

## Impacto of Communism Policy on Religion Identity in Pogradec District, Albania

**Authors :** Gjergji Buzo

**Abstract :** This paper presents the communist policy about tangible and intangible religious heritage in Pogradec District, Albania. The district of Pogradec lies in the southeast of Albania and consists of the municipality, located on the shore of Ohrid Lake, and 7 Administrative Units, with a population of about 61,530 inhabitants. From the statistical data provided by the Institute of Statistics, the city of Pogradec has 55.9% Muslims, 19.9% Orthodox, 1.4% Catholic and 1.1% Bektashi. While the religious affiliation in the Administrative Unit is as follows: Muslim 72.1%, Orthodox 3.32%, Catholic 1.18%, Bektashi 0.2%. The percentages are approximate values, taking into consideration that 13.8% of the total population preferred not to answer the question on religion and that for 2.4% of the persons who answered, the information provided was not relevant or stated. The percentage of the persons who declared themselves as believers without belonging to any religion was 5.5 and the persons who declared themselves as a non-believer and not belonging to any religion was 2.5. Number of persons who declared themselves as evangelists was 0.1% and the number of them declared as "other Christians" was 0.1%. About 80% of the population believe in God, and most of them practice one of the monotheist religions. We have divided religious practices into three major periods. The first is until 1967, when different religions were practiced in Pogradec in harmony with each other; the second is the period 1967-1990, during which the practice of religion was prohibited, and the period after 1990, when religious freedom was restored. This article is focused on the communist period 1967-1990 when Albania (and Pogradec as part of it) became the only atheist country in the world. The object of the study is the impact of these policies on spiritual and material religious identity. The communist regime destroyed or transformed the religious objects, whether Islamic or Christian and prohibited practicing religious rituals in Albania. They followed an education policy with an atheistic spirituality among young people, characterizing religion as opium for the people. All these left traces on the people and brought a deformation of the religious identity. In order to better understand the reality of that time and how this policy was experienced by the people, we conducted a survey in Pogradec District with the participation of 1000 people.

**Keywords :** communism policy, heritage, identity, religion, statistics, survey

**Conference Title :** ICRRS 2024 : International Conference on Religion and Religious Studies

**Conference Location :** New York, United States

**Conference Dates :** March 18-19, 2024