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HIGH ALBANIA AND ITS CUSTOMS IN 1908.

BY

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[WITH PLATE XXXI.]

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open revolt. But as I knew the people and had good introductions, I took French leave, sneaked out of the town in the grey before dawn, dodged the gendarmerie outposts, and was soon safely away in very light marching order.

I visited in all some twenty-four tribes, and in many was lucky enough to get a detailed account of the tribe's origin.

These tribes are divided into several marked groups. The first group I visited was *Malsia e madhe*, the Great Mountainous Land. This consists of five large tribes and three small ones. Four of the five large ones each tells that its ancestor came from the north with his family, thirteen or fourteen generations ago, flying from the advancing Turks. In some cases they found uninhabited land and settled on it. In others, they fought with the men already on the land, and finally settled among them. These former inhabitants they call *Anas*, which is interpreted in the latest Albanian Dictionary as "aborigines." They tell that the *Anas* were very strong and active, could leap over six horses and ate acorns and horseflesh.

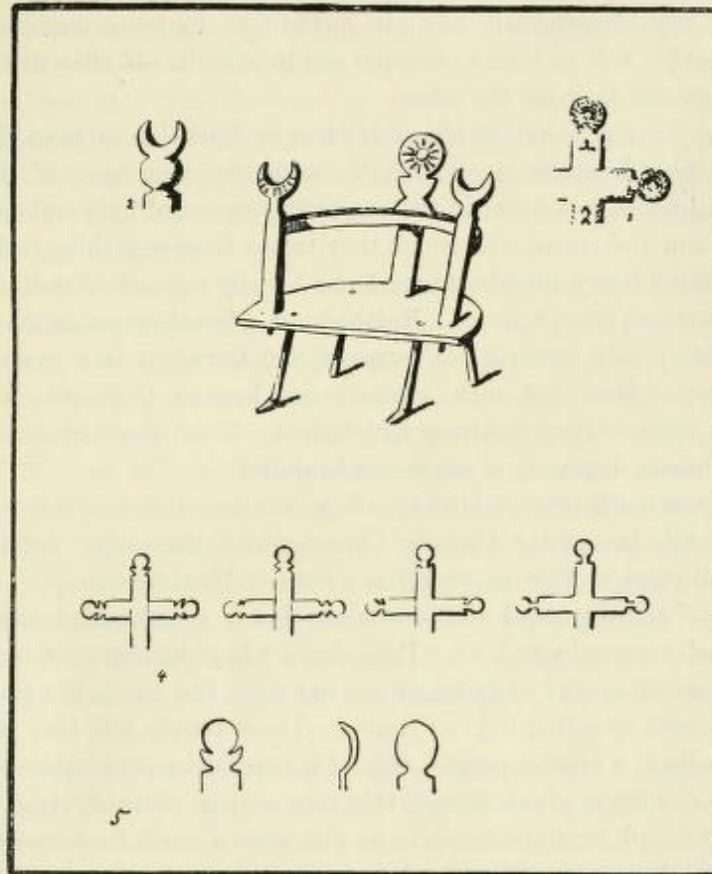
They intermarried with the *Anas*. A few houses in the Hoti tribe still trace direct descent from the *Anas*, in the male line. All four of these tribes (Skreli Hoti, Gruda, Kilmeni) tell that their ancestors came from Bosnia or the Herzegovina, precise district unknown.

An approximate date for the coming of these immigrants is the founding of the church of Gruda, three hundred and eighty years ago, so they say. Some of the tribes say they came rather before, and some rather after, this event. This gives the date 1528. History shows that, roughly speaking, the tradition is probably correct, for the Turks killed the last King of Bosnia in 1463, spread gradually over the land, and finally incorporated all Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Turkish Empire about 1590. The shifting of the peoples falls well within this period (1463-1590).

The family, a communal of perhaps sixty or seventy members—such exist still to-day—would march slowly, rarely more than fifteen miles a day, and would be long on the way, the women carrying the burdens and driving the flocks. There would be an armed bodyguard of twenty or thirty fighting men, for at fifteen a tribesman is a fighting man, and often carries arms, and is no mean foe at twelve.

Many of the neighbouring tribes of Montenegro tell precisely the same tale—namely, that their ancestors fled from the Turks thirteen or fourteen generations ago. Moreover, certain tribes of *Malsia e madhe* and Montenegro actually acknowledge blood-relationship, and trace descent from a common forefather. I am very strongly inclined to believe that the present language and nationality of such tribes—that is, whether to-day they are Serbophone and Montenegrin, or Albanophone and Albanian—has been determined mainly by whether they came under the influence of the Orthodox Servian Church or of the Roman Catholic Church. There is some evidence to show that the people who came down from the north were neither Orthodox nor Catholic, but belonged to the heretical

Bogomil sect, which was wide spread in the Balkan peninsula in the Middle Ages. I was extremely interested to find that the *Maltsia e madhe* tribes, more especially the two, *Skreli* and *Hoti*, which say they come from Bosnia, the stronghold of Bogomilism, are freely tattooed on the hand, arm and sometimes breast, with designs that I at once recognised as common in certain parts of Bosnia, notably around *Jaice*, the old capital, where the last king was slain, and in these designs the sun and the crescent moon are almost always factors.



SUN AND MOON. N. ALBANIA.

Bogomilism was a form of Manicheeism, and in Manicheeism the sun and moon play a most important part. The Christian married women of *Maltsia e madhe* wear a crescent of silver filagree or of gold braid on their caps. They vow and declare that this has nothing to do with the Turk: "It is our custom. We have always done it."

You cannot live long with the up-country tribesman without finding that the religion he professes is the merest surface veneer. He is guided for the most part by mysterious superstitions and beliefs hidden in the recesses of his soul, and he cares no jot for priest or *hodja* when their teaching runs counter to his own

holds dear, and even life itself, in order that he may do that which he believes to be right. It is not every one that is prepared so to act up to his ideals.

When you meet a tribesman and he drinks to you, *Tu ngjiat tjetër* (long life to thee), remember to drink *Tu ngjiat me neës* (long honour to thee) in return; for honour is better than life—in Albania.

APPENDIX.

TABLE OF THE TRIBES OF NORTH ALBANIA.

Maltsia e Madhe Group. (Great Mountain Land.)

I. *Gruda*.—A tribe of one *bariak*, situated between the River Tsem and the Montenegrin frontier. North of it is the Kuchi tribe (Montenegro), and south the Hoti. Gruda consists of about 500 houses (a house is vaguely reckoned in *Maltsia e madhe* as eight or ten persons). Of these eighty trace descent from Berisha (see below), and the remainder, who are called Gell (? *Djell*), are immigrants from the Herzegovina. They state that the church of Gruda was built 380 years ago, shortly after their arrival. Gruda is now about half Moslem and half Catholic. The Berisha and Djell stocks are intermarriageable.

II. *Hoti*.—A large tribe situate south of Gruda and extending to the shore of Scutari Lake. On the east it is divided from Kastrati by the Licheni Hotit, an arm of the lake. It consists of one *bariak* of about 500 houses. All are Catholic but three, those of the Bariaktar's family. This turned Moslem seven generations ago. All Hoti, except twelve houses, traces descent from Bosnia. These twelve are called Anas, and are of unknown origin. They were there when Hoti came.

Shortly after the building of the church of Gruda, thirteen generations ago, Geg Laz, the ancestor of Hoti, arrived with his family. Geg was one of four brothers. The others were Piper, Vaso, and Krasni. From these descend the Piperi and the Vasojevichi of Montenegro, who are Serbophone and belong to the Orthodox Church. Krasni is ancestor of the Krasnichi, now Moslem and Albanophone (see below). Hoti is consanguineous also with half the Triepshi tribe, which branched from it later, and reckons consanguinity also with part of Nikaj because it branched from Krasnich, which is consanguineous. Marriage is, therefore, prohibited with all these. Hoti intermarries with the Anas, but mainly marries with Kastrati.

III. *Kastrati*.—Consisting also of about 500 houses, lies between the Licheni Hotit and the Skreli tribe. 300 houses trace descent from one Delti or Dedli, who came with his seven sons from the *bariak* of Drekalovich of the Kuchi. This in turn traces origin from Berisha (see below). The other 200 houses trace from people already on the spot when Delti arrived. They are said to have been Slavs. All are now Albanophone and the majority Catholic, the rest Moslems.

II. *Matija*.—Wholly Moslem; I did not visit it. It is said to consist of 1,200 houses, and covers much land.

III. *Debra*.—All Moslem. I did not visit it. These three tribes are among the most independent of all.

It is noteworthy that Luria in the middle ages formed part of the Dukaghin principality, while *Matija* and *Debra*, it would appear, owned allegiance to Skenderbeg.

IV. *Arnji*.—A small independent Moslem tribe on the left bank of the River Mola. It is an offshoot from *Berisha*. Women wear *Mirdita* dress.

Prizren Group.

I. *Ljuma*.—A large and very independent Moslem tribe.

Along with it are grouped, *Bruti*, *Mal i zi*, *Rechi*, *Vlas*, and other small districts. They are all offshoots, so far as I could learn, of various Christian tribes, e.g., *Shala*, *Fandi*, etc.

Djakova Group.

I. *Iashi*.—800 houses, all Moslem. Did not visit it.

II. *Tropopoja*.—300 houses, all Moslem.

III. *Hashi*.—Very large tribe vaguely reckoned at from 600 to 1,000 houses. Almost all Moslem. Occupies the *Pestriku* mountains which are the traditional home of the *Mirdites* (*q.v.*). Are not consanguineous with *Mirdita*.

Djakova and its immediate neighbourhood is almost entirely populated by offshoots from *Berisha*, *Shala*, *Fandi*, and *Mirdita*. These all recognise consanguinity with their mother tribe and do not intermarry with it.

Ipek Group.

This consists of *Ipek*, *Gusinje*, and *Plava*.

I. *Ipek*.—Albanian population from a number of stocks. In neighbourhood a number of Serb Orthodox villages. Also Albanian villages, some hailing from *Shala* and *Berisha*. At *Dechani*, the dark stock from *Shala* (*q.v.*).

II. *Gusinje*.—All Moslem except a small Serb Orthodox population. *Gusinje* has never been Catholic. Much of the Moslem population can speak Serb. Stock very mixed.

III. *Plava*.—I did not visit. Said to be of mixed stock, some from *Hoti* (*q.v.*), some from a very old stock called *Pagani*.

NOTE ON THE TRIBES CONSANGUINEOUS WITH *HOTI*.

I. *Krasnich*.—I could not visit this tribe, as it was badly at blood with all its neighbours, and objects also to all foreigners. It has a powerful chieftain, *Shaban Benaku*, who traces direct descent from *Krasni* the brother of *Geg Laz*, ancestor of *Hoti*. It is noteworthy that *Krasan* is Serb for "beautiful," *Krasnik*, "a handsome man," for the tribe stems from Bosnia. Also, that though now all Moslem *Krasnich*