

# **Integration of Bosniak Community in Albania**

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## **Abstract**

The occupation of Bosnia by Austro-Hungarian forces in 1878, forced many Bosniaks to migrate to other countries and some families from Bosnia settled in Albania. For more than 100 years, in the territory between Tirana and Durres called Shijak, live in full harmony with the natives, the Bosniak community. Bosniaks who live in Albania have preserved their culture and language. This community is fully integrated.

This integration has occurred as a result of the ability of Bosniaks to adapt and because of the hospitality of Albanians. In this article I will argue that in societies with cultural diversity the integration of ethnic groups is an easier process compared to societies without cultural diversity. The integration of Bosniaks in Albania is an example of integration in a society with a high level of religious, cultural and subcultural diversity. In heterogeneous societies the integration of ethnic groups is an easier process unlike in homogeneous societies where the integration is more difficult as Herbert Gans argues that "homogeneous societies do not provide cultural diversity" and this makes integration a difficult process. Due to its cultural peculiarities, the Bosniak community that lives in Albania has the characteristics of a subculture. Integration and peaceful coexistence distributed to Bosniaks and Albanians is associating with the occurrence of diffusion.

In this article through interviews, observation and sociological theories I will argue that the integration of ethnic groups in the Balkans is possible as well as preservation of their language and culture of origin, and the coexistence between Albanians and Bosniaks is a good example for the Balkans.

***Keywords: Bosniaks, Albanians, Integration, Subculture, Cultural diversity, Ethnic***

## **The history of emigration of Bosniaks in Albania**

" According to Congress of Berlin, Austria had won the right " to conquest and administrate " Bosnia, and during this time, the Habsburg Empire had done a good job with civilization "<sup>29</sup>. The Congress of Berlin that took place during the period of time 13 June 1878- July 13, 1878,

"Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had been in crises was entrusted to Austria for 'occupation and administration'<sup>30</sup>. Although the rule of the sultan was saved and promised that occupation would be temporary, but no one had doubts that Austria would take these lands. Due to this occupation and the establishment of an Austrian-Hungary in Bosnia and Herzegovina was not easy for Bosniaks muslims, as Haki Baci express "The arrival of the Austro-hungarian in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it means for bosniaks would shift from a civilizations to another, the extent strictly diverse in culture and livelihoods, which was not easy, not soon,not painless'<sup>31</sup>. In interviews with Bosniaks they told that due to differences in religion that Austria-Hungary was trying to do, which was converting bosniaks from Islam to Catholic in the ways that conquest and occupation would be more easy, made that Bosniaks receiving their road to migration to Turkey. During the road to Turkey the ship breaks in the Adriatic Sea in Durres and they stop in Durres, when they noted along resemblance in the livelihoods they have in Bosnia with that in Albania, due to this resemblance on livelihood, in religion and culture they decided settling in the hills of Shijak where they still live today. Removal of Bosniaks from Bosnia-Herzegovina in the end of the century XIX happened for reasons they did not want to convert to Catholics, they wanted to preserve muslim religion, the conversion within which had been voluntary, according to them, and not constrained by the Ottoman Empire. Except the main theory that Austro-Hungarian Empire did not reach never before convince Bosniaks to convert to Catholics and they emigrated for religious reasons and this is certificated this history in books,there is another theory that bosniaks left their country in search of a better life.

### **Subculture " Muhaxhire " and the integration of the Bosniak community.**

Bosnian community that lives in Borak and Koxhasë of Shijak, territory between Durres and Tirana can be considered as a fully integrated community. From the reports that are done by the Council of Europe, in focus of the implementation of 'Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities', it shows that the Bosniak community in Albania have no problems of integration, unlike some other national minorities communities in Albania. Bosniaks who live in Shijak have preserve their language and culture, although they are fully integrated, Bosniaks have the characteristics of a subculture.

Community and subcultures are similar concepts, can be treated as two concepts in understanding the same, but sometimes differ in some special aspects. Subculture is more resistant to the cultural identity of society and against from general mainstream. The community has many differing cultural aspects of society, including language, traditions and

customs, livelihoods and material goods, but have too many in common with the general culture of society.

In this article the community and subculture will be used in the same meaning. Bosnian community that lives in Shijak can be seen in terms of a subculture, because of resisting that they demonstrate from main culture, also can be treated in term of community because there are many cultural aspects differ from society, including language, traditions and customs , livelihoods and material goods. The resistance of bosniaks from the main culture is not in a negative sense, but bosniaks resist in preserving their language, livelihoods and traditions inherited from their grandfathers.

The livelihood, traditions and customs of the Bosniaks who live in Shijak have many similarity with shijaksit, but equally their livelihoods changes from traditions and customs of the inhabitants shjakas. Similarities with the locals, bosniaks have felt from the moment they decided to live in Shijak in 1878. These factors of similarities had been important of adapting or of their integration. While Bosniaks differences from shjakasit, their create a their own subculture, wich Bosniaks and shjakasit called 'muhaxhirë'. Before we expound ‘‘muhaxhire’’ subculture lets explain ‘‘What do we understand with subculture?’’

‘‘Subculture in term of sociological studies or *nënkulture* in Albanian language term, wich replace it, refers to the cultural models specially designed tha differ some populations segments of a society’’<sup>32</sup>. Dick Hebdige in his book *Subculture, a meaning of style*, one of the books more elaborated in subculture studies, express that ‘‘the word ‘‘subculture’’ is loaded downwith mystery. It suggests secrecy, masonic oaths, an Unaderworld. It also invokes the larger an no less difficult concept ‘‘culture’’. So it is with the idea of culture tha we should begin.’’<sup>33</sup>

What it is the concept of culture?

The concept of culture is a set of rules or standarts shared by members of a society, wich when acted upon by the members produce behavior that falls within a range of variation the member consider proper and acceptable<sup>34</sup>. Culture is learned, culture is not biologically inherited. Culture is learned through communication . the members of a subculture are forst of all member of the larger culture of the society where they a re part of, instead subculture are ‘‘groups of population who have shared with society all cultural symbols and the language, elements of material culture membership, values and cultural norms, and other models of the dominant culture in society, but differ in quite culturally specific aspects’’.<sup>35</sup>

J.Milton Yinger explains the proportion between subculture and culture with the concept of social role “role is that part of a full culture that is assigned , as the appropriate rights and duties, to those occupying a given position”<sup>36</sup>, this, according to Yinger, does not excludes the possibility that subcultures design roles within his own system. These roles and tasks interacts with the roles of other persons inside a system and recognized and accepted by all the members who share the same culture. “But subculture is not tied in this way into the larger cultural complex : it refers to norms that set a group apart from, not those that integrate a group with, the total society”<sup>37</sup>

The metaphor of comparing parent-child is very common on subcultures theories, Boisnier and Chatman suggested “that subculture like a child, could never be entirely different from its ‘parent’”, the larger culture. Instead, because subculture emerge from the dominant culture’s values, some subcultural values may conflict with the dominant cultures’ while others may not”<sup>38</sup>. Subculture is part of the larger cultural complex membership but differs from it, often being perceived as a countraculture. In early studies about subculture there was not a clear separation between subculture and contraculture , in many studies to subculture was given a negative connotation by equating with terms like delinquency and countraculture. William notes that a large part of the research of american sociologists about of youth subcultures are generally concentrated on aspects of youth deviant behaviors. The Chicago school researchers emphasized on ethnic groups, the youth, the criminals and cultural groups other peripheral subcultures, thus subculture was a concept valid for the explanation of social pathologies<sup>39</sup>. Boisnier and Chatman<sup>40</sup> distinguish between pertaining subculture term and contraculture “subculture represent tolerated deviations that do not disrupt the normative solidarity of the larger culture’s values. In contrast, members of countracultures hold discordant values and, by virtue of their membership, explicitly appose certain aspects of the larger culture. Countercultures are, therefore, unacceptable to members of the larger organization”. Bosniaks never have behaved with features of countraculture but they have accepted the larger culture and preserving their language and special aspects of bosnian culture.

Yinger J.Milton in 1960, in an attempt to understand better the term of subculture had read over 100 books and articles, and he noticed that the meaning of the term subculture was very wide than he had imagined. Yinger does a comparison with chemists, if chemists had only one word to refer to all colorless liquids and this led them to pay attention to only the two characteristics shared in common, their analysis would be exceedingly primitive. Such an analogy overstates the diversity of ideas covered by ‘subculture’ , but the range is very wide. Nevertheless three distinct meanings can be described”<sup>41</sup>.

Bosniaks can be seen in this perspective as a subcultural group, as part of the larger culture that differ only in some specific aspects. Bosniaks are not separated by natives in Shijak, they are considered shijakas to, but due to some changes in cultural aspects they can be studied as a very interesting subculture. Bosniaks live in Albanian society, which is a society with cultural diversity and can be considered a heterogeneous society, or culturally pluralistic.

Herbert Gans explains the concept of taste culture "taste culture as the culture which results from choice, it has to do with those values and products about which people have some choice"<sup>42</sup>. Gans describes the taste cultures as subcultures, considered as the most adequate for the term. The author explains that homogeneous societies offer little cultural diversity; they generally develop only a single concept of beauty, one style of art (often religious), and one way of home furnishing"<sup>43</sup>. American society, with its pervasive division of labor and heterogeneity, "America is culturally pluralist, made up of a number of subcultures which coexist around a common core-"American culture"<sup>44</sup>. The researcher Zyhdi Dervishi appoints Albanian society as a society with subcultural density, Albanian culture not only has a subcultural density, but also there are quite prominent distinctions from and with each other"<sup>45</sup>. The fact that Albanian culture has a density of subculture is appointed also from Albanian writer Faik Konica, in his book he cited the French authors that visited Albania during the end of the XVIII century, as they appointed that Albania as plural numbers of tiny republics and half-feudal units, sometimes connected in groups, sometimes all the way apart from each other, who knew the Sultan as a distant ruler which does not interfere in their local governance<sup>46</sup>. So, Albanian culture is culturally pluralistic, a concept that Herbert Gans suggests to explain "to provide cultural content to express and satisfy the specific standards of every taste public"<sup>47</sup>. Exactly this cultural diversity makes possible and easier the integration of individuals and social groups.

Also, Gans explains what he calls subcultural programming, which gives to the public what they want and not what is best for them, what do reformists believe is related and good for people and not what is true and good for the people, because important is what is good for the reformists. In this way programs in subcultures given by centralized states is a form of authoritarianism<sup>48</sup>. This is what happened in Albania during the dictatorship, where different communities which lived in Albania during the dictatorship of the monist party, including the Bosniak community, they all are committed in building a socialist state, and they have no rights to practice aspects of their subculture because this was against communist ideology and if you act against the rules you could be punished. During the years of dictatorship, Bosniaks were not recognized as a minority group, they were officially Albanian with full rights and duties and

completely assimilated. For the Bosniak community in Albania during the years of the party system was then took over the measures of education and the complete integration for them. All Bosniaks children were not isolated from other children at school, but they were fully integrated other children in school<sup>49</sup>, but they learned only in Albanian language, and bosnian laguage was denied as a right of education in the language's parent. Thus over the years, ethnic subcultures and communities fall in a "sleep" but were forgotten by their members, who have began their activity would immediately after the down- turns of party system.

Albanian culture, as culture of full differences within its rich subcultures and dialects is explained also by the sociologist Gani Bobi "The map of Albanian culture is divided in cultural area, in subcultures, as differences vertical, perhaps could be based on linguistic differences, as a result of many factors. The map of Albanian culture generally dialectologically albanian language. Linguistic differentiations are a guide, in our opinion, more accurately a roadmap track generally of cultural differentiations, who appear in a form that is expected on circles and create an area, which draw together with each-other"<sup>50</sup>. In Albania, in addition to the main dialects *toskë* and *gegë*, there are a number of other dialects. As sociologist Gani Bobi explains linguistic differentiations are to accompany and cultural differences, to prove the thesis that Albanian culture is pluralistic, and that this leaves a space for other cultures and the integration of social groups such as the Bosniaks.

Subcultura is part of the larger culture. Culture parent that is given to us when we were born is a set of rules and standards that members of a society share their members, while subcultures is a deviation from the larger culture. Factors that impact subculture are determining from style, age, class, religion, ethnicity, racial origin, language, place of residence, personality and individual desires, sexual orientation etc. Subculture "Muhaxhir" are called so due to their origins from Bosnia-Herzegovina, language and many different cultural aspects. Preserving their cultural from their country of origin, we can find explanation by the author Anthony Smith, who explains that under primordialist viewpoints, in nationalist theories is "argued that regardless of where the individual chooses to live, within his country of birth, or to imigrate in a another state, he always will be a member of his community of origin and always will be the values of this community wich he will hol"<sup>51</sup>. This occurred with the Bosniak community in Shijak, regardless that they are fully integrated they are not culturally disconnected from their country of origin.

Coexistens of Albanians with Bosniaks are describes from english writer Edith Durham in her book concern the Balkans, published for the first time in 1905, she wrote " We passed near a place with the name being mentioned as Shijak, who had some 50 houses. All residents were

Albanians, Muslims escape from Bosnia at the time from the Austrian occupation. From this time, in Albania have changed many opinions"<sup>52</sup>, the author speaks of Borake where Bosniaks were placed when they came in Shijak. Bosniaks in Shijak are in villages Borake and Koxhase, and the city of Shijak. Bosnian family are also in Durres and in the whole country of Albania. Borak Village is Bosniaks fully populated, there are not other inhabitants. Observations on the ground and from and interviews with residents in Borak, was referred that Borake has only one family from Kukes but they did not live in Borak but had emigrated. Bosniaks are a social group as we have explained are called subculture. Subculture often is too confusing to be used but Yinger says ‘ ‘ the term is often used to point to the normative systems of groups smaller than a society, to give emphasis to the ways this groups differ in such things as language, values, religion, diet, and style of life from the larger society of wich they are a part. Perhaps the most common referent in this usage is an ethnic enclave or a region but the distinctive norms of much smaller and more temporary groups may be described as a subculture’’<sup>53</sup>, Borak village can not be considered as ethnic territory but as a territory inhabited by an ethnic population of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Borak village has a population of 847 inhabitants, (information from Durres District Council) that its population Bosniaks as a subculture is called " Muhaxhir ‘. ‘ ‘ All societies have differentiating roles, but only heterogeneous societies have subcultures. Role is that part of a full culture that is assigned, as the appropriate rights and duties, to those occupying a given position’’<sup>54</sup>, according to Yinger subcultures do not excludes membership roles within the system. These roles and tasks interacts with the roles of other persons inside a system, these are recognized and accepted by all the members who share their the same culture <sup>55</sup>. But with the subculture happens otherwise, it is not connected in this ways with the larger culture of the society, subcultures refers to the norms that set a group a part from, not those who integrate a group with, the total society. Heterogeneous societies, or culturally pluralistic societies, as was explained in the above have density of subcultural, and subcultural density creates still room or spaces for the social group membership to adjust and integrate. But the space of cultural density is not or hospitality is not for the integration or the adjusment of a social groput but there are many other factors. Other factors influencing in integrating Bosniaks in Albanian society is the resemblance of livelihoods between albanians and bosniaks, religious, and major resembances in cultural aspects that Bosniaks have found in Albania. For more than four centuries countries of Balkan had been accupied by the Ottoman Empire and "the same political, economic, cultural, educational conditions, within time under foreigners ruler have affected that this people in the nineteenth century, not to discern so many from each other on many ways"<sup>56</sup>. Exaclty similar political, economic, cultural, educational

conditions, provided an easy way for bosniaks to adapt in Albania, unlike what could be provided where the Austro-Hungarian occupation as Haki Baci express "The arrival of the Austro-hungarian in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it means for bosniaks would shift from a civilization to another, the extent strictly diverse in culture and livelihoods, which was not easy, not soon, not painless"<sup>57</sup>. With the similarities bosniaks found in Shijak, helped them to establish and integrated in Albania. Erzeni River, which it passes through Shijak resembled to Bosniak like Neretva River in Mostar. The mosques that saw Bosniaks in Durres and Shijak were crucial for their decision to live in Shijak because they are Muslims too. The similarities Shijak hills, which is now known as Koxhasë, is with the hills that Bosniaks left in Bosnia, so they were told by their grandfathers that when they saw this hill they express "just like home". Bosniaks who live in Shijak have brought many customs and traditions with them, traditions and customs which are embezzled from residents of Shijakut. To many ways of cooking as potato pie, Bosnian folk dance and songs that are sang in wedding party of Shijak, as Ken Gelder argued "... migration and immigration are often important events of subcultural identity"<sup>58</sup>, so Bosniaks have their own subcultural identities and have given many cultural aspects for shijakas habitants. Integration of Bosniaks in Shijak has been also influenced because during the period of dictatorship in Albania was then took measures for their education and their employment and many of were successful people in many areas such as in sports, education, art, farming etc.

Bosniaks were not married with locals for nearly 60 years, because they thought they would come one day that they will return to their own country of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the reason of their marriages were endogamy was because Bosniaks did not want to leave anyone behind. After 60 years, for the first time happened the first marriage between a bosniak and a shijak, because in 1948 with the demolition of the relations of the People Republic of Albanians and former FYROM, Bosniaks in Shijak by not having any alternative other began to marry with natives (with Albanians, shijakas). From that time today between Bosniak and Albanians have happened many marriages, by facilitating their integration and diffusing cultures between Bosniaks and Shijaks. When you go to Bosniaks in Shijak as a bride, you must necessarily learn their language because in their families bosniaks speak their language of origin.

Religion plays an important role in determining the subcultures. Albania has historically been the site of many religious ones, where there are a number of religions. And this number of religious is an important factor for subculture density in Albania. Religion plays an important role in determining the identity of Albanians "...for albanians religious diversity is a factor from century ago that formats subcultures or reinforces existing ones"<sup>59</sup>. Bosniaks found in Shijak

a Muslim population. Bosniaks in the end of the XIX century are known as Muslims "at that time the word Muslims was acquire for the bosnian in Bosnia Herzegovina, in a widest sence than the followers of Islam . Thus, since the end of the last century, being strengthened in the period between the two world wars, all cultural, artistic and sports rganizations that were created in Bosnia are named muslim rather than islam"<sup>60</sup>. Bosniaks in Shijak are practicing Muslim religion as well as most of the inhabitants shijkas, and this made more easy the integration of Bosniaks during the period of 1-centurie.

Although, the integration of Bosniaks in Shijak have been complete and smoothly, the features of their ethnocentric appeared after 90s, after the collapse of dictatorship Bosniaks traveled to the countr of their grandfathers but as express, that had changed many things, they already were adjusted in Albania and they continued to live in Albania. During visits in Bosnia Herzegovina, established the relations with the cousins who live in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which they visit constantly. Many Bosnian Albanian's family immigrated after 1990 to the west but some of them emigrated in Turkey where there are adjusted and fully integrated.

'The mobilization of ethnic minorities and immigrant communitie has often been describet as diaspora nationalism, to the extent that is has as main point of reference the country of origin''<sup>61</sup>. Bosniaks can be called as nacionalist of Diaspora, they do not hide their love for their country of origin, but Bosniaks love also Albania so they could be called them as ' good Albanians', easily we can prove that bosniaks tare not part of any crime or violations in society, rarely could be found a bosniak wich is par af a certen violation in Albania. However Bosniaks who live in Shijak, love Albania they do not have a sense of belonging Albanian nationality as far as the rest is Albanians, who often exceeding in extreme nationalism, this is seen for at better when the national team of Albania plays football. During the match between Albania and Serbia in November of the year 2014,qualification match for Euro 2016, where Serbs were huligane blanket and attacked Albanians football players. Albanian and Serbian society were involved by a surge of nationalism, but Bosniaks community in Shijak passed this event without any special interests and they were not involved from the wave of Albanian nationalism but was indifferent to that dhat happened in Belgrade and that topic was not part of their everyday conversations as what was happening in each albanian group, family, convesation in their everyday life. Also, indifferent to this event have been gay community ,Egyptian-rom communities. Although ''muhaxhuret''were indifferent from the match on october 2014, a year later, in October 2015 Bosniaks in the bar-cafe and in their houses where they were watchin the match, they were the cheering for Albania and posting pictures of Albanians-flag in social

networks, when Albania was qualified in Euro 2016. Therefore I like to call them goos albanians because they have simple ways to love Albania.

Gelder explain that “ “Forms of transportation and mass communication, like the newspaper, can bring people together, but new immigrants into the city may well try to preserve their social and cultural autonomy”<sup>62</sup>, Bosniaks have their cultural identity, of awareness of their identity has come as a result of many factors. Ties with their country of origin after down- turns of dictatorship in Albania and after the end of the war in Bosnia. Bosniaks have their own organisation called " Zambak" which organizes many social and cultural events for Bosniaks. In the elementary school " Adem Sabli " for a period of time children have learned the bosnian language, and books were provided by the Ministry of Education in Bosnia. Bosniaks follow the TV channel 'TV Hayat' 'with cable system. In the village of Borak it is a bridge constructed as the old bridge over the Neretva River in Mostar. Bosniaks have their graves, where are clearly distinguished eculture symbols as part of Bosnian culture. Muggleton, researcher of subcultures, sees subculture issue as postmodern issue associated closely with individualism<sup>63</sup> and this is what is going on post-communist country of Albania, in Albanians has emerging sense of individualism. Individuals already have their special styles and tastes, styles created from people or taken by the world-wide industry of fashion, not styles and flavors was offered by the party-state during dictatorship periods. Albanian society, despite social problems that characterize it, is part of the postmodern societies, as a result of the revolution of information had technology, free movement toward western countries and globalization. All these affect in on the development of the different subcultures. So, in Albania there is room for the development of subcultures and subcultural identities membership, " muhaxhirët " of the Shijakut.

Edith Durham describes Bosnia during Middle Ages as part of a new religion called Bogumil (beloved of God), the religion which is not known to much but that was fought hard and disappeared over the centuries, 'being mentioned in Bosnia and Herzegovina found a great quantities of Monuments of bogumil. Stone box graves, often sculpted. The sun, the cross, the moon as symbols, while face of warriors with kilts and armed, with bows, arrows and protect iron, give an idea of bayraktar of Middle Ages. Kilts worn today by albanian. "<sup>64</sup>. later 'Bogumil embraced Islam'<sup>65</sup> '. Albanians wear kilts shows the similarities of of the Balkan peoples.

In Borak finds inscriptions in two languages English and the language Bosnian (Serbo-Croatian), roads and public places, making use of nouns, adjectives or other information and demonstrated freely and without interference. There are to comprehension , peaceful coexistence between Bosniak community and the inhabitants of Shijakas and ‘ ‘and that respect

for diversity comes from something that also goes back to Diogenes : tolerance for other people's choices of how to live and humility about what we ourselves know. Conversation across identities-across religion, races, ethnicities and nationalities- is worthwhile because through conversation you can learn from people with different, even incompatible ideas from your own. And it is worthwhile, too, because, if you accept that you live in a world with many different kinds of people, and you're going to try to live in respectful peace with them, then if you don't agree''<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusions

Integration and adaption of social groups happens naturally in society that welcomes you has a cultural diversity. Cultural diversity and density creates necessary spaces for the integration of social groups. Also, the similarities in religion, in cultural features, in the livelihood , it makes easier the integration of a social group in society. Bosniaks or 'muhaxhirët' as subculture were integrated in Albania after they found the necessary space, hospitality, cultural resemblance and of course their desire to adapt. So, integration occurred naturally, without impositions and there has not been a tendency of assimilation, despite measures taken during the dictatorship years in Albania, Bosniaks were not culturally assimilated, but they exist today with their special subcultural identity as part of Albanian culture.

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<sup>30</sup> Po aty, pg.328

<sup>31</sup> Shoqata Boshnjakwt e Shqipwrisw ''Zambak'', *Ardhja dhe Integrimi i Boshnjakwve nw Shqipwri* . Botimet Toena, Tiranw 2001,Pg.12

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<sup>33</sup>Hebdige,D *Subculture The meaning of Style* . Routledge, London 1979.pg.4

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<sup>43</sup> Po aty, pg.67

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