

Ana Ashtalkovska Gajtanoska*Institute of ethnology and anthropology,
Skopje, R. Macedonia
ashtalkovska@gmail.com*

The daughter who gave up her inheritance: Ethnography of women’s inheritance rights and their application in contemporary Macedonian context

Abstract: This text examines the experiences of several women ethnologists / anthropologists in regard to women’s inheritance rights and the traditional practices used in contemporary context in Macedonia. Women’s inheritance rights and traditional norms, which, according to the ideal model, recommend that a woman cannot be an heir of immovable property, are among the main associations of patriarchy on the Balkans. The women interlocutors in this research consistently hold on to the thesis that the term “patriarchy” is inadequate for describing in general terms the status of women in the radically divided periods of the traditional past or the contemporary context. Therefore, this situation entails a great methodological challenge in the context of the research theme, when the experiences from the everyday life of the researchers seem to contradict their theses in regard to patriarchy.

Key words: inheritance; woman; traditional community; contemporary context; patriarchy; models

Introduction

The issue of inheritance has always been a contentious and difficult issue, and is therefore often a cause of conflicts between closest relatives placed in a position to share or not to share the property of their parents. A lot of people become disappointed in regard to this issue, the imaginary or existing statuses are vanishing, families are disintegrating, ideas of what it means to be a close relative are changing. Women’s inheritance rights and traditional norms, which, according to the traditional ideal model, recommend that a woman cannot be an heir of immovable property, are among the main associations of patriarchy on the Balkans¹. The patriarchal model is said to have been es-

¹ “The testator’s wife up until 1944 did not appear in the circle of heirs of her deceased husband, but as her unmarried daughters, she also had certain rights to

pecially intensive in the traditional village communities in these areas, but certain authors identify this model as still very much alive and present in the contemporary Balkan context². Among the Macedonian ethnologists and anthropologists, especially in the past few years, there is a group that problematizes the wide use of the term patriarchy when it is used as a term covering the Balkan submissive and dominated woman, especially when she is situated in a traditional context. In short, they look for arguments that support their claim that the term patriarchy does not manage to reflect the real situation in regard to the status of women in the Macedonian traditional culture. For example, Milenko Filipović (Filipović 1991), Józef Obrębski (Obrembski 2001a, 2001b, 2002) among the older generation, Aneta Svetieva (Svetieva 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2002), Ljupčo S. Risteski (Risteski 2002), Ilina Jakimovska (2009, 2014, and in print), Jelena Cvetanovska (Cvetanovska 2014) among the more recent researchers of the Macedonian traditional culture are only a few of those who offer data affirming women's power in the traditional village community: for instance, white and black magic, female subculture within the family and the broader community, female observance of rituals, etc., that is, those segments from the everyday or the ritualistic life that have fundamental importance for people. The point is that in reality there isn't or there wasn't such black-and-white division in which the woman is always the dark side of the opposition – the way the term patriarchy suggests, but that the statuses determined by the sex/gender criterion should and must be viewed through their numerous nuances (Svetieva 2001a, Jakimovska 2014).

The nuances surface as more interesting in the individualized stories. The Macedonian researchers begin to pay greater attention to the individual experiences instead of the stories that refer to the ideas of the interlocutors about what they should be like in their attempts to reconstruct the traditional past, which is treated as a significant task of the ethnology in Macedonia and elsewhere on the Balkans. This change of the research focus inevitably led to other changes, especially in regard to the research topics and the interest of the researchers for the contemporary rather than exclusively for the past. The topic of this text about women's inheritance rights and traditional practices employed in contemporary context in Macedonia, according to the experiences of several women ethnologists/anthropologists, is in the context of these “new” challenges.

his legacy under certain predetermined conditions. Married daughters had no right regarding their father's legacy, since they had already used their right to dowry and wedding expenses while their father was alive” (Hadži Vasilev Vardarski 2000, 226). In relation to this Karl Kaser points to the inheritance rules among the key elements of the patriarchal concept (Kaser 2008, 33).

² See for example Kaser 2008.

On patriarchy

The main association of the term patriarchy is the male domination over women. This is a widely used term by researchers who deal with gender issues, so that its meaning is simply taken as understood, that is, there is a lack of precise definitions of what this term actually means. We shall, therefore, state at this point several specific definitions of what the term means to various authors who write about Southeastern Europe and the Balkans. For example, Karl Kaser avoids using this term in its original meaning of “rule of the father”, taking into consideration the category age as relevant in regard to male authority. He treats the patriarchal concept as combinations and variations of the following elements crucial for its identification: “inheritance rules, child obedience, marriage arrangements, residence at marriage, the presence or absence of institutionalized sexual asymmetry such as polygamy and different adultery rules, or the obedience of women” (Therborn 2006, 13, according to Kaser 2008, 33). Another point mentioned here is the relationship with the patrilocality – “property, residence, and descent proceeded through the male line”. There is also subordination of women in patrilocally extended households, sexual division of labour, giving birth to male children as a female duty, the treatment of women as a form of property, etc. The summary states that this is a “classical complex and interlocking systems of patrilineality, patrilocality, and a patriarchally oriented customary law”. Men have a predominant role in society (Kaser 2008, 33). Sylvia Walby says that the term briefly means domination of men in society on the basis their position of head of the household. The domination over the younger men who were not in a position of heads of the household was just as important, perhaps even more important than the domination over women through the household, while the radical feminists developed the element of domination over women by men. The patriarchy is defined as “a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Walby 1989, 214).

There are authors who consider that patriarchy can be measured in quantitative sense. For example, Gruber and Szołtysek write about a patriarchy index, which is used to identify regions with various degrees or different intensity of patriarchy in Southeastern Europe. According to them, the term patriarchy “has often included many different elements, such as the dominance of patrilineal descent, patrilocal or patrivirilocal residence after marriage, power relations that favour the domination of men over women and of the older generation over the younger generation, customary laws that sanctioned these patterns, the absence of an interfering state that could mitigate their influence, and an inert traditional society that emanated from these conditions”. The indicators they chose for measuring the index of patriarchy are: the gender of household heads, the kin composition of the households, sex ratio, age heaping, missing information about women, age at marriage, and household complexity (Gruber, Szołtysek 2012, 2, 4; Gruber, Szołtysek 2014).

Probably all mentioned elements of the definitions, their main terms, as well as the indicators for measuring the intensity of patriarchy, etc. can be discussed and thus turn out to be disputable.

According to these definitions, it can be concluded that in parts of the world where patriarchal views dominated, and where there still is a strong dose of patriarchal views among the population on the Balkans or in Southeastern Europe, other epithets can also be employed. Thus, the associations for rural, undeveloped, pre-modern, non-industrialized go along with this term, whereas terms such as Westernization, industrialization, modernization should probably correspond, among other things, to surpassed patriarchy³ (see, for example Kaser 2008, 109, 110, but also other places in the book).

The thesis of the patriarchal traditional culture is present among most of the researchers who wrote of the Balkans and of Macedonia in the first half of the 20th century. I emphasize Joseph Obrebski as the first positive exception from this rule, who did research in Poreche in 1932–33. Although a general statement in Obrebski's texts is the thesis that "the society of the Macedonian villagers is based on patriarchal principles" (Obrebski 2002, 84), he nevertheless has the ability to enter deeply into the real model of the Macedonian traditional culture which does not always coincide with the ideals of the community, focusing on certain aspects of the female domain of action, such as traditional medicine, sorcery, female observance of rituals, as well as certain aspects of the female subculture with an emphasis on certain particulars from everyday life ("female personality", abortion, bastard-bearing women, women sorcerers – magic for impotence, female magic for power and social significance, female solidarity, etc.) (see Obrebski 2001a and 2001b). Ilina Jakimovska explains such contradictions – in regard to the patriarchal Macedonian traditional culture and the data that often serve to undermine rather than to confirm the thesis – with the absence of "a firm theoretical framework as a key for interpretation of the sometimes contradictory field data on this topic", so that the researchers "often could not themselves give a final assessment of the situation of the women in the family or in the broader social environment (Jakimovska 2014, 113). The second positive exception is Milenko S. Filipovic who was carrying out research in Western Macedonia and who wrote of women who had typically male and high functions (higher and lower village officials), so he says that "it seems that the rules and regulations were not completely strict anywhere, so the situation of certain women could be quite different thanks either to the personal characteristics of a particular woman or to the circumstances" (Filipović 1991, 11). In the later Macedonian ethnology and anthropology Ilina Jakimovska defines the research performed by Aneta Svetieva as a turning point in regard to the treatment of the

³ In the context of the easiness with which such generalizations are promoted, the term "ottoman women" can be a good illustration (see in Kaser 2008, 34).

woman in the traditional culture, so that “any further insisting on interpreting the gender roles in the Macedonian traditional culture only through the viewpoint of patriarchal and patrilinear has simply become impossible” (Jakimovska 2014, 116). In the text entitled “The status of the woman in the traditional rural community and family”, Svetieva speaks of the mechanisms of female subculture through which the women adopted a significant part of the latent rights, underlining the examples of mother-based extended family as well as the mechanisms of female subculture within the so-called father/brother-based extended family (even in regard to issues of inheritance, property, division of the extended family, as well as various types of domination mechanisms (Svetieva 2001a). Her basic thesis, when it comes to the status of the woman in the family in the Macedonian traditional culture, states that “inside the family structure on existential level, the position of the woman was not as unfavorable as we can sometimes read it was. Practically, there are only very few examples of houses (families) where inside the family relations, the male group has significantly more important place than the female one” (Svetieva 2002, 115–124). According to the examples of the literature of researchers who deal with the status of women in the traditional community, and who oppose the strict patriarchal model, it can be stated that a large number of domains where the woman has a leading role are already familiar and defined in the folk culture. The feminist analyses can easily place these female activities (black magic, female subculture, latent rights, etc.) as categories with smaller social importance full of negative energy, but some anthropologists claim that this “does not represent replacement or compensation for some traumatic state of the woman in the patriarchal society, but it represents a complementary, inevitable, harmonizing segment of the traditional culture and community, which is still termed patriarchal in the contemporary ethnological studies (Risteski 2002, 113). That is exactly why Risteski points to the need for “more subtle and more complex research of all aspects of the folk culture (...) in order to identify the influence of women in the culture and those mechanisms that contribute to the harmony and balance in the male-female relations” (Risteski 2002, 91, 106).

Due to all the difficulties caused by this term and due to the fact that it often serves the stereotypes in a much broader sense except when gender issues are concerned, I agree with Pollert that a change in the discourse is necessary. “In seeking usable language, I prefer terms which carry less of a conceptual or ideological load: what is wrong with ‘male dominated’, or ‘gender relations’ or ‘gendered’ (depending on what we are talking about)? Along with others, such as Bradley (Bradley 1989, 55), I would reserve ‘patriarchy’ or ‘patriarchal’ to specific historical social structures” (Pollert 1996, 654)⁴.

⁴ This warning of Pollert for change of the discourse can be justified with the rhetoric of the following quote: “Patriarchy is a system of male dominance, rooted in the ethos of war which legitimates violence, sanctified by religious symbols, in which

Methodological challenges

Women ethnologists and anthropologists in this research, who have been professionally interested in these issues, are now placed in a position of subjects of research, since they have actually experienced the traditional practice of inheritance law on their own skin in contemporary context within their families. Among the anonymous experiences with the women-interlocutors in this research, the personal experiences of the author of this text are also intertwined, therefore this research is connected with examination of the intimate and personal experience much more directly than what is mentioned above. This is the first methodological challenge for me, without intending to set priorities about what the “adequate” position of the researcher should be in regard to the proximity to or distance from the themes or the subjects of research. Since the dilemmas concerning this type of positioning of the researcher remain unresolved or perhaps unresolvable, in this case it is interesting to possibly detect the difference between the situation in which we approach the problem of traditional practice of women’s inheritance rights in contemporary context with relative “indifference”, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the situation in which we approach the topic carrying the experience that it entails. This means that one might occasionally be emotional and subjective and whatever else that is not linked to the notion of “science”. Since at least we, who are included in this research, still a little naively and idealistically, perhaps, hold on to the idea that our task is primarily to acquire better understanding of the theme, subjects, etc., we can say that the professional and personal aspects are largely intertwined in this “mission”.

All women interlocutors in this research consistently hold on to the thesis that the term “patriarchy” is inadequate to describe in general terms the status of women in the radically divided periods of traditional past or in contemporary context. The research of other scholars’ research, as well as the experiences of the interlocutors in my own field research in regard to this issue truly offer many arguments that contradict the widely (mis)used generalizations, such as the term “patriarchy”⁵. The second methodological challenge raises the question – what happens when one of the main associations for patriarchy will face personally

men dominate women through the control of female sexuality, with the intent of passing property to male heirs, and in which men who are heroes of war are told to kill men, and are permitted to rape women, to seize land and treasures, to exploit resources, and to own or otherwise dominate conquered people” (Christ 2016, 214).

⁵ Filipović 1991; Obrembski 2001a, 2001b, 2002; more directly in the context of the article’s topic see Svetieva 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2002; Risteski 2002; Jakimovska 2009, 2014, and (in print); Cvetanovska 2014.

the women ethnologists and anthropologists who professionally oppose exactly such associations? Within their families they have experienced or are about to experience the principle according to which women are not or are not supposed to be equal-with-men heirs of immovable property.

Following is an illustration about how this process is experienced by a woman immediately after the procedure for division of property after the death of her father. This story is selected due to the intensity in facing the personal problem, as well as because it raises many questions in regard to the problems that the interlocutors face when they are excluded from the family inheritance by their closest relatives in a subtle or not-so-subtle way in the contemporary context in Macedonia – the beginning of the 21st century. Things get even more complicated when this theme is, at the same time, their professional interest and even more when it directly contests their theses in regard to “patriarchy”.

Stories

A brother, a sister and their mother from a town in Macedonia go to a notary, where the division of the property is supposed to be made official after the premature death of their father in 2015. The notary (a woman) is already informed of the results from the division of the property. Despite this, she does not miss the opportunity to express a certain “protest comment” maybe in line with female solidarity, thus she surprisingly emphasizes twice that the daughter does not get anything in this division, because the son inherits the whole property. At the same time, she is glad that this case goes smoothly and with dignity, with previous agreement and deal about the outcome, which means that there will be no unpleasant situations in her office, and it will be a relatively easy working day for her. The outcome of this procedure has already been agreed by the interested parties, in spite of the protests, misunderstanding, objections, etc. Namely, the brother considers that it is logical that he is the only heir. The mother does not comment on that logic, thus putting herself in a position to support him. The sister considers that she should be consulted about the division of the property, that is, that she should be treated as an equal factor in the discussions, regardless of the outcome. She finds the treatment, rather than the material gain or loss as a result of these discussions, problematic. For example, she finds it completely discouraging that she has heard for the first time in the notary’s office of the property her father owns.

The daughter is 36 years old; she is married, and has a daughter. She has lived in the capital for a long time, which means that she has been at a distance from this family’s everyday life, but she has the impression that she is here whenever

these relatives are in need of something. She talks to her mother every day on the phone, and she sees her family, in average, every 2–3 months. The son is 32 years old, he is married and has two daughters. He lives with his parents and his grandmother. In addition to taking care of his nuclear family, he also has the obligation to take care of his parents and grandmother. The impression is that he really does this. For example, when their father was dying, the son was by his side. When his 87-year old grandmother drank a lot of rakia after her son's death, and when she literally lost control of herself, again he was here to deal with this problem. He has experienced many such situations. Life in this kind of extended family is complicated and difficult. On the other side of the scale of “costs and benefits” are the following benefits for the son: his children are always taken care of. Their grandmother and grandfather are always here for them. For example, the mother refers to her son's grandchildren as “our” children, whereas she refers to her granddaughter from her daughter as “your” child. She does not do this on purpose but spontaneously and unconsciously. Additionally, he does not have to take care of the meals during the day because this is provided by his parents. The bills are paid by the old(er) members of the family. They can also help when an investment should be made in something – for example, when buying a car, replacing the house's roof, etc. However, it should be emphasized that after the death of his father, the financial obligations somewhat changed. For example, now he also has to think a lot about how the expenses will be covered.

Since she was 18, the daughter has lived away from this large family. She studied and then was employed in the capital. She rents a flat. Her daughter has practically been raised by her unemployed husband, and lately they have enrolled her in the kindergarten. The meals, bills and rent are her occupation, because whatever your job is in this country, it is becoming increasingly difficult to survive. Her parents have sacrificed a lot so that she can study in the capital. The son, for instance, did not have that opportunity. After she graduated, it can be said that she somehow manages to take care of herself and now of her family as well. She considers that she struggles in life alone for a long time. This struggle without allies is also exceptionally difficult for her. She does not invest in the house as her brother does, and taking into consideration their financial situation throughout the years, she leaned more on friends when she needed help than on her family. She is not present by her father's deathbed. She is not present either when her grandmother drank a lot of rakia, and it was a traumatic situation to deal with. She hears of these things on the phone and is worried.

If we take into consideration that there is a certain balance in regard to “costs and benefits” in living in a large family for the brother and the sister, then how can we answer the main question: *how does one measure or calculate the advantage in reference to the inheritance right without suspecting that gender is still involved in these calculations?*

Taking into consideration the fact that she has not managed yet to establish her own home, the daughter feels even more intensively that when she lost her father, she also lost her “home” in a nostalgic sense as a secure destination whose doors are always open. The son continues in accordance with the idea that he should now be the “pillar of the house” with all possible obligations and responsibilities of a pillar⁶. Thus, both have difficult battles to face regardless of whether they are “romantic” or “practical”. It is simply impossible to measure whose life is more difficult or easier in terms of available family support – the support of their closest relatives.

This story happens to illustrate what things are like when the male offspring treats himself as the “pillar of the house”, while the daughter as an “external eaves”, since in contemporary context, it is difficult for the practical life to follow such ideas about sex/gender predetermined connection with the “house”. For example, if in the traditional community it was considered that marriage partners should have approximately the same social condition, now this condition is considered to be inappropriate in the choice of a marriage partner. The daughter who hasn’t received anything in the allocation of property in her family can easily enter, through a marriage, in a family that considers both the male and female heirs as equally relevant. Besides, her father always emphasized that he had two children, not only one child – which is the term for son in the traditional culture in many areas in Macedonia. The grandmother does not consider this outcome as “normal” either. This is a good illustration about how intensively the traditional and the contemporary practices can interweave in the everyday life of an individual. Additionally, the next important question that is imposed is: would this story have the same outcome if, for example, two brothers were in question, instead of a brother and a sister? Or, for instance, two sisters? The assumptions are that the result would most probably not be the same. This does not mean that in the “pure” situations in sexual sense there are no problems; as such stories are also abundant⁷.

Within the same broader family, more than twenty years ago, a completely contrary situation happened, which will represent the second case of this topic, so that we can see that the generalizations in this sense can be very uncertain. The fact that this situation takes place within the same broader family and the fact that it takes place in the “past” can also illustrate how impossible it is to identify “progress” in a time frame, when it comes to women’s inheritance right within a family, let alone in a broader Macedonian context.

⁶ The term “pillar of the house” refers to the male child is widely used in Macedonian traditional culture, as well as in the interlocutor’s surrounding.

⁷ For similar illustrations about inheritance practices referring to contemporary family life in Macedonia see Petreska 2008, 15–54.

The aunt of the two protagonists from the first story is the protagonist in this story. We will call her Elena. She was closely connected to her grandfather during her whole life. He lived in the house right next to hers, along with his daughter and the son-in-law. However, his granddaughter Elena takes care of him the most, especially in the years when everyone around identifies him as an old man. He had seven children, all of them with their own families and heirs, and he distributed part of the property through an agreement for life-long support. I will not get into the details regarding this distribution, although it is also a very interesting aspect, but I will only tell you the story of Elena. The old man decided to leave the whole ground floor of the house where he lived to his granddaughter from his son – Elena! Elena has confidently accepted the floor of the house. After her father's death, she did not accept herself as an heir when his property was divided, so it remained in the hands of her two brothers. Now Elena uses the floor inherited from her grandfather very successfully – she has made it into a big store, and has been renting it for many years. The heirs of the second floor use it for living. Many of the heirs that consider this act of the grandfather to have been too radical still object, especially for the rent that Elena takes from the store. The rest of the property of this grandfather (forests, farmland, orchards) was equally divided between his 7 children, among whom four males and three females. The grandfather was born in 1909 and died in 1992. In order to illustrate the context of the contemporary practicing of traditional right, the brother from the first story (great grandson) was born in 1983, and received his father's property in 2015. These numbers may be confusing when it comes to “evolution” in regard to women's inheritance rights.

Two interpretations in regard to patriarchy

Taking into consideration the risk that the discussion in this text may sound as a symptom of bipolar disorder, I consider that the two opposing interpretations of the story should be offered in favor of or against the strict traditional patriarchal structure which still lingers in the Macedonian contemporary context.

The supporters of the thesis that there is traditional patriarchal structure in the Macedonian society would interpret this story as a perfect illustration of the status of the woman, who is traditionally situated on the society's margins. This refers to a woman whose realization as an equal member of the family is limited by certain members of the narrow family due to the traditional principle, according to which, the woman is not an heir of the property but is “something” that is transferred from one family to another. She certainly has the opportunity in the contemporary Macedonian society to realize her right to inheritance according to the existing legislative, in a simple way – by accepting herself as an heir to

the family property. She does not do that, and the lack of action or reaction can easily be interpreted as a result of the traditional norms that are still imposed in the contemporary Macedonian society. In this situation, certain quotes are appropriate, such as “I want my brother and I to see each other, visit each other” (according to Petreska 2005, 164).

Another very interesting thesis in this context is the one about women supporters of the patriarchal concept in contemporary society. Arguments from the mentioned story can easily be found in favor of that thesis. According to the summary of those arguments, frequently it is exactly the mothers who reproduce or support the model, according to which their sons have the advantage when it comes to the right to inheritance. The mother can have serious competences in these issues because, in the absence of male authority, she is in a position to choose to support the male position in the family and cheer for its complete realization. The point that is popularly considered disappointing when it comes to women’s rights refers to female support of the female submission in the family. Although the daughter, according to the present legislation, has absolute right to fight for her inheritance right, still, when the costs and benefits are measured in this battle, it is most frequently said that the loss is again on the side of the female. The risk is that they may be accused of greed, of being destroyers of the female relations, while the traditional practices used for pragmatic reasons by the male heirs in the same story receive their justification according to traditional logic. They do not ruin the family relations, but they follow traditional family practices, and there cannot be anything disputable in this. On the other hand, this situation means that the contemporary “practitioners” of the traditional rules consciously or subconsciously (ab)use the traditional norms in regard to inheritance right, so that the invocation of certain generalizations from the traditional past in regard to this issue can be motivated by pragmatic, practical or maybe selfish reasons. The second example from the story corresponds to the thesis about re-introducing traditional norms in the Macedonian society when after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the people have turned back towards the traditional models in many segments of their everyday life. Thus, after the independence of Macedonia, the women face re-actualization of the traditional principles when their status is concerned (see more in the book entitled *Patriarchy after Patriarchy*, where this thesis is discussed in the context of gender issues in Turkey and on the Balkans – Kaser 2008).

Thus, the story may present to us a “contemporary”⁸ woman as humble, alone, without anyone to help her, to ask her, separated from her family, deprived of inheritance, who is unimportant in the family discussions, etc. Such typical representations of women on the Balkans are common in the language

⁸ The quotation marks are supposed to emphasize the relativity of these notions.

of the activists for women's rights. But it is not only the activists, but also the researchers, who frequently put themselves into such a position. Thus, the status of the woman in the following example – of the “rural woman” is treated as a consequence of the traditional prejudices and stereotypes which limit the woman as a result of the “patriarchal pattern dictated by the social and life experience of the rural women (...) It is a long-time fact that the rural woman is marginalized, economically dependent on others, not well educated, overburdened with work in her home and in her agriculture work. The feminization of agriculture follows the underprivileged position of precisely those that carry it on their back, and in the same time are silent and accept the existing situation as something that they found themselves in. (...) The ‘female’ self-initiative finds support only if the people at home have use of it. Nobody ever asked women what they want and if the work is difficult to them? The project raised women's awareness exactly in this vein. They finally speak and think for themselves. There is an impression that soon they will start speaking in their own home. (...) By empowering their position in the private and public sphere, the necessary conditions for changing the deeply entrenched patriarchal consciousness are acquired, thus establishing strategies for gender equality as a necessary condition for the modern developmental processes” (Stjepanović-Zaharijevski 2006, 240, 235, 241). Can we, then, conclude that both the “village” and the “urban”, the one from the “past” and the “contemporary” woman have been in the same situation for centuries? Just like that?

On the other hand, the researchers that mind these kinds of statements, according to their convictions, would go into a different direction. They would probably take into consideration the following aspects of the story as significant in order to emphasize the nuances when it comes to the status of women in Macedonia. The woman from the story lives alone since she was 18, at first with the support of her parents, but soon even without that support. She studied, again with a strong support from her parents, unlike her brother who did not have that opportunity. In her family, she is employed, which means that she performs all the well-known “male” responsibilities, according to the patriarchal model: rent, food, bills, etc. Her husband is unemployed, and takes care of their daughter. This includes all “female” obligations and responsibilities, this time performed by a man. Her father has never differentiated in this sense between the son and the daughter. Her grandmother is also surprised by the decision that she does not inherit anything. This information blurs the conclusions that the whole family or, more globally, the whole society cherishes the patriarchal principles today. In this sense, there is a potential to question the thesis of re-establishing traditionalism in the context of the status of women. According to this interpretation, the “woman” does not necessarily have to be treated as humble, dominated, insignificant, etc.

Conclusion

The individual has probably always been some kind of a factor, regardless of the rough division into collectivist = traditional and individual = contemporary societies. Even if we follow this division, today in the global world the individuals have greater opportunities (at least when women from this research are concerned) to get information on the relativity of things, which could enable them to leave the alleged traditional restraints if such are imposed by their society or culture. This defying can be considered a value, for example according to the feminist activists. The ethnologists and the anthropologists, depending on their convictions, find information about the traditional past in which, according to the ideal order, patriarchy rules, and about individuals who have dared to defy patriarchy and more generally the ideal model, considering their needs as priority. They don't necessarily have to be unrealized, unadjusted or otherwise labeled as "special" individuals. During our field research, we encounter elderly men and women "raised in accordance with patriarchal norms" who do not fit into the model. The dominant women, dominated men, various personalities and characters always individually appear and contradict the theses of strictly patriarchal order. In the everyday life, the exceptions and exits from the patriarchal model or any other model are more frequent than the models recognize. Therefore, the discussions about the women's fight and the "corresponding" reactions, that is, rebellions in regard to women's inheritance right in contemporary context and its traditional application should take into consideration the different, specific, individual interpretations of what is power and what is domination, who owns them formally and practically, as well as other related issues. In case of this research, the conflict is much more narrowly limited than the alleged patriarchal restraints imposed by the society, and comes down to an unexpected treatment by some of the interlocutor's closest relatives. In circumstances when during their life they did not feel limited by the male domination as the term patriarchy suggests, such stories can actually be treated as exception. The fact that they do not feel the need to insist on their woman's inheritance right can mean a conscious distancing from the fights that may have material or materialistic motivation, because that is in accordance with their personal values. Thus, this situation can be treated by those who believe in the patriarchal restraints as abandoning the model that involves the female struggle against male domination. The issues are usually much more personal and far less ordered than what is covered by the patriarchal model, but also the model against patriarchy. This is how things stand when we talk about family or personal stories. The advocacy or the support of women's rights activists in this context could have a contrary effect. Activism, however, has a completely different point when on institutional level things are set in favor of gender inequality. It is worth waging battles, and

perhaps even give labels, for this issue. However, when it comes to the notions “woman”, “contemporary” or “modern”, “traditional” or if she is determined even in more details geographically or culturally as an example of a “Balkan woman”, “Ottoman woman”, etc. there are much fewer specific data to support these qualifications, and many more labels that only contribute to stereotypes.

The abandoning of the models by individuals in their everyday life seldom allow for statistical or quantitative representation, but that does not mean that they do not exist. Therefore it is worth to have the researchers get out from the models at least occasionally, and accordingly – to get out of the patriarchal model even when it is used only as an analytic tool.

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Ana Ashtalkovska Gajtanoska
Institut za etnologiju i antropologiju, Skoplje, Makedonija

*Kćer koja se odrekla nasledstva:
etnografija ženskih prava na nasleđivanje i
njihove primene u savremenom makedonskom kontekstu*

Ovaj tekst se bavi iskustvima nekolicine etnološkinja/antropološkinja u vezi ženskih prava na nasleđivanje i s tradicionalnim praksama koje se koriste u savremenom kontesktu u Makedoniji. Ženska nasledna prava i tradicionalne norme koje, prema idealnom modelu, preporučuju da žena ne može biti naslednica nekretnina, rađaju asocijacije na balkanski patrijarhat. Žene, koje su bile sagovornice u istraživanju, smatrale su da termin “patrijarhat” nije adekvatan da se opiše status žena u radikalno drugačijim uslovima proisteklim iz tradicionalne prošlosti i savremenog doba. Stoga, ova situacija predstavlja ozbiljan metodološki izazov u kontekstu istraživane teme, kada svakodnevna iskustva istraživačica izgledaju kao da su u suprotnosti s njihovim polaznim tezama o patrijarhatu.

Ključne reči: nasleđivanje, žena, tradicijska zajednica, savremeni kontekst, patrijarhat, modeli

La fille qui a renoncé à son héritage: ethnographie des droits de femmes à l'héritage et leur application dans le contexte contemporain en Macédoine

Ce texte analyse les expériences de plusieurs femmes ethnologues/anthropologues concernant les droits d'héritage des femmes et les pratiques traditionnelles à l'usage dans le contexte contemporain en Macédoine. Les droits d'héritage des femmes et les normes traditionnelles, qui, selon le modèle idéal, recommandent que la femme ne soit pas héritière de la propriété immobilière, font d'emblée naître des associations liées au patriarcat dans les Balkans. Les interlocutrices dans cette recherche s'en tiennent fermement à la thèse selon laquelle le terme de "patriarcat" serait inadéquat pour décrire de façon générale le statut des femmes dans les périodes radicalement séparées du passé traditionnel et du contexte contemporain. C'est pourquoi le thème de la recherche donnée présente un grand défi méthodologique, étant donné que les expériences de la vie quotidienne des chercheuses semblent contredire leurs thèses concernant le patriarcat.

Mots clés: droits d'héritage, femmes, communauté traditionnelle, contexte contemporain, patriarcat

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