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# THE PROHIBITION OF WOMEN'S VEILING IN THE REGION OF GORA

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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Act on the Removal of the Veil came into force in the People's Republic of Serbia in January 1951.<sup>2</sup> Its implementation involved a ban on the use of clothing items that Muslim women wore with the intention of covering their heads and bodies. This paper examines the Act's application within a local context, considering its connection to the process of secularization in society during the mid-twentieth century. It is assumed that the ban on wearing the veil (*zar* and *feredža*) represented an effort by the communist state authorities to suppress the practice of Islamic religious customs, which can be interpreted as a strategy to promote secular political ideas and socialist ideals.<sup>3</sup> In this

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is partially the result of research conducted within the framework of the bilateral project: "Religious Policies and Freedom of Conscience in Interwar and Socialist Yugoslavia: The Contexts of Change" (Bi-Rs/23-25-054), and partially the result of work on the project: "Studying and Documenting Elements of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Gorani people in the Republic of Serbia," which was implemented in 2024. The paper is also the result of work at the Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), funded by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, based on the Contract for the Implementation and Financing of Scientific Research Work of the NIO in 2025, number: 451-03-136/2025-03/ 200173, dated 4 February 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Act on the Ban of Wearing the Zar and the Feredža, *Official Gazette of the People's Republic of Serbia* 4 (1951): 84–85, <https://pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/arhslgl/numberOverview/sgarh/14119>.

<sup>3</sup> The term communist state authorities is used to refer to the state apparatus that operated under the leadership of the Communist Party in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In the paper, the abbreviation SFRY or simply the last part of the name – Yugoslavia – is used.

context, the Act on the Removal of the Veil is analysed as a legal measure aimed at prohibiting the application of religious practices in the Gora region, framed within the political and social strategies applied by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia at the time (such as equality based on people's national affiliation).

This topic is approached from the perspective of ethnology and anthropology. The research involved the application of the fundamental and most commonly used research methods in ethnology and anthropology: analysis of relevant literature and sources, as well as empirical oral material (narratives of interlocutors).<sup>4</sup> Fieldwork was conducted in Dragaš and several villages in Gora (Bačka, Brod, Globočica, Kukuljane, Leštane, Mlike, Orčuša, Radeša, Rapča), as well as in Belgrade. The fieldwork involved conversations with interlocutors who live in Gora or are permanently settled in Belgrade.<sup>5</sup>

The topic of this paper has not previously attracted significant attention from ethnologists and anthropologists, either in Serbia or abroad. The implementation of the veiling ban has often been considered within the context of achieving gender equality and the emancipation of women,<sup>6</sup> although Gora and the Gorani community have often been

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<sup>4</sup> Vesna Vučinić Nešković, *Metodologija terenskog istraživanja u antropologiji: od normativnog do iskustvenog* (Beograd: Odeljenje za etnologiju i antropologiju Filozofskog fakulteta, Srpski genealoški centar, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Belgrade was the location of the research due to the fact that the largest number of Gorani people reside in the capital city of the Republic of Serbia. According to the National Council of Gorani People in the Republic of Serbia: "the results of the 2022 census, there are 7,700 Gorani people living in the Republic of Serbia, most of them in the Belgrade region, more than five thousand" (see: Gorani National Council in the RS, <https://www.facebook.com/nacionalnisavetgoranaca>). This fact can be explained by the continuous migration of Gorani people to Belgrade since the 19th century. Gorani people migrate to Belgrade because it offers the greatest employment opportunities (Ivaylo Markov, "Changing Practices of 'Being Together' in the Transnational Kin-Relationships among Gorani," *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* LXVII, 3 (2019): 501–22; Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom: Etnicitet, zajednica i transmigracije Goranaca u Beogradu* (Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Violeta Achkoska, "Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War," in *Gender Relations in South Eastern Europe. Historical Perspectives on Womanhood and Manhood in 19th and 20th Century*, ed. Miroslav Jovanović and Slobodan Naumović (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), 183–94; Zilka Spahić-Šiljak and Rebeka Jadranka Anić, *I vjernice i građanke* (Sarajevo: TPO fondacija i CIPS-Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2009); Zilka Spahić-Šiljak, ed., *Propitivanje ženskih, feminističkih i muslimanskih identiteta. Post-socijalistički konteksti u Bosni i Hercegovini i na Kosovu* (Sarajevo: Centar interdisciplinarne

excluded from these studies. As a result, the aforementioned papers have lacked information on the application of the veil prohibition in Gora. This fact influenced the choice of research methodology: field-work and conversations with interlocutors (Gorani people) were the primary means of obtaining original information.<sup>7</sup> The empirical material in the form of narratives serves as the backbone for writing this paper.<sup>8</sup>

The period from the 1950s to the 1970s forms the chronological framework for the research. This period was chosen as the reference

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postdiplomske studije, Univerzitet u Sarajevu, 2012); Đermana Šeta, "Analiza utjecaja novije zabrane ženskih muslimanskih odjevnih praksi u Evropi," in *Pažnja! Odjeća, umjetnost, identitet*, ed. Irfan Hošić, Danijela Velimirović, Aleksandar Pašagić et. al., (Bihać: Tehnički fakultet Univerziteta u Bihaću / Odsjek za tekstilni dizajn, 2014), 55–64; Miloš Đurović, "Hidžab kao fenomen konstruisanja i osporavanja identiteta: primjer savremenog Novog Pazara," *Etnoantropološki problemi*, n. s. 10, 4 (2015): 821–38; Edin Šaković and Izet Sabotić, "Skidanje zara i feredže na području sreza Gračanica," *Glasnik arhiva i arhivističkog udruženja Bosne i Hercegovine*, no. 43 (2013): 289–306; Fahrudin Kladničanin, *Peča* (Novi Pazar: Akademski inicijativa "Forum 10," 2020).

<sup>7</sup> I began researching the Gorani community and culture in 2012, and, with brief interruptions have been conducting it continuously to this day. The clothing of Gorani women has been the subject of my research on several occasions. Empirical data have been collected multiple times within the framework of various projects (see Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Opšta mesta sećanja' u okviru ličnog sećanja – na primeru svadbe u Gori," *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU / Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnography SASA* 62, no. 1 (2014): 261–274; Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*; Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Aktivnosti žena i očuvanje nematerijalnog kulturnog nasleđa goranske zajednice," *Etnoantropološki problemi*, n.s. 18, no. 4 (2023): 1221–43, <https://doi.org/10.21301/eap.v18i4.9>). Additional empirical material was obtained through interviews with interlocutors in 2024. This data also served to verify the existing material used in the preparation of this paper. The interviews were conducted with both male and female individuals born between 1940 and 1990. The interlocutors, while discussing the implementation of the Act, shared experiences of their mothers and relatives who were married at the time the Act came into effect.

<sup>8</sup> During the research and analysis, I took into consideration that: "the space and certain segments of an event can, due to the symbolic significance that the individual and the collective attach to it, become a (general) site of memory, which is part of personal memory. It is believed that a specific space and events can become a place of remembrance and memory only if they acquire a 'symbolic aura' (Pierre Nora, "Između Pamćenja i Historije: Problematika mjestâ," in *Kultura pamćenja i historija*, ed. Maja Brkljačić and Sandra Prlenda (Zagreb: Golden marketing - Tehnička knjiga, 2006), 36) that is, if there is a will to remember (Nora, "Između Pamćenja i Historije," 39) and to recall (Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Opšta mesta sećanja"). The ban on covering has become part of collective memory primarily because "it is an event from private life that takes place in the public sphere, rich with community symbols, and within which there is a merging of different 'levels of identity' (Alaida Asman, *Duga senka prošlosti* (Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2011), 68–71; Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Opšta mesta sećanja," 271).

framework because, at the beginning of the 1970s, more noticeable changes began to occur in the economic development of Gora, changes regarding the education of female children, the use of ready-made clothing, and the adoption of new trends in women's fashion.<sup>9</sup> The 1970s marked a turning point in this regard, not only in Gora but also in other regions of the SFRY.<sup>10</sup>

An additional challenge in conducting this research is the absence of ethnological, anthropological, historical, and sociological studies on the application of Islamic rules and regulations in the Gora region. Consequently, written sources on the religious life of the Gorani during the investigated period are rather scarce. This is one of the reasons why ethnographic empirical evidence forms the basis for writing the paper. In the analysis and interpretation, alongside the narratives of interlocutors, relevant theoretical ethnological, anthropological, historical, legal, and sociological literature was used. The sources of data also include information available on the websites and Facebook pages of individual Gorani people, as well as the National Council of Gorani people in the Republic of Serbia.<sup>11</sup>

This paper seeks to contribute to ethnological and anthropological research on Islamic religious practices in Gora during the period of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's rule, in light of the aforementioned. The aim of this paper is to clarify the consequences of the ban on head covering for the social and religious life of the people of Gora. This is a pioneering endeavour aimed at contributing to the understanding of the process of secularisation in the Gorani community in the mid-20th century.

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<sup>9</sup> Ksenija Petovar, "Osobnosti socijalnog prostora Gore i Sredske," in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska, Antropogeografskoetnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović (Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić" SANU, Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II, 1995), 429–44; Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*, 166–87.

<sup>10</sup> Nina Aksić and Hasna Ziljkić, "Ženska odevna praksa tokom 20. veka u Novom Pazaru i okolini," *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* LXX, no. 1 (2022): 159–60, <https://doi.org/10.2298/GEI2201149A>.

<sup>11</sup> The National Council of Gorani People in the Republic of Serbia was established on 13 November 2022 (see: The National Council of Gorani People in the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.goranci.org.rs>).

## Spatial and Social Framework of the Research

Gora region refers to the mountain basin stretching south of Prizren, nestled on the slopes of Šarplanina, Koritnik, and Korab. The Gora region includes the Dragaš borough and 18 surrounding villages.<sup>12</sup> Although the infrastructure of these settlements in the 21st century suggests that they are urban areas, the borough of Dragaš serves as the administrative, health, and educational centre of the Dragaš municipality. Prizren is the nearest town, and this geographical area is referred to as Prizren Gora (*Prizrenska Gora*).<sup>13</sup>

The term *Goranci* is the ethnonym used by Gorani people and others to describe the population of Gora.<sup>14</sup> Until 1999, they constituted the majority in the former municipality of the Gora region. In other words, the villages of Gora were exclusively inhabited by Gorani people, members of the Gorani community. The only exceptions were state officials who lived in Gora due to employment (teachers, doctors, municipal officials).<sup>15</sup> Gorani people communicate with each other using the local dialect, which they refer to as *našinski/našenski*.<sup>16</sup>

Historical sources (Ottoman *defters*) attest that in the 15th century, Gora was inhabited by a Christian population of Slavic origin.

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<sup>12</sup> For more information on the anthropogeographical and ethnodemographic characteristics of Gora, see: Milovan Radovanović, "Antropogeografske i etnodemografske osobenosti šarplaninskih župa Gore, Opolja i Sredske," in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska. Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović (Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić" SANU, Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II, 1995), 429–44; Thomas Schmidinger, *Gora: SActischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora* (Wien: Wiener Verlag, 2013), [https://www.academia.edu/4305148/Gora\\_SActischsprachige\\_Muslime\\_zwischen\\_Kosovo\\_Albanien\\_Mazedonien\\_und\\_Diaspora](https://www.academia.edu/4305148/Gora_SActischsprachige_Muslime_zwischen_Kosovo_Albanien_Mazedonien_und_Diaspora); Zejnel Zejneli, *Goranci – svačiji i ničiji, a ipak svoji* (Subotica: Grafoprodukt, 2015); Sadik Idrizi and Admir Idrizi, *Kruševo (Gora)* (Prizren: Utilis, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> Radivoje Mladenović, "Govor Šarplaninske župe Gora," in *Srpski dijalektološki zbornik XLVIII, Rasprave i grada*, ed. Pavle Ivić (Beograd: Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti i Institut za srpski jezik SANU, 2001), 1–606.

<sup>14</sup> Mitra Reljić, "Goranci – od geografske odrednice do etnonima," *Oktoih: Časopis Odjeljenja za srpski jezik i književnost Matice srpske – Društva članova u Crnoj Gori* 1, no. 1–2 (2011): 165–73.

<sup>15</sup> Zejneli, *Goranci – svačiji i ničiji, a ipak svoji*.

<sup>16</sup> Mladenović, "Govor Šarplaninske župe Gora."

During the period of Ottoman rule, conversion to Islam took place.<sup>17</sup> Today, the Gorani people still tell the story of “Baba Božana” – the last Christian in Gora.<sup>18</sup> Interviewees also mentioned that there is material evidence in Gora suggesting that the ancestors of the present-day population were Muslims, or that Muslim settlers arrived in Gora prior to the expansion of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>19</sup> One such piece of material evidence is a stone plaque with an inscription that once stood on the wall of a mosque in Gora. Interviewees claimed that part of the Gorani community considers this plaque to be significant proof that the first mosque in the Balkans was built in Gora before the arrival of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>20</sup> During our research in Gora, we were unable to see the plaque as, according to interviewees, it had been removed for preservation. All members of the Gorani community are Muslims (Sunni), with the conversion to Islam in Gora gaining momentum in the 19th century.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Tatjana Katić, “Prelazak na islam stanovništva Gore i Opolja, prema osmanskim katastarskim popisima,” *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* LXIX, no. 1 (2021): 65–82. For the social and religious context of the Gora region during the Ottoman Empire period, see: Milan Ivanović, “Kulturna baština Gore, Opolja i Sredske župe,” in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska: Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović (Beograd: Geografski institut “Jovan Cvijić,” Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II, 1995), 453–78.

<sup>18</sup> The interlocutors cited the example of a woman – “Baba Božana” – as evidence that there were Christians in the Gora region before the acceptance of Islam. According to oral tradition, she is said to have been buried at a site where a Christian cemetery once existed, near the village of Brod. Other members of her family moved to Prizren while she was still alive, as noted by Petar Kostić, one of her descendants (Petar Kostić, *Crkveni život pravoslavnih Srba u Prizrenu i njegovoj okolini u XIX veku*, Beograd, 1928).

<sup>19</sup> The narrative states that Islam was brought to the Gora region by a family originating from Aleppo (Halepa), present-day Syria. According to this account, the family settled in Gora as a result of population migrations from Asia Minor. As evidence, a private document is cited, which is in the possession of a family in Gora that traces its ancestry to these settlers from Aleppo (Idrizi and Idrizi, *Kruševo*, 340).

<sup>20</sup> Nadir Dacić and Lejla H. Alomerović, *Islamska zajednica Srbije (1868–2018) (1284–1439 hidžretska godina), zajednica muslimana Srbije – kratak pregled nastanka i razvoja* (Beograd: Fakultet islamskih nauka u Beogradu, Kulturno društvo muslimana Srbije “Gajret,” 2018), 101–103.

<sup>21</sup> See Katić “Prelazak na islam stanovništva Gore i Opolja, prema osmanskim katastarskim popisima,” 65–80. There are several theories regarding when they adopted Islam, as well as regarding their origin (see Radovanović, “Antropogeografske i etnodemografske osobnosti šarplaninskih župa Gore, Opolja i Sredske,” 11–47; Ebubekir Sofuoğlu, *Şar Dağlarındaki Genetik Şifreler - Gora Abidesi* (Baský: Fsf Print Hause / Avcýlar Ýstanbul, 2007); Schmidinger,

The following is a brief outline of the social, economic, and cultural conditions in the Gora region during the 1950s, specifically during the period when the Act banning the wearing of the veil was enacted.

The villages in Gora during this period represented a distinctly rural environment, as was the case with most mountain settlements in the area. Electrification in most of the Gorani villages was implemented quite late, only in the 1970s.<sup>22</sup> The population was primarily engaged in livestock farming, although, from the 1950s onwards, animal husbandry was slowly abandoned and eventually completely disappeared.<sup>23</sup>

As a result, there began an intense migration of the male population "to the *gurbet*", that is, seasonal work in cities across the former state.<sup>24</sup> The consequences of these migrations influenced changes in the age and gender structure of the population in the Gora region. According to interviewees, women performed household and farm-related tasks, with typically one older male member of the family remaining at home. Women did not pursue education past the first four grades of primary school.<sup>25</sup> The vast majority of the population lacked the financial means to send their children to school after primary education, leading young men to learn trades and inherit their fathers' occupations. During this period, many Gorani people engaged in various crafts outside of Gora.

The position of women, or rather their role in the family and household, was not identical across all Gorani villages. According to interviewees, patriarchal patterns were more pronounced in the family and kinship relations in villages that were more distant from Dragas. The position of women in the family can also be inferred from the fact

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*Gora: Sactischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora; Zejneli, Goranci – svačiji i ničiji, a ipak svoji).*

<sup>22</sup> Zejneli, *Goranci – svačiji i ničiji, a ipak svoji*; Idrizi and Idrizi, *Kruševo*.

<sup>23</sup> Harun Hasani, "Migracije stanovništva Gore," in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska: Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović (Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić," Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II, 1995), 154–56.

<sup>24</sup> *Na gurbet* (to the *gurbet*) – a term used in Gorani community and the wider Balkan region for seasonal migration movements of the male population. *Pečalba* is a synonym for this type of migration (see Hasani, "Migracije stanovništva Gore," 154–56; Petko Hristov, "The Balkan Gurbet / Pečalbarstvo – Past and Present," *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU* LXIII, 3 (2015): 551–63; Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*, 45–79.

<sup>25</sup> Petovar, "Osobenosti socijalnog prostora Gore i Sredske," 434–36.

that there was no option to choose a marital partner, girls married at a young age, and there was limited movement for girls and women in public spaces.<sup>26</sup> Married women were required to wear clothing that covered both the body and head. This primarily involved the *terlik* and headscarf.<sup>27</sup> These garments were made of wool within the domestic craft industry. Women would cover their heads with a white *headscarf*, tying it in such a way that it covered their mouth and nose. They are said to have been “veiled” (Gorani dialect: *zabuljeni*). Wearing the *terlik* was mandatory when women left the family home or yard, and the scarf was also worn inside the house when male family members were present.

According to the interviewees, women actively participated in religious practices performed in the private space, i.e. at home. Women prayed and taught children how to pray. Visits to the mosque were reserved solely for male family members. The interviewees also stated that during the holy month of Ramadan, everyone fasted – a regular practice among the Gorani people even after World War II. Ramadan Bajram and Kurban Bajram were the two most important holidays celebrated in Gora. In addition, there was a practice of observing certain Christian holidays, such as Christmas.<sup>28</sup> *Đuren* is also one of the holidays that has

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<sup>26</sup> See Zorica Divac, “Svadbeni običaji u Sredačkoj župi i Gori,” in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska: Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović (Beograd: Geografski institut “Jovan Cvijić,” Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II: 1995), 195–202; Petovar, “Osobenosti socijalnog prostora Gore i Sredske,” 434–38.

<sup>27</sup> *Terlik* – a term used in the Gorani community for a type of handmade black cloak, reaching to the middle of the shin. It is used to cover the body. The interlocutors consider the *terlik* and the white headscarf as part of Gorani tradition. They do not directly associate the covering of married women with these garments to Islam and religious practices (see Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*, 237).

<sup>28</sup> The interlocutors emphasized that the celebration of Christian holidays has remained from the time when the Gorani people were Christians. Christian holidays were celebrated within the family circle. In literature, we come across the narratives of Gorani people that are similar to the discourse of the interlocutors who participated in my researches (see Žan-Arno Derans and Loran Žeslen, *Putovanje u zemlju Goranaca: Balkan, početak XXI veka* (Beograd: Medijska knjižara Krug, 2011); Schmidinger, *Gora: Sactischsprachige Muslime zwischen Kosovo, Albanien, Mazedonien und Diaspora*; Aleksandar Pavlović, “Proslava Đurena u Prizrenskoj Gori - prilog istraživanju,” *Zbornik radova Filozofskog fakulteta u Prištini* 51, no. 2 (2021): 159–89).



been celebrated for centuries in the Gora region.<sup>29</sup> Judging by the ritual actions performed, it suggests the presence of pre-Christian elements in the social and cultural practices.<sup>30</sup>

The distance of the Gorani villages from Dragaš, as well as their poor communication with the population of other villages, also affected the stricter adherence to religious regulations in everyday life.<sup>31</sup> Interlocutors noted that the difficult communication between villages, as well as between the villages and Dragaš, contributed to the slower and less rigorous implementation of the ban on covering and religious practices.

### The Ban on Wearing the Veil and Secularization

In this paper, secularism is approached as an ideological framework that the communist regime in postwar Yugoslavia sought to implement through various strategies and mechanisms.<sup>32</sup> The ban on wearing the veil, in this context, represents only one such strategy aimed at achieving gender equality and the emancipation of women.<sup>33</sup> Secularization

<sup>29</sup> For an explanation of the celebration of Đuren in the 21st century, see Pavlović, "Proslava Đurena u Prizrenskoj Gori," 159–89.

<sup>30</sup> Dragoslav Antonijević, "Etnički identitet Goranaca," in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska: Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović, Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II (Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić", 1995), 84–88.

<sup>31</sup> Desanka Nikolić, "Etnokulturni stereotipi stanovnika Gore i Sredačke župe," in *Šarplaninske župe Gora, Opolje i Sredska, Antropogeografsko-etnološke, demografske, sociološke i kulturološke karakteristike*, ed. Dragoslav Antonijević and Milovan Radovanović (Beograd: Geografski institut "Jovan Cvijić" SANU, Posebna izdanja, knj. 40/II, 1995), 167–74; Divac, "Svadbeni običaji u Sredačkoj župi i Gori," 195–202; Petovar, "Osobnosti socijalnog prostora Gore i Sredske," 433.

<sup>32</sup> In this sense, the strategies that are fundamentally political and initiated by the state authorities can be viewed as political pragmatics (see Špiro Marasović, "Kriza ateizma," *Crkva u svijetu* 20, no. 4 (1985): 344, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/14455607.pdf>). In relation to this, alongside the process of secularization, the atheization of Yugoslav society can also be considered (see Esad Ćimić, *Drama ateizacije: religija, ateizam i odgoj* (Sarajevo: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika, 1971)); Marasović "Kriza ateizma"; Ante Katalinić, "Dva tipa ateizacije," *Obnovljeni Život: časopis za filozofiju i religijske znanosti* 36, no. 3–4 (1981): 264–68.

<sup>33</sup> Violeta Achkoska, "Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War," in *Gender Relations in South Eastern Europe. Historical Perspectives on Womanhood and Manhood in 19th and 20th Century*, ed. Miroslav Jovanović

is a complex social phenomenon that is approached in different ways depending on the context in which it is considered. There are several definitions of the term, depending on which dimension of the phenomenon is being emphasized.<sup>34</sup> The concept of secularization differs in religious contexts from its interpretation in secular ones.<sup>35</sup> Three key aspects of secularization can be identified: the separation of religious institutions from the state, the relegation of religion and religious practice from social life, and the transfer of religious beliefs and practices to the private, intimate sphere.<sup>36</sup> In this regard, it is “important to distinguish between the ideology of secularism and the process of secularization, or ‘secular’ as an epistemological category and ‘secularization’ as a political doctrine.”<sup>37</sup> This paper approaches secularization as a descriptive category, analysing it in the context of the application of specific normative regulations introduced by the communist state apparatus with the aim of creating a secular state.

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and Slobodan Naumović, *Studies on South East Europe* Vol. 3. (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2004), 184–86.

<sup>34</sup> See Dylan Reaves, “Peter Berger and the Rise and Fall of the Theory of Secularization”, *Denison Journal of Religion* 11, Article 3 (2012): 11–13, <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/religion/vol11/iss1/3/>.

<sup>35</sup> Sava Aksić, “Sekularizacija države (Pojam, uzroci i posledice)”, *Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Nišu* 57, no. 80 (2018): 181–85, <https://doi.org/10.5937/zrpfni1880181A>.

<sup>36</sup> See Reaves, “Peter Berger and the Rise and Fall of the Theory of Secularization,” 11; Ivan Janez Štuhec, “Sekularna Europa i novo pozicioniranje religije u društvu,” *Nova prisutnost* 12, no. 1 (2014): 6–9; Gašper Mithans, “Religious Communities and the Change of Worldviews in Slovenia (1918–1991): Historical and Political Perspectives,” *Annales: Annals for Istrian and Mediterranean Studies, Series Historia et Sociologia* 30, no. 3 (2020): 416, 424, <https://doi.org/10.19233/ASHS.2020.27>.

In academic and public discourse, the terms *laicism* and *laicization* are also used, which essentially refer to the separation of religion from the state, and particularly the separation of schools from the Church and clergy (see Aksić, “Sekularizacija države (Pojam, uzroci i posledice)”, 182). Some authors clearly emphasize the distinction between the terms *laicism* and *secularization* (see Dino Abazović, “Sekularizam i sekularizacija u sadašnjem javnom diskursu – iz nereleligijske perspektive,” in *Religija i sekularna država: Uloga i značaj religije u sekularnom društvu iz muslimanske, kršćanske i jevrejske perspektive sa fokusom na Jugoistočnu Europu*, ed. Ahmet Alibašić and Stefan Schreiner, Međunarodni simpozijum, Sarajevo (BiH) 21.-24. oktobar/lis-topad 2007 (Sarajevo, 2007), 191–92.

<sup>37</sup> Talal Asad, *Formations of Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 1; Abazović, “Sekularizam i sekularizacija u sadašnjem javnom diskursu – iz nereleligijske perspektive”, 190.

Based on the current research findings, it can be stated that there is a pronounced confessional identification with Islam as a religion among the Gorani people. In conducting the research and analysing empirical data, the starting point was the understanding that confessional identification is a broader concept than religiosity, and implies "acknowledging and aligning with a specific faith, regardless of personal (ir)religiosity."<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the veil was approached both as a segment of religious practice among women and as a social norm and customary rule of behaviour within the Gorani community.<sup>39</sup> This means that it is not always possible to equate the act of women covering themselves with the existence of belief in God. In other words, the absence of covering among women in Gora is not considered an indication of a lack of belief in God, nor is it seen as a sign of a loss of religiosity among the Gorani people.<sup>40</sup> In this paper, the ban on wearing the veil is not approached as a strategy that would a priori lead to the abandonment of religious beliefs and practices.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Radmila Radić, "Pripadanje bez verovanja i poznavanja," in *Novosti iz prošlosti. Znanje, neznanje, upotreba i zloupotreba istorije*, ed. Vojin Dimitrijević (Beograd: Beogradski centar za ljudska prava, 2010), 107.

<sup>39</sup> According to the interpretations of Islamic religious principles by certain Islamic scholars, the practice of covering for women in Islam is not prescribed by the Act and is therefore considered an expression of cultural and social influences on the formation of traditional religious rules, which over time came to be regarded as religious obligations (see Marjana Harcet, "Kuranski propisi o odijevanju kao temelj egalitarnosti u islamu," *Etnološka istraživanja/Ethnological Researches* 1, no. 12/13 (2008): 191–201; Ivan Ejub Kostić, "Islam i feminizam u postkolonijalnom dobu," *Kom V*, no. 3 (2016): 95–119.

<sup>40</sup> In this context, it should be noted that covering for women is part of Gorani tradition, passed down through generations for centuries, and did not have solely religious connotations (see Nikolić, "Etnokulturni stereotipi stanovnika Gore i Sredačke župe," 169–74; Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*, 149–66). Particularly valuable in this context are the data provided by authors of Gorani origin (see Ljajko Šefit, *Istanbulske rane*, Gornji Milanovac: Grafoprint, 2018); Idrizi and Idrizi, *Kruševo*, 2020). Further data on the role of women's clothing items such as the 'terlik' and 'marama' (headscarf) in the creation of symbols of Gorani tradition and community, as well as Gorani identity (see Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Opšta mesta sećanja' u okviru ličnog sećanja – na primeru svadbe u Gori," *Glasnik Etnografskog instituta SANU / Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnography SASA* 62, no. 1 (2014): 261–74; Jadranka Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Aktivnosti žena i očuvanje nematerijalnog kulturnog nasleđa goranske zajednice," *Etnoantropološki problemi*, n.s. 18, no. 4 (2023): 1221–43.

<sup>41</sup> See Marasović, "Kriza ateizma," 212–213.

The individual level of secularization can be viewed in two ways: through the enforcement of covering in public spaces and through the implementation of measures to control covering by individuals (family members, neighbours). Individuals, through their actions directed against the covering of women, contributed to the secularization in the Gorani community (collective level). In this way, there is an overlap between the individual and collective levels. However, it is not justified to draw conclusions about the level of religiosity of individuals, as this was not the aim of the research. For this reason, the paper discusses religious practices within the Gorani community and the impact of the ban on covering on their (non)execution. The paper examines the application of the ban on covering for women as one of the attempts by the authorities to reduce the influence of religion on individuals and Gorani community. It is assumed that removing the veil is a strategy for restricting individual religious freedom and, in this way, propagating secular political ideas. The application of the aforementioned Act is examined within the context of the state-imposed process of secularisation of Gorani society in the mid-20th century. The phenomenon of the ban on covering is extremely complex, as the research results presented here demonstrate. Therefore, all the points made above should be understood as an attempt to shed light on the particularities of religious practice in Gora during the period of the creation of a secular social structure in socialist Yugoslavia.

In ethnology and anthropology, as well as in related disciplines, numerous studies have been published in which clothing and dress practices are examined in various contexts and using different approaches.<sup>42</sup> We can agree with the observation of Nina Aksić and Hasna Ziljkić that “The challenge of studying dress lies in its complexity, in the ability of a single dress practice to reflect a whole range of different experiences, cultural, folk, and religious traditions, social changes, and so on.”<sup>43</sup> It is also a fact that: “Through clothing, a person presents themselves to the community, informing others about their taste, income, habits,

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<sup>42</sup> Dragan Žunić, *Tradicionalna estetska kultura, Telo i odevanje*, ed. Dragan Žunić (Niš: Centar za naučna istraživanja SANU i Univerziteta u Nišu), 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Aksić and Ziljkić, “Ženska odevna praksa tokom 20. veka u Novom Pazaru i okolini,” 150.

nationality, and religious affiliation.”<sup>44</sup> The example of the ban on covering among Muslim women, discussed in this paper, shows that clothing has strong symbolic significance and value, as well as a communicative function within society. It represents a channel through which information is both given and received across multiple social fields simultaneously. It is well-known that the Communist Party considered religion the main obstacle to achieving not only gender equality but also equality among the peoples and nationalities of Yugoslavia. The removal of the veil was therefore presented in the public sphere as one of the key strategies of secularization, believed to contribute to equality both on a gendered and national basis.<sup>45</sup>

### The Application of the Veil Ban in Gora region

It is clear that the ban on wearing the veil directly interfered with the religious practices and religious identity of the Muslim population, and represents an example of the violation of religious freedoms and basic human rights.<sup>46</sup> The application of the Act in Gora region began shortly after it came into effect in 1951. Women were placed in a position where they had to choose between customary law and legislative norms, between their microcosm and society.<sup>47</sup> In such social circumstances, it was not at all easy for women to reconcile old and new social and

<sup>44</sup> Milina Ivanović Barišić, *Odevanje u okolini Beograda: druga polovina 19. i prva polovina 20. veka*, Posebna izdanja, knj. 88. (Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU, 2017), 9.

<sup>45</sup> See Achkoska, “Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War,” 187–88; Fahrudin Kladničanin, *Peča* (Novi Pazar: Akademska inicijativa “Forum 10”, 2020). The key role in channelling ideas of the emancipation of Muslim women and policies of gender and national equality was played by the anti-fascist women’s movement – AFŽ (see: Achkoska, “Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War,” 187–188; Miroslava Malešević, *Didara: Životna priča jedne Prizrenke*, Etnološka biblioteka knj. 14 (Beograd: Srpski genealoški centar, 2004); Kladničanin, *Peča*, 10–11, 12). For certain aspects of its activities in Gora region, see: Malešević, *Didara: Životna priča jedne Prizrenke*, 75–76.

<sup>46</sup> See Zilka Spahić-Šiljak and Rebeka Jadranka Anić, *I vjernice i građanke* (Sarajevo: TPO fondacija i CIPS-Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2009), 168; Edin Šaković and Izet Šabotić, “Skidanje zara i feredže na području sreza Gračanica,” *Glasnik arhiva i arhivističkog udruženja Bosne i Hercegovine*, no. 43 (2013): 305.

<sup>47</sup> Achkoska, “Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War,” 186.

cultural values and practices. The ban on covering had very traumatic consequences for many women in the Region of Gora, according to the memories of the Gorani people.<sup>48</sup> Women found it extremely difficult not to wear their headscarf in public places in the way they were used to. Gorani women traditionally covered their heads with a white scarf. According to the testimonies of the interlocutors, they tied it in such a way that “only their eyes were visible, they were veiled”.

One of my interlocutors said:

“I was a little girl, they banned those black *feredža* from being worn. And they took them all away. You weren’t allowed to wear those black *feredža*. Later, they allowed the *feredža* again.” The interlocutor explained that she used the word ‘feredža’ to refer to the covering of women in Gora due to the way they used to cover themselves at the time – they were completely covered.<sup>49</sup>

The interlocutors also stated:

“They asked for the scarves to be removed.”<sup>50</sup>

“When communism took over, communism removed the scarves. It was even impossible to fast.”<sup>51</sup>

“Communism took off the veils, and fasting was not allowed either.”<sup>52</sup>

When discussing the practice of covering, the interlocutors emphasized:

“It was shameful to go without a scarf.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> See Idrizi and Idrizi, *Kruševo*, 119.

<sup>49</sup> The interlocutor was born in the village of Radeša and was 73 years old when we had the conversation (in 2015).

<sup>50</sup> The interlocutor was born in the village of Bačka and was a 72 years old when we had the conversation (in 2013). He recalled the words of his mother, who didn’t want to remove her headscarf or leave the yard of the house without it.

<sup>51</sup> The statement was given to me by a 67-year-old woman from Dragaš. In our conversation in 2024, she spoke about the period when the ban on covering was in effect, based on the experiences of Gorani women, whom she listened to during her upbringing.

<sup>52</sup> The interlocutor was born in 1984 in Gora, grew up, and currently lives in Belgrade. His statement is based on the narratives of the people from Gora, which he heard during his upbringing. The conversation took place in 2021.

<sup>53</sup> The statement was given to me by a 64-year-old woman from Dragaš. In our conversation in 2024, she spoke about the period when the ban on covering was in effect, based on the experiences of her mother, to whom she listened to during her upbringing.

"It is dignified for a woman to be covered."<sup>54</sup>

"She should be covered. It's a sign of respect for the elders."<sup>55</sup>

The interlocutors stated that covering for women was a sign of respect for Gorani tradition, and that it was part of the social practice of the Gorani people, which aligned with their understanding of Islamic religious teachings and rules. This can be inferred from the narratives of the women who experienced the ban on covering as a disgrace, improper behaviour, and a disrespect for tradition and elders.<sup>56</sup> Similar observations are found in the literature: "Removing the veil was, however, very painful for many women, who experienced it as a great shame."<sup>57</sup> Therefore, the ban on covering in Gora was not only recognized as an attack on religious practice, as was the case with the ban on fasting. The interlocutors, when talking about the situation they faced due to the implementation of the Act banning covering, as well as other programs of the Communist Party in Gora, mentioned that teachers encouraged children at school to drink water in order to get them to break their Ramadan fast, which is the third pillar of Islam. They also added that these actions were carried out by teachers who were themselves from Gora.

I have pointed out that women did not want to remove their scarves because it violated the basic rules of behaviour within the community. Therefore, in an attempt to circumvent the ban, they avoided going to public places, particularly to the town of Dragaš.<sup>58</sup> However, they still

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<sup>54</sup> The statement of a 58-year-old woman from Rapča, the conversation we had in 2023. She spoke about the 1950s, when the ban on covering was in effect, based on the experiences of her aunts.

<sup>55</sup> The statement of 48-year-old woman from the village of Globočica. In the conversation we had in 2022 she talked about the practice of covering in Gora. She emphasized that the practice of covering women always has the same meaning, regardless of whether it refers to the 1950s or the present time.

<sup>56</sup> In support of the aforementioned, there are data provided by Admir Idrizi, "Zakon o zabrani nošenja zara i feredže," [https://www.academia.edu/38338015/Zakon\\_o\\_zabrani\\_nošenja\\_zara\\_i\\_feredže\\_pdf](https://www.academia.edu/38338015/Zakon_o_zabrani_nošenja_zara_i_feredže_pdf).

<sup>57</sup> Šaković and Šabotić, "Skidanje zara i feredže na području sreza Gračanica," 305. Šaković and Šabotić explain the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the period when the banning of the veil was in implementation.

<sup>58</sup> The interlocutors cited examples of their mothers, aunts and other women from the village who did not want to go out without a headscarf. A similar practice has been recorded in other

had to go out and work in the fields, to the river, or to the village well to wash clothes, for example. During these times, they tied their scarves so that their faces were uncovered. Idrizi, one of the few Gorani authors who has written on this topic, also notes that scarves were not banned; instead, they had to be tied so that the face was uncovered. He connects the ban on covering with the authorities' intention to "destroy the Muslim society and the foundation of its pillar – the woman".<sup>59</sup>

The *terlik* was also perceived as a garment that covered the body. Instead of wearing the *terlik*, Gorani women wore garments that somewhat allowed them to cover their bodies.<sup>60</sup> A statement has been recorded according to which women wore the *terlik* "inside out."<sup>61</sup> This means that the inside of the *terlik* was worn on the outside, as it was not black. Gorani women also wore overcoats to cover their bodies, especially after the 1960s, when mass-produced clothing became more accessible to the people in Gora.

The ban on covering primarily disrupted the continuity of the centuries-old tradition of using specific garments (scarves and *terlik*) that were also used to express a woman's marital status. In the literature, the implementation of the ban on covering is noted as one of the causes for the migration of Muslims from the Novi Pazar and Macedonia regions to Turkey.<sup>62</sup> The interlocutors also mentioned that the reason for the migration of families from Gora to Turkey in the 1950s was precisely the enforcement of the Act banning the veil, as well as the implementation of other repressive measures by the Communist authorities in Gora.

As noted, the women in Gora did not want to voluntarily remove their headscarves.<sup>63</sup> The enforcement of the Act in Gora was carried

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parts of Yugoslavia (see: Achkoska, "Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War," 186; 190–91; Šaković i Šabotić, "Skidanje zara i feredže na području sreza Gračanica," 305).

<sup>59</sup> Idrizi, "The Law on the Prohibition of Wearing the Veil."

<sup>60</sup> Idrizi, "The Law on the Prohibition of Wearing the Veil."

<sup>61</sup> Idrizi and Idrizi, *Kruševo*, 119.

<sup>62</sup> See Aksić and Ziljkić, "Ženska odevna praksa tokom 20. veka u Novom Pazaru i okolini," 166–74.

<sup>63</sup> Contrary to the aforementioned, we recorded narratives from interlocutors who view the implementation of the mentioned Act as an opportunity to free themselves from religious



out by the police, and there was also control at the level of individuals employed in schools or local administration in Dragaš and surrounding villages.<sup>64</sup> According to the interlocutors, the strictest enforcement of the Act was evident precisely in the borough of Dragaš. They also pointed out that there were repressive measures against individuals who did not comply with the Act.<sup>65</sup> One frequently cited example was that of a pregnant woman who was sentenced to prison for wearing a scarf when visiting the doctor. Women were not free to move beyond the yard of their homes, as there was always the possibility of encountering a neighbour who could report them to the authorities.<sup>66</sup> This situation reflects the informal networks of control that were extremely developed and present in all social contexts during the communist period. People were wary of each other, fearing that someone close to them might report them to the authorities for acting contrary to the party regulations or other formal or informal institutions. Informal social networks thus played a crucial role in the secularization process in the Region of Gora.

I have emphasized that despite this, women did not wish to abandon the practice of covering, and it was not until the mid-1960s that there were more frequent examples of women going out in public without their headscarves and *terlik*. These changes were mostly made by young women, as evidenced by a documentary film shot in a village in Gora.<sup>67</sup> The practice of wearing mass-produced clothing, such as jeans and tight blouses, became more common in the 1970s. Fashion trends in the clothing of girls and women starting from the early 1960s can also be viewed in the context of the secularization of society at that time.<sup>68</sup>

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prescriptions and customary rules, or as a chance to express personal choices in clothing. These statements primarily concern young women who, from the 1970s onwards, adapted their attire to the fashion trends of the time. This means that the girls wore jeans (denim trousers) and did not cover their heads with a veil (see Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*, 166–88).

<sup>64</sup> Idrizi, "The Law on the Prohibition of Wearing the Veil."

<sup>65</sup> For information on repressive measures in Bosnia and Herzegovina, see: Šaković and Šabotić "Skidanje zara i feredže na području sreza Gračanica," 302–304.

<sup>66</sup> A similar situation has been recorded in Macedonia (see Achkoska, "Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women in the Republic of Macedonia Following the Second World War," 189–91).

<sup>67</sup> This refers to a film by Birte Trerup, a Danish ethnomusicologist who stayed in Gora in the 1960s and recorded valuable audio and video material.

<sup>68</sup> See Elvira Dizdarević, *Ideologija i moda u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji 1960-tih godina: pojava džinsa* (Diploma thesis, Univerzitet u Sarajevu, 2019); Nina Aksić, *Kultura svih ili kultura za sve*

According to the interlocutors, these changes had more far-reaching consequences for the practice of covering women in Gora than the impact of the legal regulations themselves.

The change in the clothing of girls and women was not viewed with approval by most Gorani people. According to them, the introduction of fashion trends was seen as distancing young people from Gorani tradition, and religious practice was seen as part of that tradition, which was taken for granted and not questioned. The interlocutors claim that during the period of intense enforcement of the Act (in the 1950s), the population of Gora did not fear abandoning their faith, that is, Islamic teachings and practices, but rather feared the loss of the symbols of Gorani identity.<sup>69</sup> This supports the assertion that the people of Gora perceive the wearing of the scarf and *terlik* primarily as symbols of Gorani tradition, rather than merely as expressions of religious affiliation and belief in God.<sup>70</sup> This can be explained by the fact that Gora is a local community where Muslims constitute the majority population.

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*Institucionalni amaterizam u Novom Pazaru u periodu socijalizma* (Beograd: Etnografski institut SANU, 2023).

<sup>69</sup> The ban on women covering their heads represented an act of preventing public expression of religious affiliation. However, based on the research presented here, it is not possible to speak about the impact of the ban on changes in the faith in God and Islamic religious teachings. From the above, it can be assumed that the ban on covering did not necessarily contribute to a decrease in belief. This reasoning arises from the understanding of covering by interlocutors as a part of Gorani tradition and customary practices. Furthermore, academic papers suggest that the roots of women's covering in Islam should be traced back to pre-Islamic traditions, and thus, the ban on their retention can be seen as an attack on the pre-Islamic part of Islamic tradition (see Harcet, "Kuranski propisi o odijevanju kao temelj egalitarnosti u islamu," 191–201; Kostić, "Islam i feminizam," 104–105). Certainly, further research should be conducted with a focus on the impact of the ban on women's covering in Gora and its effect on changes in an individual's (personal) faith in God.

<sup>70</sup> Amin does not consider head covering for women to be an expression of religious devotion, as Islamic rules allow women to have their head and faces uncovered (see Kostić, "Islam i feminizam," 105). Haddad also notes that it is very difficult to prove that head and body covering for Muslim women is something prescribed as a social obligation for believers. He argues that it is a practice linked to the cultures and traditions of specific regions (Tāhir al Haddad, "Imra'atuna fi al sharia wa lmujtama," in *Muslim Women in Law and Society Annotated translation of al Tahir al-Haddad's Imra'atuna fi al-sharia wa l-mujtama*, ed. Ronak Husni and Daniel L. Newman (New York: Routledge, 2007), 42–43; according to Kostić, "Islam i feminizam," 105). Harcet connects the practice of covering the head and body among Muslims with pre-Islamic practices (see Harcet, "Kuranski propisi o odijevanju kao temelj egalitarnosti u islamu," 191–92).

For Gorani people, Gorani tradition served as a tool for constructing their own identity, both at the individual and collective level.<sup>71</sup> The survival of the Gorani community, according to the interlocutors, was closely linked to the adherence to Gorani customs and the performance of cultural practices that allowed the creation of symbolic boundaries between their community and the Albanian community living in the surrounding area. The emancipation of women expressed through new clothing practices was therefore viewed as an attack on the symbols of Gorani identity and the survival of the Gorani community. Women in Gora have always had an exceptional role in creating and preserving marital and family relations, as well as the symbols of Gorani culture and identity. Religious practice is thus perceived as part of the cultural and identity practices of the Gorani people. Therefore, it is not surprising that much attention was given to the clothing of women in Gora.<sup>72</sup>

Based on the above, the implementation of various prohibitions, such as the ban on women covering their heads, led to religious teachings being carried out and passed on within the domestic, family environment. This consequently contributed to strengthening religious practice in the family setting. The family became the focal point for the continued practice of religious teachings and rituals, and due to the migration of the male population, it was the woman/mother who became the bearer of that practice.<sup>73</sup> Based on this, the ban on covering may have contributed to the weakening and/or loss of an individual's connection with the religious institution (mosque), but not necessarily the loss of faith in (the existence of) God and adherence to Islamic religious prescriptions and rules. In support of this, the data shows that interlocutors most often perceived the ban on covering as an attack

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<sup>71</sup> See Đorđević Crnobrnja, *Nismo prekidali sa Gorom*.

<sup>72</sup> See Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Opšta mesta sećanja' u okviru ličnog sećanja – na primeru svadbe u Gori," 261–74; Đorđević Crnobrnja "Aktivnosti žena i očuvanje nematerijalnog kulturnog nasleđa goranske zajednice," 1221–43. The role of the *terlik* and scarf in the construction of Gorani tradition and identity is also reflected in the content available on the Facebook page of the National Council of Gorani people in Serbia and the website: "Gora vo srce," <https://www.facebook.com/nacionalnisavetgoranaca/>; <https://gora.in.rs>.

<sup>73</sup> Đorđević Crnobrnja, "Aktivnosti žena i očuvanje nematerijalnog kulturnog nasleđa," 1221–43.

on Gorani tradition and customary practices, which served to regulate relationships within the family and the community.<sup>74</sup>

### Conclusion

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the ban on head covering in Gora had a certain impact on the achievement of secular paradigms.<sup>75</sup> In this context, the question arises as to whether the ban on head coverings was truly implemented with the aim of secularising the Muslim community within the then federal state. If this was indeed the goal, it suggests that the practice of covering women was recognised as extraordinarily significant in the lives of not only Muslims but also as a practice whose omission was supposed to lead to fundamental changes in the application of Islamic principles and rules in people's lives. Considering this, the ban on wearing the veil can be viewed as a strategy intended to eliminate social patterns and religious practices that held strong symbolic significance at both the collective and individual levels.

To what extent the ban actually succeeded in this regard cannot be easily judged, primarily because it was not the only measure implemented by the state system aimed at achieving gender equality, as well as equality among all peoples and nationalities within Yugoslavia. Furthermore, the notion that "covering the hair and face is an Islamic innovation, despite there being no explicit prescription in the Quran about covering the face"<sup>76</sup> suggests that the absence of this practice would not necessarily contribute to secularisation. In light of this, it is understandable that the Act banning head coverings could not, by

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<sup>74</sup> Haddad and Amin emphasized that it is not Islamic religious rules that place women in a subordinate position, but rather patriarchal models and traditional religious prescriptions (see Qasim Amin, *The Liberation of Women & The New Woman* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo, 2000), 7; al Haddad, "Imra'atuna fi al sharia wa lmujtama," 42–43; according to Kostić, "Islam i feminizam," 104–105). These models and prescriptions clearly had a greater influence on regulating marital, familial, and social relations in various settings than the actual Sharia rules.

<sup>75</sup> A similar situation is recorded in other regions of the SFRY (see Aschkoska, "Lifting the Veils from Muslim Women," 183–94; Šaković and Šabotić, "Skidanje zara i feredže," 289).

<sup>76</sup> Harcet, "Kuranski propisi o odijevanju," 191.

itself, lead to the abandonment of religious practices at the individual level. In other words, secularisation did not occur merely as a result of the change in the dress practices of Muslim women.

Research findings also lead to the conclusion that the ban on wearing the headscarf was not only a key strategy for achieving secularisation, but rather served as a repressive measure that could not be overlooked, given that it was proclaimed by the communist authorities as an important instrument for the emancipation of women and the achievement of equality among the peoples and nationalities in Yugoslavia.

I have noted that the wearing of the headscarf and the *terlik* in Gora is linked to tradition, which has been influenced by Islamic religious principles. Therefore, the ban on wearing these garments was primarily perceived as an attack on Gorani tradition. This does not, however, negate the impact of the ban on the sustainability of Islamic religious practice and identity. Women did not contribute to secularisation merely because they stopped wearing the headscarf. It follows that it is not possible to draw conclusions about the (in)effectiveness of this process in the Gorani community based solely on changes in dress practices. It turns out that the change in dress was, in fact, instrumentalised by the political elite and social structures.

The research demonstrates that dress practices are an excellent indicator of social, economic, and political influences within a particular environment. In this sense, the findings of the research on the relationship between the secularisation process and the ban on covering during the socialist period can be understood. However, the ban was successful at the level of changing the form – dress practice, which was significant at a certain point in time. Yet, it could not, in the short term, provoke changes in cultural norms or result in a transformation of traditional attitudes and values concerning the regulation of family and marital relations, nor could it affect changes regarding the abandonment of other elements of religious practice. According to the interlocutors, alongside the ban on coverings, there was also a ban on observing religious rules, such as fasting during the holy month of Ramadan. Additionally, during the communist period, the sale and consumption of alcohol in the Gora region became more widespread. Interlocutors stated that the appearance of alcohol and the fasting ban had far-reaching consequences

on the application of Islamic religious rules in Gora, compared to the ban on wearing the headscarf. It follows that the implementation of the ban on covering did not have the same effect on secularisation in Gora as did the abandonment of fundamental religious practices that constitute basic duties in Islam.

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