

## Albanian Women during Monarchy (1928-1939)

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### Abstract

*"Without the progress of women, every civilization remains opaque and ineffective" expressed the sister of King Zog I, Sani in a letter sent to the Albania's Minister of Interior when the King sent it along with the other sisters visit our country and to show to the Albanian mentality that women development meant the country's progress. Since the beginning of his reign, the King Zog I, would dedicate a great importance to the social reforms and especially the women's emancipation. Given that woman was a major educational of generations the King would pay attention not only to their education, but also to their involvement in the political field and equating them with men and this was achieved by adopting the Civil Code, for which the model was obtained from the Western countries.*

**Keywords:** Albanian Civil Code, removal yashmak, women's education, "Albanian Woman" organization.

### 1. Introduction

Albanian women had been victims of a wide mentality of ignorance and secular occupation, without culture or knowledge, yet by their nature they could feel that something was missing. They dreamed of a better life but were not able to express it because of the lack of education. They had a great desire to go through the bright path of progress. However, no one cared about their feelings and desires. No one. Everyone had fallen asleep and couldn't see the mourning condition of women.

The King Zog I, put all his efforts into quick actions to pass from ignorance to culture. With the impetus of King Zog I, Albanian women who unintentionally kneeled to their fate immediately began to move on. The founding of "Albanian woman" organization, showed to them the picture of someone who was interested about their rights, to bring them on the appropriate level of respect; and he was the beloved king Zog I, a peerless happiness for the Albanian women, aimed to the sublimation of Albanian women, in order to be provided with culture as healthy as possible and to preserve the country's oldest arts, our character, which is one of the strongest in the Balkans, our costumes, national songs and dances.

### 2. Content

"We are centuries behind the rest of civilized Europe. People are not able to write nor read; they obey to a very few laws written, blood feud remains prevalent in many regions of the country. I am determined to civilize my people and assign them as much in the way of learning the habits and lifestyle of Western" (Lushaj, 1995, p.2). Since the beginning of his political career the King Zog appeared as a politician with a Western-oriented Albanian society, a process that began in the first year of the monarchy by drawing the Albanian Civil Code. Thus, in a message addressed to the parliament for the approval of the Civil Code, H.M King Zog said: "The honor of Albanians cannot be defended by a shield, but from their strong character and national habits that we have inherited from our ancestors. We must educate our daughters among with our sons. Discipline and sacrifice to the way of progress. Deviation from fulfilling these important tasks will not be tolerated. Albanians must show what they are at first. Neither the church nor the mosque, cannot influence them to quit the national feelings and ideals" (Ushtelenica, 1995, p.211). On March 1, 1929 the parliament cancelled the old civil code and approved a new one by French and Swiss model to take account of the specific conditions of Albanian life and gave all citizens equal rights despite their sex, age or education..

Albanian Kingdom Civil Code expressly provides that spouses detention of unspecified predict that their marriage is regulated according to the customs of the country. Civil Code of King Zog I, for the first time predicted the marriage contract, which must be done in front of an public attorney, before the celebration of marriage (Civil Code 1929 ,pp.311-312)

According to the Kanun of Lek Dukagjini, wife had no right, over the children nor the house. Wife also had no inheritance rights on the property left by her husband or children. She had the right to remain to the husband's house, or to leave, taking "thirteen stones of beans and three burdens of corn". This shows that woman had very little property rights over what they earned during the marriage. Albanian Kingdom Civil Code was drafted on the basis of the modern code of the time, Napoleon's Civil Code, which has exerted great influence in many other countries, especially to the Italian Civil Code and one Swiss. This code for the matrimonial property regimes rely on the French Civil Code of 1804, where the main feature was the power of husband over his wife because of the conservative society of the time (the Civil Code, a work cited). Civil Code of King Zog I had great importance at that time because for the first time put on legal basis the family relationship, which would be unique for the entire country. "In practice, it was difficult for him to find the application, especially when the impact of rules and canons religious norms was too strong and maintained their influence for years."

A major impact on the Albanian customary law, had Shariat (Islamic law). However regarding to the property rights,women had rights only over her personal wealth.Following the experience of the Court of Dictation, turns out that woman had no property rights over common property made during the marriage. According to the practice of the time, women could inherit a part of the estate after the death of her spouse. By 1929, except for some decisions of benefit from the inheritance in the experience of this court, there is no occasion to address problems related to marital property after the death of the spouse. By 1929, except for some decisions benefit from the inheritance in the case law of this court, there is no occasion to address problems related to marital property after divorce. With the entry into force of the Civil Code of King Zog I, regulation of property relations between spouses and other family relations was made on legal grounds and not by custom or religion of the spouses. Civil Code accepted secular institution of marriage. Marriage entered into solemn manner before the civil registrar (Civil Code 1929, pp. 42-51). Article 121 states: Husband before it attains the age of eighteen and sixteen years old woman can not enter into marriage; continuing with Section 186 which states: Men and women who marry without holding the formalities prescribed by law is punishable by a fine of up to 1000 golden francs. also with this fine punished the Civil Registrar as well. "Even after the adoption of the Civil Code, a good part of the citizens, continued to bind the marriage, "according to custom" no secular marriage, as a result of their mentality on marriage.

As you can see, people do not understand about marriage under customary norms, so they had no legal value, and thus do not benefit any protection from the laws. Albanian Kingdom Civil Code expressly provides that spouses detention of unspecified predict that their marriage is regulated according to the customs of the country. Civil Code of King Zog I, for the first time predicted the marriage contract, which must be done in front of a public attorney, before the celebration of marriage. Under this Code, the property regime of the spouses may be adjusted by agreement of the parties and the law. Ways of regulating the property of the spouses was stipulated in the marriage contract. Parties have the right to change the regulation of the property (in property regime) in the marriage contract before the marriage was celebrated in the same form, in public act. Third persons who were not aware of the changes in the marriage contract can not be affected by these changes.

The prediction on the Civil Code of the marriage contract constituted a very important step in family relations at the time, especially in relationships between spouses, given the social position of women. But these changes have not found an adequate ground, because it was not accompanied by the necessary change of mentality of the Albanian society. "We can say that this was a modern code, but in a patriarchal society like Albania can be implemented only in rare cases in the area of family relations." Civil Code, in terms of property relations between spouses governed by: Dote, Real parafemale, joint ownership between spouses, etc.. With the civil code, polygamy was denied and arranged the rights of divorce, recognized the same rights as her husband, while before the man was the leader and wife enjoyed only what was allowed by the husband. Removed the prohibition of the marriage of a Muslim woman with a non-Muslim.

Newspaper " *Ellinikou Mellon*" in its article dating April 3, 1929 writes "Since viewing Tirana got a beautiful, happy view, caused by a radical reform that took place in the life of Albanian women and owed progressive activity of civilized of Albanian King Zog I ", which continues "the sheet and the "Veil", had been imposed by the Turkish sultans to the Albanians after the death of their national hero George Castriota ... this reform had a special significance after deciding equality rights woman with the husband ,before that the wife was considered as a lower creature than man "( Newspaper "Democrat", 1937, p. 3).

Approval of the Civil Code would mark an important step in improving the position of women in society and especially in the family as expressed by "Democrat" newspaper in an article " it's like a large window facing the west, as a tool that will free women from slavery, strengthen veins civilizing our generation, will arm all means of resistance and activity to realize purpose of neo Albanianism "(Newspaper"Democrat", 1929, p.1) . King Zog, on 10 December 1929, received at the Royal Palace the Albanian Women Representative, and said: "This is one of the happiest days of my life,seeing you, Albanian lady, in front of me and thank you from my heart for your wishes. You must say that I am very happy for the initiative you have taken changing social life. Albanian women must feel upon themselves the heavy burden that has taken over. If the Albanian woman will not do properly the task of the mother and will not show the courage to serve to the changing of social life, the organization that have started will remain incomplete. I wish that Albanian woman,must not present just the elegance and honor, but also be a useful element for patriotism. I am hopeful that you will put Women civilization on the right track. I wish you success in the tough path that you have to follow "(Salman, 2008, p. 218).

It was a primitive state, for Albanian women who had been victims of a wide mentality of ignorance and secular occupation, without culture or knowledge, yet by their nature they could feel that something was missing. They dreamed of a better lifebut were not able to express it because of the lack of education.They had a great desire to go through the bright path of progress. However, no one cared about their feelings and desires.Noone.Everyone had fallen asleep and couldn't see the mourning condition of women. The King Zog I, put all his efforts into quick actions to pass from ignorance to culture. With the impetus of King Zog I, albanian women who unintentionally kneeled to their fate immediately began to move on. The founding of "Albanian woman" organization, showed to them the picture of someone who was interested about their rights, to bring them on the appropriate level of respect; and he was the beloved king Zog I, a peerless happiness for the albanian women, aimed to the sublimation of albanian women, in order to be provided with culture as healthy as possible and to preserve the country's oldest arts, our character, which is one of the strongest in the Balkans, our costumes, national songs and dances.

Why should King Zog paid all that great care to the Albanian women organization , because the basis on which rests the greatness of a nation, is woman. Woman is the producer of the new element, well formed morally and physically, valuable for the future of lighting the nation ( Salman 2008, p. 229). In 1931 King began the implementation of social reforms, which could be carried out with no big impact on the budget. In March, Parliament was presented a law, which was passed immediately, under which it was considered a violation for every woman who covered her face completely or partially and it would be punishable by a fine amounting to 500 gold francs. Law provided a heavier punishment for all those who stopped or tried to persuade women not to enforce this law.

First, he sent three of his unmarried sisters, Muslim princesses Myzejen, Ruhije and Mexhide, to a sudden visit on the most northern area of the country, including the city of Shkodra, which areas presumed the bigotry waste centers . The purpose of this visit was mostly to give a convincing and touchable possibility of uncovering the faces of Albanian women, showing in front of everyone the beautiful faces of King sisters. The three princesses dressed up with the latest European fashion, with short tight skirts and make up on their faces, stood in Shkoder a week, accompanied by the Minister of Interior Juka, Aranitasi and other government officials. Sisters made visits to schools, churches, mosques, hospitals, markets, archaeological centers and had a good time in meetings with different people. Shkodra economic activity was halted completely. Princesses, whom by the time they had been virtually imprisoned in the royal palace,going out in public just for a stroll on horseback, accompanied by armed guards through the lonely streets of Tirana,in Shkodër went freely anywhere having meals out always in the presence of photographers (Fischer J.2004, p. 262). The King for the implementation of this action took care to secure the support of the Clergy.

It was organized calling a Muslim council to give an opinion about this change, which approved a report submitted by the President of the Islamic Community of Albania, where it was claimed that Islamic law does not require women to cover their head or face. He also revealed the need for women's participation in all social activities.

Of course, the new law met with some controversy, as many Albanians were not completely able to afford higher prices for the purchase of clothing of the time. Began to circulate word about the possibility of an opposition to this action in Shkodra, as well as organizing a silent passive position in the form of a strike by women at home. In the whole country there was not any real contrary and in fact almost all the elements of Albanian society welcomed the change with joy. Small groups of Gypsies in Albania, which until then had scandalized citizens of Shkodra and other provinces sitting uncovered, rejoiced immensely when they saw that they were always right. Merits of adopting this measure of the Albanian people in this time belong to the King Zog, because he previously had been able to prepare the foundations that made it possible to take a decision, although it did not go any further. He demanded removal dowry leaving women the right to continue to maintain their previous attire, including the headscarf. It was sufficient for the Authorities even if a small part of the face was uncovered (Fischer, 2004, p. 264).

On March 10, 1937 was adopted the Law "Prohibition of face covering by women." This law had nothing to do with Muslim women who were forced to hide their face due to the Islamic fanaticism. It was not a declarative act. It was imperative to implement mandatory law. Violators would face criminal sanctions, ranging from fines to imprisonment. Had to face responsibility the father, husband or guardian. "If they would not exercise their influence to remove face veil with any means" and they would be fined 1000 fr. gold. Those who urge the violation of law and to press for holding the veil, in addition to the more severe penalty, 2000 fr. Gold could also be punished one month in jail. In special cases imprisonment could be extended up to 1 year, or deportation culprit from three months to three years. Extraordinary sanction envisaged law on "those who make propagate for keeping the veil: imprisonment up to 15 years" (Official Gazette, 1937, p.1).

"Order-said HM the king- the availability of funds in the new budget, to create a reasonable fund for organizing in all the cities of the kingdom, special courses for women, by means of which will be given to them, except basic reports necessary to combat illiteracy, practical everyday lessons to develop their physical, mental and moral, giving the opportunity to meet, as appropriate, their sacred mission in the family and in society " (Puto, 2009, p.594). On the implementation frame of the reform on 10-11 April 1933, Parliament decided to amend Sections 206, 207 royal statute. In Section 206, as amended, learning and education of Albanian citizens was confirmed as the exclusive right of the state. It was announced that primary education for all Albanian citizens was compulsory and free. However for the educational needs of the population, in education law left a clause under which private schools can operate only if they cooperate with the state, to help him to open schools in those countries where the state was unable to open itself.

In 1933, the implementation of educational reform law for the nationalization of schools were closed institutes like "Qiriazi" "Stigmatimeve" in Shkodra, private institutes feminine "NaimFrasheri" closed the only female school in Korca. With students from the lower classes of this school, in this city, was opened four years urban schools, while in the South with feminine school closure "Stigmatine" will create low branch feminine near Shkodra gymnasium. Minority schools were closed in the Greek language. Against this action of the Albanian government reacted harshly Greek government and the Vatican, complained to the League of Nations. In 1933 was opened in Tirana female institutes, "Nana Mbretneshë" two normal full branches and gymnasium, elementary program. In this institute would continue their studies the students of the four high schools closed. Normal female education concentration in a single hand as it was feminine Institute of Tirana, was important to improve the content of the curriculum and to increase teaching quality, as here were focused more qualified forces within the country, and were appointed teachers from various western states.

However, being the only female institution in Albania, led to the limited number of students, especially in the normal branch, because not all girls, in different districts of the country, who wanted to continue school had economic opportunities to attend it. Even the state with the possibility of financial resources was not able to cope with the increasing demands for scholarships. In addition to this institution for the education of girls, a secondary role played Lycée and mixed gymnasiums.

In Korca, after the transformation of the normal urban school, with the decision of the Ministry of Education, began the acceptance of girls in Lycée. Also in the 1933-1934 school year, the number of girls in the gymnasium of Gjirokastra, in the gymnasium of Shkodra, Elbasan etc increased quickly. To improve the educational situation of girls in the village, in the educational reform law was provided the opening of schools and two-year courses feminine agricultural character, which would be open through villages and small towns that were near large villages.

In their programs, general character courses would be limited. In such a school was supposed to return the normal female American school in Kavaja. In this type of school, would be accepted girls who had completed primary education up to the age of 15 years. In the two-year agricultural schools programs more room occupied household objects, especially agricultural economy that counted 10 hours a week program. In the academic year 1934-1935, this type of female school was opened in the American school of Kavaja. Twenty girls would be supported by a scholarship from the state.

Students would be accepted mainly from the surrounding villages. The Ministry of Education failed to realize this objective of reform in the other parts of the country with the reason that such an undertaking requires strong financial support and teaching etc.. Girls contingents also foreseen by law admitted to the school should be the primary, which was impossible because most of the girls in the village were illiterate. However, the Ministry took some measures, perhaps limited, to improve the educational status of girls in the northern Highlands and opened new boarding school. So in August of 1932 with its proposal, the Council of Ministers decided that boarding of Homesh Diber, to be used for the girls.

In the school year 1932-1933, there were placed 20 scholarship girls from Gora, Kukes, Elbasan Diber Bërzeshtë, whom after finishing school would contribute as teachers in their provinces. In Shkodra district continued to operate five schools feminine and efforts were under way to open the female branch in the gymnasium of the city, which after many setbacks, doors were opened in the 1934-1935 school year. That same year the female primary school was opened in the sub prefecture of Lezha.

A grave situation was the education of women in the provinces of Luma and Puke. According to data in the province of Luma on 200 school-age girls, did not attend classes due to lack of schools and teachers. In twenty mixed schools because parents fanaticism only a small number of girls attend school in Borje village and in the center of the city. For this reason S/Prefecture authorities of Luma asked the Ministry of Education for the opening of feminine elementary schools in Bicaj, in Topojan and Krumë. From educational statistics data of this prefecture is shown that until 1939 there was not any female elementary school blossom. Only in 1938, the Ministry of Education sent in Luma province 20 scholarships to support studies of 20 girls in Tirana Women's Institute. In the implementation of educational reform in the school year 1932-1933 and thereafter, there was an increase in the participation of girls in school. In addition to existing schools in the cities of this region were opened up new schools.

Thus, in Tirana were opened three female primary school with five-year program with 22 classes in total. Even Elbasan city opened two female elementary school. Besides feminine schools in 30 years, especially after the 1932-1933 reform, Albania opened 40 mixed schools. On the basis of data in the 1934-1935 school year in the country's 575 primary schools learn 50 890 students of whom 14 944 were girls, compared with 5 082 girls who attended the school in 1926-1927. Higher rates were observed in secondary education. In the academic year 1934-1935, in the normal schools of the country out of 308 total students, 106 were girls. While the total number of high school students was 2 303, of which 529 were girls, compared with 117 girls who continued to learn in all schools in the 1926-1927 school year. 1936-1937 their number increased in 1205. Despite the achievements in female education, in urban parts of the country and with a few exceptions in rural areas, girls in the Albanian village were almost illiterate. This was highlighted in most prefectures of the country's educational reports for the 1933-1934 school year. In 188 villages of Elbasan, is said in the education report - there is no school for girls. In 17 mixed schools, from 744 students, only 65 are girls. Such alarming figures were given by the prefecture of Durres and Tirana etc.. This small percentage of Albanian girls who continued their education came as a result of a hard time, and a miserable position of Albanian women, as a result of a miserable mentality and deep ignorance, and clearly reflects that woman was discriminated and not considered human being able to give more to the society.

It were open nearly 500 courses to combat illiteracy and women dowry with those little, but necessary virtues lacking. These courses began in the 1937-1938 school year, classes went from 6 to 8 months a year with 8 hours a week, taking part in women of any age and adult daughter. Order is done, according to the race, female primary school premises and other specials, being divided into two sections: courses for those who do not know how to read and write and those that own both. In the first section, are given three hours of instruction per week: writing, reading and arithmetic, elementary after school program; in the second session, three hours per week, are these lessons: Classifieds (singing, writing, compositions and practical), arithmetic (the four operations and annual system), without the need of the three pre-primary classes. In both sections held 4 hours of practical lessons per week handwork: sewing, cutting, embroidery, etc.. Different conversations at the same time kept on patriotic historical arguments on the domestic economy, on growth and care of children, on hygiene and on popular medicine. In these courses are registered and continue learning, since the first days that opened, nearly 1,400 girls and women: Gjirokastra with 215 women, Tirana with 185 women, Korca with 156 women and Vlora with 132 women (10 years monarchy, 1938, p.169).

State and private schools feminine were: Private state Institution "Qiriazi", state female normal school of Korca, female private schools "Stigmatineve" in 1930. In 1931 was opened Private Female Institute "Naim Frasheri" a 7-year program was divided into two branches: gymnasium and normal. Within two years the number of students in this school reached 130. The opening of American agricultural schools, would give more space to subjects such as Household and Agriculture. Although the new education law banned the teaching on foreign languages in albanian schools, this school was excepted and allowed the teaching on English language. (10 years monarchy, 1938, p.236)

In 1938 in Tirana the nursing school would be reopened and admissions would be made through competition stages, after candidates had made a four-month internship. In addition to the preparation of nurses within the country in the 1928-1929 school year, 20 girls were sent to study in obstetrics-gynecology at the "Adriatic" University branch in Bari, Italy. (10 years monarchy, 1938, p. 244) In 1932, efforts have been made to open in Tirana the dramatic art school. Their admission would be done through competition stages and it is found out that there were presented three girls from Elbasan: Andona Pavli Todri, Ksanthipi Cipi, Athina Dhimitër Kristo (A.Q.SH, 1932, p.10). In the 1934 education law, illiteracy was given to Article 224, which envisaged the opening of adult literacy courses, particularly for women and girls. As premises for opening certain courses were assigned the female schools premises on several cities such as: Tirana, Berat, Gjirokastra, Korca, Vlora, Lushnja, night-time courses too, were opened for women. Regular course studies were seen in Gjirokastër, where the total number of students reached 100. These courses would continue from six to eight months, eight hours a week. At these courses could participated women and girls of all ages.

That a course was valid, it should have up to ten women and had two sections, with women who did not know literacy and those who knew. In the first section the number of women must be only six. There would be taught writing, reading and arithmetics on the basis of first grade elementary program with three classes per week. The second section would teach writing, reading and arithmetics by fourth grade program with three classes week. Both sections would also teach hand work that would be accomplished four hours a week. Lessons would be shared if the number of women exceeded 30. If the number of the students would fell to seven within two or three weeks, the course was closed only by a decision of the Ministry of Education. In the entire country were opened 42 courses with 1 906 students (Musaj, 2002, p.230). "It is an undisputable fact that in a nation where women are not prepared for their great mission, its civilization is too slow and sometimes superficial" says in its article "VATRA" newspaper. In the New Year's Eve, in 1936, King Zog, gave one of his rare celebrations in the royal palace, asking all the guests to come with Western-style clothing. During a speech he held that evening, he said: "We seem to do fast and great strides towards civilization and Western culture. This is imposed on us by our history, geography, our political position and the character of our nation" ("Vatra", 1935, p.4). Within a few weeks the king had prepared a social and economic draft in order to fulfill his plan. In the social field, King Zog proposed the removal of the veil that covered the Muslim women's faces and the elimination of mixed clothing Albanian and European among men. King's program also included teaching the poor peasants from their mayors how to fabricate wooden beds themselves and avoid sleeping on the ground, which the King was convinced that it was the source of many common diseases across the people (Fischer J. 2004, p. 261).

### 3. Conclusions

"Without the advancement of women, every civilization remains opaque and ineffective" ("Vatra", 1935, p. 4)  
Why should King Zog paid all that great care to the Albanian women organization?

"Because - said Hysen Salman in his book " Assessments of King Zog I , King of Albanians "- the foundation on which rests the greatness of a nation, is woman. Woman is the producer of the new element, well formed morally and physically, valuable for the future of lighting the nation (Salmani, 2008, p.229).

Was important to improve the legal position of the woman who was under the power of her husband. Polygamy was banned. If divorced wife would have equal rights with husband, while before that, could be exercised exclusively by men. It was accepted only the marriage under religious grounds, and the new Civil Code made it mandatory the civil marriage and dit not recognize any legal effect religiously. Lifted the ban on the marriage of a Muslim woman with a man of a different religion. Prohibiting cohabitation, partners were treated as illegal spouses and were subject to criminal sanctions, more severe for men. Were put in front of responsibility the tutors and those who had to take care of the family with fines of up to 6 months of imprisonment. An important condition for the implementation of a fair and impartial legal provisions especially in civil matters was a judicial framework professionally capable. Government had managed to attract the well prepared judges, most of whom had studied in Italy, France, Austria etc. ( Puto, 2009, p. 470).

In 1935, the Albanian government signed the International Labour Convention for the protection of the rights of women and children in the work process. A year later the government lead by Mehdi Frashëri, issued a decision, which recognized the right of girls and women to compete with men to be employed in public administration (Musaj, 2008, p. 130).

In a study presented in the "10 years Monarchy" journal, was given an overview of the female education during the years of the monarchy:

year	1927-1928	1933-1934	1935-1936	1937-1938
no. female students	176	713	1020	1425

As shown in the table the number has increased as a result of the reforms and the important attention paid by the Albanian government of that time.

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