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## **THE TRADITIONAL COSTUME OF THE SARAKATCHANS IN REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

*Abstract:* In the research of the ethnical and cultural past of a people the traditional costume has an important place. It is an inseparable part of the human life, directly connected to the esthetical and cultural notions of the community to which it belongs. It has an apothropical and decorative function, and at the same time it is a national flag of the ethnical community to which it belongs. The traditional costume also directly depends on the external factors, such as the climate, the land structure; therefore it is a kind of a mute witness of the economic functions, the degree of cultural development, as well as the cultural and historical changes that have been happening in the actual ethnic community.

*Key words:* Sarakatchans, Macedonia, immigration, traditional costume, comprising parts. Ethnic community: Sarakatchans; Karakatchans; Ashans; Tsrnovunans.

On the territory of Macedonia and Serbia for the first time they are mentioned in the year 1882 (R. T. Nikolich, 1912, 180). It is considered that they originate from the village of Saratch (R. T. Nikolich, 1912, 180), near the Greek-Turkish border, from where due to the terror they migrated to the territory of Macedonia and Serbia. The village of Saratch is not the place from where they directly immigrated to Macedonia. From that village they first ran away to the surroundings of Thessaloniki, from where they later migrated to these counties. They immigrated in groups. According to the data noted by Branislav Russich (B. Russich, 107/v-12), a group of "Sarakatchans" in Macedonia migrated in 1918 from the village of St. Vasilitsa (between Kukush and the Lagadin Lake) to the village of Prdejtsa (near Gevgelija), where they remained until the twentieth years of the twentieth century. From 1920 to 1922 they lived in the village of Udovo, and in the period between 1922 to 1948 they lived in Bogdantsi. This group of "Sarakatchans" fed its cattle on the mountain of Kozhuf.

About the "Sarakatchans" in Macedonia very little has been written. N. Surin (N. Surin, 1929, 88-92), who in 1905 visited the "Sarakatchans" in the village of Rozhden (Mariovo), for them uses the term "Romuns", "Vlahs" and "Karakatchans", and considers them Greek-converted Vlahs. In the same text the author says that they spoke in Greek. A similar confusion with the ethnic names we find in the text of Vera Klitchkova "Vlahs Karakatchans in Macedonia" (V. Klitchkova, 1953, 21-23). The photographs in this text clearly show that it is a matter of "Vlahs-Karaguns", where the ethnic name "Karaguns" is replaced with the ethnic name "Karakatchans". Further in the text the author says: "Besides the Vlahs "Karakatchans", there is another ethnic group in Macedonia, the "Sarakatchans", who divert from the "Karakatchans" with the way of life, the traditional costume and the language." In this case we come across a collision of two ethnic names which refer to one ethnic community - "Karakatchans-Sarakatchans". Thus a question is posed: Who are the "Sarakatchans" in Macedonia?

They consider themselves to be Greek: "We are Greek" - says Kata Kostova from Demir Kapija, born in 1927 on the mountain of Kozhuf. Until she was twenty years old she did not speak the Macedonian language, and she does not speak the Vlach language even now. The same data we received from the other members of this ethnic community. A. Popvasileva obtained similar information through her field studies (A. Popvasileva, 1987, 12), and confirmations of that we also find in some older work (R. T. Nikolich, 1912, 180).

The "Sarakatchans" in Republic of Macedonia have settled in the higher mountain areas, where their exclusive occupation was raising livestock. They put their herds to graze on the mountains: Kozhuf (Lipa, Alchak, Gladnitsa, Suvidol, Momina Chuka, Adzhibaritsa, Dragaj), Nikodinska Planina (Nikodinska mountain), Nidzhe with Kajmakchalan, Kozjak (the village of Rozhden), Baba (Pelister, Shobajnitsa, Kriva Kobila, Sapundzhitsa, Golemo Ezero (Grand Lake), Debel Rid (Fat Hill), Dervishka)

and other mountains. In the winter period the "Sarakatchans" went down to the valleys in Macedonia, or went to Solunsko Pole (Thessaloniki Field) for the winter.

The line of the main stock-raising migrations started in the neighbourhood of Dojran, to be precise from the areas Gornichet, Asani and Ergela and went on to the mountain Baba, following the route: Dojran - Udovo - Pepelishte - Krivolak (they crossed the river Vardar) - Tsrveni Bregovi (Red Banks) - Drenovo - Pletvar - Nizhopole - Malovishta - Pelister.

Until 1948 their occupation was raising livestock. It is a period when they began a stationary way of life. Then they inhabited more urban settlements, those being the neighbourhoods of Gevgelija (Mrzentsi and Prdejtsi), Valandovo (Udovo), Demir Kapija (Kureshnitsa, Bistrentsi and Pepelishte), Bitola (Malovishte, Nizhopole and Trnovo), Ovchepole (Tsrvena Dzvezda), Shtip (Karaorman) and Strumitsa (Hamzeli).

In the 1960's the process of emigration to their homeland Greece begins. The law for collectivisation and the forced confiscation of their herds are the basic reasons for which the "Sarakatchans" moved out of Republic of Macedonia. By that the chain of their traditional way of life is broken. Those who tried to smuggle the stock to Greece had problems with the law, and the rest had to seek their existence in agriculture. Some of them built their own houses in the urban areas, while for the rest room was found as tenants, for what they paid a rent of 250 - 600 dinars, depending on the premises they used. For those reasons the search for a better life made them come back to their old motherland - Greece. So, for example, before their emigration in Tsrvena Dzvezda there were 70 Sarakatchan houses, in Karaorman there were 40, Demir Kapija and Kureshnitsa had 20 houses each, and in Tri Cheshmi 244 inhabitants are mentioned (B. Russich, 107/V-6). Besides the fact that this ethnic community is resettled in Greece, some of its members live in Macedonia in Gevgelija, Negortsi, Demir Kapija, Bistrentsi, Negotino, Kavadartsi, Shtip, Skopje, Bitola, Nizhopole etc. It should be mentioned that in most of the cases it is a matter of mixed marriages between Macedonians and Sarakatchan women, so that their assimilation is an imminent process. The only Sarakatchan family now lives in Shtip, fully integrated into the modern way of living.

### **Traditional costume: Sources**

In 1894, during the visit to the "Sarakatchans" on the mountain of Bodenik, Tihomir Djordjevich noticed: "We found the women in the huts, they sit and spin wool: their clothes are very pretty and clean. They wear clothes similar to those of the men, only more colourful. On their heads in the hair they have various little things plaited in and sorted in a certain order. They plait their hair like "trljave", which is worn in some of our regions." (T. Djordjevich, 1933, 107)

This is just a single example of how and how much has been written about the traditional costume of the "Sarakatchans" at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Similar data we have found with the other research workers:

R. Nikolich has noticed: "They are very economical: the costume as well as all the rest of the clothes is made by the women; they pay only at the fulling-mill for the **fulling** of their woollen cloth." (R. T. Nikolich, 1912, 182)

In various regions the traditional costume of the "Sarakatchans" was different.

According to Hoeg, the costume of the "Sarakatchans" in Epirus was pretty practical. The men wore white shirts with variegated sleeves, a black waistcoat, long white trousers, a belt and a "fustanela" (skirt for men) with a lot of gussets, a black hat on the head. This is how an every-day costume looked like. The women's traditional costume was made out of black wool; they wore a vest, an apron, a skirt, and around the neck and on the chest they wore threads. The author indicates that there was a difference between the traditional costume of the rich and that of the poor. In the same text it is mentioned that the traditional costume changed significantly in the next forty years or so (C. Noeg, 1925, 25-26), yet it is not said what had been changed, how and why.

L. Zhunich in 1953 visited the "Sarakatchans" on the mountain Gotch, and during that visit he noted down: "A large part of the Sarakatchan clothes were made of white woollen cloth. The material for

the crafting was prepared by the women, except for the scarves and some sorts of cloth which they bought."

It is pointed out that the "Sarakatchans" were proud of their traditional costume, which was very pretty, plentifully embroidered and decorated: "We were "Sarakatchans", shepherds, but when we were dressed-up and went somewhere, everybody was looking at us." It is also noted that in Greece their traditional costume was prettier than that of the country people (L. Zhunich, 1924, 94).

The fact that the Sarakatchan traditional costume differs in various regions is also pointed out by B. Marinov in his work "Contribution to the Research of the Origin, Way of Life and Culture of the Karakatchans in Bulgaria" (B. Marinov, 1964, 92), where it is noted that the traditional costume of the "Sarakatchans" from Epirus significantly differs from that of the "Sarakatchans" in Bulgaria. According to Marinov, the "Sarakatchans" in Bulgaria belong to the "Belodrshkovtsi" (the "Whiteholders"), because they wore a white "fustanela" (men's skirt) and white tight pants girded on with a white belt. On the upper part of the body they wore a white "shegun" (a kind of a coat). In the 1930's this white traditional costume was replaced with the so-called "Macedonian traditional costume", which conformed to the nomad way of life (B. Marinov, 1964, 92).

The women's traditional costume changed a few times. Originally the women wore "sukmani" (one-part long dresses) without sleeves. The old traditional costume was not decorated very much; somewhat later the traditional costume was decorated with ribbons and cords, and certain parts began to be dyed. The stock-raising way of life reflected on the traditional costume, too. On the whole, the traditional costume was made of black Karakatchan wool, decorated with ribbons and embroidered with silver-gilt thread; it was adjusted to the climate characteristics of the high-mountain regions (B. Marinov, 1964, 93).

Contrary to Marinov, Hatzimichali points out that the traditional costume of the "Sarakatchans", in spite of the fact that they are scattered all over the Balkans, differs very slightly. The authoress, over 35 pages and using more than 40 illustrations, describes the traditional costume of the "Sarakatchan women" in Greece. We should mention that this work also represents a most complete description of the Sarakatchan women's traditional costume. Hatzimichali stresses that in Greece two types of Sarakatchan traditional costumes can be found. The first variant is the one that was worn by the "Sarakatchans" in Macedonia (this refers to the region Macedonia in Greece; Epirus, Thessalia, and then it goes on to Athica, Eubeju and the north part of Peloponez), whose basic characteristic was its simplicity. The second variant was the one that was worn by the "Sarakatchans" in central and eastern Macedonia, that is to say in Serez, Kavala and the central parts of Paranestion. This type of traditional costume was later limited only to the territory of Thrace. But, in spite of the differences, the two traditional costumes refer to the conclusion that they originate from the same type of traditional costume. Furthermore the authoress says that the older women claim that a hundred and more years ago the men and women wore the same upper body clothes, made of a coarse woollen fabric (A. Hatzimichali, 1984, 300). After 1900 the traditional costume in Thrace began to be decorated, lost its simplicity and refashioned into the traditional costumes of the population from the neighbouring regions (A. Hatzimichali, 1984, 300).

Information about the traditional costume of the "Sarakatchans" we also find with B. Russich in his field records from the neighbourhood of the village of Sarach (in his records Sarakovo) near Janina (B. Russich, 127/I-7). In these records Russich has only listed the comprising parts of the male and female traditional costume.

Fragmentary information about the traditional costume of the "Sarakatchans" in Macedonia is given by the travel writer A. B. Heranda. He says: "Our way was soon blocked by large groups of some strange people in Greek clothes of blue woollen cloth and large black peasant sandals decorated on the tips, which drove immense herds of sheep with long black fleeces. It is the nomad tribe of the so-called Karakatchans" (A. B. Heranda, 1927).

However, the most precise data about the reconstruction of the traditional costume of the "Sarakatchans" in Republic of Macedonia have been obtained from the elements deposited in the depots of the museums in Skopje, Shtip, Strumitsa or are with private persons and collectors.

### **Men's traditional costumes**

At the "Sarakatchans" the costume is called "nfika", and for the formal attire the term "armat" is also used (P. Skok, 1927, 171). During grieving the costume was worn inside out for 40 days.

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century the "Sarakatchans" in Macedonia wore a woollen undershirt - "malina" (which was put directly onto the bare body, summer or winter), over it a shirt - "kamso", made of white cloth with wide sleeves; on the lower part of the body they wore pants - "vracha", made of white woollen heavy cloth, and white trouser legs - "kalci", attached to the pants with a woollen string; at the knees the "kalci" were wrapped with black or colourful fringed ribbons - "kalcedeti". Around the waist they girded themselves with a white, and later also with a black variegated belt - "zonari"; over it they put on a leather belt with partitions - "silav", where they carried the smoking kit. On the upper part of the body over the shirt they put on a white vest - "djamadani", buttoned up on the chest with little metal hooks; a white dolman - "seguni", with cut sleeves. The stockbreeders also put on a "kabanitsa" (cloak) with long sleeves on top of it. On the feet they wore short woollen socks - "patula", leather peasant sandals - "caruhi" (hand made), typical of almost all of the Balkan stockbreeders. They covered the head with a white or red fez (during the summer), or a fur cap (during the winter).

During the festive days over the vest they put on a short waistcoat with cut sleeves - "konduseguna", a "fustanela" (men's skirt with gussets) made of white cloth, and on their feet they wore multicoloured socks and shoes.

Between the two world wars the "Sarakatchans" also began to wear black trousers made of heavy cloth - "gilot", a shirt with a straight cut and tight sleeves, a black double-breasted waistcoat and a black coat - "patatuka". Around the neck they wore a shawl, and on the head - a fur cap or a cap - "skufje", on the feet black, and on festive days colourful woollen socks and shoes. During this period, in festive days the "Sarakatchans" also began to wear tight white pants down to the ankles; on top of them they wore a white "fustanela" (men's skirt with gussets). This kind of traditional costume they also wore during weddings.

Comprising parts: undershirt - "malina", shirt - "kamso", trouser legs - "kalces", men's skirt - "fustanela", pants - "vracha", vest - "djamadani", dolman - "seguni", waistcoat - "kondusiguna", belt - "zonari", trousers with a rider's cut - "pantalonja", coat - "patatuka", cloak - "gunj", leather belt - "silav", socks - "patula", trouser legs' ribbons - "kalcedeti", peasant sandals - "caruhi", shoes - "kurb'el'a", shawl - "mandilj", hat - "kacua", fez - "fes", fur cap - "shubara", cap - "skufje", towel - "patcheta".

### **Women's traditional costume**

The women's traditional costume at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century consisted of: an undershirt - "malina", shirt - "kamso" (made of linen or cotton cloth), skirt - "fusta", trapezoid-shaped apron - "podja", belt - "zonari" and a little belt made of trinkets - "zoka" with metal buckles - "kleodamata". During festive days on top of the longer vest they wore a waistcoat - "gozoki". On their feet they wore black woollen socks - "curapja", and during the summer they wore thick knee socks - "kalces", and they also wore leather peasant sandals - "caruhi". They covered the head with a black knitted woollen shawl - "mandilj" (B. Russich, 127/1-7; L. Zhunich, 1924, 94).

Between the two world wars the traditional costume did not undergo any essential changes, except that it became more decorated. The shirt had short sleeves, and the cleavage was covered with a piece of cloth - "trahlja". There were changes on the apron as well: instead of the trapezoid, they started to use aprons made of white cloth bought in a shop, which they decorated with cords. On the longer vest they attached wide sleeves - "manike", and on the feet they put on abundantly decorated socks.

The women were modest in decorating. The maidens wore necklaces around the neck, and the women who were younger wore a thread of ducats. On the belt they attached metal buckles - "kleodomata", and on the chest there was a button - "kopce". On the scarf they attached ducats which, after they gave birth to a first child, they took off and they wore them threaded on ribbons around the

neck. The women wore rings, men wore them rarely, and girls never wore them. Female children were tattooed, and the most common motif was the cross.

Comprising parts: undershirt - "malina", shirt - "kamso", "gushnik" - "trahlja", skirt - "fusta", apron - "podja", belt - "zunari", little belt - "zoka", dolman - "seguni", waistcoat - "gozoki", coat - "patatuka", sleeves - "manika", socks - "curapja, thick knee socks - "kalces", peasant shoes - "caruhi", shawl - "mandilj".

Hair - the girls differed from the women only by the way they wore their hair. The girls wore their hair with a parting in the middle; they tied a ribbon embroidered with silver gilt around their head and they threw their hair over it. After a girl got married, she plaited her hair in plaits - "kasunis"; the plaits were crossed above the forehead, wound around the head and tied at the back of the head with a ribbon. The women wore this kind of a hairdo until their death.

### **Jewellery:**

- a). "flurid", bridal jewellery for the head; a golden coin (when a bride had given birth to her first child she put this coin on the necklace around the neck);
- b). "sklarikja" - earrings; they were metal, decorated with little chains which not only decorated the face, but also held the earrings to prevent losing them;
- c). "hajmali", bridal jewellery for the chest - necklaces, old coins (on younger women it was threaded ducats);
- d). "kopce", bridal jewellery for the chest, an alloy of silver, moulding technique, engravings and black paste (savat);
- e). "kleodamata", metal buckles, attached to the belt, an alloy of silver, moulding technique, engraved, silver-plated; by form very similar to "glasinachki pojasi" (a medieval belt);
- f). "klidoma", buckles, chest decoration; metal plates; an alloy of silver; moulding technique, engravings; "savat" (black paste); necklaces; filigree crafting; motifs: leaves, snakes, eagles with one or two heads and so on;
- g). "manilis", a bracelet, decoration for the wrist; bronze (brass); moulding, engraved, it is worn on the right hand and fastened with a silver needle;
- h). "drahlidi", rings, worn only by the married women (it was not for girls); brass, moulding technique, engraved.

The metal jewellery was similar almost for all the Sarakatchan women. It was bought by order from the local jewellers or the Albanian and the Jewish traders.

Tattoos - even in the early childhood years, on the forehead and on the hands; motif: cross; technique: "sadj" (soot), alcohol ("rakija" - a sort of home-made brandy), needle.

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