

SURVIVING AND DESTROYED CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL MONUMENTS IN THE ŽUPAS OF GORA AND SREDSKA AND PART OF PRIZRENSKI PODGOR IN ŠAR MOUNTAIN*

Three mountain župas (roughly: districts) in Šar Mountain (Serbian: Shar-Mountain) - Gora, Opolje and Sredska - bear their unchanged Slavic names, which are common to all Slavic languages. Gora is synonymous for a mountain and forest (mons, montis, silva, silvae). Opolje is a valley (campus) hemmed in on all sides by mountains and cliffs. Sredska is also a Slavic word and denotes a mountain district with a score of hamlets, on and just below the peaks of the Šar Mountain system in the upper flow of the River Prizrenska Bistrica.

Gora

The oldest known mediaeval Serbian source about villages and hamlets of Gora is the well-known Charter of the Monastery of the Holy Archangels near Prizren, signed by Tsar Dušan in 1348, setting up the monastery and gifting it many villages. According to the Charter, the villages of the Gora župas had the duty to give sentries, in the number determined by the prior, to stand guard over the monastery and the city: "All villages of Gora and Šiklja (today in Albania) are to stand guard in the monastery in the number to be determined by the Prior". Of the special duties, the Charter listed that the people of the village of Brod should shepherd the church's sheep to pasture for a monthly wage and were exempt from paying tax on the use of the pastures, while the village of Rapča should provide tinder for the monastery's fire. The Turkish census of 1452-55 included also the Gora nahiyah (Turkish for district). The census gave the names of the villages and the Slavic names of the people, and was important both for its account of the region and for its antiquity, being part of the oldest surviving Turkish census that included Serbian lands.

The fall of Prizren to the Turks in 1455 completed the conquest of these Serbian župas. In the Turkish census of 1452-55, the names of the villages of

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Gora were absolutely Slavic and the names of the people were mostly Slavic or at least Christian, i.e. taken from the Christian calendar.

In all twenty villages of Gora there are traces of forty-one Serbian Orthodox temples - ruins of churches and of one anchorite settlement, as well as 23 ancient Christian cemeteries. Of these ruins, five are believed to have been monasteries: **St. Demetrius's in Brod**, which as legend says housed the Bishop's Seat; in Vranište; in Veliki Krstac, where meadows outside the village are still called Kaludjerci (Monks' Property); in **Ljubovište, Zli Potok, Globočica, Radeša and Restelica**. Of nine Gorany villages - Borje, Zapod, Košarište, Novo Selo, Orgošta, Orešak, Pakiša, Crnoljevo and Šištevac - given to Albania under the 1925 peace treaty, churches existed in **Borje, Zapod, Šištevac and Košarište (St. Mrata)**. There is knowledge also of the existence of an **epigraph in the Cyrillic script (at Zli Potok), silver icon lamps, (at Ljubovište), chest and ceremonial crosses (at Brod and Radeša), icons and old bibles (at Brod), and marble fonts (at Zli Potok and Restelica)**. The existence of early Slavic, archaeologically unexplored localities, is evident in the names of localities such as Mogila, Mogilište and the like. There has been no archaeological research in this part of our country on a single landmark in the past 150 years since archaeology developed as a science in Serbia.

Sredska

The Sredska or Sredačka župa, saved from total Islamisation, preserved to the present day an imposing number of undamaged churches: 12 were built chiefly at the time of the restored Peć Patriarchate in 1557. Their endowers, judging from inscriptions on the frescoes, were villagers of the Sredska župa. **These churches are in Bogoševci, Gornje Selo, Dražiči, Mušnikovo, Planjan, Sredska and the recently restored churches in Živinjane and Lokvica**. The church in the village of Planjane retains a headstone dating back to 1363, with a carefully etched text by Monk Kalinik, which is among the most beautiful surviving examples of Serbian epigraphy of the 14th century.

The architecture, murals and icons of the churches in the Sredska župa are an important link in the chain of Serbian church art between the 16th and 19th centuries.

In addition to the 12 surviving churches in the Serbian-speaking Serbian and Muslim villages of the Sredska župa, there are another 14 church ruins and three hermitages.

The Sredska churches guard more than 100 icons and other artifacts, among them a censer dating back to the 14th century, church bells from the 19th century, clappers, inscribed rattles and other ritual artifacts.

There is a unique huge stone trough for watering livestock, about 4.5 metres long, found by the natural spring near the Church of the Holy Mother of God overlooking the hamlet of Pejčiči on the outskirts of the župas's biggest

village - Sredska. This was where, in the period of intensive stock farming, the villagers watered their animals, which in some villages numbered thousands of head.

We have included in this study of the cultural and historical monuments of Gora and Sredska three villages of the župas of Prizrenski Podgor - Ljubižda, Koriša and Musutište - with their destroyed churches and expelled Serbs.

The village of Ljubižda, situated 4 km northeast of Prizren, was mentioned in the 1348 Charter of Tsar Dušan to his endowment, Monastery of the Holy Archangels, by the name of Ljubižnja, with "Ljubo's Church" and two "Ljubo's vineyards" in it.

The village had 11 churches, of which only the Church of St. Nicholas is still standing intact, while the others have been destroyed, with only foundations and lower portions of the walls still showing.

The Church of St. Nicholas was built in the 16th century at the time of the Restored Peć Patriarchate in 1557. Its original murals have not survived. Macedonian fresco painter Vasilije Krstić-Daskalević of the Djinovski family of Debar of which he left a signed inscription painted the existing ones in 1867. The only surviving church is a veritable repository of icons, church books, hymnals and other artifacts brought from destroyed churches in Ljubižda and the surrounding Islamised villages, and even from the Monastery of the Holy Archangels, endowment of Tsar Dušan, after its destruction.

There are remnants of the following churches in the village: St. Saviour, St. Petka, St. John, Holy Sunday near the village fountain and another Church of Holy Sunday in the hamlet of St. John, another Church of St. Nicholas in the same hamlet, then the Church of the Holy Healers, St. Elijah at the Serbian cemetery, St. George and the Holy Archangels in the yard of the present-day mosque.

The village of Koriša is situated 6 or 7 km northeast of Prizren. It was mentioned by that name in two charters by Tsar Stefan Dušan (English: Stephen Dušan) - in 1343 and 1348. The village had five churches: the church and monastery of Sts. Peter and Paul, the ruins of another church - the Church of St. George in today's Serbian cemetery, the third church is in the south part of the village, in the hamlet still known as Duh (Spirit), the fourth church - the Church of Holy Sunday, stood in today's village crossroads, and no part of it has survived, the fifth church - the Church of the Shroud of the Holy Mother of God, was the only one left standing by June of 1999.

To the east of and above the village, in what is known as the area of Koriška Gora, are the ruins of anchorite settlements: the anchorite Church of St. Peter of Koriša, the Church of St. Helen, two churches in the Luka district, ruins of what was possibly the Church of St. John on an obliterated Serbian cemetery above the building of the village school, the Monastery of St. Mark and the anchorite church attached to it, the ruins of the Mužljak Monastery and the anchorite Church of the Holy Trinity of Rusinica.

The Monastery of the **Holy Apostle Mark** is on a ledge overlooking the River Koriša. Over the centuries, it has been ravaged and rebuilt many times, until in 1996 it was finally restored and a dormitory built on, so that monks moved in the next year. In the summer of 1999, however, local ethnic Albanians ravaged it again.

The ruins of the **Mužljak** Monastery stand on a white cliff in the wide expanse of the Rusinica forest, northeast, close to the Monastery of St. Mark.

Mušutište is a village in Prizrenski Podgor, in the foothills of Mt. Ikona, some 15 or 16 km northeast of Prizren. Until July of 1999, the old Serbian Church of the Holy Mother of God built in the early 14th century stood in the village.

Above the entrance to the church stood one of the oldest, longest and, in terms of composition and purity of the etching, most beautiful epigraphs of the 14th century. It read that the church was built in 1315 by the great bailiff (governor of crown estates) Dragoslav, with his wife Jelena, son Staniša and daughter Ana.

There were also several minor churches in Mušutište. The Monastery of the **Holy Trinity of Rusinica** stood until July of 1999 on a hillock overlooking the village of Mušutište, in the foothills of Mt. Rusinica, some 2 km south of the village.

Mediaeval anchorite retreats: in the župas of Gora, Opolje and Sredska, as well as in the župas of Prizrenski Podgor, there existed a considerable number of mediaeval monastic anchorite retreats, of which only the names and occasional ruins have survived to this day: the Hermitage and ruins of the **Monastery of St. Peter of Koriša**, with accompanying church sites. This is considered to have been the mainspring of eremitism in the Prizren area.

Many of these churches, monasteries and hermitages held hundreds of manuscripts in the Cyrillic script, a number of rulers' charters and legal codes by kings and Tsars: King Dragutin (reigned from 1276 to 1282), King Milutin (1282-1321), King Stefan Dečanski (1321-1331), King (later Tsar) Dušan (1331-1355), and Tsar Uroš (1355-1371). Hundreds of these manuscripts and charters have been plundered and scattered in the 19th and 20th centuries all over the world, some of which are to be found today in London, Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Bucharest, Sofia, Moscow, St. Petersburg and Odessa. More than 1,300 old Serbian Cyrillic manuscripts were destroyed in the fire that gutted the Serbian National Library in the German bombing of Belgrade on 6th April 1941. Among them 90 or 500 volumes were brought back from Kosovo and Metohija. Of this number, 7 were from Prizren, among which the well known 13th century Prizren Gospel.