

# *The Ethnic and Religious Structure of the Population in the Vardar part of Macedonia according to the Censuses of 1921 and 1931*

---

Borče ILIEVSKI

Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Faculty of Philosophy  
Skopje, Macedonia

*The author humbly dedicates his article  
to Darinka Petreska, PhD*

1. Upon the foundation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Kingdom of SHS) on December 1, 1918, it was necessary to determine the exact number and structure of the population in the new state. To this end, a census was taken in the whole territory of the Kingdom of SHS on January 31, 1921.<sup>1</sup> The census of 1921 was the first all-encompassing census in the territory of present-day Republic of Macedonia, taken with the use of a modern statistical methodology. In the official publication released in 1932, which included statistics about the religion, native language, gender and age of the population, the Vardar part of Macedonia was officially part of the province of South Serbia.<sup>2</sup> The published statistics of the censuses are the fundamental statistical source for studying the changes to the size and structure of the population be-

---

<sup>1</sup> Censuses are a pragmatic need of a state, being a product of the growth of the state and its administration, and of the need to obtain a precise image of the structure of its society. The first censuses depended on two significant parameters: military requirements and taxes. The censuses, in the present-day sense of the word, taken with a modern methodology, are a new historical phenomenon.

<sup>2</sup> Дефинитивни резултати Пописа Становништва од 31 јануара 1921 године, Сарајево, државна штампарија 1932

tween the two World Wars.<sup>3</sup>

The statistics of the census of 1921 represent an important source for comparing the demography of the population before the Balkan Wars and World War I and the consequences that the wars had left on the size and structure of the population of the Vardar part of Macedonia. The ethnic structure of the population can be determined only indirectly, through the statistics about the native language and religion, and therefore those statistics can be only approximate. In keeping with the official state politics of the time, Macedonians by their native language were registered as Serbs or Croats. In fact, the censuses were also used for putting into practice the state and national politics of the time.<sup>4</sup> To the question of what their religion was, people had the chance to choose one of the options listed on the census forms or add their own.<sup>5</sup> According to the native language, the published statistics of the census of 1921 reveal fourteen ethno-lingual groups.<sup>6</sup>

In order to establish the exact, or nearly exact, number of Macedonians, we have to address the statistics critically, comparing those about the religion and the native language, so as to obtain a figure closest to the real one. According to certain estimates, some 550,000-600,000 Macedonians lived in the king-

---

<sup>3</sup> The initial results of the census of 1921 were published in 1924, while the definite results were published in 1932. The definite results of the census of 1931 were published in four volumes that came out from 1937 to 1940: *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od marta 1931 godine, knjiga I, Prisutno stanovništvo broj kuća i domaćinstva*, Beograd, 1937; *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od marta 1931 godine, knjiga II, Prisutno stanovništvo po veroispovesti*, Beograd, 1938; *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od marta 1931 godine, knjiga III, Prisutno stanovništvo po pismenosti i starosti*; *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od marta 1931 godine, knjiga IV, Prisutno stanovništvo po glavnom zanimanju*, Beograd, 1940

<sup>4</sup> С. Радовановић, Етничка структура Краљевине Југославије у контексту националне политике југословенства, Демографија, књ. IV, 2007, 130-131

<sup>5</sup> By their religion, the residents of the Kingdom of SHS were registered as: Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Greek Catholics, Evangelists, Muslims, Israelis, atheists, and unknown.

<sup>6</sup> Serbs or Croats, Slovenes, Czechoslovaks, Rusyns (Ruthenians, Malorussians), Poles, Russians, Hungarians, Germans, Arnauts, Turks, Romanians or Tsintsars (together), Italians, French, English, other and unknown.

dom in 1921.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the remaining population – Albanians (officially registered as Arnauts by their native language), Turks and Vlachs (registered as Romanians-Tsintsars by their native language) – was listed as separate statistical units. Despite certain errors concerning these ethnic groups, there are almost no problems determining their exact figures. A problem occurs in regard to the Serbs considering they are in the group of Serbs or Croats by their native language and considering they are Orthodox by religion, it is virtually impossible to separate them from the Macedonians. It is during this period that the colonization of Macedonia with Serbian population went underway. Most of the administration and the military and police forces were also Serbian and so the presence of Serbs since 1918 had been rising. In 1921, the colonization of the Vardar part of Macedonia was at its very beginning. The biggest colonial settlements were established after the census and therefore the colonizing population in this period represented a very small portion of the total population. The region of Kosovo and Metohija remained a primary territory for colonization for the authorities throughout the period between the two World Wars.<sup>8</sup>

At the time of taking the census, Macedonia was divided into seven districts<sup>9</sup> and twenty-nine counties and its population totaled 798,291.<sup>10</sup> This number does not include the residents of the municipalities of Radovnica, Stajevce and Trgoviste in the county of Kriva Palanka, which were annexed to Serbia after 1945.<sup>11</sup> According to the official publications about the total number of resi-

---

<sup>7</sup> Vladan Jovanović, *Jugoslovenska država i Južna Srbija. Makedonija, Sandžak, Kosovo i Metohija u Kraljevini SHS*, Beograd, 2002, 46

<sup>8</sup> If comparing the statistics about the colonizing families, which is not a subject of this paper, it can be concluded that the authorities were particularly interested in “pacifying” the tumultuous areas in Kosovo dominantly populated with Albanians by settling Serbian and Montenegrin colonists. Most of those settled in what were known as Southern Areas were in fact settled in the areas of Kosovo and Metohija.

<sup>9</sup> The districts of Bitola, Bregalnica, Kumanovo, Ohrid, Skopje, Tetovo and Tikves

<sup>10</sup> Дефинитивни резултати Пописа Становништва од 31 јануара 1921 године, Сарајево, државна штампарија 1932, 88-123

<sup>11</sup> Lazar Sokolov, *Promena u strukturi stanovništva na teritoriju NR Makedonije 1921-1953 godine kao odraz ekonomskog razvoja*, Skopje 1962, 30. On the issue of the border line demarcation between Macedonia and Serbia upon their constitution as republics in Yugoslavia, see: Виолета Ачкоска, *Братството и Единството 1944-1974 помеѓу хармонија и дисхармонија*, Скопје 2003,

dents in 1921, the population totaled 808,724.<sup>12</sup> The History of Macedonians of 1969 cites the incorrect figure of 728,286,<sup>13</sup> while the publication of 2000 states that in the Vardar part of Macedonia, after the end of World War I, the population totaled 771,678.<sup>14</sup>

If we compare the statistics of the census of 1921 with the statistics of the first Serbian census in this territory of 1913,<sup>15</sup> as well as with other statistics pertaining to the total number of residents immediately before the Balkan Wars, we can infer the conclusion that the Vardar part of Macedonia lost approximately 100,000 residents in less than a decade.<sup>16</sup> It was a result primarily of the emigration of a part of the Muslim population immediately after the Balkan Wars and also of the emigration of a portion of the other population (Macedonians, Vlachs) after the Balkan Wars and World War I, as well as of the loss of lives during the wars.<sup>17</sup> From 1912 to 1918, some cities lost a substantial portion

---

208-218.

<sup>12</sup> Статистички годишник на Р. Македонија, завод за Статистика на Р. Македонија, Скопје 1998; Vladimir Simeunović, Stanovništvo Jugoslavije i socijalističkih republika 1921-1961, Beograd, 1964, 22

<sup>13</sup> Историја на македонскиот народ, книга трета, Скопје, 1969; Михајло Апостолски Етничките промени во Македонија во XX век, Сп. Историја, XX/2, Скопје, 1984, 67-68. The Statistical Office of the People's Republic of Macedonia says in its monthly report No 9 of 1953, on page 43, that 797,346 people lived in the territory of the People's Republic of Macedonia in 1921. Lazar Sokolov also deducts 10,443 residents of Radovnica, Stajevce and Trgoviste from the total number of residents and obtains the result of 798,286 residents in Macedonia in 1921. (Lazar Sokolov, Op.cit, 30)

<sup>14</sup> Историја на македонскиот народ том четврти, Македонија меѓу балканските и Втората светска војна, Скопје, 2000, 133

<sup>15</sup> Речник места у ослобођеној области старе Србије по службеним податцима, израдио Мил. Ант. Вујовић, Београд, 1914

<sup>16</sup> According to the official statistics, in 1913-1914, in the Vardar part of Macedonia, the region of Strumica excluded, the population totaled 890,000. (ibidem...,15-151)

<sup>17</sup> Estimates are that by the end of March 1914, some 60,000 Muslims emigrated from the areas occupied by Serbia (Macedonia, Kosovo and Sandzak). (Vladan Jovanović, Iseljavanje muslimana iz Vardarske banovine između stihije i državne akcije, Zbornik Pisati istoriju Jugoslavije: Viđnje srpskog faktora, 81; Dimitrije Djodjevic, Migrations during the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars and World War One, Migrations in Balkan History, Belgrade, 1989, 115-118)

of their population. Only in Bitola, from 1914 to 1921, the population declined by 41 percent. The largest city in the Vardar part of Macedonia in 1921 was Skopje with 40,666 residents.<sup>18</sup>

Of the total number of residents in the territory of the Vardar part of Macedonia, 546,013 people, or 68.44 percent,<sup>19</sup> were registered in the official statistics as Serbs or Croats by their native language. This fact being a product of the politics and stance of the state and the Serbian political leadership toward Macedonia and Macedonians can by no means provide a correct picture of the ethnic structure in 1921. In this period, the colonization had just begun and therefore only a small portion of the registered Serbs or Croats were truly Serbs and Croats by ethnicity. This group also included the administrative, military and police staff stationed in Macedonia after 1918 and therefore we can be sure that most of the registered Serbs or Croats were, in fact, Macedonians by their native language and that Macedonians totaled some 518,000, accounting for approximately 65 percent of the total population of Vardar Macedonia.<sup>20</sup> The second most numerous were Turks, who totaled 118,758 residents, or 14.83 percent of the population, followed by Albanians, amounting to 110,650 residents, or 13.87 percent of the total population.<sup>21</sup> According to these statistics, in the Vardar part of Macedonia, there lived 9,087 Vlachs, constituting 1.12 percent of the population, as the other ethnic groups totaled 13,785 residents, or 1.73 percent of the total population.

Comparing the statistics of the census of 1921 with the statistics of the population of before the Balkan Wars, it becomes evident that notable ethnic changes occurred in certain areas. The Turkish population no longer constituted

---

<sup>18</sup> Дефинитивни резултати Пописа Становништва од 31 јануара 1921 године...,112

<sup>19</sup> The calculations are made based on the official statistics released in 1932.

<sup>20</sup> This estimated figure includes also the Macedonian Muslims registered as "Serbs or Croats" by their native language

<sup>21</sup> One of the scholars studying this issue doubts the truthfulness of the official statistics, primarily concerning the number of Albanians, arguing that their number was lowered for political reasons. (Muhamed Pirraku, *Kulturno-prosvetni pokret Albanaca u Jugoslaviji 1919-1941*, *Jugoslovenski istoriski časopis*, 1-4, Beograd, 1978, 356-370; Hairedin Hoxha, *Proces nacionalne afirmacije albanske nacionalnosti u Jugoslaviji: izbrana poglavlja*, *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*, 51,52, Ljubljana, 1982, 237-239

a majority in the cities, except Gostivar,<sup>22</sup> and their number decreased considerably in areas where they had been in the majority until the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, such as the regions of Stip and Radovis and parts of the southern Vardar valley. On the other hand, despite the suffered ethnic loss, especially in the region of Debar after the uprising of 1913 was quelled, the Albanian population managed to raise its number relative to the situation of before the wars, thus raising its political role as well. Apart from the Turkish population, the number of Vlachs, who constituted only onethird of the population before the Balkan wars, due to emigration or subtle assimilation, went considerably down as well.<sup>23</sup>

As regards the religious structure, most of the population – 518,229 or 64.91 percent – were Orthodox. They included Macedonians, Serbs, Vlachs and other small ethnic groups. Muslims constituted 270,295 residents, or 33.94 percent. This religious group included Turks, Albanians, Macedonians professing Islam, who were officially registered as Serbs or Croats by their mother tongue, and most of the Roma population. Jews totaled 5,047, which was 0.63 percent of the population.<sup>24</sup> In the Vardar part of Macedonia, there were also 2,215 Catholics, or 0.27 percent, most of whom lived in the region of Strumica, where there also lived 765 Uniats, accounting for 0.10 percent, and the majority of

---

<sup>22</sup> The official statistics reveal that in the city of Gostivar, Turks constituted as much as 77.5 percent of the population. From a total of 4,830 residents in the city, 792 were Orthodox, 89 were Catholic and 3,949, or 81.7 percent, were Muslim, while 846 were registered as native speakers of Serbian, 138 as native speakers of Albanian (Arnaut) and 3,743 as native speakers of Turkish. (Дефинитивни резултати Пописа Становништва од 31 јануара 1921 године..., 116-117). The Turkish influence was particularly strong in the urban areas, where the other Muslims, for example the Albanians in Gostivar, adopted fast the Turkish language and sentiment, and were no different from the Turks. This assimilation before the Balkan wars was taking place in a number of cities in Macedonia. Compare: Јован Ф. Трифуноски, Албанско становништво у СР. Македонији, Београд, 1988, 114

<sup>23</sup> According to the statistics of Vasil K'ncov, in the parts of Macedonia that were occupied by Serbia after the Balkan Wars, some 33,000 Vlachs lived in the late 19th century. (Васил Кънчов, Македония етнография и статистика второ фототипно издание, София, 1996, 281-283)

<sup>24</sup> Most of the Jewish population in Macedonia were Sephardic Jews settled in the 16th century.

1,103 Evangelists in Macedonia, constituting 0.14 percent of the population.<sup>25</sup>

*Residents by their native language in Vardar Macedonia as of January 31, 1921<sup>26</sup>*

<i>District</i>	<i>Serbs or Croats</i>	<i>Turks</i>	<i>Arnauts</i>	<i>Vlachs</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
Bitola	134,535	18,007	19,209	4,425	4,556	180,732
Bregalnica	72,764	29,011	71	1,197	1,304	104,347
Ohrid	48,460	7,506	11,448	1,597	200	69,211
Skopje	81,901	26,336	21,569	645	4,702	135,153
Tetovo	53,688	14,547	48,399	70	475	117,179
Tikves	73,210	17,338	34	882	971	92,435
Kumanovo	81,430	6,013	9,944	271	1,576	99,234
Total	545,988	118,758	110,674	9,087	13,784	798,291

*Source: Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921 године, Сарајево 1932*

Despite certain oversights and errors made during the taking of the census, the statistics obtained from it are precious, showing how the population moved in terms of both ethnicity and religion. They also reveal all socio-economic changes that occurred as a consequence of the demise of the Ottoman Empire, as well as the changes that occurred under the pressure of the new political reality.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921 године, Сарајево 1932, 88-123

<sup>26</sup> The ethnic groups in the table are according to the official state statistics.

<sup>27</sup> Here we have to underline certain flawed information published as official statistics.

It is said that in the municipality of Gorno Kolicani near Skopje, populated by Albanians and Macedonians professing Islam, there were 1,111 Turks and 1,414 Albanians. Evidently, Muslim Macedonians from the villages of Dolno Kolicani and Pagarusa were registered as Turks. It is interesting that the Muslim Macedonians in the other villages of the surroundings of Skopje were all registered as native speakers of Serbo-Croat, in adherence with the politics of the time. That was also the case with the Veles village of Melnica, populated solely by Macedonians professing Islam. Almost all of them were registered in the official statistics as native speakers of the Turkish language. Also, a certain portion of the Roma population was registered either as Turks or Albanians, depending on the region. There are such examples in Skopje, Veles, Strumica, Prilep, Bitola and other cities. At the same time, in the Struga village of Radolista, 531 people were listed as Turks although not even during the Ot-

Macedonians lived in the whole territory. In some areas, after the emigration of a portion of the Turkish population, they were an absolute majority, as frequently they accounted for over 90 percent of the population. The number of Macedonians increased considerably in cities, where, on the other hand, the number of Turks declined. Turks constituted half of the population in the Dojran county,<sup>28</sup> while in the region of Radovis they constituted 43 percent of the population.<sup>29</sup> In the other areas, mostly to the east of the Vardar, in the regions of Ovce Pole, Kocani and Stip, they accounted for one-third or one-fourth of the total population and their number tended to decline. In Western Macedonia, in addition to the cities, Turks lived primarily in the surroundings of Gostivar, where they made up 25.5 percent of the population, as well as in Gorna Zupa. A few Turkish ethnic oases remained in Pelagonija, too.

Albanians lived compactly as, in fact, before the Balkan Wars, mostly in the western and northwestern regions. In the county of Dolni Polog, Tetovo region, Albanians constituted 52.4 percent of the total population, while in Gorni Polog, Gostivar region, they were 42.3 percent of the population.<sup>30</sup> In the region of Skopje, Albanians made up 21.37 percent and in the region of Kumanovo 17.43 percent of the population. In compact groups, they also lived in the regions of Kicevo (32.60 percent), Debar (28.4 percent), Struga (25.6 percent) and Prespa (8 percent). These three ethnic groups represented the chief components of the ethnic map of the Vardar part of Macedonia in the early 1920s.

Apart from Krusevo, where they represented 44.1 percent of the town population, Vlachs also lived in Bitola and a few surrounding villages, as well as in the region of Ovce Pole. As traders, Vlachs lived in almost all major cities, yet represented only a small portion of the local population. Jews, with no exception, lived only in Skopje, where they totaled 1,868, or 4.6 percent, Bitola 2,640, or 9.3 percent, and Stip 491, or 4.4 percent. 2. The second census of the population in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was taken on 1-20 April 1931.<sup>31</sup> In this census, apart from other information, data about the native language, religion and ethnicity were collected.<sup>32</sup> The religion-related information was published in

---

toman period was there any Turkish population there.

<sup>28</sup> Дефинитивни резултати Пописа становништва,...119

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem...,95

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem...,116-117

<sup>31</sup> As in the previous census, only the present population was recorded.

<sup>32</sup> Светлана Радовановић, *Op. cit.*, 133-138



1938.<sup>33</sup> The information about the native language and ethnicity were not published until the beginning of World War II. The political criteria in agreement with the politics of the time, which promoted the nationality of Yugoslavs, represent a problem in studying the ethnic structure of the population in the whole country and not just Macedonia.<sup>34</sup> With respect to their ethnicity, all South Slav peoples were recorded as “Yugoslavs.”<sup>35</sup> Only if a person was not “Yugoslav,” their ethnicity was recorded. After the occupation of Belgrade in April of 1941, the German troops seized the records of the census of 1931, sorted them and published them in Vienna in 1943.<sup>36</sup> The statistics about religion in this publication are compared with the native language statistics and shown in tables by banovinas and districts. Based on these records, the ethnic structure of the population in the Vardar part of Macedonia can be at least approximated. The editor of the summarized data from the official census from 1931 also points out the imperfections of the information provided as “the Macedonians had never have their dialect recognized and have always been called Serbs”.<sup>37</sup> The statistics about the ethnicity of the population in the Kingdom were most probably destroyed during the German bombardment of Belgrade.<sup>38</sup> After the war, in 1945, some of the records of the census of 1931 pertaining to the native language and religion were published by the State Statistical Office.<sup>39</sup>

According to these statistics, 938,628 people lived in the Vardar part of Macedonia in 1931. The total population in the Vardar part of Macedonia increased by 140,337 in a decade.<sup>40</sup> In other words, the number of people climbed

---

<sup>33</sup> Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva 31 marta 1931 godine, Beograd 1938

<sup>34</sup> Владан Јовановић, Вардарска бановина 1929-1941, Београд, 2011, 54

<sup>35</sup> Konačni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 15 marta 1948 godine, Uvod, Beograd 1954, xi

<sup>36</sup> Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession nach den unveröffentlichen Angaben der Zählung von 1931, Wien, 1943

<sup>37</sup> “Den Mazedoniern wird nicht eininmal die Eigenheit eines Dialektes eingeräumt, sonder sie werden einfach als Serben angesehen”... Ibidem, 6

<sup>38</sup> Zoran Janjetović, Deca careva pastorčad kraljeva Nacionalne manjine u Jugoslaviji 1918-1941, Beograd, 2005, 63;

<sup>39</sup> Stanovništvo predratne Jugoslavije po veroispovesti maternjem jeziku po popisu od 31.III.1931 godine-pregled po srezovima, Državni statistički ured, Serija II,

<sup>40</sup> The number of residents of the municipalities of Trgoviste, Stajevce and Radovnica in the county of Kriva Palanka, which were annexed to the People’s Republic

up by some 14,000 annually, which was primarily a result of the high rate of natural increase. Between 1929 and 1931, the birth rate in the then Vardar Banovina stood at 38-42‰. The death rate was still high, which is why the rate of natural increase was 15-20‰.<sup>41</sup> The percentage of the city population remained almost the same as in 1921, or 25 percent of the total population.<sup>42</sup> Skopje was the largest city and an economic center with 8,958 households and 64,807 residents.<sup>43</sup> Together with its suburbs, it had 68,334 residents.<sup>44</sup>

Most of the population was Orthodox and Muslim. Orthodox were 637,667 residents, or 67.9 percent, as Muslim were 282,813 residents, or 30.1 percent. In one decade, the Orthodox population increased by 119,438 residents, which was a result of both the aforementioned high rate of natural increase and the colonization that was massive in the 1920s. Apart from the Macedonians and Vlachs, the recorded Orthodox citizens included also colonizing Serbs and a small number of Montenegrins.<sup>45</sup> The colonizing population is estimated at 20,000-100,000.<sup>46</sup> However, we believe that the total number of

---

of Serbia after 1945, was deducted from the total population. A total of 11,333 people lived in these three municipalities in 1931. (Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od marta 1931 godine, knjiga I...,101)sveska 3, Beograd, 1945

<sup>41</sup> Statistički godišnjak, knjiga I, 1929, Beograd, 1932, 119; Статистички годишњак књига II, 1930, Београд, 1933, 70; Statistički godišnjak, knjiga III, 1931, Beograd, 1934, 67

<sup>42</sup> Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od marta 1931 godine, knjiga I, Prisutno stanovništvo broj kuća i domaćinstva...,98-107 ; Владан Јовановић, Вардарска бановина 1929-1941...,78

<sup>43</sup> Almanah Kraljevine Jugoslavije, Opšta državna uprava Banovine, srezovi, opštine i gradovi, Zagreb, 1932, 370

<sup>44</sup> By religion, 40,865 were Orthodox, 3,578 were Catholic, 21,011 were Muslim, 2,641 were Jewish and 248 professed other religions. (Prisutno stanovništvo po veroispovesti...,105)

<sup>45</sup> The colonizing population originated from almost all parts of the Kingdom, primarily from the passive regions where there was agrarian overpopulation.

<sup>46</sup> Стојан Киселиновски, Етничкиге промени во Македонија (1913-1995), Скопје, 2000, 55. By 1940, 4,167 households were settled in the Vardar part of Macedonia during the process of colonization. (Александар Апостолов, Колонизација на Македонија во стара Југославија, Скопје, 1990, 208). According to Jovan Trifunovski's estimates, in 1940 colonists totaled 40,000. (Јован Ф. Трифуноски, Меѓуратна колонизација Срба у Македонији, Београд, 1991, 14). According to other statistics, 3,670 families, or 18,384 peo-

colonists, administrative, military and police staff, as well as other residents from other parts of the kingdom populated mostly in the major cities, did not exceed 60,000-65,000 in the early 1930s. In regard to the Muslim population, despite their high birth rate, because of the emigration in the 1920s, their total number went up by only 12,000, which resulted in a 3.9 percent decrease relative to 1921.

*Residents by their native language in the Vardar part of Macedonia in 1921 and 1931*

<i>Native Language</i>	<i>1921</i>	<i>1931</i>
Serbs or Croats	545,988	669,110
Turks	118,758	105,407
Albanians	110,674	129,645
Vlachs	9,087	10,981
Roma	/	9,837
Jews	/	6,835
Other	13,784	6,813
Total	798,921	938,628

*Source: Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва 1921 године, Сарајево 1932, 88123; Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession nach den unveröffentlichten Angaben der Zählung von 1931, Wien, 1943, 308-351*

According to the published statistics, 669,110 residents, or 71.2 percent, were officially recorded as native speakers of Serbo-Croat, 129,645 residents, or 13.8 percent, as native speakers of Albanian (Arnaut in the official statistics),<sup>47</sup> 105,407 residents, or 11.2 percent, as native speakers of Turkish, 10,981 residents as native speakers of Vlach,<sup>48</sup> 9,837 residents as native speakers of Romani, as 6,835 residents declared themselves as Jews by their native language,

---

ple, 15,995 of whom were Orthodox and 3,389 were Catholic, were settled in Macedonia in 277 towns and villages by June of 1940. Colonists were not settled only in the counties of Gorni Polog, Kriva Palanka, Struga and Prespa. (Драгиша И. Кецојевић, Насељеници у Јужној Србији између два светска рата, Вардарски Зборник, Београд, 2011, 182). In the territory of Macedonia and Kosovo, 87,000 colonists were settled by 1940. By religion, 94 percent of them were Orthodox and 6 percent were Roman Catholic. (В. Јовановић, Вардарска бановина 1929-1941..., 101).

<sup>47</sup> Stanovništvo predratne Jugoslavije po veroispovesti maternjem jeziku po popisu od 31.III.1931 godine..., 29-31

while 7,094 people said they professed Judaism.<sup>49</sup>

According to these statistics, Macedonians in 1931 totaled approximately 605,000-610,000, or roughly 65 percent.<sup>50</sup>

The analysis of the statistics of the census of 1921 and 1931 shows that the number of Turks stepped down from 118,758 in 1921 to 105,407 in 1931. It was due to the emigration of some of them in the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, too, a process that went underway during the Balkan wars. In most counties, their number either declined or stagnated. Both Turks that lived in cities and some of those that lived in villages, especially the wealthier ones, were emigrating in the 1920s. The number of Turks dropped in the regions of Stip, Veles,<sup>51</sup> Kocani,<sup>52</sup> Bitola and Prilep,<sup>53</sup> and Ovce Pole.<sup>54</sup> Many Turks and Muslims in general left the region of Tikves as well. Many local Muslims were Islamized and did not speak Turkish despite being referred to as Turks by the Christians.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>48</sup> As in 1921, the Vlach population in Macedonia is recorded by the official statistics as native speakers of the Romanian language. (Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession..., 308-351)

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem

<sup>50</sup> This figure includes the population recorded as native speakers of Serbo-Croat that were Orthodox or Muslim by religion, as well as the Catholics and Protestants in the region of Strumica.

<sup>51</sup> In the 1920s, around 200 families emigrated from only a few villages north of Veles (Ivankovci, Mamutcevo, Sujaklari and Calosevo) (Миљенко С. Филиповић, Северна велешка села, Насеља и порекло становништва, књига, 17,532), as people were leaving also the villages of Gorno Orizari and Crkvino (Јован Ф. Трифуноски, Oblast Babune i Topolke, Zbornik za narodni život i običaje južnih Slavena, knjiga 47, Zagreb, 1977, 177)

<sup>52</sup> The emigration from the basin of Kocani was massive in the second half of the 1920s. All Turks moved out of the villages of Oblesevo and Banja. Some 90, mostly richer, families left Zrnovci from 1922 to 1928. In the same period, 120 households moved out of Teranci, 75 households moved out of Morodvis, as Turks were emigrating also from Vidobiste, Blatec, Peklјani and other villages in the region. (Јован Ф. Трифуноски, Кочанска котлина сеоска насеља и становништво, Скопје, 1970, 53-151)

<sup>53</sup> Apart from the cities, in the 1920s, i.e. the period between the two censuses, Turks and other Muslims (Albanians and Macedonians professing Islam) were emigrating from the basin of Pelagonija in great numbers, too. Only of the village of Kremenica (Kenali) about 100 households moved out between 1924 and 1930. (Јован Ф. Трифуноски, Битољско-прилепска котлина антрополого-

On the other hand, the number of Albanians in the period between the two censuses increased by nearly 20,000. It was a result of the high rate of natural increase, which was typical in this period for the entire population of Macedonia, and of the low rate of emigration compared to the other Muslim population. Albanians emigrated mostly from the areas where they did not constitute a compact majority, such as the regions of Prilep or Bitola, while in other areas this process was much more moderate.<sup>56</sup> The number of Albanians increased most in the counties of Skopje, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kumanovo, Kicevo and Struga. In the Tetovo county, Albanians constituted an absolute majority of 53 percent. In the Gostivar county, they represented a relative majority of 45 percent; in the Kicevo county 31 percent; in the Struga county 29 percent; in the Debar county 25 percent; in the Kumanovo county 20 percent; and in the Škopje county 19 percent.<sup>57</sup>

---

графска проучавања, Београд, 1998, 99-416)

<sup>54</sup> In the basin of Ovce Pole, from 1923 to 1928, all Turkish residents of the villages of Pesirovo, Amzabegovo and Malo Crniliste emigrated. Many households left the other villages as well. Only in the period from 1924 to 1927, 70 households moved out of the village of Gorobinci. (Jovan F. Trifunoski, *Ovčepoljska kotlina, Zbornik za narodni život i običaje južnih Slavena*, knjiga 47, Zagreb, 1964, 666-762)

<sup>55</sup> See: Јован Хаџи Васиљевић, *Муслимани наше крви*, Београд, 1924, Војислав С. Радовановић, *Тиквеш и Рајац, Насеља и порекло становништва*, књига 17, Београд, 1924, 198-278; Васил Кънчов, *Македонија етнографија и статистика* второ фототипно издание, Софија, 1996, 49-50

<sup>56</sup> In the 1920s, Albanians moved out of a few villages of the basin of Pelagonija, such as Brailovo, Vrboec, Porodin, Crneeci, etc. Compare: (Јован Ф. Трифуноски, *Битољско-прилепска котлина...*, 193, 261, 308, 384). The emigration of Albanians from other regions was smaller.

<sup>57</sup> Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession..., 308-351; *Stanovništvo predratne Jugoslavije po veroisповести i maternjem jeziku*, sv. 3, pregled po srezovima, avgust 1945, 29-31

*The religious structure of the population of Macedonia by district,  
according to the census of 1931*

<i>District</i>	<i>Orthodox</i>	<i>Catholic</i>	<i>Other Christians</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Jewish</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
Bitola	49,549	651	86	11,098	3,778	2	65,164
C. Selo	11,033	95	3	4,595	1		15,727
Dojran	6,388	91	25	5,208	1		11,713
D. Polog	23,236	193	7	47,543	4		70,983
Gevgelija	15,423	158	87	264	11		15,943
Galicnik	6,493	25	1	5,532			12,051
Debar	6,707	405	7	9,177			16,296
G. Polog	9,939	90	1	22,636			32,666
Kavadarci	22,138	88	45	1,648			23,919
Kicevo	16,096	142	11	15,853			32,101
Kocani	25,822	106	19	5,835	2		31,784
Kratovo	19,980	46	9	265			20,300
K. Palanka	28,656	83	15	441	4		29,199
Krusevo	22,114	21		1,435			23,570
Maševo	14,345	154	2	892	1		15,394
Mariovo	12,984	59		2,848			15,894
Negotino	7,061	204	11	5,600			12,876
Ohrid	28,357	170	12	4,524	3		33,066
O. Pole	16,740	149	5	5,044			21,938
Porece	13,610	10	1	5,119			18,740
Prespa	16,823	62	9	4,737			21,631
Prilep	46,296	216	30	7,929	9		54,480
Radovis	11,467	57	122	7,814	1		19,461
Skopje	70,592	3,720	253	50,845	2,635	7	128,052
Struga	15,610	50	2	12,393			28,055
Strumica	30,429	290	1,690	6,582	5		38,996
Stip	12,572	488	25	6,181	626		19,892
Veles	29,884	308	40	11,998	6		42,236
Kumanovo	47,323	351	43	18,777	7		66,501
Total	637,667	8,482	2,563	282,813	7,094	9	938,628

*Source: Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva od marta 1931 godine, knjiga II, Prisutno stanovništvo po veroispovesti, Beograd, 1938, 98-107; Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession nach den unveröffentlichten Angaben der Zählung von 1931, Wien, 1943, 308-351*

The emigration of the Macedonians professing Islam was fairly prominent in this period. It is hard to identify their exact number based on the census records. In 1931, in the Vardar part of Macedonia, there were 40,106 Muslims, whose native language was Serbo-Croat.<sup>58</sup> Most of them were Macedonians professing Islam. Their emigration was particularly strong after the Balkan Wars. Many on-site research and statistics reveal that they emigrated massively from all areas, even from those where they constituted compact groups. Only from the six Skopje villages down the valley of the river Markova Reka, some 115 families emigrated to Turkey between the two World Wars.<sup>59</sup> Also, they emigrated in great numbers from the region of Tikves.<sup>60</sup> There was emigration from the region of Veles, too.<sup>61</sup>

In 1931, 10,981 Vlachs lived in the Vardar part of Macedonia. In the official statistics of the census, they were recorded as native speakers of Romanian. They constituted 1.2 percent of the population and noted a slight increase relative to the census of 1921. They were most numerous in the counties of Bitola (2,722), Krusevo (1,532) and Struga (1,138). In the town of Krusevo, they constituted 42 percent of the population. As a result of their affiliation to the Patriarchy, until 1912, some of them declared themselves as native speakers of the Greek language. For example, in Bitola, 709 residents, most of whom were presumably Vlach, said their native language was Greek.<sup>62</sup> In 1931, 9,837 residents, most of whom, or 4,204, lived in Skopje, were recorded as native speakers of the Romani language, as 6,835 were recorded as Jews, 3,751 of whom lived

---

<sup>58</sup> Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession...,308-351 Most of this population lived in the region of Reka, Debarska Zupa, Tikves, the regions of Kicevo, Prilep, Skopje, Struga, Tetovo and Veles.

<sup>59</sup> Јован Ф. Трифуноски, Слив Маркове реке антропогеографска промагтрања, Скопје, 1958, 158-182

<sup>60</sup> In 1921, some 9,000 Muslims lived in the counties of Kavadarci and Negotino, recorded as "Serbs or Croats" by their native language (Дефинитивни резултати Пописа Становништва од 31 јануара 1921 године...,120-121), and their number fell to 4,110 by 1931 (Die Gliederung...,322,332)

<sup>61</sup> From the villages of Dolno Vranovci and Melnica, approximately 120 households moved to Turkey from 1925 to 1938. (Јован Ф. Трифуноски, Oblast Babune i Topolke...,172) .

<sup>62</sup> Die Gliederung...,308 In 1931, in the Vardar part of Macedonia, 1,794 residents were recorded as native speakers of Greek

in Bitola, 2,629 in Skopje and 618 in Stip.

The census projected for 1941 was not taken because of the occupation and disintegration of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The first post-war census of 1948 recorded all changes to the ethnic structure that occurred in the fourth decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and during World War II.