

The Position of the Woman from Elbasan in the Social and Family Life during The Years 1925-1939

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Abstract

The article aims to reflect the difficult position in which the woman from Elbasan in the family and social life during the years 1925 – 1939. The patriarchal mentality in society and the family was the main influence of this situation. The situation was further aggravated by the low level of education and culture he possessed. Religious norms were also not a good influence on the position of women. The situation of Muslim women was more difficult than that of Orthodox women and the level of education was lower. The drafting and implementation of Government protection policies for women in the country encountered many difficulties. In the region they acted according to the areas: canons, customary norms, spiritual and religious rites. Albanian legislation on women's rights was incomplete. His power was weak, compared to the influence of the customary, canonical and religious tradition operating in the country. Despite the policies pursued and the measures taken, the situation of women in the family and society did not improve. Present and disturbing in these years were also presented such problems in the family and society as the sale and purchase of women, the infant engagement of girls, the exploitation of women as labor and in the most difficult jobs in the family etc. In these years, steps forward were made, but not sensitive, tangible, and with the same level throughout the region. Methodology: research, comparative and analytical. As literature sources we mention: the archive, the press of the time, and the historiographical sources.

Keywords: sale-purchase; discrimination; illiteracy; emancipation; integration;

1. Introduction

During the years 1925 - 1928, the position of women was the same as in previous periods. The inferiority of the position of the Albanian woman, disturbed the layer of intellectuals in the country, this layer educated in the metropolis of cultural life in Europe (Austria). Albanian intellectuals supported the idea that the emancipatory journey of the Albanian woman could only be done through binding government policies, state laws and their consequent implementation in the country. One of these intellectuals was Mit'hat Frashëri. In defense of this idea, he encouraged the President of the Republic of Albania to react positively, regarding the reopening and reorganization of women's societies in the country. At the first session of the Senate on June 1, 1925, A. Zogu, among others, stated on this position that: "...We must be convinced that for the change of social life, not only the laws are enough, but also the progress and exaltation of the Albanian Woman." (Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Albania, (2007), *History of the Albanian people*, Vol. III, Tirana: Toena, p. 208) The education of the Albanian woman was seen as a necessity, by the intellectual elite in the country, from which the improvement of the position could come her, in the family and society. It was the right time to work and invest in undertaking effective policies towards increasing

the level of education of women in Elbasan and in the country. The difficulties on this road were numerous, as, instead, they acted according to the zonal division, canons, customary norms, spiritual traditions and religious beliefs. The invalidity of the Albanian state legislation had influenced the norms, canons and beliefs to dominate in the conditioning of the life of the woman in the country. Even during the years 1925 - 1928, the inferiority of women in social and family life in relation to men was dominant in the country. An expression of inferiority towards it was noticed significantly in March 1925 with the issuance of the electoral law for the Parliamentary elections in the Republic of Albania. The electoral law issued on the eve of the parliamentary elections, excluded the Albanian woman from the voting process and from participating in political life. This right was never mentioned or discussed, both in Albanian political circles and in terms of the life of civil society in the country.

During 1929, the government's attention was focused on the implementation instead of policies aimed at improving the educational and cultural level of Albanian women. The educational reform of 1929 aimed to realize and increase the participation of women not only in the level of education primary, but also in secondary. One of the government's priorities in the fight against illiteracy and patriarchy in the country was efforts "... For the promotion of female culture, but also for its training and its preparation for family life." (*"10 years of the Kingdom 1928-1938"*, Tirana, September 1, 1938, pp. 208-209)

2. The position of women in Elbasan in the years (1925 - 1939)

2.1 Engagements and marriages

The position of the woman from Elbasan was no different from the position of women in the country. The picture was the same for the woman from Elbasan as a girl, as a woman and as a mother, in the family and in society, in the lack of rights and in the inability of the state to put in place her image and position. Elbasan was a region which, in addition to its strategic and physical-geographical importance, was prominent during the Albanian history as a region in which secondary education¹ was born and developed, which produced teaching staff in the country and beyond. Despite this, the situation of the woman from Elbasan was quite serious and her educational and cultural level was not good. Numerous and very disturbing problems related to the difficult position of the woman from Elbasan, were a consequence of domination instead of customary norms, patriarchal traditions, religious fanaticism in the family and society. Women in most Albanian families were considered and treated as an individual in inferior positions: without rights, without desires and without freedom of thought. If we make a parallel regarding the position of women in Europe, in the period of the `30s of the XX century, which we have as an object of treatment, the Albanian woman could be compared in terms of education and rights. Existing, murderous phenomena for this social stratum, in the area of Elbasan during these years were presented: sale-purchase, sale of a woman by her family and purchase by the family of the future husband, abuses with the prices of marriages or engagements, cradle marriage or at a young age, its use in the heaviest family chores, etc .

The world economic crisis of 1929-1933 had its impact on Albania as well. The economic situation of Albanian families deteriorated, which led to the emergence of problems within it. One of the problems that arose was the speculation about the amount of money that had to be paid in cases of engagements or marriages between young people, which appeared and became more present in rural and remote mountainous areas. It is no exaggeration to say that this problem in

¹ Here was born the Normal School, in 1909, considered the first pedagogical institute in Albania

many areas turned into a phenomenon. Another unusual act, but manifested in the period of economic crisis was the breaking of the engagement by the girl's family without notifying the family of the boy, with whom she was engaged. This act was considered as a violation of the Albanian customary tradition as the act of betrothal was performed with the will and understanding of the families, and as such its dissolution required the understanding of the parties. This phenomenon appeared in 1935 in some families of the Municipality of Zaranika in Elbasan. The concern conveyed to the Prefecture of Elbasan, by the families of the boys in this municipality was quite large, for the fact that not only were they not informed, but they had paid for the purchase of the girl. More specifically, in the complaint of the head of the family of the boy, among other things, it was stated that: "...I had engaged my son Salihu to the daughter of Isak Ceni, Lija from the village of Mollagjesh, her father against the promise he had given me wants to marry the girl to Zeqir Shushku from the same village for speculative purposes, as has become a habit unfortunately in our people..." (Central State Archive, F. 271, D. 105, 1935, p. 1) The head of the family demanded the reaction of the Elbasan Prefecture, because, according to him, this was contrary not only to the law but also to the custom. In the people this act was considered as a violation of the word of honor and non-observance of the trust, and for these reasons towards the violators, an attitude had to be taken and measures had to be taken by the competent bodies. According to the complainant, the word of honor and faith had been sacred to the Albanian family, society and nation, which held them much higher than speculation and money. Such a phenomenon became present in village Broshkë of Dumre Commune of Elbasan. The case was an engagement performed between two families, the son and the daughter from a young age. From the engagement the girl's father had received from the family of the future groom a cash reward of 12 fr. gold, for the engagement realized since 1929. As the children grew, the groom's father asked about the girl, who had been bought by his family. From the verifications carried out, he had learned that the girl's father, without informing her, had engaged his daughter again to another family and had received money from that family again. From the complaint made to the Prefecture, it was judged by her, that this constituted a fraud, which should have been punished according to the law. (Central State Archive, F.271, D. 105, 1935, p. 4) Another case of this nature had occurred in the Municipality of Gjinari in the village of Jeronisht in 1935. The payment that the boy's family had made to the head of the girl's family was 340 gold francs in connection with an engagement, which had been made some time ago. A concern had arisen on the part of this family after the girl, who had been bought to be a bride in their family, was engaged again, also within that village. The information was forwarded to the Elbasan Prefecture, which was asked to take measures not to cause any incidents between families. (Central State Archive, F. 271, D. 105, 1935, p.p. 8-9.)

In the years 1925 - 1939, the first steps were taken in the country in the framework of social emancipation and the acquisition of some rights for Albanian women. The focus of government policy was the fight against backward customs, patriarchal family fanaticism, as well as the denial of women's rights and freedoms in the country. Quite important and decisive was the change, perhaps not entirely but to a certain extent of the unwritten but quite dominant customary law (canons) in Albanian society. These efforts were evidenced in: in terms of curbing or restricting the organization of engagement or marriage ceremonies, according to customary norms, as well as to minimize the phenomenon of buying a woman as a wife with cash by the future husband. The customary tradition, turned into an unwritten legal code, was present in the rural areas of the Elbasan Prefecture² as well

² Elbasan was a Prefecture located in the center of Albania, with an ancient history, favorable geographical position and played an important role in the economic, social and political life of the country.

as in its cities, both in the population of the Muslim and Christian faiths. This clearly stated that the period of the young man's engagement until marriage was used by the girl's family to ask for a certain amount of money from the boy's family for the preparation of her dowry, the amount calculated in the base currency of the country was 70-80 napoleons of gold. The price of the money the girl's family needed to make the dowry was not the same at all times and in all places. Speculation was rife about the amount of money the boy's family owed to the girl's family for preparing the dowry. The increase in this amount of payment caused dissatisfaction in the families of Elbasan, due to the deterioration of their economic situation. The habit of buying women became prevalent in the population of the province of Shpati. The abuse of prices was a concern for the families of Elbasan, who, from time to time, submitted their complaints and petitions to the provincial bodies, for the reduction of the price of engagements and marriages. Positive reactions and support to their requests were previously provided by the Metropolitan religious institution in Elbasan. This institution in 1924 had decided to take into account the demands of the inhabitants of the province and had set a limit price of 20 gold napoleons for engagement and marriage actions in the region. Political events in the country during 1924 influenced the decision not to be implemented by the local population until 1925. To implement this initiative, the Elders of the Shpati Province organized a meeting in November 1925 in which it was decided as a priority, respect and implementation in Elbasan area of the Metropolitan decision of 1924. The decision was forwarded for reconsideration to the Elbasan Prefecture and the Council of Ministers. It was an important step towards curbing abuses in marriage prices. In July 1927, 19 villages in the province of Shpati, under the support of the Metropolitan of Elbasan (represented by Veniamin Haxhi Jakovi), set up a Commission, which would follow the practical implementation of the above decision by the population of this area. (Musaj, F., (2002), *Women in Albania in the years 1912-1939*, Tirana, pp. 154-155)

The commission for overseeing the implementation of the decision had 6 members, and Kostandin Ahqaut was elected its chairman. His work focused on conducting investigations into persons who engaged in illegal marital relations and who abused the price set in the marriage. (Central State Archive, F. 271, D. 169, 1927, p. 2) At the meeting it was decided that for every widow, in case of remarriage, not to be paid for it by the family of the husband of new, more than 20 napoleon gold. Decisions were considered important for the well-being of families in the region of Elbasan as well as for the improvement of their economic situation

A very widespread phenomenon in the region of Elbasan as well as in the country, was the engagement from the cradle or as a minor, which was performed in exchange for monetary reward. Over time, it had become a disturbing phenomenon, prompting the reaction of Albanian politics to reflect on it. For this purpose in December 1925, the Council of Ministers organized a meeting in which it was decided that: "All engagements of girls performed before the age of 17 by giving words and exchanging signs, in front of the state, are considered non-existent and have no value." (Musaj, F., (2002), p. 155) Such a decision was both deterrent and controlling if it was implemented precisely. Despite the positive and significant reaction of the Albanian Government regarding this outdated customary tradition, it should be noted that this process was not stopped or it could not even be claimed that it could disappear. The decision of the Council of Ministers to annul engagements or marriages at a young age remained inconceivable and unenforceable for most of not only the families of Elbasan, but also of the Albanian society. In the family tradition, the bond between young people was carried out in two stages: engagement and marriage. Both stages relied heavily on customary law, tradition, and faith. Tradition clearly stated that in a marital relationship the giving of a word, vow or promise was

done between the parties creating bridges between families. The girl's father promised the boy's father loyalty in the new bond that would be established between the young men of the two families. In the Muslim faith,³ it was customary for the boy's family to go and knock on the door of the girl's family to ask for her hand, through the messenger. In the Christian faith, custom determined that it was the girl's father, the one who went and knocked on the boy's family, the groom candidate, giving and asking for allegiance. The act of asking for the hand of the girl from the boy's family and giving the word, the promise, the promise from the girl's family, could be performed even when the girl was a minor. The date of marriage of the young people was set between the two families with their understanding. The coronation ceremony of the couple in the marriage, based on the manner of its realization were attended by: the judge (civil representative); or imamie hoxha (religious representative). The wedding ceremony was attended by representatives of the families of the son and daughter, as well as witnesses of the parties. This way of betrothal and marriage as a tradition had remained since the time of the Ottoman conquest, and continued to be present in the 30s of the XX century. It was the deputies of the Albanian Parliament who made efforts in these years towards the improvement of: the position of women, their legal status in the Albanian family and society, and in the fight against backward customs. Parliamentary debates between MPs also highlighted the large gap that existed in gender relations between women and men in the country. A bill on women was presented to parliament, which was not approved by Conservative MPs. In the compromise between the political forces in the Parliament it was decided that: "The right to marry in marriage would have the state civil status offices, while that of divorce again remained with the religious courts." (Academy of Sciences of Albania, (2007), Vol. III, Tirana: Toena, p. 201

The position of women during the years 1925 - 1928, in the region of Elbasan, improved to but not at the same pace. Improvements were identified in the legal position of Elbasan women both in the family and in society. The law recognized the right of women to oppose marriage against their will. Throughout the territory of the Elbasan Prefecture, the law in terms of improving the position of women was not implemented uniformly and the expected results from it did not have the same level. When a woman's desire was supported and taken into consideration by her family or relatives, she was more protected and more confident in the steps she took in life.

The Prefecture of Elbasan also spoke against this bad habit and for putting women in a protective position in the case when: "I a young man from Elbasan stood up in defense of his sister, whom his uncle had taken to his house and wanted to marry against her will." (Musaj, F., (2002), p. 160) But the zonal, local and national reality in those years was not the same throughout the country. In conditions when about 80% of the population lived in villages or in deep mountainous areas, and illiteracy was in the extent of 90% of the Albanian society, the perception and implementation of the law in general was difficult. The difficulties were exacerbated by the educational level of the population in the country, as well as by the dominance of patriarchal familie part of this society. In many areas of the Elbasan region, the woman was considered in the family simply as a workaholic, and a spiritual object for satisfying her husband's desires. Often, even today in the opinions of the elderly, when a female child is born, we hear it said that "when a girl is born they cry / cry and the beams of the house". The expression was a clear reflection of the difficulties of being a woman or a girl in the life reality not only of the Elbasan region but everywhere in the country. The phenomenon of buying and selling women in Albania, despite the mitigation and

³ Islam or the Islamic faith was one of the religious beliefs that existed in Albania at this time, widespread in the country after the conquest of the Ottoman Empire.

improvement, remained a phenomenon that appeared in Albania during the years of the Albanian Monarchy, not only in Elbasan but throughout the country. Habit became the object of criticism and was treated with ironic notes even by the press of the time. The article "The son marries the mother", reflected the fact that customary law also dominated the law. The author of the article ironically stated that: Hasan, the son of I.D. (initials), from the neighborhoods here, married his mother, a 45-year-old woman, to B.Xh. a 30-year-old widowed man, who, according to local custom, sold his mother for 8 napoleons of gold, which he put in his pocket and made you halal! ” It was considered in the press as "Original and truly prototype events not only for the annals of the whole world, but also for those of our country." (Newspaper "Gazeta e Re", Tirana, Friday, February 8, 1929) According to the press of the time, the purchase of women was considered not only a social wound, but also a national shame. (Newspaper "Drita", Tirana, March 31, 1937) The sale of women in the country by her family was not only considered as a means of profit, but also as a way of expanding this family given the family and tribal circle.

The adoption of the Civil Code, on April 1, 1929, brought about a significant improvement in the position of women in the family and social life. This code was intended to regulate the relations between the rights of women and men, the right to: divorce, marriage between individuals of different religious faiths, the compulsory performance of civil marriage, etc. Despite the legal rights set out in the Civil Code on women and women, in the Albanian social mentality of those years, she felt inferior to men. (Puto, A., (2009), *Political Albania 1912-1939*, Tirana: Toena, p. 470) The code remained inconceivable not only by particular individuals but also for most of Albanian society. In the Albanian reality of the time it could not: be thought, perceived and applied the right that a boy and a girl had to be known, accompanied, loved, coexisted between them.

The customary tradition clearly stated that the young people connected in the couple from the moment of giving the word in the engagement until the first night of the marriage could not be seen, met and talked among themselves. They did not know each other at all. The girl could not even meet other people, not part of her family. In terms of the functioning of the Civil Code, with the legalization of civil marriage, it was extremely difficult, the visual contact between the representatives of the Civil Registry and the girl to be married, in her home to enable identification. As the scholar Sulë Dedej said: "Because of inherited fanaticism, the girl's face should not have been seen by the civil office envoys - the girl was standing behind the door answering the officer's questions." (Dedej, S. (1999), *Abedin Caushi in the footsteps of the Elbasan tradition*, Onufri, p. 115) In order for this act not to be considered as a legal violation and to justify in a way the girl's family, an irregular report was invented, ie false medical.

During the years 1929-1939, marriages between young people took place in two forms: marriages performed in cult institutions and civil marriages performed in the offices of the Civil Registry in the Municipality. To give a good example of the implementation of the Civil Code, Elbasan on April 5, 1929 realized the first marriage at this institution. Among the Municipalities in the country, this institution set the record for announcing a marriage between persons of the Muslim faith. So Elbasan was the first city in Albania to make a marriage announcement based on the new Civil Code. The press of the time in this regard said: "...The marriage was made between Muslims, who do not have the freedom and liberalism that Christians have, then the record still belongs to Elbasan!" (Newspaper "Gazeta e Re", Tirana, Wednesday, April 10, 1929) For the time being, however, this marriage could be considered an achievement due to the fact that the ice was broken on the organization of marriages between young people no longer in religious institutions but in state institutions, on the basis of the law expressed in the Civil Code. The first civil marriage performed between young people of the Muslim faith in

the region of Elbasan, paved the way for the performance and performance of other marriages to individuals within one faith or between different religious faiths. Civil marriages were considered moderate acts for the time, both in the region of Elbasan and in the country.

Even during 1932 in the area of Elbasan in the framework of further improving the position of women and girls in marital relations, steps were taken forward. Steps in the protection and improvement of the position of women were taken by the residents of Elbasan, with the support of local state bodies and under the influence of religious communities in the area. Such a reflection was observed in the province of Slope, in which the Elders of its 17 villages, based on the serious condition of women and women from Elbasan organized a meeting, where through the analysis of the serious position of women in this province, came out with some conclusions. "...The difficult position of women in this province was a result of the action of old habits, which determined all her life activity. In particular the habit of betrothal in the minor and the price of marriage had seriously violated the dignity of the woman and denied her freedom and rights." (Musaj, F., (2002), p. 205) The sale and purchase of girls with money, in the area of Elbasan reappeared as a very worrying phenomenon in 1934. This problem was forwarded by the Prefect of Elbasan to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, for guidance on the attitude of the masses that he had to implement. It was unacceptable that in the 30s of the twentieth century, women were treated as an object, which had a price in monetary value. The prefect of Elbasan in the report addressed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs informed that in the mountainous areas of the Prefecture of Elbasan "unfortunately there was a bad rooted habit that all girls under the age of marriage were sold by parents and bought by grooms at a price of 40-50 Napoleons". The sale and purchase of girls, whether by themselves or their families, was considered an act contrary to the laws of the Albanian State. Despite the measures taken by the competent bodies to curb this phenomenon, what was unfortunately noticed was the impossibility of stopping it. The purchase price of women by the husband's family increased from time to time, for several reasons: the number of women in relation to men was lower, another reason was the use of women's labor in agriculture. Hard work and difficult living conditions caused the death of women and women at a young age, reducing their number as well as the number of childbirths. The prefect of Elbasan, in 1934, gathered the chiefs (leaders) of the highlands to discuss finding ways, appropriate ways that could curb or reduce the price of selling or buying their women in the country by their families. At the end of the meeting it was decided that the payment should not exceed 500 francs gold and a minimum price of 300 francs gold was set. With the exception of Zdrajsh in some other areas the decision had a positive impact and brought about the improvement of the economic position of families in these areas. (Central State Archive, F. 271, D. 92, 1934, p. 4) There were many cases of physical violence against a woman by her husband or other members of the family. Physical and psychological violence was also used against women without support or relatives. They were exploited by relatives or not, forcing them to marry for profit. In the areas of Elbasan, cases of marriage of women with violence and without a crown were also identified, against her will by relatives and family members. These marriages were performed for profit, even in cases where women had mental problems and were unable to cope with family life. There were reactions to these cases from the competent bodies, leading them to legal proceedings. (Central State Archive, F. 271, D. 92, 1935, p. 8)

In the years 1925-1939, many problems in the relations between the spouses were identified in the families of Elbasan. The consequences were severe: disputes, violence and divorces, which were present in Elbasan couples. Based on such a situation, a draft law was presented to the Prime Minister, which in its essence aimed at banning backward customs that allowed the betrothal of a girl with a reward or with a man much older than the girl. Despite the functioning

of the law and the sanctions that he provided, in the area of Elbasan, the phenomenon of buying and selling women could not be stopped. The phenomenon caused concern in some prefectures in the country as well as in the Prefecture of Elbasan, which in turn, sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs two reports prepared on the complaints of the sub-prefectures of the municipalities under them, in which the restriction of payment was requested by law for the act of selling a woman in marriage. In a complaint of a villager from the village Zdrajshi of Elbasan it was written: "If all this deposit is paid, 60-90 napoleons of gold for a bride, we will be left unmarried, because we can not save this amount even for twenty years. We demand that this amount be reduced, both in many parts of Albania and in our municipality." (Musaj, F., (2002), p. 211) The Council of Ministers, after considering the complaints and proposals, reacted regarding them, by set a maximum price for the marriage bond, about 15 gold napoleons.

The Prefecture of Elbasan was very active in the Royal Order of 13 September 1930 on the prohibition of old customs in marriage or funeral ceremonies. As an institution, it paid attention to the implementation of new state laws. The prefecture underlined the importance of the order in question both economically and socially. Each municipal leader was an obedient law enforcement and government decision-making soldier in the area where he exercised his function and duty. (Central State Archive, F. 271, D.76, 1930, p. 2) Municipalities were instructed to show care both for the implementation of the order and for the identification of violators of the law, as well as the penalties for those who did not implement it. In 1931, the first spark after the changes in the legislation, was shown in the city of Elbasan by the intellectual elements, through the realization of marriages between different religious faiths. Starting from this year onwards, several marriages took place between the teachers of this city of different religious affiliations. According to the data it was evidenced that: "in the city we married Muhammadan teachers with Orthodox teachers, in 1931 as Baki Sinella with Kristina Sh., In 1935 Faik Pajuni with Alipi Buda, in 1937 Abdyl Bajraktari with Kristina Lulla... and the teacher Behexhet Hoxholli with Artemisi Popa." (Dedej, S. (1999), *Abedin Caushi in the footsteps of the Elbasan tradition*, Onufri, p. 113) Undoubtedly these first sparks of change could be considered not only as the first swallows of social emancipation, but also as acts of committed between individuals of different faiths, laying an even sounder foundation in the relationship between these faiths. In the Albanian tradition, religious belief had never been and was not an obstacle in social, family and personal relations.

Forced marriage and the use of violence against women became present during 1935 in the area of Elbasan. Complaints or complaints made by women themselves to the competent bodies were rare, but quite important for solving their problems. Such a complaint was submitted to the Elbasan Prefecture by a woman named Zymbyle Shahini from the village of Posnovishte, with whom she complained against her father, who unwillingly asked her to marry Sali Xaro in the village of Vina. Without performing the marriage celebration formalities, her father had exercised physical violence on the daughter by taking her to her husband's house, against her will. So from what can be understood, the use of violence was the main tool used in case of opposition by the girl to the decisions made about her life. The intervention of the competent bodies was done carefully, in order to avoid any unfavorable situation that could be created by such objections.

Until 1936 marriage as an act of union of two people with the crown was performed in the traditional way using kinship ties and tricks. Shkesi was an individual, who left at the request of the groom's family to knock on the girl's family, to ask for her hand for the engagement with the son of the family who had sent her. The coronation ceremony of the couple in the marriage took place with the participation of the two families and the couple themselves in the civil status offices. This custom was realized with the undertaking of the reform for the removal of

the veil and the appearance of uncovered women in public, the coronation of the relationship between the couples was done following the traditional way as well as through the institution of the Municipality. The marriage ceremony in the Christian religion was different from the marriage ceremony in the Muslim religion. Girls in wealthy families did not cover their faces and hair, went out in public, went to church without having problems with the presence of men. Girls in Christian families were free to express their opinion on whether or not to engage in engagement or marriage. Muslim women in public came out covered from head to toe in public rarely appeared but accompanied only by Muslim women. The black cape covered his body, while his hair and face were covered with white cloth. This was a special way of dress typical of Elbasan that was not encountered anywhere else. And the process of closing the house and covering the woman in the Muslim faith started at a young age of 10-12, and continued for a lifetime even after the engagement and marriage. (Newspaper "Besa", Tirana, Saturday, May 14, 1932)

3. Other aspects of the achievements of the woman from Elbasan in the years 1928-1939

The employment of Elbasan and Albanian women was a rare occurrence in the country. During the years 1928 - 1939, concrete steps were taken in Elbasan, towards the employment of women in the private or state sectors of life in the region. This right was defined by the Civil Code for women. The example of one of the women, who was among the first to be employed in the Post - Telegraph of the city of Elbasan was Hedije Qemal Ruli, who became the first example of a woman in civil service. (Newspaper "Gazeta e Re", Tirana, Sunday, April 28, 1929)

In 1935, the Albanian Government approved the law that prohibited the wearing of the veil and veil in public. A part of the people of Elbasan reacted positively to him, forcing their first wives to remove the veils (face cover) in public, thus becoming the first on the path of social emancipation in the region. A good example in this regard was given by the religious communities, mainly those of the Muslim faith, whose wives were the first to remove the veil on the public. The article of the newspaper "Arbënia" (Newspaper "Arbënia", Tirana, November 30, 1935) entitled "Social event in Elbasan", among other things, informed that the manifestation carried out on the commemorative day of raising the Flag in Albania and the declaration of Independence, in Elbasan about 60 women had taken off their veils and celebrated with others. In the Elbasan tradition, the young woman was always viewed with skepticism and suspicion, but if she entered their homes, it was difficult to get out of there, defending and supporting herself by any means.

Despite the efforts made to change the situation of the woman from Elbasan, the reality in most parts of the region was presented differently from what was trumpeted in the ideology conveyed by the press. In the mountainous areas of the Elbasan Prefecture the condition of the woman was serious, she not only did not improve, but the hope for her change was low. A report by the Elbasan Prefecture, sent to the Ministry of Internal Affairs in a single paragraph, described the plight of women in the remote mountainous areas of Martanesh in 1936. The deplorable and miserable condition of women in this area was a result, not of the difficulties and poverty that was dominant in the life of the inhabitants of the area but from the influence of the elements of patriarchal fanaticism that was like oxygen for most of the Elbasan and Albanian families. The report said: "Life is at such a low and miserable level, this is not generally caused by the economic point of view, but by their bad mentality, having the habit that men do not work any jobs and women they are generally busy with agricultural work, housework and replacing animals in transport, so the woman is not promised any time at all for

cleaning and arranging the family.” (Central State Archive, F. 271, D. 112, 1936, p. 12)

The suppression of free thought and judgment by women was the refrain of policies and behaviors not only social, family, but also of men towards women. In the areas closer to the center of Elbasan, the position of women improved somewhat, thanks to the measures taken to improve the position of women in the family and society. We mention some of the initiatives taken by the Mayors in cooperation with the locals, to improve the position of women in their municipalities. Such initiatives were not few, in the area of Elbasan, but quite important for the purpose they carried in themselves. In March 1938, at the invitation of the Mayor of Shpati II, the nobility of this province met. The purpose of the meeting was to take measures to eradicate bad habits, which caused confusion among the people and caused economic aggravation regarding the considerable and unaffordable expenses with which they were performed. Among the decisions (Central State Archive, F. 271, D. 151, 1938, p. 1) the most important taken unanimously in it we mention: not allowing the engagement of girls before reaching the age of 15 years. For the bride's dress a maximum amount of 200 gold francs was set, a sum which had to be paid by the future husband's family. For fiancées before the decision was made, whose husbands paid more than 200 gold francs, the excess money would not be returned to the payers. While the spouses, who had not yet completed the amount of 200 franga ari, had to pay it etc. The decisions taken were intended to curb abuse by the parties in connection with: underage marriage, high fees related to the bride's dress, or local rules for conducting marriage ceremonies and marriage ties between the couple. Decisions were considered fair by the residents, they were supported by them being considered as a canon or local legislation with regulatory function but how much and how they would be implemented, its was left to time.

In the 30s of the XX century, women's societies were established in the country under the influence of the Albanian Woman Society in Tirana. On April 15, 1929, with the participation of a large number of ladies from the city of Elbasan, in the place called "School for Girls" was formed the Branch of the Society "Albanian Woman" for Elbasan.

Important steps were taken in the years 1925-1939 towards the education of Albanian and Elbasan women. In the region of Elbasan, women's schools were opened in which female teachers taught, as such was the social mentality. During the school year 1926-1927 in the Prefecture of Elbasan was opened the Women's Primary School of Peqin, in which 29 students taught, with teacher Rozina Troshani. (Central State Archive, F. 295, 1929, D.7, p. 37) The presence of female teachers was necessary because it guaranteed the engagement and participation of female students in the stages of education in female schools. In addition to women's schools, mixed schools (boys and girls) were established and operated in Elbasan. In the female and mixed schools of the Prefecture of Elbasan worked as teachers in Belesh: Haxhire Daiu, Aferdita Caku; in Bradashesh: Tefta Përmeti; in Franash: Nafize Dylgjeri; in Cërrunjë: Henrijeta Kungulli; in Dëshiran Sanije Mitarja; in Dragot Sulovë: Olga Shuraja; in Godolesh Aferdita Andoni, in Gur i Zi: Aferdira Caridha; in Gjergjan: Aferdita...;⁴ in Kuqan: Persefon Lazri; in Kryezjarrh: Aspasija Papparisto; in Mliza: Parashqevi Dedja, in Rrasë Gjusepina Fishta and Shefikat Bardhi; in Seferan: Nashifere Biçoku etc. In the sub-prefecture of Peqin in the School "Mustafa Gjinishi" with a number of students in total 54, taught during 1927 and teachers: Fatime Kola, Fani Kaçilja, Artemis Hoxholli, Mili Kazadej, Aferdita Mano, Mejser Voci and Meleqe Ballhysa (preparatory). Teachers worked in the village schools of the Peqin sub-prefecture: in Fatish was Miriminsa Zajmi; in Gjoca: jGenovefa Shuqja; in Hasgjokaj: Hatixhe Kadiu. In the Center District of Elbasan in some of the primary schools such as Shilbatër worked the teacher

⁴ It is illegible in the archival document

Flutur Sejдини; in Shtërmën: teachers Marianthi Biba, Burbuqe Kamami; in Zavalina: Albina Deljana etc. (Central State Archive, F. 271-Prefecture Elbasan, D. 70, 1927, p. 4-6) The five-year primary school that existed and functioned in Elbasan in 1927, as part of its teaching staff had and teachers Urani Thanasi, Parashqevi Nosi, Shefikat Sefa, Frosina Dodbiba. Based on the data presented by Teki Selenica for 1927, the state of education in the Prefecture of Elbasan based on the existence of schools and the number of teachers in them was: "Elbasan had 26 complete primary schools (full-note my-R.M.) studying 1150 men; 2 complete (supplementary) primary schools where 204 women studied, a total of 28 schools with a number of students 1354. The number of teachers of supplementary primary schools was 41 males and 6 females." (Selenica, T., (1928), "Albania in 1927", Tirana, p. LXVII)

During 1927 in Elbasan there was a women's school named after the well-known personality of the Elbasan region Ali Agjahu in Namazgjah. During 1929 in the Normal School of the city there was also an Exercise School, in which both boys and girls studied. The female factor was also prominent in the management of schools in Elbasan, where we mention the Female School in whose staff Parashqevi Nasi was the Headmaster and in which teachers worked: Agni Todhri, Urania Thanasi, Efrosini Dodbiba, Kristina Shuteriqi and as a religious teacher Naxhije Osmani (Central State Archive, F. 271 - Prefecture of Elbasan, D.167, 1931, p. 13) Teachers Tereze Valjale and Athina Panidha taught at the Women's School of the Prefecture of Peqin. (Central State Archive, F. 271, D.167, 1931, p. 10) In the years 1933-1934 the girls started attending the Elbasan Normal and other high schools in the country. The implementation of the educational reform in the country also affected the improvement of women's education in the region of Elbasan. A second female school was opened in Elbasan, the number of female students and teaching staff increased. In the school year 1933-1934 the number of girls in all schools of the city of Elbasan was 69. In addition to education, great importance was attached to the involvement of girls or women in cultural activities. In the '30s, the first steps were taken regarding the preparation of female artists in art schools by submitting to the competition. From Elbasan in 1932, three girls entered the competition: Andona Pavli Todri, Xanthipi Cipi, Athens Dhimitër Kristo (Central State Archive, F. 471, D. 116, 1932, p. 10) In the context of improving, activating and displaying skills or capacities of women or women from Elbasan, under the guidance of government policies, in Elbasan were opened handicraft courses and exhibitions of the unfolding of their works. Their organization was carried out through a coordination of work between the Inspectorate of Education and the Prefecture of Elbasan. The opening of such an exhibition took place in 1938, where the "Naim Frashëri" School became the exhibition center for the handicrafts of women and women from Elbasan. (Central State Archive, F. 271, D. 254, 1938, p. 1)

Conclusion

Following the changes in the Albanian society for the female element, despite the hopeful goals of the new legislation in its favor, as well as the obligatory efforts of state institutions for its implementation, the situation in the country changed slightly, and was a little sensitive for the most part. The position of the woman from Elbasan improved, but not as much as the bloated atmosphere of the demagoguery of the government media in the country. The educational situation improved to some extent, which was not at the same level and with the same participation, and the same pace of development from time to time at the Prefecture level. The policies launched with vigor for the improvement of the situation of the woman or woman from Elbasan or Albania, but also for its further development, despite the promising departures, remained on the road for various reasons or reasons, especially the lack of financial means allocated to her.

The tradition and custom, fanaticism and

patriarchy of the Albanian society of the years 1925-1939, remained dominant and appeared influential in the problems that appeared from time to time in Elbasan and in the country. Elbasan in the largest percentage of the Muslim population, despite the usual spirit of religious fanaticism, witnessed in this period a spirit of cooperation and reflection with the Albanian government and the reforms taken by it in the context of improving and elevating the position of women in the country.

The engagement of Albanian and Elbasan women in social life, education, elimination of the remnants of religious, patriarchal, canonical and customary fanaticism, employment and improvement of the cultural level, etc., were some of the fruits undertaken by the state policies of 1928-1939. The policies undertaken by Ahmet Zogu for female emancipation, increasing the cultural and educational level of Albanian women were carried out in the framework of conditioning and implementation instead of Western policies of liberalization and democratization. Policies that would fill you with hope for changes and qualitative steps towards the integration of Albanian women in various aspects of life in the country, at the level of her sisters in developed western countries. Hope faded and was lost when instead of the existence of sad reality appeared on the condition of this layer. Some of the results achieved by the implementation of state policies were: achievements in women's education, women's participation in cultural life, the establishment of the branch of the Society "Albanian Woman", the reform on the removal of the veil, civil marriage, curbing but not the disappearance of salepurchase of wife etc. The problems did not disappear in these years, but were part of the life reality of the people of Elbasan, which appeared as a result of the mentality, tradition, custom of the dominant religious belief in their families. Few in number and powerless was the Albanian intellectual elite of those years, which was put at the forefront of movements for change and progress of Elbasan and Albanian women, but the difficult reality in the country was a deterrent to such an effort.

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