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ANTON ÇETTA AND THE IMPACT OF BLOOD RECONCILIATION IN THE SOCIETY OF KOSOVO, 1990

Abstract: The idea for movement of blood feud reconciliation was one of the most important humanitarian missions in the Albanian society in Kosovo during the 1990s. The act of forgiveness of blood feud was a humane act that reconciled families and had a positive impact on Albanian society in Kosovo. During 1990, Albanians in Kosovo started to face a dire situation in all aspects. The year 1990 marks many momentous events in the history of Kosovo, and many of these events were difficult ones since most Albanians left their jobs by force, and as a result, the economic situation of Albanian society became very dire. During the year 1990, most of the professors, doctors, police officers, judges, journalists, etc., were forcibly removed from work by the Serbian authorities, as a result many families were struggling for economic survival. The life of the Albanian population was endangered not only by the political situation as well as by the economic difficulties. Life in many Albanian families became difficult and almost unbearable, many families took the path of exile and left Kosovo. In this study, the difficulties and the political and economic situation of Albanian society will be mentioned only indirectly, in short points. This study aims to highlight a very humane event that began in Albanian families and society, and it all started in 1990. In this difficult and dark year for the Albanians in Kosovo, "a light began to shine in many families", and the movement for the suppression of blood feuds and the reconciliation of Albanian families began. Blood feuds mostly happened between families, but they could also happen between entire tribes and could last for several decades.

Despite the difficult circumstances, what makes 1990 more remarkable is the movement for social and spiritual liberation. This movement has historical importance for society in Kosovo because it broke "chains" of murders in Kosovo, reconciling thousands of people for a short historical period. Despite the extremely hard historical circumstances in which the society in Kosovo was during the 1990s, it was the movement for reconciliation that brought about a revival of Albanian society in Kosovo. The reconciliation movement led by Anton Çetta had an incredibly positive impact to the Albanian society. In addition to

the fact that thousands of people agreed with this movement, what makes it even more remarkable is that it brought a positive effect to every family to the extent that many children born in the 1990s bear the names: Pajtim and Pajtime (reconciliation), as well as many places in which the reconciliations were being held in, calling them: Meadow of Reconciliation, Hill of Reconciliation, etc. This humanitarian event brought a positive impact to the entire Albanian society Anton Çetta became a symbol of reconciliation.

Key words: Anton Çetta, Blood feuds, Reconciliation, Albanian society in 1990, Kosovo.

ANTON ÇETTA I UTICAJ POMIRENJA KRVI NA DRUŠTVO KOSOVA, 1990. GODINE

Apstrakt: Ideja o pokretu za pomirenje krvi u obliku krvne osvete bila je jedna od najvažnijih humanitarnih misija u albanskom društvu na Kosovu tokom 1990-ih godina. Akt opraštanja krvne osvete bio je human čin koji je pomirio porodice i imao pozitivan uticaj na albansko društvo na Kosovu. Tokom 1990. godine, Albanci na Kosovu počeli su se suočavati s teškom situacijom u svim aspektima. Godina 1990. označava mnoge značajne događaje u historiji Kosova, a mnogi od ovih događaja bili su teški, jer su većina Albanaca bili prisiljeni napustiti svoje poslove, što je rezultiralo veoma teškom ekonomskom situacijom albanskog društva. Tokom 1990. godine, većina profesora, ljekara, policajaca, sudija, novinara itd. je nasilno uklonjena sa posla od strane srpskih vlasti, usljed čega su se mnoge porodice borile za ekonomski opstanak. Život albanske populacije bio je ugrožen ne samo političkom situacijom, već i ekonomskim teškoćama. Život u mnogim albanskim porodicama postao je težak i gotovo nepodnošljiv, pa su mnoge porodice krenule putem progonstva i napustile Kosovo. U ovom istraživanju, teškoće i politička i ekonomska situacija albanskog društva biće pomenute samo posredno, u kratkim crtama. Ovo istraživanje ima za cilj da istakne vrlo human događaj koji je počeo u albanskim porodicama i društvu, a sve je počelo 1990. godine. U ovoj teškoj i tamnoj godini za Albance, "svetlo je počelo sjati u mnogim porodicama" i pokret za suzbijanje krvnih osveta i pomirenje albanskih porodica je počeo. Krvne osvete su se dešavale između porodica, ali su se mogle dogoditi i između cijelih plemena i trajale su decenijama.

I pored teških okolnosti, ono što čini 1990. godinu još značajnijom je pokret za društvenu i duhovnu emancipaciju. Ovaj pokret ima historijski značaj za društvo na Kosovu jer je prekinuo "lance" ubistava na Kosovu, pomirivši hiljade ljudi u kratkom historijskom periodu. I pored izuzetno teških historijskih okolnosti u kojima je društvo na Kosovu bilo tokom 1990-ih godina, upravo je pokret za pomirenje koji je doveo do procvata albanskog društva na Kosovu. Pokret za pomirenje vođen od strane Antona Çette imao je nevjerovatno

pozitivan uticaj na albansko društvo. Osim činjenice da se hiljade ljudi složilo s ovim pokretom, ono što ga čini još značajnijim je to što je doneo pozitivan uticaj svakoj porodici do te mjere da mnoga djeca rođena tokom 1990-ih nose imena: Pajtim i Pajtime (pomirenje). Mnoga mjesta na kojima su održani sastanci za pomirenje takođe su promjenila svoja imena, nazivajući ih: Livada Pomirenja, Brdo Pomirenja, itd. Ovaj humanitarni događaj doneo je pozitivan uticaj cijelom albanskom društvu, uticaj pomirenja se osjećao u svim albanskim porodicama. Anton Çetta postao je simbol pomirenja.

Ključne riječi: Anton Çetta, krvne osvete, pomirenje, albansko društvo 1990, Kosovo.

Introduction

What happened to Albanian families and society in Kosovo in 1990? Why until this time, blood revenge murder was considered an honor? Why from this year and onwards, blood revenge murder was not considered an honor, but an honor was reconciliation - forgiveness?

One idea, one person and thousands of lives saved, 1990.

In 1990, the idea to reconcile families that were in a blood feud and to stop the blood feuds altogether, appeared from a group of Albanian youth. Although the idea was quite humane, its realization was not an easy one, it required a lot of knowledge and courage to realize it. It was not easy to enter the families whose loved ones had been killed and even more so to have the courage to ask for their blood to be forgiven. The idea was quite good, but a good person was also needed for this idea to work, a very courageous, deeply knowledgeable, well-loved, and respected person was needed. The idea that the Blood Reconciliation Movement should be led by Professor Anton Cetta, a learned, brave, and well-loved man, turned out to be quite a shot. Anton Cetta led the movement for blood reconciliation, together with many intellectuals and young Albanians. From February 1990, when this movement started, meetings for blood reconciliation were held at homes, but for a brief time, this movement took on such large proportions that meetings began to be held in open spaces with sufficient space. Anton Cetta used to say that it is not an honor to kill and take revenge, but to forgive and extend the hand of reconciliation is a real honor. For just one day, in the gathering held in the place called "Verrat e Llukës", on May 1, 1990, more than five hundred thousand people gathered, and hundreds of blood feuds were reconciled extending the hand of peace and reconciliation. Thus, Anton Cetta and the year 1990 marked an important event in the history of Albanian society because from this year it was a family honor for all that extended the hand of reconciliation. The year 1990 was also called the year of Albanian reconciliation.

Political and Economic Circumstances in Kosovo and the Beginning of the Movement for Reconciliation

The year 1990 marks a difficult year in the history of Albanian society in Kosovo, with many challenges for most of the Albanian families in Kosovo. The proposed constitutional changes give Serbia jurisdiction, including the Autonomous Province of Kosovo.¹ Remarks by Representative Hank Brown, 1st of August 1990, Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo continue to be deprived of their basic rights to live in freedom.2 When Kosovo's autonomy was forcibly swept away in 1989, the conflict reached a new stage of intensity.³ In 1990, in accordance with the law of the Republic of Serbia, the Kosova institutions and state bodies were denied their former rights to design teaching curricula and syllabi, to publish textbooks, and to draft developing policies at all the education levels, including that of the University of Pristina. 4 On 5th July 1990, Radio Television Prishtina (the only broadcaster in Albanian language in Kosova) was occupied by numerous Serbian Forces.⁵ In August 1990 authorities shut down Albanian daily newspaper 'Rilindja'. National and social discrimination against Albanian workers continued during 1991⁷. The wave of Albanians leaving their jobs did not stop⁸. A particularly serious situation was created in 1990, after the removal of Kosovo's autonomy⁹. Through the issuance of discriminatory laws and normative acts, Albanians were excluded from economic, political, and social life. 10 The discriminatory policy was manifested in almost every sphere of

¹ Philip E. Auerswald and David P. Auerswald, eds, *The Kosovo Conflict: A Diplomatic History Through Documents*, Hague: Published by Kluwer Law International, P.O. Box 85889, 2508 CN The Hague, The Netherlands 2000, 26.

² *Ibidem*, 47.

³ Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Thakur, eds, *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention: Selective Indignation, Collective Action, and International Citizenship,* United Nations University Press, Printed in the United States of America 2000, 33.

⁴ Rexhep Ismaili & Mehmet Kraja, *Kosova: A Monographic Survey*, Kosova Academy of Science and Arts: Prishtina 2013, 342-343; Denisa Kostovicova, *Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space*, Published by Routledge 2005, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN, 115

⁵ R. Ismaili & M. Kraja, *Kosova: A Monographic Survey*, 342-343; Nicole Farnsworth (editor), *History is her story too: The History of Women in civil society in Kosovo 1980-2004*, Kosovar Gender studies: Prishtina, Kosovo 2008, 46.

⁶ Miranda Vickers, *Midis Serbëve dhe Shqiptarëve*: Një histori e Kosovës, Toena, Tiranë 2004, 299; N. Farnsworth, *History is her story too: The History of Women in civil society in Kosovo 1980-2004*, 46.

⁷ State Agency of Archives of Kosovo, Agjencia Shtetërore e Arkivave të Kosovës – hereinafter ASHAK, Fund: *Bujku*, Adil Fetahu, "Diskriminimi nacional e social i punëtorëve shqiptarë", *Bujku*, 4.X.1991, 13.

⁸ ASHAK, Fund: *Bujku*, R.D, "Konferenca për shtyp e Bashkimit të Sindikatave të Pavarura të Kosovës: Valë e re e largimit të shqiptarëve nga puna", *Bujku*, 10.X.1991, 3.

⁹ Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë – Qendra e Enciklopedisë Shqiptare, *Kosova një vështrim enciklopedik*, Botimet Toena: Tiranë 1999, 157.

¹⁰ Jusuf Osmani, Kolonizimi serb i Kosovës, Prishtinë 2010, 167.

life, especially in education.¹¹ From 1990, the Serbian government applied the so-called 'violent measures' to the National and University Library of Kosovo, denying Albanians the right to services. 12 The right to use the library was denied until 1999. 13 To write a real analysis of the violation of human rights from which the Albanians of Kosovo have been suffering since 1990 would require writing long chapters because of the implementation of a series of extraordinary measures, decrees and administrative laws which authorized the dismissal of Albanians from work so that most of them who used to work in the state/public institutions were expelled from their jobs. 14 The Serbian authorities removed Albanians from work regardless of professions, teachers were also expelled from work, doctors as well just like other Albanian health personnel was not spared, even though the number of deaths from measles and polio started to increase. because the number of vaccinated Albanians was falling.¹⁵ During 1990 in Kosovo, every day more and more Albanians were fired from their jobs and the Albanian society in Kosovo began to face a very serious economic situation, just like death cases increased among Albanians due to the lack of medical personnel. In this difficult and dark year for the Albanians, a light of hope began to shine in many Albanian families, the movement to end blood feuds and the reconciliation of Albanian families began.

In Kosovo in the 1990s there was an effort to stop blood feud, led by Professor Anton Cetta and supported by large public demonstration. ¹⁶ Kosovar Albanians carried out a campaign to reconcile families engaged in blood feuds as a strategy to unify Kosovar Albanians. ¹⁷ The campaign was led by the intellectual elite of Kosovo, headed by Anton Cetta. ¹⁸ The purpose of this campaign was the reconciliation of families in order to conserve themselves. ¹⁹

Feuds occur between families, but they can also occur between entire tribes and can last for several decades, even well after the original cause of the blood feud could have been forgotten.²⁰ In 1990, Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (CDHRF), became involved in a campaign that

¹¹ Ibidem, 167.

¹² Akademia e Shkencave dhe Arteve e Kosovës, *Kosova: Vështrim Monografik*, Akademia e Shkencave dhe Arteve e Kosovës: Prishtinë 2011, 592.

¹³ *Ibidem*, 592.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 592.

¹⁵ Noel Malkom, Kosova: Një histori e shkurtër, Koha: Prishtinë 2001, 364.

¹⁶ Sandra F. Joireman, *Aiming for Certainty: The Kanun, Blood Feuds and the Ascertainment of Customary Low*, 13 http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07329113.2014.916090.

¹⁷ Suzana Pratt, Gjakmarrja: Albanian Blood Feuds and Restorative Aplications of Tradicional Justice, 13.

 $https://www.academia.edu/4654081/Gjakmarrja_Albanian_Blood_Feuds_and_Restorative_Applications_of_Traditional_Justice.$

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 13

¹⁹ Sokol Xhaxho, *The Phenomen of Blood Feud Among Albanians and its impact on Children*, 7 https://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordOId=8975275&fileOId=8975372.

²⁰ Robert Elsie, *Leksiku i kulturës popullore shqiptare: Besime, mitologji, fe, doke, rite, festa dhe veçori kulturore,* Skanderbeg books: Tiranë 2005, 66.

would advance human rights and further unite Kosovo Albanians: the movement for the "Abolition of Vendettas", or blood feuds descended from the time of the Kanun of Lek Dukagjin, an old social code dating before the fifteenth century, code that dictated Albanian custom²¹. The Kanun included social rules governing various aspects of life such as marriage, inheritance, land, animal grazing rights, and punishment for criminal acts.²² Kanun become an important point of reference in delineating Serbian opponents, while reinforcing the unity of the Albanians ranks.²³ The restorative Justice features of Albanian traditional laws provide an alternative to blood feuds and retaliatory murder.²⁴ The kanun governs all social, economic and the moral spheres of life and has been deeply ingrained in Albanian social consciousness for at list six centuries.²⁵ Blood feud affects families who basically become isolated.²⁶ This has various social and economic implications on the lives of the people.²⁷ At the heart of the Kanun is the idea of honor, and particularly the honor of the family.²⁸ Related to family honor are then a myriad of other associated issues from the much-lauded Albanian hospitality to the blood feud as the method via which infractions on the honor of the family are rectified or assuaged.²⁹ One's personal honor as well as the honor of one's family are central to Albanian culture and traditionally have been defended even to the death.³⁰ Participants in this movement were university undergraduates, professors, students, and other young people.³¹ The Reconciliation Initiative was started by a group of young people.³² The beginning of this movement was in the town of Peja, from a group of students who had just been released from prison (they were political prisoners), with the motto: "We forgive you 32 blood feuds in the name of the 32 martyrs who were killed by the Serbian police in the demonstrations for freedom and independence". 33 The group of youngsters who took the initiative for reconciliation, in January 1990 met with Professor Anton

²¹ N. Farnsworth, History is her story too: The History of Women in civil society in Kosovo 1980-2004, 41.

²² *Ibidem*, 41.

²³ D. Kostovicova, Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space, 117.

²⁴ S. Pratt, Gjakmarrja: Albanian Blood Feuds and Restorative Aplications of Tradicional Justice, 16.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 16.

²⁶ S. Xhaxho, The Phenomen of Blood Feud Among Albanians and its impact on Children, 2.

²⁷ Ibidem, 2

²⁸ S. F. Joireman, Aiming for Certainty: The Kanun, Blood Feuds and the Ascertainment of Customary Low, 10.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, 10.

³⁰ N. Farnsworth, *History is her story too: The History of Women in civil society in Kosovo 1980-* 2004, 41-42.

³¹ Tanya Mangalakova, *The Kanun in Present – Day Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro*, 10 http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00003864/01/The Kanun.pdf.

³² Arbnora Dushi and Agata Çetta, (eds), *Anton Çetta dhe Aksioni i Pajtimit të Gjaqeve*, Instituti Albanologjik: Prishtinë 2020, 10; Cen Desku, *Pajtimet në Motin e Madh 1990*, Faik Konica: Prishtinë 2015, 74.

³³ Gazmend Rizaj, Monografia Peja: Vështrim monografik për Komunën e Pejës, Pejë 2017, 179-179; D. Kostovicova, Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space, 117.

Çetta and informed him about their mission.³⁴ Professor Anton Çetta and the secretary of Council for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms, Zekerija Cana agreed to assist them.³⁵ Professor Anton Çetta was a distinguished scholar on issues relating to Albanian villages, custom, and folklore, and he was the figure had led the campaign.³⁶ Professor Anton Cetta was also one of the founders of the "Mother Teresa" humanitarian association in Pristina (Kosovo).³⁷ According to them, no one knew better than Professor Anton Cetta to judge and touch the soul of every Albanian.³⁸ The action for blood reconciliation turned into a popular movement, the people supported this action very quickly.³⁹ In the history of all nations, there are movements that mark positive turns for social, spiritual, and national liberation, and such a movement of historical importance for the Albanian nation was the Reconciliation movement that began on 2nd of February, 1990.⁴⁰ According to the Albanian press of the time, after this date reconciliation continues in different parts of Kosovo. 41 This movement made it possible the saving many lives in the Albanian society in Kosovo, reconciling thousands of families and bringing them spiritual relief. The Central Council of the National Movement for Reconciliation of Blood Feuds was led by professor and prominent folklorist Anton Cetta. 42 Anton Cetta was appointed as the head of the group for reconciliation, an intellectual with high virtues and very dear to the people of Kosovo. In a ,,dark" time, in which Kosovo was, the movement had to be led by a "Torch that cuts through the darkness", and for this, the figure of Anton Cetta stood out.⁴³ The campaign started in 1990, led by a group of

³⁴ ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, Veli Veliu, "Lëvizje e madhe për pajtim e bashkim kombëtar", *Rilindja*, 3.II.2000, 8; ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, Safet Hoti, "U përkujtua 10-vjetori i pajtimit të gjaqeve", *Rilindja*, 1.V.2000, 3; C. Desku, *Pajtimet në Motin e Madh 1990*, 115.

³⁵ N. Farnsworth, *History is her story too: The History of Women in civil society in Kosovo 1980-* 2004, 43.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 43.

³⁷ A. Dushi and A. Çetta, Anton Çetta dhe Aksioni i Pajtimit të Gjaqeve, 82.

³⁸ C. Desku, Pajtimet në Motin e Madh 1990, 115.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, 75.

⁴⁰ A. Dushi and A. Çetta, Anton Cetta dhe Aksioni i Pajtimit të Gjaqeve, 48.

⁴¹ ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, B. Baraliu, "Suharekë: U falën dy gjaqe e shumë ngatërresa", *Rilindja*, 26.III.1990, 2; ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, Ç. Ibishi, "Në disa fshatra të Mitrovicës së Titos u falën pesë gjaqe", *Rilindja*, 26.III.1990, 2; ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, Sh. Y. "Viti: U pajtuan pesë familje", *Rilindja*, 26.III.1990, 2; ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, F.O. "Kur thrret zëri i ndërgjegjes burrat falin burrërisht", *Rilindja*, 29.III.1990, 10; ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, Mehmet Kajtazi, "O Prite, Prite Anton Çettën", *Rilindja*, 2.IV.1990, 14; ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, J. Salihu, "Po griset perdja e errët", *Rilindja*, 2.IV.1990, 14; ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, E. S., "Në odat e burrërisë e të bujarisë", *Rilindja*, 2.IV.1990, 9; ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, M. Krasniqi, "Gjakmarrja si plagë e kohës: Thyerja e disa rregullave të kobshme", *Rilindja*, 8. IV.1990, 2.

⁴² G. Rizaj, Monografia Peja: Vështrim monografik për Komunën e Pejës, 179-179; T. Mangalakova, The Kanun in Present – Day Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro, 10.

⁴³ ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, R. Ramabaja, "Pishtarët që çanin errësirën", *Rilindja*, 3, Shkurt 1990, 10.

prominent intellectuals from Kosovo, headed by Anton Çetta, and as a result, many cases of blood feuds were reconciled.⁴⁴

Over 1,200 blood feuds were resolved in whole or in part through reconciliation efforts. 45 The reconciliation that took place in Kosovo played an important role in reducing the phenomenon of blood feud compared to Albania where similar reconciliation never happened. ⁴⁶ The Reconciliation Action was joined by many people of different profiles and all of them were volunteer activists. The figure of the well-known personality was affirmed every day more and more. The name of Anton Cetta, of this noble man, became an important name that had great influence wherever he was present.⁴⁷ Many reconciliations were made because they could not turn Anton back without extending the hand of reconciliation. It is important to emphasize the fact that the Reconciliation was done only with the extension and shaking of the hand. The handshake has been known for centuries by Albanians and was known as Besa. 48 In Albanian culture, Besa is a popular custom, it is a word of honor, something sacred, and violating it was not even thought of.⁴⁹ The violation was considered a great shame.⁵⁰ In Albanian customary law, Besa was not only a moral virtue but an institute of special importance. 51 Besa is the most sacred tradition, Besa in Albanian society is not only kept, but the Albanian, if necessary, gives his life just to keep Besa.⁵² In Albanian society *Besa* is one of the virtues that have been deeply rooted in the mentality and life of Albanians, and without it, one cannot understand the Albanian character. In the history of Albanian, society traditions, the institute of Besa has played a positive and special role, also as an instrument to set up order and avoid any kind of conflict and disagreement.⁵³ To receive and give the word Besa, as intermediates were chosen people with high human virtues, people who stood for popular wisdom, and people who were considered the inspiration of the time.⁵⁴ Despite any excesses and exceptions, the Albanian *Besa* is an institution

⁴⁴ R. Elsie, Leksiku i Kulturës Popullore Shqiptare: Besime, Mitologji, Fe, Doke, Festa dhe veçori kulturore, 66-67.

⁴⁵ S. Pratt, Gjakmarrja: Albanian Blood Feuds and Restorative Aplications of Tradicional Justice, 14: T. Mangalakova, The Kanun in Present – Day Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro, 10.

⁴⁶ S. Xhaxho, The Phenomen of Blood Feud Among Albanians and its impact on Children, 15.

⁴⁷ Gjon Keka, Anton Çetta dhe Filozofia e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve, Botart: Tiranë 2015, 44.

⁴⁸ Mark Tirta, Simbolika e dorës në artin aplikativ shqiptar, *Gjurmime albanologjike*, *Folklor dhe Etnologji*, 36-2006, Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës: Prishtinë 2007, 12.

⁴⁹ Shtjefen Gjeçovi, *Kanuni i Lekë Dukagjinit*, Shtëpia botuese Kuvendi, Shtypi Geer: Shkodër 2001, 82-84.

⁵⁰ Franc Nopça, *Fiset e Malësisë së Shqipërisë Veriore dhe e drejta zakonore e tyre,* Tiranë 2013, 334.

⁵¹ R. Elsie, *Leksiku i Kulturës Popullore Shqiptare: Besime, Mitologji, Fe, Doke, Festa dhe veçori kulturore*, 32-33; Robert Elsie, *Fjalor Historik i Shqipërisë*, Eugen, Tiranë 2011, 118.

⁵² Xhorxh F. Williams, *Shqiptarët*, Argeta-LMG: Tiranë 1999, 27.

⁵³ Mark Tirta, *Etnologjia e shqiptarëve*, Tiranë 2003, 339-340; Valbona Berisha, *Fjala e dhënë - Besa, Gjurmime albanologjike, Folklor dhe Etnologji, 36-2006*, Instituti Albanologjik i Prishtinës: Prishtinë 2007, 267.

⁵⁴ M. Tirta, Etnologjia e shqiptarëve, 339-340.

that until recently was generally respected by Albanians, and of which they can be proud even today.⁵⁵ *Besa* has played an important role as means for social connections, social balances, overcoming conflicts, and strengthening national consciousness and love for the country.⁵⁶ According to Jacques Bourcart, "Besa" is the loyalty to implementing an agreement.⁵⁷ In the wake of the complicated political circumstances in Kosovo in 1990, the ancient Albanian institution of *Besa* was revived.⁵⁸ After meeting with individual families, activists organized large reconciliation meetings in various regions that drew thousands of people.⁵⁹ Feuding families were invited to come forward to publicly reconcile and give their *Besa*.⁶⁰ The great importance that *Besa* had among Albanians, is best understood from the movement for reconciliation because the chain of blood feuds was almost impossible to break. It was considered that the soul of the person killed, will not find rest until the perpetrator was killed.⁶¹ Very quickly, the popular gatherings for blood feud reconciliation began to spread all over Kosovo.

For two years, from 2nd of February 1990 to 2nd of February 1992, thousands of families were reconciled. According to Denisa Kostovicova, initiated a nationwide campaign of reconciliation about 2.000 feuding families were reconciled and some 20.000 people released from house arrest. Anton Çetta did not want families to be destroyed by killing each other, he wanted the families and people to forgive, reconcile and start a peaceful and normal life. His goal was to save human life, save family, and society. Etta said that the Albanian people are ennobled by high virtues such as *Besa* and Hospitality, therefore we must extend the hand of reconciliation and eradicate the wound of a blood feud. Anton Çetta wanted the reconciliation not only to work but also to be a lasting one because only in this way hostilities would stop. It is worth emphasizing the fact that within two years, from 1990 until 1992, *Besa* was not broken, not even in a single case. The fact remains that not only during the blood reconciliation action but even today after more than three decades, there

⁵⁵ R. Elsie, *Leksiku i kulturës popullore shqiptare: Besime, mitologji, fe, doke, rite, festa dhe veçori kulturore*, 32 – 33.

⁵⁶ M. Tirta, *Etnologjia e shqiptarëve*, 341.

⁵⁷ Jacques Bourcart, *Shqipëria dhe Shiptarët*, Dituria: Tiranë 2004, 150.

⁵⁸ G. Rizaj, Monografia Peja: Vështrim monografik për Komunën e Pejës,179-179.

⁵⁹ N. Farnsworth, *History is her story too: The History of Women in civil society in Kosovo 1980-* 2004, 43.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 43.

⁶¹ X. F. Williams, Shqiptarët, 28.

⁶² D. Kostovicova, Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space, 117.

⁶³ Gjon Keka, Anton Çetta dhe Filozofia e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve, Botart: Tiranë 2015, 32.

⁶⁴ G. Keka, Anton Cetta dhe Filozofia e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve, 32.

⁶⁵ Lulëzim Etemaj, *Lëvizja e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve në Kosovë 1990-1991*, Armagedoni: Prishtinë 2020, 169; D. Kostovicova, *Kosovo: The Politics of Identity and Space*, 117.

⁶⁶ G. Keka, Anton Cetta dhe Filozofia e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve, 32.

⁶⁷ A. Dushi and A. Çetta, *Anton Cetta dhe Aksioni i Pajtimit të Gjageve*, 11-12.

was no case of violation of the *Besa*.⁶⁸ This is the best indicator of how strong the conviction of people who extended the hand of reconciliation was.

Reconciliation at the "Verrat e Llukës"

The movement for reconciliation, and the public action of reconciliation of blood feuds between many Albanian families organized on 1st of May 1990, had a great echo. Albanians all over the world welcomed the news with joy. This was also expressed by Mother Teresa, in her letter dated 3rd of May 1990 (just two days after the reconciliation action) where among other things she says:

I am always spiritually connected through prayer and love with my Albanian people, especially in difficult times. After many hardships and dangers, the news of reconciliation makes me extremely happy. Congratulations to the Albanian youth who started this work and to all those who participate in this great and holy work.⁶⁹

This letter and other letters that were written and signed by Mother Teresa, and which are of great importance to Albanian society, were published by Don Lush Gjergji, a close associate of Mother Teresa. 70 Don Lush Gjergji was also one of the well-known personalities who took part in the Reconciliation movement. Don Lush Gjergji also emphasizes Mother Teresa's contribution to the movement for blood reconciliation. She constantly prayed for the reconciliation of the Albanians, sending letters of support and constantly supporting the movement for blood reconciliation.⁷¹ Even during the blood reconciliation action, Don Lush Gjergji's mission was Peace and Reconciliation. He addressed the participants of the gathering with the words "In your tearful eyes, in your tired but happy faces, I read a desire: the burning desire and need for Reconciliation". 72 In one of the gatherings held, Don Lush Giergii addressed the crowd saying: Those who are forgiving, and reconciling are the heroes of our day, and it is difficult for me to find congratulatory words for them, except to say: well done. 73 Don Lush Gjergji was also a close associate of Anton Cetta, his conversations with Anton were very friendly and motivating. In his writings, he

⁶⁸ ASHAK, Fund: *Bujku*, Frrok Kristaj, "Besa e shqiptarëve -vlerë morale e etikës gjithëkombëtare", *Bujku*, 9.III.1998, 10; L. Etemaj, *Lëvizja e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve në Kosovë 1990-1991*, 9.

⁶⁹ The letter is written in Albanian and published by Don Lush Gjergji. Don Lush Gjergji, *E kam në zemer popullin tem shqiptar: Bisedime me Shën Nënën Tereze*, Drita: Prizren 2019, 79.

⁷⁰ See: Don Lush Gjergji, *E kam në zemer popullin tem shqiptar: Bisedime me Shën Nënën Tereze*; ASHAK, Fund: *Bujku*, Isak Ahmeti, "Unë gjithmonë e kam në zemër popullin tem shqiptar", *Bujku*, 11.V.1998, 14.

⁷¹ C. Desku, Pajtimet në Motin e Madh 1990, 163.

⁷² L. Etemaj, Lëvizja e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve në Kosovë 1990-1991, 92.

⁷³ ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, Daut Maliqi & Tahir Neziri, "Tubim i madh popullor për Pajtimin e Gjaqeve në Karaqevë: Kurrë më gjakmarrje e vëllavrasje në trojet tona", *Rilindja*, 3.V.1990, 5.

also mentions the conversations where Anton Çetta asks him "Don Lush, do I have your backing, do I have your unconditional support?", and Don Lush replies "Yes, you have all of the support of Kosovo and of the Albanian people".⁷⁴ So, Don Lush Gjergji gives him a very motivating answer. Therefore, this humane, motivating and beloved man in Kosovar society was almost constantly close to Anton and present in many blood reconciliation gatherings.

In the beginning, the forgiveness of blood feud and the laying of the hand of reconciliation was done at private homes, but the large number of people who began to participate and see the act of laying the hand of reconciliation increased so much that they began to be held in open spaces. The largest gathering was the gathering at "Verrat e Llukës", where over 500,000 people gathered.⁷⁵ The gathering of "Verrat e Llukës", ⁷⁶ was one of the most popular and massive gatherings that remained in late history of Kosova. In this grand gathering, Anton Çeta addressed the crowd, inviting them to join the brave men of reconciliation until the last blood feud between the Albanians is forgiven.⁷⁷ This speech influenced that many humane people, so they decided to approach him from the crowd and forgive the blood feud for their family members by extending the hand of reconciliation.⁷⁸ Anton Cetta's speech inspired so much of the present people, which made them come forward and forgive blood feud and reconcile without being planned before, and as a result we saw an increase in the number of people who pledged to forgive the blood feud, extending the hand of reconciliation. The events in Kosovo prove that blood feuds can be put aside and resolved.⁷⁹

The impact of reconciliation of blood feud in the Albanian society of Kosovo

The history of many nations marks different movements and positive turns in society and such a movement for social, and spiritual liberation and of historical importance for the Albanian nation was the movement for Reconciliation led by Anton Çetta.

⁷⁴ Don Lush Gjergji, *Prof. Anton Çetta dhe frytet e pajtimit të gjaqeve në Kosovë*. https://www.syri.net/kosova/340785/prof-anton-ceta-dhe-frytet-e-pajtimit-te-gjaqeve-ne-kosove/.
⁷⁵ L. Etemaj, *Lëvizja e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve në Kosovë 1990-1991*, 7; C. Desku, *Pajtimet në Motin e Madh 1990*, 97-110; ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, Igballe Rexha, "Vetëm bashkërisht i përballojmë sfidat", *Rilindja*, 2.V.2000, 3.

⁷⁶ See photo from Verrat e Llukes, 1st of May 1990 https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Photograph-of-blood-feud-reconciliation-gathering-Verrat-e-Llukes-1-May-1990 fig5 295404617.

⁷⁷ ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, Curr Mazrekaj & Skënder Zogaj, "Manifestim i madh popullor për pajtimin e gjaqeve në Llukë të Epërme të Deçanit: Dorën e Pajtimit e shtrinë 124 familje kosovare", *Rilindja*, 3.V.1990, 1, 5.

⁷⁸ Curr Mazrekaj & Skënder Zogaj, *Manifestim i madh popullor për pajtimin e gjaqeve në Llukë të Epërme të Deçanit: Dorën e Pajtimit e shtrinë 124 familje kosovare*, 1, 5; L. Etemaj, *Lëvizja e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve në Kosovë 1990-1991*, 193.

⁷⁹ S. Pratt, Gjakmarrja: Albanian Blood Feuds and Restorative Aplications of Tradicional Justice, 14.

One year (1990), one event (blood feud reconciliation), one man (Anton Cetta), despite many events that took place in Kosovo, the year 1990 will stand out for one important historical event, and that is: The hand of reconciliation, between people and families that were in a blood feud, influenced the year 1990 that will be marked as the Year of Reconciliation. 80 It is important to emphasize the impact that this movement had on society, in some cases, Albanian families that were in blood feuds not only did they stop killings and feuds, but the enmity turned into friendship.81 Anton Cetta's speeches ignited the burning desire for forgiveness, saying that "Blood vengeance sends us to destruction, while forgiveness and reconciliation not only will save lives of future generations but will keep us alive, just as it is a victory against evil". 82 Revenge is the face of weakness, while reconciliation and forgiveness are the faces of victory, families must live in peace with each other. 83 Tolerance is an expression of democracy; therefore, blood feud forgiveness shows that those who extend the hand of reconciliation and forgive blood are convinced that they are making a humane gesture. 84 The echo of the reconciliation of the Albanians arouses great interest for other nations as well, thus, a photojournalist from New York, Paula Allen says: What Albanians are doing in Kosovo is important for all the nations of the world, especially for those nations where blood feuds are still alive. This model should serve as an example to all the nations of the world, to stop killing each other....⁸⁵

Reconciliation of blood feuds has made Anton Çeta, both in oral and in written history, to be called by different names, such as Elder of Reconciliation⁸⁶, Wise Elder⁸⁷, People's Psychologist⁸⁸, Oracle of National Reconciliation⁸⁹, Torch of National Unity⁹⁰, "He died to always live in the mind and soul of the Albanian people".⁹¹ A teacher who not only taught his students but also learned how to save the lives of generations, how to pray, and how to save the family and society.⁹² Reconciliation was initially done in homes, where the families that were in conflict gathered, and after they were convinced to reconcile, they gathered in a large square, meadow, or hill, where many spectators also gathered

⁸⁰ Arbnora Dushi and Agata Çetta, (eds), *Intervista dhe Letërkëmbime*, Instituti Albanologjik: Prishtinë 2020, 170.

⁸¹ ASHAK, Fund: Rilindja V. Bytyqi, "Hasmëritë u kthyen në miqësi", Rilindja, 3.V.1990, 5.

⁸² G. Keka, Anton Çetta dhe Filozofia e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve, 33-34.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, 39.

⁸⁴ L. Etemaj, Lëvizja e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve në Kosovë 1990-1991, 164.

⁸⁵ A. Dushi and A. Çetta, Anton Çetta dhe Aksioni i Pajtimit të Gjaqeve, 50.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 67.

⁸⁷ G. Keka, Anton Çetta dhe Filozofia e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve, 38.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 44.

⁸⁹ C. Desku, Pajtimet në Motin e Madh 1990, 99.

⁹⁰ A. Dushi and A. Çetta, Anton Cetta dhe Aksioni i Pajtimit të Gjaqeve, 81.

⁹¹ Ibidem, 82.

⁹² G. Keka, Anton Çetta dhe Filozofia e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve, 38.

to share the joy of reconciliation.93 The naming of the places where the reconciliation of blood feuds took place in many cases changed immediately after the gathering and the extension of the hand of reconciliation. In all of Kosovo, the names of many meadows, hills, lawns, and oak trees received new names: Meadow of Elder was named Meadow of Reconciliation. Hill of Barë was named Hill of Reconciliation, Lawn of Çirezi was named Lawn of Reconciliation⁹⁴, etc. In these gatherings, professors and humane people who were well known, gave speeches motivating the present as much as possible for reconciliation. In the places where the gatherings were held, the names of the places began to be changed and new toponyms were born, instead of for example "Hill of Graves", new toponyms were born like: "Hill of reconciliation". 95 Some of the old toponyms, such as "Hill of graves ,,, it is not known exactly from which historical period they date, but the new names related to the name: reconciliation, we know for sure that they date from 1990, from the beginning of the blood reconciliation movement.⁹⁶ The newspapers of the time inform us of the names of various Albanian personalities who participated in these gatherings, as well as the advice and requests addressed to the people during these gatherings. In Rilindia, daily newspaper in the Albanian language in Kosova, on 5th of May 1990, it is said that at the gathering held by the Assembly of Reconciliation in Kolovica (neighborhood of Pristina), a request was made, that all children who are born within a week should be baptized with the name Pajtim and Pajtime (Pajtim/e is Albanian for reconciliation). This advice, which spread a positive spirit among the people, were often indisputable for implementation in Albanian society. For this positive spirit that the reconciliation movement brought to Albanian society, I interviewed a mother, Sevdije Demaj⁹⁷, who gave birth to a son at this time, on 8th of May 1990, and her son was baptized with the name Pajtim.

The whole time I was pregnant I was planning a different name. The movement for reconciliation brought such positive energy to the entire Albanian society and to our family, therefore the proposal from my brother-in-law that the son is baptized with the name Pajtim was not even discussed. It was a name related to the most important humanitarian event of the time in Albanian society, that's why we baptized it with love, Pajtim. 98

⁹³ A. Dushi and A. Çetta, Anton *Çetta dhe Aksioni i Pajtimit të Gjaqeve*, 11; L. Etemaj, *Lëvizja e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve në Kosovë 1990-1991*, 86.

⁹⁴ A. Dushi and A. Çetta, Anton Çetta dhe Aksioni i Pajtimit të Gjaqeve, 57.

⁹⁵ ASHAK, Fund: *Rilindja*, Y. A & B.Z, "Nga Kuvendi i Pajtimit në Kolovicë të Prishtinës: Fundi i Hakmarrjes", *Rilindja*, 5.V.1990, 1.

⁹⁶ L. Etemaj, Lëvizja e Pajtimit të Gjaqeve në Kosovë 1990-1991, 168.

⁹⁷ The interview was conducted on August 27, 2022, by author, in Prishtina, Kosovo.

⁹⁸ The name *Pajtim* became a name that was directly related to the reconciliation of blood feuds in Kosovo, which is why it was widely spread in 1990.

According to her, her son feels very good and proud of the name he bears, and she says that:

Since Pajtim knows the importance of his name even though he lives in Germany and in German it doesn't sound that good, he still likes and feels proud of his name.⁹⁹

The movement for reconciliation influenced many Albanians to baptize their children with the names: Pajtim, Pajtime. ¹⁰⁰Three decades have passed and these names still are directly related to the historical event of reconciliation. The year 1990 was declared the year of Reconciliation. ¹⁰¹ This historical event will stand out not only from the current importance but also from the historical one, is the extension of the hand of reconciliation, therefore this year entered history as the year of reconciliation of the Albanians. ¹⁰² The impressions from the time of Reconciliation are numerous and unforgettable. Within one day (1st of May 1990), managed to gather hundreds of thousands of Albanians in "Verrat e Llukës" and reconcile hundreds of Albanian families, becoming a symbol of peace for Albanians in the 20th of century.

Forgiveness of blood feuds and extending the hand of reconciliation had a great impact on the economic aspect as well.¹⁰³

Forgiveness of blood feuds and the extension of the hand of reconciliation had a positive impact on Albanian society, not only in economic and psychological aspects but thousands of people's lives were saved.

In 1990, extending the hand to Anton, and giving *Besa* for reconciliation was considered an honor. A positive spirit was created among the people, and Anton Çetta became a symbol of reconciliation. As a sign of respect for his humanitarian work for Albanian society, on November 28, 2022, in the capital of Kosovo - Pristina, the statue of Anton Çeta was placed. The statue was placed on the campus of the University of Prishtina, near the Faculty of Philology, in one of the most frequented places by both students and all citizens of Pristina the capital of Kosovo, with the hope that his statue with the outstretched hand will be an inspiration for peace and reconciliation for the new generations in Kosovo.

⁹⁹ The political and economic situation in Kosovo forced many Albanians to migrate to different countries of the world, Sevdije Boshtrakaj Demaj left Kosovo in 1992 and settled in Germany.

¹⁰⁰ In Albanian society, as soon as we hear the names Pajtim and Pajtime, we immediately say that the year of their birth could be 1990 since these names are related to the historical event of blood feud reconciliation.

¹⁰¹ A. Dushi and A. Çetta, Anton *Cetta dhe Aksioni i Pajtimit të Gjaqeve*, 54.

¹⁰² C. Desku, Pajtimet në Motin e Madh 1990, 72.

¹⁰³ Forgiveness of blood feuds also had a great impact on the economic aspect because the families that were in the blood feud lived closed and in isolation, as a result, in a difficult economic situation. After the forgiveness of the blood feud and the extension of the hand of reconciliation, they could go out and work freely.

Summary

Often, even though we have good ideas that can have a positive impact on society, during their implementation many times we can encounter difficulties, and sometimes their implementation can be impossible. If we have a humane idea for society, it does not mean that we must execute this idea ourselves; the important thing is that good and humane ideas for humanity to be done. As important as it is to give positive and humane ideas to society, it is so important to find the right people who will realize-execute positive and humane ideas in society. The idea of the youth group for reconciliation was quite right, but it seems that even more accurate was the choice of the person who will lead this movement. Seeing the great influence, love, and respect that the figure of Anton Cetta had in the people, we also see the importance of the choice of personalities who will lead humane ideas in society. The Reconciliation Movement was a movement that remained in the history of Kosovo as a humane movement that had a very positive impact not only on the families that reconciled and stopped the killing among them but brought a positive and humane spirit to the entire society of Kosovo and among all Albanians. Many people and many events stay written in the history of a country. Depending on different human professions, people constantly save each other, lives are constantly saved by doctors, police, firefighters, etc., and this makes many people feel good about their work and about the people they have saved, whether one or two, five, ten or more lives saved. Human work and profession make many people become wellknown figures for their activity in the society where they live, and beyond. Many of them remain in history for various human activities. But to remain in history as the figure of Anton Cetta is something rare and almost extraordinary, just as the power of this man among the people was extraordinary, and whose hand reconciled hundreds of families in just one day. Anton Cetta is an exceptionally good example that regardless of the profession we have, we should think positively and contribute to the good of society as much as we can, and often we are not even aware of how important we can be, and how quickly our positive impact on society can be increased. Just a handshake from Anton Çetta reconciled thousands of families and saved so many lives. The statue of Anton Cetta was placed in the center of Pristina, the capital of Kosovo, as a sign of respect for his humanitarian work and with the hope that his statue with an outstretched hand will be an inspiration for reconciliation and peace for new generations as well.

I hope that this study will increase self-confidence, regardless of the profession: doctor, police officer, firefighter, professor, etc., and will increase the power of positive thinking. Simply, be a good example that our hand, even used just for a handshake (like Anton Çetta), whether to pull someone out of the water or out of the fire, whether by writing an email, whether by writing a research article or writing a book, our hand can have a positive impact on society and save many lives.

Zaključak

Često, iako imamo dobre ideje koje mogu imati pozitivan uticaj na društvo, tokom njihove implementacije često nailazimo na poteškoće, a ponekad je i njihova implementacija nemoguća. Ako imamo humanu ideju za društvo, to ne znači da tu ideju moramo sami realizirati, važno je da dobre i humane ideje za čovječanstvo budu ostvarene. Koliko je važno davati pozitivne i humane ideje društvu, toliko je važno pronaći prave ljude koji će ostvariti i provesti pozitivne i humane ideje u društvu. Ideja omladinske grupe za pomirenje bila je prilično ispravna, ali izgleda da je još precizniji bio izbor osobe koja će voditi ovaj pokret. Gledajući veliki uticaj, ljubav i poštovanje koje je figura Antona Čete imala kod ljudi, također vidimo važnost izbora ličnosti koje će voditi humane ideje u društvu. Pokret pomirenja bio je pokret koji je ostao zapisan u historiji Kosova kao humani pokret koji je imao vrlo pozitivan uticaj ne samo na porodice koje su se pomirile i prestale ubijati međusobno, već je doneo pozitivan i humani duh čitavom društvu Kosova i među svim Albancima. Mnogi ljudi i mnogi događaji ostaju zapisani u historiji jedne zemlje. Ovisno o različitim ljudskim profesijama, ljudi neprestano spašavaju jedni druge, životi se neprestano spašavaju od strane liječnika, policajaca, vatrogasaca, itd, i to čini da se mnogi osjećaju dobro zbog svog rada i zbog ljudi koje su spasili, bilo da je to jedan ili dva, pet, deset ili više spašenih života. Ljudski rad i profesija čine da mnogi postanu poznate ličnosti zbog svoje aktivnosti u društvu u kojem žive, i izvan toga. Mnogi od njih ostaju zapisani u historiji zbog različitih humanih aktivnosti. Ali ostati zapisan u historiji kao figura Antona Čete nešto je rijetko i gotovo izvanredno, baš kao što je izvanredna bila i moć ovog čovjeka među ljudima, čija je ruka pomirila stotine porodica u samo jednom danu. Anton Četa je izuzetno dobar primjer da bez obzira na profesiju koju imamo, trebamo pozitivno razmišljati i doprinositi dobru društva koliko god možemo, često nismo ni svjesni koliko možemo biti važni i koliko brzo možemo povećati svoj pozitivan uticaj na društvo. Samo jedan stisak ruke od Antona Čete pomirio je hiljade porodica i spasao toliko života. Statua Antona Čete postavljena je u centru Prištine, glavnog grada Kosova, kao znak poštovanja za njegov humanitarni rad i s nadom da će njegova statua sa ispruženom rukom biti inspiracija za pomirenje i mir novim generacijama također.

Nadam se da će ova studija povećati samopouzdanje, bez obzira na profesiju: liječnika, policajca, vatrogasca, profesora, itd, i povećati snagu pozitivnog razmišljanja. Jednostavno, budite dobar primjer da naša ruka, čak i ako se koristi samo za stisak ruke (kao Anton Četa), bilo da izvučemo nekoga iz vode ili iz vatre, bilo da pišemo email, bilo da pišemo istraživački članak ili knjigu, naša ruka može imati pozitivan uticaj na društvo i spasiti mnoge živote.

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