



## POLITICS OF ECONOMIC PRESSURE TO THE ALBANIAN POPULATION OF KOSOVO FROM THE SERBO-CROAT-SLOVENE KINGDOM DURING THE YEARS 1918-1929

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### **Abstract:**

To remedy historic injustices against the Albanian borders and stop the violence and Serbian military repression against Kosovo Albanians, the delegates of Albania at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919-1920, demanded the revision of Albania's borders of 1913. They made efforts to include Kosovo and other Albanian territories within the Albanian state.<sup>i</sup> But even after the intense talks that took place in Paris and in its circumstances that resulted in the signing of the Peace Agreements in Versailles between States of Antante and other states of axis,<sup>ii</sup> Kosovo at this peaceful conference was left in the framework of the newly formed Kingdom of Serb-Croat-Slovenia (MSKS). Whereas Albania an independent state was admitted to the borders of 1913.<sup>iii</sup> As a consequence, Kosovo's economic situation began to weaken.

**Keywords:** economy, boundary, Albania, kingdom, wars, gendarmerie, people, years, freedom.

### **1. Introduction**

According to the Decree Law of 1919, Kosovo was under the military administration of Army Zone III of MSKS with centre in Skopje, respectively, it was under administration

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<sup>i</sup> Dusan T. Bataković, Serbian government and Esat Pashë Toptani, without year and place of publication, IDK, page. 54.

<sup>ii</sup> Момир Јовић, History of the Serbs, Приштина, 1997, f. 274-275.

<sup>iii</sup> Василије Крстић-Ђорђе Лекић, Kosovo and Метохија for centuries Зубља, Приштина, 1995, f. 63; Prof. Dr. Muin Çami, Albanians on the Kosovo problem at the end of the I World War, The Kosovo issue is a historical and current problem, (Symposium held in Tirana on: 15-16 Prill 1993), Tiranë, 1996, f. 143.

of Kosovo Division headquartered in Pristina, which was divided into areas of military regiments.<sup>iv</sup>

Even according to Schmit historian, between the two wars the governments of MSKS, one after the other, tried to implement policies aimed at changing the ethnic structure in Kosovo, in favour of Serbs. For these purposes, they were willing to use all the means of state and pre-state power. The Albanian population, in these circumstances, remained the subject of the politics in question. The developments of those years proved that the integration of Albanians into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was not intended, but their ethnic assimilation,<sup>v</sup> and their migration to Turkey and Albania.

During the First Balkan War of 1912-1913 Kosovo and a part of other Albanian lands fell into the occupation of Kingdom of Serbia and Montenegro. Despite the will of the majority Kosovo Albanian population, the Ambassadors Conference in London left Kosovo within the framework of the state of Serbia and Montenegro. In the First World War, Kosovo was divided between Axis forces, respectively between Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria.

## **2. Economic pressures by encouraging the Albanian population to migrate**

The economic base of the population of the former Vilayet of Kosovo, during Ottoman rule was agriculture, most of its inhabitants engaged in agriculture. Secondly, livestock farming was most developed in mountainous areas than in other parts of the territory. Craftsmanship and trade were also important. It should be said that Kosovo had great benefit also from transitional trade, between the coastal Albania and the Balkan interior, so the inhabitants of Kosovo generally did a good life and had an enviable standard. But after the two divisions that were made to the Albanian territories respectively Kosovo (in the Berlin Congress in 1878 and at the London Conference of 1913) in favour of Serbia and Montenegro, among other things started the economic base of the Albanian population to weaken, they faced with numerous economic difficulties, rarely with the establishment of the Albanian-Yugoslav state border, Kosovo was separated from its traditional and natural market with the centuries and the Albanian Coast, and then in the region around the cities of Prizren and Gjakova Because of the border, many

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<sup>iv</sup> Limon Rushiti, Kosovo's territorial administrative regulation over 1918-1929, Kosova-Kosovo, nr. 1. Prishtinë-Prishtina, 1972, f. 259; Daut Bislimi, Some aspects of the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian kingdom's attitude towards Albanian Kosovo in our historiography, Albano logical Traces The series of historical sciences no. 25-1995, Prishtinë, 1997, f. 190.

<sup>v</sup> Oliver Jens Schmit, Kosovo short story of a central Balkan country, Pristina, 2014, f. 146.

agricultural land remained un worked, land that belonged to Albanian residents the resident within the borders of 1913 and Kosovar emigrants who had fled to Albania to escape the persecutions and prosecutions of the Kingdom of Serbia-Croatia- Slovenia, on both sides of the border there were separate families and ethnological areas and land offs.

This situation which was created directly influenced the beginning of economic decline of Kosovo Albanians, this weakening that was constantly increasing over time. To overcome this state of affairs, the Kingdom of Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom (MSKS) should accept the demands of Kosovo Albanians to establish bilateral relations and bilateral relations with Albania and find solutions to overcome this situation with Aimed at alleviating the economic situation of the Kosovo population, which was also borne out by International Law on the regulation of joint border agreements between neighbouring states.

Researcher Haskuka, will ascertain that: as a consequence of the establishment of the Albania-Yugoslavia border, over the years, not only was it difficult, but also trade with the Albanian coast stopped.<sup>vi</sup> Government the MSKS created this situation itself with the purpose of encouraging and obliging the Albanian population to move out of this state, Therefore Albanians were subjected to a strong economic pressure, through special measures of Yugoslav power, some of which were as follows:

- There was a rise for some degree of land classification of Albanians;
- became a ban of tobacco cultivation in Albanian districts / sub-prefectures;
- Draconian penalties were imposed on persons who "cut wood into the mountain"; and
- Veterinary decrees were strictly enforced.

Particularly, the pressure of Yugoslav power was more powerful The Albanians who resided in areas where the land was more fertile and those who possessed commercial and handicraft facilities (shops). One of the perpetrators of these circumstances recalls: "*Although it seems paradoxical, it was a fact that for lands belonging to villagers-farmers, or for homes demolished in the cities, the former Albanian owners continued to pay the tax*".<sup>vii</sup>

The decline of handicrafts caused the increase of taxes and other obligations of craftsmen to SKS Kingdom. This decline was also helped by the relocation of many other craftsmen to Turkey.<sup>viii</sup>

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<sup>vi</sup> Prof. Dr. Esat Haskuka, Analysis of Prizren functions over the centuries, Prizren, 2003, f. 251.

<sup>vii</sup> Tafil Boletini, Memories, Near Isa Boletinit & Facing the challenges of the time, Preparation for publication and illustrations Prof. Dr. Marenglen Verli. Tiranë, 2011, f. 475.

<sup>viii</sup> Prof. Dr. Esat Haskuka, Po aty. f. 252.

To better understand the economic circumstances created at this time, we are giving an example of the craftsmanship of the filigree jewellery in the city of Prizren, in 1866 there were 47, Filigree manufactory in this town<sup>ix</sup> and in 1914 only 35 such workshops were in operation. Then, of the 100 slab tabs (leather processors) of Prizren in the 19th century, in 1912 there were 45 and in 1928, they were reduced to 20.<sup>x</sup>

With the aim of further weakening the economic situation of Kosovo Albanians, the MSKS leaders instigated "disarmament" actions of the genocide population with the aim of plundering, depriving, and expelling Albanians from Kosovo. This path followed continuously in different periods is also seen in state documents of the time. The executives of these shares, during the period 1918-1938, burned up on the foundation

132 Albanian villages and thus impoverished their respective families.<sup>xi</sup> As a result of all this inhabitants remained without minimum conditions for survival. These actions created impatient circumstances. This situation created conditions for the realization of state plans for the expulsion of Albanians from Kosovo.

### **3. Robbery and Slavic violence against Albanians to the detriment of the economy and the displacement servile**

According to the testimony of the Committee "National Defence of Kosovo": in January 1919, the Albanians were robbed of great numbers and they were left without food from the Serbs.<sup>xii</sup> The robberies were organized, especially by senior officials of the SKS Kingdom, as evidenced by the article of the Serbian newspaper "Socialist Zora" of June 2, 1920. There, among other things, wrote in the article that while he was the founder of the Gora Gorge (South-West Kosovo) At break, no robbery took place but when he returned to duty in this circle were stole at once, 15 heads of cows, throughout the district 50-60 thousand sheep and 5,000 cows were stolen. All these thefts, so did the people of the commander, just to abuse them, which had been turned into twigs of

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<sup>ix</sup> Zija Shkodra, Albanian city during the National Renaissance. Tiranë, 1984, f. 155; M. Savić, Crafts and Industry in the affiliated areas and crafts in the old borders of the Kingdom of Serbia, Belgrade, 1914, f. 75.

<sup>x</sup> Zija Shkodra, Albanian city during the National Renaissance. Tiranë, 1984, f. 105

<sup>xi</sup> Dr. Hakif Bajrami, Gentlemen's agreement Tito-Kyprili më 1953 in Split, Vjetar, Nr. XXV-XXVI, Prishtinë, 2001, f. 260.

<sup>xii</sup> Dr. Lush Culaj, Albania and the National Problem 1918-1918, Prishtinë, 2004, f. 52; Hakif Bajrami, How did Serbia re-occupy Kosovo on 1918, part 2, Prishtinë, 2012, f. 283.

Kacak (mountain brigade).<sup>xiii</sup> A few days later, on June 8, 1920, Kingdom SKS undertook the action with the help of the army and the gendarmerie against 'Lumë-Malësia' e Prizrenit, on this occasion, over 2,000 heads of livestock was looted.<sup>xiv</sup> This province is about 500,000, livestock breastfeeding, which had before the invasion; in 1939, there were only 50,000.<sup>xv</sup> Slavic scholars Jovicevic and Miljkovic, quoting in their work, an August 1921 document, through which state terrorism is confirmed to the Albanian population. In it is seen the order of the country's commander in Peja (of superior Filip Carićic) to undertake an action in the central Kosovo area, namely in the Drenica province, burning villages, killing residents,<sup>xvi</sup> and looting the population.

Division of the Army of MSKS assisted by the gendarmerie, Chetniks and armed settlers, on January 6, 1921, at the height of winter frost, had started a large-scale action to disarm the Albanians in Kosovo.<sup>xvii</sup> During this action, without mentioning the many killed, they carried out theft and burned many houses. In many villages of eastern Kosovo, as in Podujevo, they had burned 50 houses, plundered 55 more; In the village of Keçekollu burned four and plundered five quarters; In Prapashtica burned 80 houses and robbed equally; In Sharban they plundered and then burned 28 houses; 32 houses were burned in Bjelopoja; In Nishec village they plundered all the houses and then burned some of them.<sup>xviii</sup> The same form of violence is seen in the Dukagjini Plain Region (Western Kosovo), where an army sub-army was in the post of Commander of the Military Unit in Carrabreg. He, besides raids, robbed the Albanian families.<sup>xix</sup> On August 6, 1921, the Kosovo National Defense Committee received reports from the field that SKS "Dora e Zezë" paramilitary formation, aided by the army of this state, burned in the peaks of Peja and Gjakova 300 Three-flats houses; and has robbed 1,000 homes and has carried their merchandise with hundreds of carts. The same state structure has robbed up to 12,000 livestock big and small, and horses according.<sup>xx</sup> To Serbian researcher Daciç, the Yugoslav state took care of the abduction of Albanians' properties. This they tried to do so through the so-called Agrarian Reform. The respective officials

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<sup>xiii</sup> Mr. Muhamet Pirraku, Political, social and economic circumstances in Kosovo in the year 1920 according to the gazette *Socjalistička Zora*, Kosova-Kosovo, Nr. 17, Prishtinë, 1988, f. 325.

<sup>xiv</sup> Павле Јовићевић-Мита Миљковић, *Fighting the Pec Communists between the two wars, 1918-1941*, Belgrade, Without publication year, f. 72.

<sup>xv</sup> Marenglen Verli, *Kosova dhe sfida shqiptare në historinë e një shekulli*, Tiranë, 2007, f. 63.

<sup>xvi</sup> Павле Јовићевић-Мита Миљковић, *Fighting the Pec Communists between the two wars, 1918-1941*, Belgrade, Without publication year. 119.

<sup>xvii</sup> Limon Rushiti, *Movement of Kaçaks (mountain fighters) në Kosovë 1918-1927*, Prishtinë, 1981, f. 151

<sup>xviii</sup> Shaban Braha, *The Serbian Genocide and the Albanian Resistance (1844-1990)*, Tirana, 1991, f. 287.

<sup>xix</sup> Павле Јовићевић-Мита Миљковић, *Fighting the Pec Communists between the two wars, 1918-1941*, Београд, Without publication year, f. 119.

<sup>xx</sup> Shaban Braha, *The Serbian Genocide and the Albanian Resistance (1844-1990)*, Tirana, 1991, f. 291.

tried not to leave any traces of documents about misappropriation of Albanian lands. However, such tendencies were in vain, as falsified documents also show traces of the taking of property by senior Serbian officials. On this occasion, in Kosovo, they took large amounts of land. Some of the senior SKS state officials were involved in these actions as well as they are: Pashiçi, Kojiçi, Pop Miniçi, Jakov Çorbiç etc.<sup>xxi</sup> For this issue the newspaper "Socijalistička Zora" of the date: 6 e 9. VI. 1920, wrote: The assets of Mazgit and Azizi villages (the inhabitants of the latter are all displaced in Turkey in the years 1912-1914), totaling 3,000 hectares of land are "bought" by the Serbian government (N. Pashić) and deputy Raska (Jakov Corbic). These lands were bought at a very low price. Even, Nikola Pasić was praised that the grave of Sultan Murat is in his property.<sup>xxii</sup> Pashiç himself and his family in Kosovo, after 1918, had also taken mining sites in Kopaonik

In 1922, the Kingdom SKS through bidding fictitiously sold the Trepça mine to the national bank, and the "Novobërdë" mine Croatia's first savings bank,<sup>xxiii</sup> with these actions now these mines changed the owner.

In the looting of Albanians Including the Serbian clergy and the Deçan Church, and others, how did the books of dreams of Dushan's day open, Saying that these and those riches have belonged to this church or that monastery. The priests' monks themselves participated in the expropriation of Albanians from the lands.<sup>xxiv</sup> The Yugoslav government had continued to confiscate religious property and charitable organizations.<sup>xxv</sup> In At this time the ownership of Slavic Orthodox institutions was not only affected (as envisioned by the Agrarian Law of December 5, 1931), but mainly at the expense of Albanian properties, it was always growing.<sup>xxvi</sup> On the one hand, properties were occupied by Islamic and Catholic religious institutions, and, on the other hand, Albanians' properties were given to monasteries and churches of Pravo-Slavic. For these cases proves also the Decision of the Chief Agrarian Directorate in Skopje, no. 2441, dated 28. VIII. 1927, which talks about the assignment of the Isniq

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<sup>xxi</sup> Mr. Zhivojin Denić, *Industry and Mining of Kosovo from 1918-1941*, Kosova-Kosovo, nr. 1. Prishtinë-Prishtina, 1972, f. 332, 336.

<sup>xxii</sup> Павле Јовићевић-Мита Миљковић, *Fighting the Pec Communists between the two wars, 1918-1941*, Београд, Without publication year, f. 74.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Ali Hadri, *Albanian-Yugoslav Relations*, Prishtina, 2003, f. 130.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Tafil Boletini, *Memories, Near Isa Boletini & Opposite the Challenges of the Time.....*, f. 476.

<sup>xxv</sup> Çerim Lita, *Yugoslav Kingdom Policy on Albanians and Albania 1929-1941, The Politics of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia towards the Albanians and Albani 1929-1941*, Shkup-Prishtin, Скопје-Приштина, 2012, f. 134.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Dr. Marenglen Verli, *Orientation of the Yugoslav colonization agrarian reform over Albanian Muslim peasantry and its consequences, Religion, Islamic Culture and Tradition among Albanians*, Pristina, 1995, f. 468.

(Peja) lands to the Deçan Monastery. It is about a large land complex of 100.33 ha, on the bank of Ratkoci,<sup>xxvii</sup> the land which was extremely fertile.

This action of MSKS's power was in contravention of the Sen-Zhermen Agreement (1920), according to which the Kingdom was obliged to offer its peoples full protection of life and freedom, regardless of their background, nationality language Race and religion.<sup>xxviii</sup> In the wake of the wild expropriations was the confiscation of the Cemeteries of the Catholics of Peja and their giving to a Montenegrin, who turned it into a vineyard.<sup>xxix</sup>

Senior officer of MSKS's Punisha Račić visited radicals in Kosovo and returned to Belgrade on May 17, 1921, submitting a report on the political situation in Kosovo. Through fraudulent methods, he had bought a large forest of Hazir Sylejmani. Haziri was from the town of Gjakova and sold his property for only 500,000 dinars. Punisha had managed to deceive Haziri as the latter did not know the Serbian language and did not understand the lance he was doing. Haziri realized that he was cheated when Punisha began to cut the forest.<sup>xxx</sup> But such frauds occurred hundreds of cases in Kosovo and elsewhere in the SKS Kingdom.

Fields for the use of stones in the territory of the municipality of Shala, Mitrovica region, had been owned by Isa Boletini since the Ottoman Empire. From October 1923, his son Muja was forced to have a Serb co-owner.<sup>xxxi</sup> Muja's cousin writes: *"The Albanian dealer, at this time, does not open the shop as a partner with a Serb; he could never work from heavy taxes, not even being able to travel for commerce"*.<sup>xxxii</sup> Residents of the Rugova province were taken pastures and forests and were given to the inhabitants of the Slavic province of Montenegro's Secular.<sup>xxxiii</sup> As a result, Rugova residents have suffered a lot; they have been the only surviving resource for livestock and wood trade.

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<sup>xxvii</sup> Dr. Jusuf Osmani, Resistance of cadres and religious institutions against agrarian reform and colonization in Kosovo between the two world wars, religion, culture and Islamic traditions among Albanians, Pristina, 1995, f. 483. This quote the author has picked up from the Serbian sources AJ, "Dvor", 74. k. 338, gr. 429. a.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Dr. Jusuf Osmani, Po aty. f. 481.

<sup>xxix</sup> Çerim Lita, Yugoslav Kingdom Policy on Albanians and Albania 1929-1941, The Politics of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia towards the Albanians and Albania 1929-1941, Shkup-Prishtina, Скопје-Приштина, 2012, f. 135.

<sup>xxx</sup> Dr. Bogumil Hrabak, One radical report on the situation in Kosovo 1921 year, Vjetar nr. IV-V (1968-1969), Prishtinë, 1971, f. 213.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Mr. Zhivojin Denić, Industry and Mining of Kosovo from 1918-1941, Kosova-Kosovo, nr. 1. Prishtina-Prishtina, 1972, f. 324.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Tafil Boletini, Memories, Near Isa Boletini & Opposite the Challenges of the Time, .... f. 475.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Глигорије Божовић, Images of Kosovo and Metohija, Prishtina, 1998, f. 74.

As a result of many created circumstances, many Albanians had paid interest on banks owned by wealthy Serbs over time, they could not pay interest, so banks and the state, for various reasons, confiscated the assets of Albanians and they sold it many times below its real value. So when selling any confiscation in auction of Albanians for any debt, the Serbs became aware of who would buy their backs, who would land their belongings, land or shop, so on auction day they would not add to one another's bazaar.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

At this time was widespread corruption and usury. Even these phenomena are likely to be promoted from the top for the purpose of expelling Albanians more rapidly. It is worth to give a description of T. Boletini according to which it is proved that: *"To issue the necessary certificate for passport, persons with serious troubles had to pay bribes after bribes and only when the clerk and the lawyer were convinced that they had nothing but the soul, then they said, "Drive, break the neck." Particularly brutal were with those who sought, immigrating to Albania. But to those who wanted to go to Turkey, though they were shaking well, they easily opened their way"*.<sup>xxxv</sup> For obtaining money from the lawyer R. Zojic for the issuance of passports of Albanians in order to migrate,<sup>xxxvi</sup> there are also two aforementioned Slavic authors. On the other hand, Albanians did not sit idly before these storms. Initially in Peja, a charity association named "St. Catherine" is established, whose mission the association is to prevent displacement. Under the shadow of the charity association "St. Katarina" is established The Committee for the Prohibition of Displacement, in which the committee included people of authority and influence, among which the priest Shtjefën Gjeçovi.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The committee influenced the appointments of Albanian Catholic parishioners in Kosovo because it had become practicable at this time for non-Albanians to be elected for priest in Kosovo. The charity priest Shtjefën Gjeçovi was assigned with service to Has, which was a rare case for a Franciscan to serve in Zym. The arrival of Gjeçov in Zym is mainly related to the duties given to the Imamate of the Mosque in Gjonaj with powers for equipment with family passports to those Albanians to displace them. In the Kosovo Archives<sup>xxxviii</sup> for the period 1927-1941 found photocopies of Albanian families from 3 to 30 family members, who have been provided with passports by an imamate in Gjonaj to be displaced.

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<sup>xxxiv</sup> Tafil Boletini, *Memories, Near Isa Boletini & Opposite the Challenges of the Time*,..., f. 475.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Tafil Boletini, *Memories, Near Isa Boletini & Opposite the Challenges of the Time*,..., f. 476.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Павле Јовићевић-Мита Миљковић, *Fighting the Pec Communists between the two wars, 1918-1941*, Belgrade, Without publication year, f. 211.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Nexhat Çoçaj, *Border zone preservation of national identity after the proclamation of Independence, publishing of the acts of the conference nationwide "Albanian cultural identity in 100 years"*, Tirana, 2013, f. 193-194.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Archive of Kosovo. Fund 490, Box. no. 21 dhe 23.

#### 4. Conclusion

A large number of Kosovar Albanians, day after day because of the economic crisis had started to feel the social crisis, with the only hope of having the mother country respectively Albania. First contacts to regulate the status of exchanges and border traffic between Albania and the Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom were made in January 1922, but almost this year, almost nothing was done to facilitate exchanges and border traffic. Even at the end of this year, the Yugoslav government made it even harder this process after establishing the passport regime for border crossing.<sup>xxxix</sup> In spite of the fact that in the 1922 agreement, the inhabitants of the area concerned had to cross the border only with ID-card.

Kingdom of SKS behaves with her Albanian citizens in two different ways. Thus: To strengthen the economic situation of Kosovo Serb farmers in the period between the two wars, the state had formed agricultural cooperatives such as Srecka village, in the Prizren region. In this cooperative were also brought tractors that would help farmers to work the land.<sup>xl</sup> On the other hand, the Albanians became economically weak because they were taken properties and were given to Serbian colonizers. There were times when Albanian farmers continued to work their lands even further by verbal agreement with the colonizer. On this occasion, they were obliged to give half of the productions they received from the working land to the new owner of the land (colonizer). All these measures helped to make the situation of Albanians more and more difficult. According to Professor Bajrami, by 1926, nearly thirty percent of Albanians had returned to the arm labourers,<sup>xli</sup> and working as a serf in their properties but managed by Serbian colonizers.

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<sup>xxxix</sup> Paskal Milo, *Albanian and Yugoslavia, 1918-1927*, Tiranë, 1992, f. 189.

<sup>xl</sup> Војислав Танасковић, *Средачка Жупа, Приштина*, 1992, f. 182-183.

<sup>xli</sup> Prof. Dr. Hakif Bajrami, *Politics of Pan-Slavic Serbs in the struggle for the extermination of Albanians 1836-1999*, Vjetar, Nr. XXXI-XXXII, Prishtinë, 2004, f. 129-130.

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