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**KOMUNIKIMI INFORMAL I POPULLIT SHQIPTAR SI FAKTOR I
ZHVILLIMIT TË KOMUNIKIMIT KULTUROR DHE NDRYSHIMEVE
SHOQËRORE**

**НЕФОРМАЛНАТА КОМУНИКАЦИЈА НА АЛБАНСКИОТ НАРОД
КАКО ФАКТОР ВО РАЗВОЈОТ НА КУЛТУРНАТА
КОМУНИКАЦИЈА И ОПШТЕСТВЕНИТЕ ПРОМЕНИ**

**THE INFORMAL COMMUNICATION OF THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE
AS A FACTOR IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL
COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL CHANGES**

Abstract

Among Albanians, the place where discussion and communication takes place the most are cafés. Informal communication as important factor of the determinism of cultural and social development, in this research will be presented as a study of the role of “coffee” even as a very interesting form of media that is still practiced today. This form of informal communication among the Albanian people in the Balkan Peninsula, as a whole, also represents the form of cultural recognition and social development. “Does the coffee help to get this job done?” it is asked when a case moves towards resolution. Sending a package of coffee as a gift symbolizes sharing in another's sadness or pain. Joy and sadness are accompanied by coffee. Coffee, which paves the way for informal communication, as a special institute, is attached

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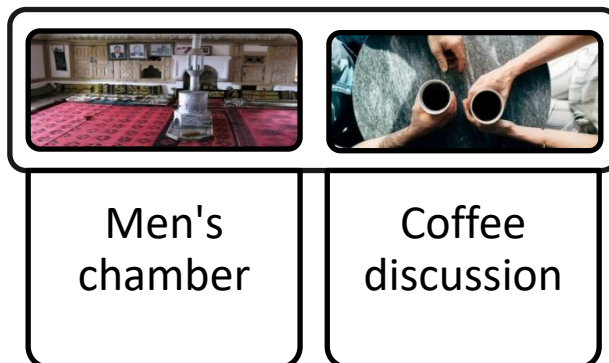
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to many other institutes of unwritten culture, such as faith (or the given word “besa”) or hospitality. The refraction that coffee culture takes in our days will be the object of research during this paper. The pedagogy that informal communication accomplishes for learning culture is special. The way to resolve disagreements or agreements is through informal communication. After the 1990s, in the conditions of the lack of law enforcement and the authority of state institutions, citizens have used normative cultural spaces as mediators to self-regulate social relations. Matters of property and inheritance, the sale and purchase of land, the movement of population, conflicts between parties, and the entire cosmology of life kiss a worldview that revolves around coffee. Even the media, when they want to make invitations to follow different shows, insert the word brown in the title of the shows. Using direct contacts with people in the field, as well as conducting surveys and questionnaires on the importance of informal communication in their lives, we will try to bring to this research the informal Albanian culture and tradition in the Balkan Peninsula.

Keywords: *Informal communication, culture, coffee, cultural code, Albanian culture.*

1. Introduction

There are many widespread forms of informal communication among the Albanian people, but in their totality we can distinguish two main forms, namely “men's chamber” and “discussions while having a coffee”. In this study, we will deal with the second form of informal communication, because we believe that unlike the first form,



discussion over coffee is still practiced today. Therefore, in order to conclude on the main topic, it is important to analyze a little the origin of the coffee bean..

Image 1: The two types of informal communication of the Albanian people
There are many explanations about the origin of the coffee bean.

Among the indigenous peoples of sub-Saharan Africa such as Ethiopia, Sudan, Guinea and Mozambique, coffee was in widespread use as early as 825 AD. In the Middle East it developed as a drink and as a flavor in the thirteenth century and later spread to southern Europe in the seventeenth century. For example, in southern Italy, coffee was in general use since 1645, while in Venice, the first coffee bar was opened in 1615, and from this bar, the culture of drinking coffee started. This was followed by the establishment of the first coffee houses in Marseille and Paris in the 1670s, and it was not long before coffee became a popular drink across Europe (Kerr, 1977). The first café in England was set up in Oxford in 1650 by a Jew named Jacob in a premise now known as The Grand Café. After 1675, more than 3,000 cafés were established throughout England. In France in 1689, Prokop Kuto opened the “Cafe Prokop”. This café still exists today and was one of the meeting places of prominent people of the French Enlightenment in Paris, such as: Voltaire, Rousseau and Denis Diderot, who frequented it and it is discussed to have been the birthplace of their Encyclopedia, the encyclopedia of first modern (Hysa, 2013).

America had its first cafés in Boston in 1676. Coffee, tea, and beer were often served together in the same premise, which served simultaneously as both a café and a tavern; one such was the “Green Dragon” in Boston. According to the well-known publicist Daut Dauti, Albanians are the first Europeans who have tasted and adapted coffee as a national drink (Dauti 2016). He also argues the contribution made by the Albanian from Tuzi Pashk Rosi registered as Pasqua Rosee who together with his business partner William Oldys will open the first luxury cafés in London according to the model that existed in Istanbul. Coffee culture dates back to the 14th century, while the so-called “coffee houses” were the places where a pleasant climate was created to gather artists, intellectuals and people of knowledge. These environments were hotbeds of literary, philosophical and political discussions in major Western cities such as London and Paris. “Turkish coffee”,

from which our society has also been influenced due to the Ottoman Empire, was actually not produced in Turkey but in Yemen. In 1530, the first café was opened in Damascus, while in Istanbul, the first café was opened in 1475 by merchants coming from Damascus and Aleppo. The first café was opened in Constantinople in 1640 and then it acquired a very important social role in Turkish society for events such as marriages and deaths but also in the everyday life of people. Since 2013, “Turkish coffee” has been on the list of UNESCO's cultural heritage.

The café is the most public place where people perform. It is the place of conversation with oneself but also with others. One way for explaining the word coffee connects it with the Arabic word “kahëa” which passed into the Turkish word “kahve” and through a progressive contraction got the meaning in Albanian with the word “kafe”. This way is contested by those who support the derivation of the term coffee from the name of the Kaffa region, in south-western Ethiopia, as it is where this plant grows massively spontaneously, Coffee as a product is thought to have originated in 11th century Ethiopia . Today it is considered a coffee plant cultivated in over 70 countries of the world, mainly in the equatorial regions of America, Southeast Asia and India (Radio-7, 2016). Coffee belongs to the third group of light drugs and is known for its therapeutic effects, despite studies that tend to highlight its real effects more clearly. There are studies that show more the psychological effects and dependence of coffee than the real physical effect.

2. The spread and use of informal communication among Albanians

Evlija Çelebiu, who visited Kosovo and upper Albania in the years 1660 and 1662 and southern Albania in 1670, emphasizes that in the numerous inns, guesthouses and parks, among other things, the main ritual was serving and drinking coffee. At this time European peoples did not make coffee as part of their ritual. In the 20s of the last century, the tradition of opening cafes began in Albania, mainly in the main cities such as Shkodra with the famous “Kafja e madhe” or Tirana with “Kafe Flora”. Their models were similar to coffee houses in London or Paris and designed (especially the “Kafja e madhe”) according to the most advanced models. Here the intellectual elites brainstormed, ordinary people calmed down, foreigners who visited the country

identified the new Albania, the villagers witnessed the visit to these cafés as an event.

Going back to the traditional Albanian culture, a café is easily verified as a strong ethical institution in building social relationships. The decisions made after drinking a coffee have a legal character and are inviolable by the parties. “Drinking coffee” is considered as successfully ending a conflict, finishing a job or solving a certain problem. When this happened, there was no longer any need to question what had happened, but it was deposited in the collective memory as a solved and closed issue. This high legal ethics has been used and continues to be used for important issues in the life of Albanians, such as the division of property and wealth, the resolution of disputes or the agreements that define the rules for the functioning of society in the future. A café is a space to build a symbolic space in which meaning and identity emerge. Coffee is the beginning and end of a relationship, conflict or problem.

2.1 Coffee under the knee

A study published by Rockport listed about 1000 icons, symbols and pictograms for visual communication in every language (Blackcoffee, 2009). Anthropologists had long ago warned against the confusion between confusing similarity of form with similarity of its substance. Edmund Leach identifies “the aesthetic advantage, ritual and symbolism with which societies embellish their routine and technical behavior, expressing the essence and, therefore, the distinctiveness of society”. Within this aesthetic lie the “ethical rules” of society. This part of the content of an act may be materially irrelevant to the purported purpose of the act. But it is of crucial importance to the ways in which participants construct their social worlds: it is “part of the overall system of interpersonal communication within the group” (Cohen, 2001). There is no doubt that coffee and the way it is served have received special attention by associating it with various ceremonies that translate into communication codes and symbols. Every ritual has a symbolic aspect to which it wants to give a certain importance. The Albanian researcher who has paid special attention to communication through symbolic interaction is the sociologist Zyhdi Dervishi. Among other things, he says: “Albanians of traditional society drank a lot, up to 20 coffees a day. In most cafés in the cities and especially in most Albanian families, very high-quality coffee

was prepared [...] Through the degree of sweetness or bitterness of the coffee, answers were indirectly given to many issues [...] Serving coffee under the left knee and especially under the knee was considered a grave insult (Dervishi, 2016).

From the interview with the informant A.B, a 68 years old from the village of Bushtricë in Kukës and a resident of the Kamëz area in Tirana, this story is told: “After 1990, a wedding was held in our village. In the men's chamber where people were received for visits, it was served collectively. The room was paved with pillars on both sides, and the coffee-maker who served handed the cups and the pot of coffee to the one at the head of the chamber. The men sitting passed the coffee to each other. When it was the turn of a young man about 25 years old, the one by his side gave him the coffee under his knee. This was very heavy. But he was told that you are not a man of honor because you did not take revenge for your father's death. The boy got up and ran away. They criticized him a lot, they person who said that, but the damage was done. After 5 years, he took his revenge by he killing his father's killer's brother in Tirana.



Image 2: The way of serving coffee when one had not revenged for the blood of a close relative

The above story shows an incident that implies the great importance of ceremonial in serving coffee. The routine is not just “drinking coffee” because in itself it is a simple act, but in this case it is much more than that. Ritual directly affects the change of human relationships. This kind of differentiation of giving coffee below the knee reminded the boy that he did not deserve to be given coffee like everyone else since he had not retaliated according to canon law. This coffee becomes the cause of a subsequent murder. This codified and complex

way of communicating to someone who does not know the importance of serving coffee may seem absurd. The translation of this strong message into an almost imposed social attitude shows the real weight of the ceremonial. Bronislaë Malinowski in the book “Crime and dockets in the wild society” talks about the “futility” of the Trobriand ceremonials in relation to the exchange of food, but their binding and binding force was extraordinary (Malinowski, 2013).

The researcher Albert Doja, among other things, states that: “Honor is an essential component of the notion of the individual and the principles of the notion of faith among Albanians are part of the discourses and cultural practices of the process of building the personal character of each individual. Discourses on honor [...] also represent a legal and historical institution of customary law” (Doja 2012). While on the psychological level, the presence of many others, in this particular case in the room, “amplifies the positive and negative reactions”, which promote self-awareness and encourage the boy to react (Petro, 2023).

3. Forms of serving coffee and its symbolic functions

Treating with coffee has been important to prove other features of Albanians. When someone was treated with a coffee when entering someone's house as a friend or as a guest, this proved that the respective family had a good economic level and that it was differentiated from others.

It is worth emphasizing the fact that in the past it was quite difficult to secure coffee as a product either because of the high cost but also because of the fact that it was missing on the market. Therefore, treating with a coffee was of great value in introducing the family. The coffee had to be drunk whole so that nothing was left in the coffee cup and this testifies to the great value it had as a product. While the care shown for the “coffee cups” was so high that the master of the house or his deputy replaced the cups, why should these precious vessels never leave the drawing room. Women also drank coffee (Tirta, 2003). We experienced the evaluation of coffee in one of the expeditions in the area of Kamëz, a district in Tirana, during the ethnographic work. We knocked on the house of S.L from Dibra who was about 75 years old. Immediately his son's daughter-in-law served us Turkish coffee. Trying to verify every detail and always focused on the conversation, one of us had consumed half of the coffee, but the colleague could not drink the

coffee without water. At this moment he asks the lady for a glass of water. The reaction of the informant, the owner of the house, was accompanied by a deep breath and a quick count of the rosaries in his hand. After a short silence he turns and looking his colleague in the eyes says: "Oh professor, you wasted this coffee". He was taken aback and was very shyly reflecting on any mistake he might have made during the conversation. He asked him what he had done and apologized that he could have insulted him because of the complaint. He continues his reasoning: "Professor, when drinking coffee, do not drink water because the taste and value of the coffee it's lost." On the other hand, it must be said that not every person who went to visit was served coffee. The status of the person going home mattered a lot. A friend, an important guest, a man known for his values, a man coming from afar or from another area was served coffee with all the ceremony that befits the presentation of the utmost respect paid to one who is visiting the house was relevant. So coffee shows the status of the family but also shows the status of the guest.

Another important aspect of giving coffee is its direct connection with two very important values of Albanian culture: hospitality and trust. As we proved above, briefly since the examples and the life that coffee makes in society cannot be reduced to the limits of this conference, giving coffee takes on great value to show the maximum appreciation to a friend. However, we must emphasize a broader meaning that the offering of coffee has, since its giving is often symbolic. Coffee can also be a lunch, it can also be mahogany filled with the best dishes. "Bread and salt with a white heart" - is said among Albanians. Symbolically, giving it testifies to the generosity and special hospitality given to the friend. On the other hand, drinking coffee with someone is immediately a quality leap in the relationships that are created. He earns unconditional loyalty and receives the blessing of a friendship that he does not reject for any reason. In the canon of Lekë Dukagjini it is said: "Every friend needs bread that he eats himself; for a good friend, you need coffee, brandy, and bread, spread with anything else"; for a friend, hearts need tobacco, sweet coffee, brandy, bread and meat" (Gjeçovi, 2022). When coffee is drunk, friendship rises, hands are shaken and trust is kept. Joy and sadness are accompanied by coffee.

"Let's sit down and have a coffee" is said when the parties want to resolve a disagreement. When the other has not agreed to sit down for coffee, the message is that he does not agree to have a solution to

the conflict or issue being discussed. "Shall we have a coffee on this issue?" it is asked when a case moves towards resolution. The environment of the country where the negotiations will take place can have a major impact on the terms and conditions that will be agreed upon (Tracy, 2013). In this sense, coffee is a neutral place and creates a necessary comfort zone so that the parties are not suggested and do not have psychological disadvantages.

When a work is "done (having a coffee on this issue)", it takes the form of a legal norm, a law. Coffee is drunk on occasions of joy such as: in engagements (two coffees were drunk if someone had gone to ask for someone's hand, one at the beginning as a welcome and one if the request was approved, accompanied by the words "may it be good for us, put the coffepot on the fire"), weddings or various parties. In the event of an engagement or marriage, the amount of lek that the person who went for the congratulation thinks of leaving as a gift is also left in the cafe. This kind of exchange of gift, money, with coffee is a symbol of appreciation for the person and the family who has the joy. The same thing happens in case of death or in case of various disasters. They are heard in the slang: "the last coffee" which is drunk when someone dies, "coffee for the chief" when someone is commemorated after death on the anniversary. "Bitter coffee" (without or with little sugar) testifies to the pain the family has for the deceased. This type of coffee is generally offered when the deceased is young. For each occasion, drinking coffee is accompanied by congratulations (in cases of joy) or comforting expressions (in cases of misfortune). Sending a pack of coffee as a gift symbolizes sharing in another's sadness or pain.

For the forgiveness of blood, coffee was drunk as the end of a blood feud, in the presence of all the people involved in this mediation, the cup of coffee is raised and before drinking, the one who forgives the blood says: "forgiveness be the blood". Once this happens, the return of blood feud for those two families can no longer be discussed. With that coffee, the final agreement is reached, peace is established between the parties, a new social relationship is built on the basis of mutual respect.

In the event that one party breaks the rule, the agreement or the established peace, then the other party has the right to react, also using the expression: "a coffee was drunk on this issue already".

4. Coffee and its economic importance in modern times

The pedagogy that coffee realizes for learning culture is special. The rules of its consumption are the compass of building social relations. Being so, in the canonical culture and in the absence of the state, “drinking coffee” was not just an act but legitimized people's decision-making. The twist that coffee culture takes nowadays in the conditions of a weak state should be seen as a reflection of the time of the absence of the state. The state institutional culture in these years of the democratic transition, which is mostly a continuation of the anti-communist transition, has been replaced by the coffee culture. It is often the case that the informality of coffee houses and precedes formal institutional decision-making. Agreements are prepared in the coffee shop, which then turn into institutional policies. One might counter this by saying that perhaps in coffee a looseness is gained and valuable ideas can be drawn. I think that this culture simply becomes the reason for the continuous corruption, turning coffee houses from places of intellectual discussion, as they were in the past in developed countries, to places of application of institutional corruption.

The analysis shows that coffee import or consumption has a direct relationship with the country's economic growth (Korkuti, 2022). At the end of the 90s of the 20th century, Albania was ranked as the second country in the world for the high number of café bars after Spain, which has 587 cafés per 100,000 inhabitants. Albania turns out to have 473 café bars per 100,000 inhabitants, while most of them have less than 200 café bars per 100,000 inhabitants, according to global statistics. This statistic can have different interpretations, but among others, economic structural factors such as unemployment and poverty should not be overlooked. A more important factor is the tradition created in society for the consumption of coffee. Morning coffee is a ritual that wakes people up from sleep, it is the positive energy they get to face the day. This coffee, generally for those who are at work, is a “quick coffee” that does not fulfill its full function as they don't have time available to enjoy it quietly. A coffee is said to be complete when there is enough time for conversation, when it is done with ease and when everyone at the table can express their opinion.

It should be noted that cafes are mainly an urban phenomenon, as we explained above, they were first opened in the main cities. Nowadays, even in villages, cafés are common. In today's cafés, public

opinion can often become public opinion as ideas flow freely and without hindrance. Discussions in the cafe touch every field and without any restrictions you can talk about private life, politics, art and culture, etc. Cafés provide “intimacy” and a space that fulfills the criteria of personal and interpersonal communication. You can enjoy solitude and reflect with yourself as you can consume your free time and share moments with your loved one, you can have conversations with friends without rules that limit the topic. Cafés today guarantee the equality of people (beyond specific cases) as anyone can sit in them without prejudice, regardless of status, and receive service without any distinction. There is another group of people who use coffee as a way to pass the time in the absence of other commitments. According to a study conducted in 2019 in Albania by the “Friedrich Ebert” Foundation, half of young people spend time in cafés, while only 21% of them visit cafés and bars on occasion (Konica.al, 2019).

Inviting someone for a coffee is refreshing and an invitation that is not easily refused among Albanians. This is also reflected in the media and in various television programs that use coffee in the titles of various shows. This general coffee culture has already been introduced in all kinds of markets and is being used in order to grow the business.

Conclusion

Coffee culture begins in the 14th century and comes as an influence from the countries of origin. In Europe and the USA, the coffee culture is related to their use for carrying out literary, political and intellectual discussions. For Albanians, this culture comes from the influence of the Ottoman Empire. Albanians have made coffee part of important life rituals and have used it as a special institute. Coffee plays an important role and implies a complex communication with codes and messages that prove different human attitudes. In present days cafés, in the space where Albanians live in the Balkan region, have a high prevalence and are places where conversations, discussions and formal and informal communication are mostly consumed.

Reviewers:

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