality of becoming a couple necessitates a trousseau which includes items such as a bed, mattress, sheets, married woman's clothing etc., all of which have to be paid for. Although it is absurd to equate the indirect dowry with the 'sale of women,' some girls react very strongly to the knowledge that there is bargaining over them going on behind their backs. Ultimately, as in most societies, it is men who have to provide for the setting up of a family.

If a woman provides for herself, she has a better bargaining position within her husband's home. Some young women are so proud and ambitious that they insist on doing double the amount of work by working at a salaried job and giving all their pay to the head of the household, and by doing a share of housework equal to those who are at home full-time.

This problem of the status of working wives in extended families is a new one. It is not yet very common, but it will increase, as there is no consensus on how to resolve the question of the division of labour. Some feel that it is not fair to have to perform double the amount of work, but the husbands do not wish to disrupt family harmony by insisting on any favours for their wives, over others in the family. It may seem strange to us, where a wage-earning man is considered equal to a peasant, that there can be a great deal of trouble if an educated woman is treated 'like a princess' at home. Somehow a man's labour is seen as different to a woman's. Household chores are not considered real work, hence the justification for working women to be expected to take their share of housework. In practice this varies from family to family.

Since men's tasks by definition are complementary, supporting one another in maintaining and improving their estate, their different incomes are seen as supplementing one another in a common cause. Women's different activities, however, are conceived of as being more competitive. Their work parallels each other so that different treatment would increase their potentially competitive positions. Traditionally, each woman cares for her own children, occasionally assisting the others'. They also take turns in the

common household chores like baking bread and cleaning the communal rooms. If one woman is freed from these tasks, then more tasks fall to the others, and since there is no visible profit to be gained, no one will see good reason to do the extra work. In any case, the money earned goes to the household head and is usually invested in the estate from which the women may get no share. Indirectly they may benefit from the accumulated wealth, but all women would say that their husbands bring in much more than a working woman.

The process of change in Isniq is irreversible. New attitudes will prevent a return to the old ways. How far the process of family division will go, depends very much on further social developments in Yugoslavia. It seems clear, at any rate, that with the ideals held by today's youth in the village, the age of the *zadrugas* has come to an end. I predict that family life will resemble that of other areas of the country as soon as those who grew up in the age of the subsistence economy, have passed on.

## GLOSSARY OF ALBANIAN TERMS USED IN THIS BOOK

<i>agha</i>	(honorary title used in Ottoman times)
<i>amvise</i>	housewife
<i>anas</i>	indigenous (population)
<i>të ardhurat</i>	newcomers
<i>argat</i>	day labourer (for crop cultivation)
<i>bajrak</i>	banner (Ottoman territorial division in Northern Albania)
<i>bajraktar</i>	standard bearer, head of <i>bajrak</i>
<i>baqica</i>	housekeeper, female counterpart to male household head
<i>bark</i>	minor lineage (from the word ‘womb’)
<i>bari</i>	shepherd
<i>bia</i>	daughter
<i>bujk</i>	peasant
<i>burrë, pl. burra</i>	man
<i>bylmet</i>	dairy products
<i>çifçi</i>	serfs of the Ottomans
<i>çiflik</i>	Ottoman feudal landholding
<i>çilere</i>	communal bedroom
<i>çoban</i>	shepherd
<i>daja, pl. dajët</i>	mother’s brother
<i>djemi</i>	the young men (collective plural)
<i>eyalet</i>	Ottoman regional division
<i>fëmijë</i>	child
<i>fis</i>	patrilineal descent group, clan
<i>flamur</i>	banner, flag (same as <i>bajrak</i> )
<i>fshat</i>	village
<i>fshatar</i>	villager
<i>fuqi punëtore</i>	work force
<i>gjak</i>	blood
<i>gjinie</i>	sex, gender, wife’s natal family
<i>gjyshja</i>	grandmother
<i>grue, gra</i>	woman, women
<i>hajduk</i>	robber (in Ottoman era)
<i>havale</i>	veil
<i>hise</i>	minimal lineage (a man with his wife and descendants)
<i>hodja (hoxha)</i>	Muslim priest, hodja
<i>kanun</i>	traditional code of law

<i>këshill</i>	council
<i>këshilltar</i>	council member
<i>kolibe</i>	nest, shed
<i>kreu</i>	male head
<i>kryeplak</i>	chief elder
<i>kullë, def. kulla</i>	fortified house
<i>kushëri</i>	cousins, cousinhood
<i>lagje</i>	major lineage (from ‘quarter’ of a town)
<i>laknore</i>	nettle pie
<i>ligj</i>	law, code, rules, customs
<i>magjetorje</i>	housewife on duty
<i>mahallë</i>	major lineage (same as <i>lagj</i> )
<i>marre</i>	shame
<i>miftar</i>	head of village council (in former times)
<i>mik, miq</i>	friend, guest, in-law; friends, guests, in-laws
<i>motër</i>	sister
<i>nder</i>	honour
<i>i ndershëm</i>	honourable
<i>nënë</i>	mother
<i>nip</i>	nephew
<i>nusje</i>	new bride
<i>oda</i>	men’s room, guest room, living room
<i>pajë, def. paja</i>	trousseau
<i>partia</i>	League of Communists (in local speech)
<i>plak, pl. pleq</i>	old man, old men
<i>plakë</i>	old woman
<i>pleqësia</i>	gathering of old men, board
<i>postermen</i>	cow or ox slaughtered each winter
<i>prenk</i>	prince
<i>prie</i>	leader (of the village)
<i>raja</i>	the conquered subjects of the Ottomans
<i>robtë</i>	subordinate members of the household, household slaves or prisoners
<i>rrugaç</i>	street urchin
<i>sanjak</i>	territorial division (Ottoman term)
<i>shok</i>	friend (male), husband
<i>shoqe</i>	friend (female), wife
<i>shpie</i>	house, household, family
<i>sitnic</i>	compensation paid to father of bride on marriage
<i>sobe</i>	(Serbian term with same meaning as <i>oda</i> )
<i>spahi</i>	Ottoman feudal military lord
<i>stan</i>	mountain hut
<i>tallë</i>	remnants of maize plants used as cattle fodder
<i>teze, tezja</i>	mother’s sister, the mother’s sister
<i>timar</i>	Ottoman feudal landholding

<i>vajtim</i>	mourning ceremony
<i>vajzë, def. vajza</i>	girl
<i>vilajet</i>	Ottoman regional division
<i>vllaznie</i>	brothers, brotherhood
<i>zadruga</i>	household of extended family (Serbian term)
<i>zojë, zoja</i>	lady, Mrs
<i>zot, zoti</i>	gentleman, Mr
<i>zoti i shpies</i>	the head of the household

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