

ŠAR (SHAR) MOUNTAIN AND ITS ŽUPAS IN SOUTH SERBIA'S KOSOVO-METOHIA REGION*

- Geographical position and multiethnic characteristics –

The geographical position of Šar Mountain and the župas of Gora, Opolje, Sredska and Sirinić

Šar Mountain is a vast and complex morphotectonic structure stretching between the south part of the Kosovo basin, the Crnoljeva and Crna Gora Mountains (Skopska Crna Gora and Kumanovo-Preševo Karadrag), the Tetovo (Gornji Polog and Donji Polog) and Metohia-Prizren basins, Mt. Korab (2,764m), Koritnik and the Ljuma region in northeast Albania.

Šar Mountain marks the beginning of a separate morphotectonic massif of the Dinaric Alps, known in classical geological and geomorphological literature as the Shar-Pindus mountain system. Its tectonic lines and ranges curve from the south-north direction to southwest-northeast, looming over a deep tectonic depression between the Zeta-Skadar-Medovo littoral and the Metohia-Prizren basin in the Beli Drim river valley, just as on the opposite, northwest side, the Dinaric Alps in the area of the Komovo, Mokra and Prokletija mountains swing over the Zeta plain, the Drim and Metohia from the dominant "Dinaric direction" of northwest-southeast to the "Metohia direction" of southwest-northeast. This creates "the most important transversal valley of the western half of Šar Mountain through which used to run the Zeta Road, the ancient Via de Zenta, the chief transversal route of the Nemanjić state *"between the Dinaric and the Šar-Pindus mountain systems, with influences and functions that helped towards diversification of the ethnographic and historical development of the population."*¹

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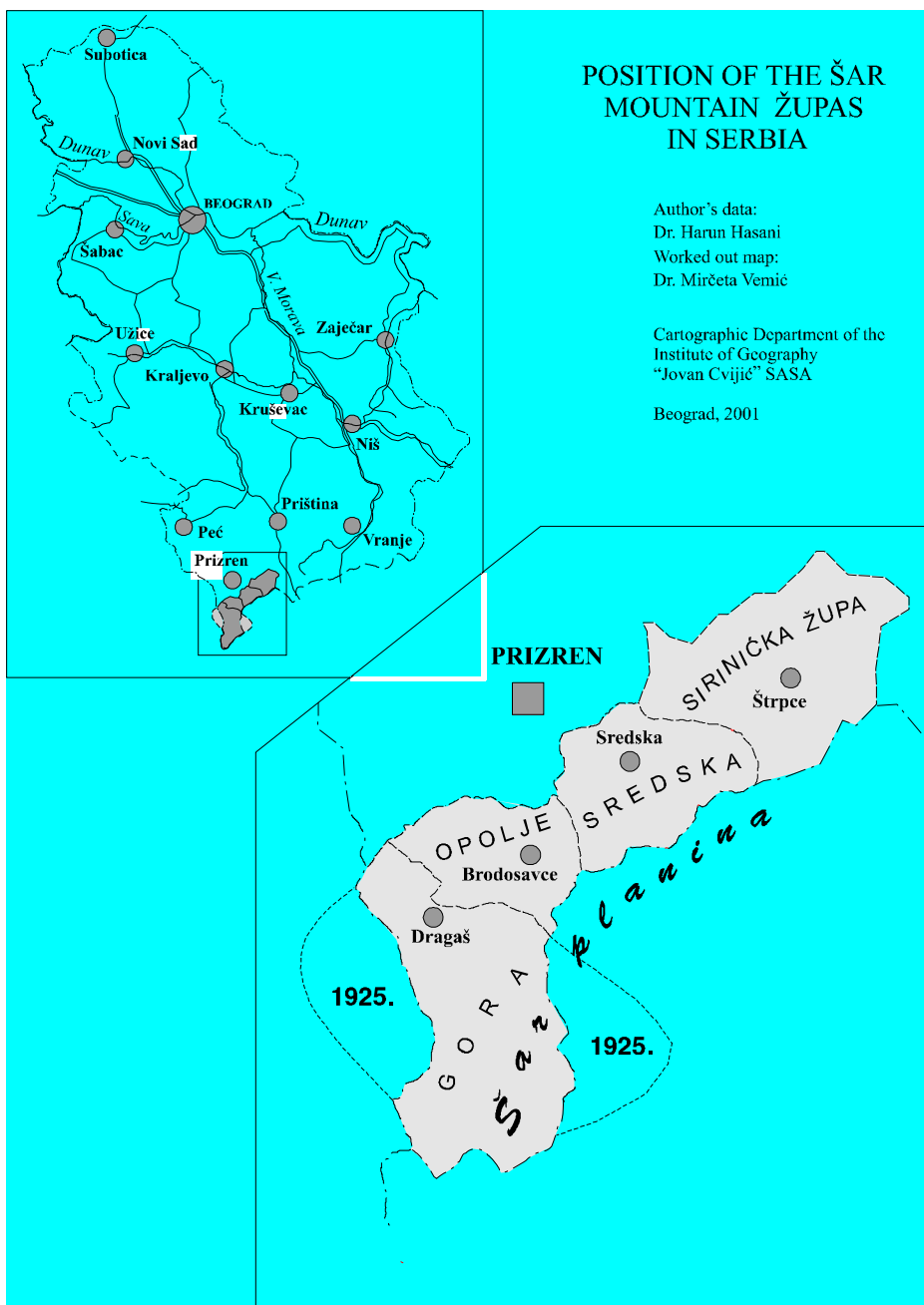
¹ Цвијић Ј. (1906), **Основе за географију и геологију Македоније и Старе Србје** (*Basic Elements for the Geography and Geology of Macedonia and Old Serbia*), књ. 1, Београд, , стр. 22-26, 27-28; Радовановић М.В. (1994), **Shara - Scardus -Catena Mundi** (*Šar Mountain - Scardus - Catena Mundi*), **Лековите сировине** (*Medicinal*

Šar Mountain, under the name of Scardus, was designated an orographic and hydrographical hub of the western and central Balkans by ancient geographers Strabo (b. 63 BC, d. AD 24) and Ptolemy (2nd century AD) in the conception of a Central Ridge, referred to since the 16th century as Catena Mundi or Catena del Mondo (The Chain of the World). The erroneous concept of a Central Ridge, which supposedly formed a high mountain barrier "between the wild northern areas and the civilized south" was maintained also in the Peutinger Table and other itineraries of the Roman times, as well as later, at the time of the Renaissance and, in some sources, until the second half of the 19th century. Individual maps wrongly gave Šar Mountain as Monte Argentaro (Mt. Kopaonik). *Coronelli's* 17th-century map marked especially the Šarpeak of Ljuboten (2,499m), which Austrian topographers of the 1870's represented to be the highest peak in Šar Mountain (3,050m).

Regardless of the misconceptions about the Central Ridge, which were slowly removed from European cartography under the influence of *Ami Boué* and *H. Kiepert*², all sources have always described Šar Mountain as the chief orographic hub which has, through all historical epochs, played a specific part in the regional structure of the Serbian and neighbouring Balkan states, as well as in ethnic processes in the entire region between Metohia, Kosovo, Vardarska Macedonia, West Macedonia and North Albania. This role was particularly evident in their political, ethnic and cultural history, since the Šar Mountain system extends in the south and southwest transitional and contact zones towards north Albanian tribes and territories of ethnic symbiosis between Serbs and Albanians. During all historical epochs, complex ethnic processes unfolded in the Šar Mountain system and its immediate neighbourhood (the Prizren, Ljuma-Dukagjin, Polog, Skopje-Vardar and Kosovo basins), which were mostly influenced by population migrations and military campaigns: settling of Serbs in northern and central Albania since the early Middle Ages, which is best evident from a wide-spread use of Serbian Slavic toponyms; Turkish invasions (from the 1370's and 1380's until 1455); Austrian-Turkish and Serbian-Turkish wars and the huge migrations of Serbs that they triggered; constant Albanian penetration in migrational streams; ethnic symbioses and ethnic amalgamations between Serbs, floating masses of Macedonian Slavs, Albanians, old Balkan Wallachians, Yürük Turks and other ethnic entities and substrata; during Turkish rule (1455-

Raw Materials), књ. 13, Институт за проучавање лековитог биља "Јосиф Панчић", Београд, стр. 11.

² *Ami Boué, La Turquie d'Europe, Paris, 1840, 1842 (European Part of Turkey Between the Years 1837 and 1842)*. Famous French geographer and researcher Ami Boué published several works of special interest to knowledge about the natural and anthropogeographical characteristics of Kosovo, Metohia and other south Serbian regions; *Kiepert H. (1853), Generalkarte von der europ. Türkei nach allen vorhandenen und itinerarischen Hilfsmitteln (General map of the European part of Turkey according to all existing and travel guiding materials)*, Berlin.



Map 1. *Position of the Šar Mountain župas in Serbia*[♦]

[♦] In all maps presented in this book the territory of Gora is shown according to delimitation between Yugoslavia and Macedonia attained in 2001.

1912), ethnic processes and changes were also strongly influenced by the Islamisation and Albanisation of Serbs and the remaining Wallachians. Being in the centre of these areas in which ethnic processes were especially intense, the Šar Mountain region, settled in pre-historic and ancient times and the early Middle Ages, *acquired the characteristics and functions of a recipient of both kindred and diverse ethnic groups and stratified ethnocultural substrata, similar to some other mountain regions* (the Alps, the Pyrenees, Caucasus, the Altai Mountains, etc.). The acquisition of these ethnic features was especially helped by the orographic structure of the Šar Mountain system, which is characterised by mountain-sheltered valleys in the basins of the rivers Plav, Prizrenska Bistrica (draining into the Adriatic sea) and Lepenac (Aegean sea), with the unique hydrographic phenomenon of bifurcation of the Nerodimka in south Kosovo (the Black Sea system). Those are Šar Mountain valleys of **Gora, Opolje, Sredska** and **Sirinić**, dotted with numerous archeologically insufficiently explored traces of human habitation dating back to Neolithic and antique times and the early Middle Ages. Even before their annexation to the mediaeval Serbian state in the late 12th and the 13th centuries, these mountain basins were swamped with Serbian Slavic people, which can best be seen from the Slavic onomastics and endowment charters of Serbian rulers to church estates, in which were mentioned most present-day localities in the Šar Mountain region. In mediaeval Serbia **Gora, Opolje, Sredska** and **Sirinić** were incorporated into the system of administrative, territorial and feudal organisation of the Serbian state, when they were granted the status of župas (roughly: districts) as the basic geographical and administrative units.

Ethnocultural changes that occurred in the Šar Mountain region during the long Turkish rule produced ethnic and cultural differentiation and ethnic consolidation of the population of *the Šar Mountain župas*, and the creation of territorially defined analogous ethnic buffer zones. These buffer zones, with the exception of an Albanian enclave in Opolje, split and funnelled Albanian penetration from north Albania towards the central Kosovo-Metohija areas of Old Serbia and retained the features and functions of an eccentric southwestern axis of the Serbian ethnic territory. Meanwhile, the Šar Mountain region, taken as a whole, with its župa seats, acquired pronounced multiethnic and multicultural characteristics, which have been maintained for centuries by nurturing traditional cultural values and mutual tolerance.

Etymology of the word župas and the Slavic origin of the names of the Šar Mountain župas

The designation župa has existed in all Slavic nations, except the Russian, since the time of their tribal organisation and the emergence of the first state communities and administrative and territorial units. Among the South

Slavs, župa is deeply rooted with the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and has become part of many regional and local names in all central Balkan, Pannonian, Dinaric, Alpine and coastal South Slavic lands, acquiring very early (certainly between the 9th and 10th centuries) the meaning of a separate geographical, administrative and ethnographic unit in the hierarchy of territorial state organisation. **Župa** primarily denotes "a natural entity of lesser dimensions" which stands out geographically because of its relief and favourable climatic features: a mild climate, sheltered from cold winds, exposed to a lot of sunlight, and suitable for settling and farming. Also, division of some regions into župas and natural entities has special importance to ethnic and cultural processes. Jovan Cvijić thus wrote: "*the people of a župa were to some extent exposed to a different evolution...* It would appear that the fragmentation of relief was especially conducive to local ethnographic diversities evident in one and the same Balkan nation."³ Ethnic processes in the župas of Šar Mountain confirm this.

The concept of **župa**, in many ways linked also to the administrative organisation of Serbian lands in the Middle Ages, was a basic category in its hierarchy. **The seats** of župas were towns, as a rule, but "there were župas with no towns or, more likely, with a town consisting only of the home of the chieftain, without a town settlement, without a city."⁴

The Šar Mountain **župas** were precisely of this kind. They were expressly mentioned in mediaeval Serbian legal documents - endowment charters by Serbian rulers to monastic estates: Khilandar Monastery on Mt. Athos in 1276, 1308, etc., Dečani Monastery in 1330, the Prizren Episcopate in 1336, the Monastery of the Holy Archangels at Prizren in 1349, 1355, etc., listing most present-day localities by their present-day names. The status, rights and obligations of a župa were specifically regulated in the *Zakonik* (code of laws) of Serbian Tsar Stefan Dušan (English: Stephen Dushan) at state assemblies in Skopje in 1349 and in Serez in 1354.

The *Zakonik* of Serbian Tsar Stefan Dušan incorporated **župa** into the system of legal regulations of mediaeval Serbia, whose administrative hierarchy consisted of **lands, cities, župas and krajištes**. "Župas and krajištes were one and the same, with the župas along the borders called krajištes." The basic units of habitation were villages. Therefore a **župa** was more an administrative and geographical concept, *and villages did in fact all that župa was said to do*⁵. **Župa** and **županija** acquired a wider meaning in the administrative structure of countries under Austrian rule (eg. **županijas** in Croatia, Slavonia and Srem in the mid-19th century), whence they were taken, with the meaning of regional

³ Цвијић Ј. (1987), *Балканско полуострво (The Balkan Peninsula)*, Сабрана дела (*Collected Works*), књ. 2, Београд, стр. 85-87.

⁴ Новаковић С. (1965), *Село (The Village)*, Српска књижевна задруга, коло LVIII, књ. 393, Београд, стр.22-23, 24, 25-28.

⁵ *Ibid.*, стр. 22-23, 24, 28-29.

administrative units, and incorporated into the 1921 Vidovdan Constitution of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The present-day Republic of Croatia has reintroduced **županijas** into territorial division.

The concept of **župa** has survived in Serbian lands of central and southern Serbia, especially in Kosovo and Metohia, as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina, through the geographical names of regional and historical-geographical entities, with deep roots in folk tradition. In Kosovo and Metohia there are the following župas: *Topolnica, Letnica, Lab, Lugovi, Nerodimlje, Paunpolje, Sitnica, Zagorje, Zvečan, Banjska, Ibarski Kolašin, Jelci, Drenica, Lapušnik, Altin, Vokš, Drškovina, Hvosno, Patkovo, Reka, Zatrnavo, Suhogrlo, Trnava, Prizrenski Podgor, Gora, Opolje, Sredska (Sretečka) and Sirinić*⁶. In view of this, the term **župa** was always stressed in the titles of studies on the Šar Mountain region prepared in the 1989-94 period by research teams and published by the "Jovan Cvijić" Geographical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts⁷.

Important in the etymological study of the term **župa** are observations by Petar Skok, who notes that there are two chief directions in etymological interpretation: according to Brückner et al., **župa** and **župan** are of Avar origin (like kagan>kan, bajan>bojan>ban), as confirmed in some Old Bulgarian writings; according to M. Budimir, **župa** is pre-Slavic in origin, while **župan** is a derivation. Brugmann, who saw a connection with the Sanscrit gup (put away, guard) and gopa (guard), and with some Greek and German terms gave a similar interpretation. It is interesting to note that Persson saw an ancient kinship between **župa** and the Gothic gawi, which was the origin of the New German Gau⁸. S. Ristic and J. Kangrga translated the German Gau as *župa, kraj* (area), *kotar* (area), or *srez* (district), *Gaugraf* as *župan, knez* (chieftain), *regional headman*, and *Gaugrafschaft* as *županija, okrug* (district)⁹. Niko Županić (alias K. Gersin), in a German-language discourse on Old Serbia and the Albanian question, introduced the above German terms as analogous with *župa, župan* and *županija* in Serbo-Croatian terminology¹⁰. In the same text, Županić also listed and described the župas of Šar Mountain.

⁶ Вукановић Т. (1986), *Срби на Косову (Serbs in Kosovo)*, књ. 1, Врање, стр. 12-16.

⁷ Видети: **Општина Штрпце – Сиринићка жупа. Одлике природне средине** (See: Štrpce Municipality, Sirinić Župa – Environmental Characteristics), Посебна издања Географског института "Јован Цвијић" САНУ, књ. 37/1, Београд, 1990; **Шарпланинске жупе Гора, Опоље и Средска (Šar Mountain Župas of Gora, Opolje and Sredska)**, Посебна издања Географског института "Јован Цвијић" САНУ, књ. 40/II, Београд, 1995.

⁸ Skok P. (1973), **Етимолошки рјечник хрватскога или српскога језика** (Etymological Dictionary of the Croatian or Serbian Language), књ. 3, Jugoslavenska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, Zagreb, str. 687, 688.

⁹ Ристић С., Кангрга Ј. (1936), **Енциклопедијски немачко-српскохрватски речник** (German-Serbo-Croatian Encyclopaedic Dictionary), Београд.

¹⁰ Županić N. (Gersin K.) (1912), **Altserbien und die Albanesishe Frage (Old Serbia and the Albanian Question)**, Vienna-Leipzig, pp. 26-27.

We note that French and English terminologies do not have a term that would be analogous with **župa** and its derivatives. The 1916 French war manual of military information on North Serbia (La Serbie septentrionale), in the chapter on the Šar and Crna Gora mountains (Les Montagnes du Sud - Les massifs Char Mountain et Tsrna Gora), *specifically mentioned the Šar Mountain župas of Gora, Sredska and Sirinić as "les petits bassins" characterised by a "remarkable mixture of Muslims and Orthodox Christians"*. Here it was written: "Dans les petits bassins qui s'alignent au N. du Char Mountain, au delà de la cuvette de Prizren, on observe aussi un mélange remarquable de musulmans et d'orthodoxes: celui de *Gora* est exclusivement peuplé par de musulmans qui ne parlent que le Serbe et vivent en hostilité constante avec les Albanais. Au delà du bassin de Gora, le bassin de *Sredska* se partage presque également entre musulmans (486 maisons) et orthodoxes (420); puis, toujours vers le Nord, *Sirinitsch* compte 10 villages serbes (741 maisons serbes sur 795) contre 7 villages albanais; beaucoup de paysans serbes de ces petits bassins doivent émigrer"¹¹. This text made no mention of *Opolje*, probably because the French authors considered the *Opolje* župas to be part of *Gora*, with which *Opolje* does not have a clear natural boundary. French summaries of the anthropogeographical monographs on *Gora*, *Opolje* and *Sirinić* by Milisav Lutovac and Atanasije Urosević translated **župa** as "une petite région montagneuse"¹². Also, the French war manual, in the section on the Crnoljeva and Čičavica mountains ("Tsrnoliéva montagne et Tchitchavitsa montagne"), said the *Sirinić župa* lies in the high plain of the Lepenac which "*forme un petit canton montagnard*, presque formé des tous les côtes et dont les relations se dirigent aussi bien vers Prizren que vers la plaine de Kossovo; il comprend 17 villages dont 9 serbes, 7 albanais, et 1 mixte"¹³.

¹¹ Notice sur la Serbie septentrionale, Ministère de la Guerre, Commissions de Géographie du Service géographique de l'Armée, Imprimerie nationale (*Note on North Serbia, Ministry of War, Commission for Geography of the Army Geographical Service*), Paris, 1916, pg. 38. - This manual lists cartographic and geographical sources consulted in its preparation, viz.: Carte de l'Europe Centrale, publiée par l'Institut géographique militaire de Vienne; Carte en 34 feuilles de la partie méridionale de l'ancien royaume de Serbie et de Vielle Serbie..., Exécutée par l'Etat Major Serbe et reproduite par le Service géographique de l'Armée à Paris, etc. Of the French-language bibliography, also quoted are the following works by French geographer Gaston Gravier: L'émancipation économique de la Serbie, Soc. de Géogr. commerciale de Paris, XXXVIII, juin 1911, pp. 417-432; Le développement économique de la Serbie, Ann. de Géographie, XXI, 1912, pp. 50-56; La Nouvelle Serbie, Revue de Paris, 15 nov. 1913; L'Albanie et ses limites, Revue de Paris, 1^{er} et 15 janvier 1913; La Vieille Serbie et Les Albanais, Revue de Paris, 1^{er} novembre 1911.

¹² Лутовац М. (1955), **Гора и Ополје – антропогеографска проучавања** (*Gora and Opolje – Anthropogeographical Studies*), Српска академија наука и уметности, Насеља и порекло становништва (Localities and the origin of the population), књ. 35, Београд, стр. 313; Урошевић А. (1948), **Шарпланинска жупа Сиринић** (*The Šar Mountain Župa of Sirinić*), Годишен зборник на Филозофскиот факултет на Универзитетот Скопје, кн. 1, Скопје, стр. 175.

¹³ Notice sur la Serbie septentrionale (*Note on North Serbia*), pg. 34.

The names of the Šar Mountain župas of *Gora*, *Opolje*, *Sredska* and *Sirinić* are of autochthonous, Slavic origin. The term **gora** is found in all Slavic languages. "Etymologically, *Gora* is not just a wooded tract, but a mountain area as well. Gora and mountain are here, as in many other cases, synonymous", stressed Academic Milisav Lutovac in his anthropogeographical monograph on Gora and Opolje¹⁴. Thence the term **gora** is widely used in South Slavic countries, *mostly as a basis for the names of regional entities* (Podgor, Podgorina, Podgorje, Gorje, Zagora, Zagorje, itd.). It is characteristic that, in its original meaning, the term **gora**, as used in Kosovo and Metohija and in all Serbian lands, in this form denotes *only the župas of that name* in Šar Mountain, which clearly indicates its absolute geographical uniqueness. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the typically Slavic concept of **Gora** was very early inducted and took root in the extreme southwest of the Šar Mountain group as the result of its long-acquired Serbian Slavic ethnic identity, probably at the time of Slavic settlement in the 6th and 7th centuries and, according to some interpretations, even before this generally accepted period. Of great interest to this important question are observations by Hellenist Miodrag Stojanović, who has recently, relying on antique sources and Šafarik, as well as on the rich Slavic historical onomastics, indicated that Serbs had been present in these lands and far beyond, in north and central Albania, before the Great Migration from Propontis and Transcaucasia¹⁵.

The name *Opolje* was undoubtedly of the same Serbian Slavic origin. "This name," according to Milisav Lutovac, "had to do with inhabited localities dotted around a field. It is interesting to note that the name *Opolje* appears also in Poland, Lower Silesia"¹⁶. The Serbian rulers Stefan Dečanski (1326) and Stefan Dušan (1348, 1355) mentioned many of the Opolje and Gora villages in their charters, which is a fair indication that they had existed before those dates.

The name of the *Sredska* (*Sredačka*) župa and its central city, Sredska, (which comprises 7 hamlets) is typically Slavic, meaning generally a centrally-positioned locality or area, which the *Sredska župa*, situated as it was in the immediate vicinity of the imperial city of Prizren, had in relation to the other župas in Šar Mountain and along the Prizren-Tetovo-Kosovo caravan route. The name Sredska was therefore given to this župa long before it had become, together with its hamlets, part of the estate of the Monastery of the Holy Archangels, endowment of Tsar Stefan Dušan in the Duvška Gorge of the Prizrenska Bistrica River. Serbian rulers gifted individual localities and holdings

¹⁴ Лутовац М., *Гора и Опоље* (*Gora and Opolje*), стр. 234.

¹⁵ Стојановић М., *Топономастика Албаније и Јужне Србије* (*Toponomastics of Albania and South Serbia*), "Обележја" (*Features*), бр. 203, стр. 26-27; видети прилог истог аутора у овој публикацији (see the contribution by the same author to this publication).

¹⁶ Лутовац М., *ibid.*, са позивом на саопштење В.С. Радовановића (with reference to a statement by V.S. Radovanović).

in Sredska to Khilandar Monastery on Mt. Athos as far back as 1276 and 1308, i.e., long before Tsar Dušan's charters of gift of 1348 and 1355. The considerable populousness and well-developed religious spirit of the Sredska župa are testified to by the fact that this small area, with barely 13 localities, had 26 churches. During Turkish rule, the biggest Sredska village, *Ljubinja*, was the centre of Ljubinski barjak (district) with 33 localities, a separate administrative unit within the Turkish military territorial organisation of the areas where Islamisation of the indigenous Serbian population had been carried out, which in the Sredska župa happened after the Austrian-Turkish wars of the late 17th and the early 18th centuries.

The name *Sirinić* also derives from Serbian Slavic etymology and stands for one of the chief products of stock-farming, viz. cheese, which in this župa was an important component of traditional material culture. For the first time, *Sirinić* was mentioned as a župa in 1331, in Tsar Dušan's charter of gift to Khilandar. Next, mentions of it were to be found in the imperial charters of 1348 and 1355; by this last, Tsar Dušan gifted the locality of *Selce* (later *Sevce*) to Khilandar Monastery. Archeological research indicates that Serbian Slavs began settling here in the early Middle Ages¹⁷. In the period of dual Serbian-Turkish rule over most of Kosovo and some adjacent regions (1393-1455), *Sirinić* belonged to the Morava nahiyah (tract) of the Brankovići District, and as such was included in the Turkish land census of 1455. In the late 19th century, chrome ore deposits were discovered in the *Sirinić* župa, and were mined until the mid-1960's. The deposits were largely depleted during the 1941-44 war years, when under German military rule the mines were producing the highest output (around 100,000 tons a year), and a narrow-gauge railway was laid between Vrbeštica and Kačanik to transport the ore. More than 3,000 people, mostly *Sirinić* Serbs, are estimated to have worked in the mines and ancillary industries. Most of the *Sirinić* župa was under Bulgarian civilian and police administration, while the villages of Jažince and *Sevce* were until September of 1943 under Italian occupation, specifically under the administration of the pro-fascist Greater Albania regime. The mining centre was Brezovica, which since the 1960's has developed into a tourist resort (Brezovica Inex Ski Centre).

¹⁷ Јанковић Ђ. (1993), **Етнички простор Срба на Балкану у средњем веку у светлу археолошких и писаних извора** (*The Ethnic Space of Serbs in the Balkans in the Middle Ages in the Light of Archaeological Sources and Written Records*), едиција "Етнички простор Срба" (*The Ethnic Space of Serbs*), књ. 1, Универзитет у Београду – Географски факултет, стр. 24-25.

Ethnic processes in and multiethnic characteristics of the Šar Mountain župas

Notes on the historical, anthropogeographical and political roots of ethnic processes

Taken as a whole, the Šar Mountain region, with Prizren, Prizrenski Podgor and the adjacent regions of Podrima (Orahovac) and Kosovo, has pronounced multiethnic and multicultural characteristics which are, as noted above, the result of historical processes, migrations of the population and ethnic changes. Of essential importance to the ethnic processes was the 457-year Turkish rule (1455-1912), not counting the period of dual Serbian-Turkish rule in the Brankovići District (1393-1455).

Migrations of Serbs had the character of forced resettlement, historical (1690 and 1737) and refugee migrations (in times of war and in times when Albanian tribal anarchy peaked), migrations in waves, and economic migrations (seasonal migrations of workers to cities in Serbia and Macedonia, to Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, emigration to the United States of America, Argentina, Uruguay, Australia). Large-scale Serbian emigrations occurred during Austrian-Turkish wars (especially the 1689-90 and 1737-39 wars) when, on the urging of the Viennese court and led by the Orthodox clergy, the Serbs rose up against Turkish oppression only that, after the withdrawal of the Austrian army which had held a significant proportion of Serb detachments, they should be left exposed to brutal reprisals at the hands of the Ottoman forces. These migrations were the most pronounced in Prizren and on the margins of Šar Mountain. The Serbian population in the 18th century was somewhat replenished with settlers from Montenegro, north Albania and west Macedonia. The settling of Albanians from Malisori and Miridit proceeded in fits and lasted from the 17th century to the mid-19th century, the brunt of the settlers going to the Prizren basin, Kosovo and Karadag (Crna Gora) immediately on the Serb's moving out. In this process, the Albanian settlers embraced Islam and acquired a privileged status as against the remaining Orthodox Christian Serbs. However, the penetration of Albanians into the Šar Mountain župas, with the exception of *Opolje*, was stopped with the Islamisation of indigenous Serbs in *Gora* and the *Sredska župa*. This created *two buffer zones of Muslim Serbs* who blocked Albanian penetration into the *Sirinić župa* from southwest and west, from which directions the brunt of Albanian farmers and tribes was coming into Old Serbia and Macedonia. Albanians therefore did not go to *Sirinić* from the southwest, from the direction of the *Sredska župa*, but from the north and northeast, from the direction of south Kosovo, Kačanik, Skopska Crna Gora and the Skopje basin, i.e. inversely to the main direction of their penetration from north Albania (southwest-northeast and west-east), and that only from the mid-18th century. Their infiltration into the ethnically compact Serbian *Sirinić župa* was limited in range

(4 purely Albanian localities and 4 mixed localities with a Serbian majority near the exit from the župa in the direction of Kosovo). In addition to the Muslim Serbian barrier of the *Sredska župa* and *Gora*, the absence of the spahi (chitluk) aspects of the feudal agrarian regime and the existence of the tightly-knit Serbian family *zadrugas* (extended families), successfully resisting Albanian infiltration and Islamisation, greatly helped maintain a compact enclave in *Sirinić*. The *Sirinić župas* thus produced the biggest South Slavic family *zadruga* of 106 members, which survived until 1934. The *zadruga* (the Durlević clan in the village of *Drajkovac*) had attracted the attention of French researcher Emile Sicard¹⁸.

Albanisation of *Opolje* began in the early 16th century, when Turkish feudal tyrant Kukli-bei of Bukhara in central Asia ruled the župas. Radical ethnic changes were effected by a forced Islamisation of Serbs and their utter cultural and social mimicry, expulsion of the remaining Christians and settling of Albanians from *Has* and *Ljuma*. This phenomenon of early Albanisation and Islamisation was extensively treated by Russian consul in Prizren Ivan Stepanovich Yastrebov, one of the most prominent researchers of Old Serbia and Albania, member of the Serbian Learned Society and the Serbian Royal Academy¹⁹. The important contribution of the Serbian component to the ethnogenesis of the *Opolje* Albanians, as well as to the Albanians in *Ljuma* and the entire *Dukagjin*, has also been pointed out by Academician Milisav Lutovac, who stressed, among other indicators, the absence of an awareness of tribal affiliation as being characteristic of the Albanised populations of Serbian origin²⁰.

The ethnic processes in the Šar Mountain region were also contributed to by Turkish shepherds from Anatolia, who since the 16th century had lived in part of east Macedonia whence they drove their flocks to pasture in Šar Mountain; also by the Old Balkan Wallachians (*Gogas*), better known in Serbia as *Cincari* (*Tsintsars*), Macedonian Slavs and offshoots of some Mongoloid ethnicities. They were all assimilated by Muslim Serbs and also by part of the Orthodox Christian Serbs and Albanians.

On the special ethnic identity of Gora

According to the Yugoslav state census of 1991, there were 17,574 people in the 19 localities of *Gora*. Of this number, 16,112 (91.7%) declared as

¹⁸ Sicard E. (1943), *La Zadruga Sud-Slave dans l'Evolution du Groupe Domestique (The South-Slav Cooperative in the Evolution of the Family Group)*, Ed. OPHRYZ, Bureau à Paris.

¹⁹ Ястребов И.С. (1904), *Стара Србија и Албанија (Old Serbia and Albania)*, Споменик Српске краљевске академије XLI, Други разред, књ. 36, Београд.

²⁰ Лутовац М., *Гора и Опоље (Gora and Opolje)*, стр. 277.

Muslims in the sense of ethnicity; the estimated and partially registered number of Albanians was 941 (5.3%), only 70 people (.4%) declared as Serbs, while the rest of 451 (2.6%) were undecided. The 1991 census did not officially list Goranians as a separate ethnic (national) group, whose ethnic identity has been studiously researched and defined in a multidisciplinary scientific research project of the "Jovan Cvijić" Geographical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, which was why most of them declared themselves to be of Muslim nationality.

In the census of 1961, when the Yugoslav state statistical office introduced for the first time the concept of "Muslims in the sense of ethnicity", 3,321 people (28.9% of 11,477 covered by the census) declared as Muslims; 179 (1.6%) as Albanians, 5,260 (45.8%) as Turks, 179 (1.6%) as Serbs, and as many as 2,539 (22.1%) as others or undecided. The figures show that Goranians reacted to the national policy of the Yugoslav partyocracy of the day in one of the following ways:

a) by completely rejecting the favoured Albanian option, which shows long and successful resistance to Albanisation to which many ethnic Turks, Muslim Serbs and Romanians (Gypsies) had succumbed in the wide areas of Prizren and Šar Mountain;

b) although aware of their Serbian Slavic roots, Goranians did not declare as Serbs, in that way demonstrating again an aspiration for an ethnic identity of their own which was the result of long and complex ethnogenetic and ethnocultural processes. Here it should be stressed that the distancing from the Serbian option, which had stood a realistic chance after the Balkan wars and the First World War, and even after the Second World War, was the logical outcome of an anti-Serbian, basically Comintern national policy of the communist partyocracy, non-existence of a Serbian national policy and a wide-spread identification of Serbian nationality with Orthodox Christianity, which meant abandonment of Vuk Karadžić's famous maxim about Serbs of three persuasions: Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic. This was why the concept of Gora as a Muslim Serbian oasis existed mostly in the narrow circle of anthropogeographers and ethnologists²¹;

c) the option of declaring as "Muslims in the sense of ethnicity" in the census of 1961, which preceded the endorsement of a Muslim political nation in the Yugoslav state census of 1971, put Goranians in perplexity, not so much because of their ethnic identity, as because of the reasons behind and

²¹ У антропогеографској студији о Гори и Опољу Милисав Лутовац каже следеће: **Горани, како становници Горе себе најрадије називају, сачували су се као српска оаза у масиву Шар планине и Коритника и поред великих етничких поремећаја који су се догодили у околним областима: Љуми, Метохији и Пологу**", стр. 268 (*In his anthropogeographical study of Gora and Opolje, Milisav Lutovac wrote: "Goranians, as the people of Gora like to call themselves, were preserved as a Serbian retreat in the Šar and Koritnik massifs despite major ethnic disturbances that were sweeping through the surrounding regions: Ljuma, Metohija and Polog", p. 268*).

consequences of such a new element in the Yugoslav national policy. A significant majority of Goranians did not accept the Muslim ethnic option in 1961, but declared instead as Turks with whom, in addition to a shared religion, they felt a kind of oriental cultural closeness dating back to the period of Turkish rule. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that there had been a political rapprochement between Yugoslavia, Turkey and Greece, formalised in the so-called Balkan Pact of 1953-54; in the census of 1953, an absolute majority of Goranians had opted for the Turkish ethnic affiliation²². However, Goranians had largely abandoned the Turkish option by the 1971 census (9.2% of Gora's total population of 13,497). Since then, Goranians have sublimated their identity as a separate ethnic group, of which they have a deep awareness and which in fact they are. The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts Inter-Departmental Board on Kosovo and Metohija wrote to the Serbian government in 1997 to this effect²³, and at the February-March 1999 Rambouillet conference, France, Mr. Ibro Vait, M.A., represented the Gorany ethnic group in the Yugoslav state delegation.

Opolje as a totally homogenous Albanian enclave

The population of Opolje, living in 19 localities, is a rarity in the totality of the Kosovo-Metohia paradox for its total ethnic homogeneity. According to the census of 1981 (the census of 1991 was boycotted), Albanians made up 99.9% of the population (18,003 of 18,036). The total ethnic homogeneity of Opolje dates from considerably before this, as evident from the censuses of 1948, 1953 and 1961, when 99.8% of the population declared as Albanians²⁴.

Opolje Albanians, who have had their equal share in the Albanian population boom in Kosovo and Metohia (despite a negative migration balance, the average annual population growth in the 1961-1971 period was 33 per 1,000, and in the 1971-1981 period, 29.8 per 1,000), represent an introvert demographic system with enormous relative overpopulation: according to estimates for 1991, there were 173 people per 1 square kilometre, and in some villages, up to 250 people per 1 square kilometre, all this in conditions of scarce natural and economic resources. Albanians of Opolje, just as the entire Albanian population of Kosovo and Metohia, bear features of a typical explosive demographic

²² Радовановић М. (1995), *Антропогеографске и етнодемографске особености шарпланинских жупа Горе, Опоља и Средске (Anthropogeographical and Ethnodemographic Features of the Šar Mountain Župas of Gora, Opolje and Sredska)*, Посебна издања Географског института "Јован Цвијић" САНУ, књ. 40/II, Београд, стр. 37-38, 43-44.

²³ The proposal for official recognition of the Gorany ethnic group approved by the Committee on the basis of a written explanation submitted by its members Dr. Harun Hasani and Dr. Milovan Radovanović.

²⁴ Радовановић М., *ibid.*, стр. 38, 51-52, 53.

system of a high emigration potential that is permanently generating. This acute problem will inevitably have to be faced by whatever administration is in power and this problem cannot be solved at the local level. It is out of the real power of any one national political programme and its solution can be sought only in the broader framework of the Balkan and European cooperation.

Multiethnic characteristics of the Sredska župa

The 1991 census for the 13 localities of the Sredska župa recorded a population of 10,100. The estimated size of the population that year was 11,760 and comprised Albanians who did not register and a small number of Muslims who were temporarily working abroad and were not registered through the omission of the census-taker. The ethnic structure of the entire (registered and estimated) population was thus: (Orthodox) Serbs 707 (6%), (Serbian-speaking) Muslims 8,825 (75.1%), Albanians 1,800 (15.3%), others 428 (3.6%)²⁵. Since the end of the 17th century the Sredska župa has been going through complex ethnic processes and as a result witnessed specific phenomena of the national affiliation floatation. Indigenous Islamised Serbs established an efficacious system of "circular defence" against Albanian infiltration from the directions of Opolje and Prizren, maintaining neighbourly relations with Orthodox Serbs. They retained the Serbian language, customs and traditional institutions of village communities, and developed a specific scheme in dealing with economic and social questions by way of seasonal and sporadic economic migrations and modern economic migrations to the countries of Western Europe. They fluctuated in declarations of ethnicity, depending on their estimate of the political situation of the day: in 1948, they declared mostly as Albanians; in 1953, they split into Yugoslavs-undecided (11.2%), Albanians (40.8%) and Turks (14.2%); in 1961, they did not avail themselves of the option to declare as "Muslims in the sense of ethnicity"; in 1971, when the pressure of the Albanian communist partyocracy in Kosovo and Metohia on Muslims, whatever their ethnicity, was the fiercest, they declared in a preponderant majority as Albanians; in 1981, precisely at the time of Albanian nationalist and separatist rebellion, they embraced the Muslim option en masse (70% of the total population of the Sredska župas), which was confirmed in the census of 1991 (75.1% of the total population)²⁶. Orthodox Serbs in the Sredska župa, who towards the end of Turkish rule had accounted for some 40% of the population, have evinced a constant decline, in both absolute and relative terms, in all post-war censuses, except briefly in the period between 1948 and 1953: in 1948, there were 3,490 Serbs (35.6%); in 1953, they numbered 3,516 (33.4%); in 1961, their

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 73-74.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 65, 66, 72-74.

number was 2,869 (30.9%); in 1971 - 2,089 (18.6%); in 1981 - 1,122 (9.7%); and in 1991 - 707 (7%). The sharp decline in the Serbian population was the result of emigration that was deeply rooted and continuous in the Sredska župa tradition of the Serbian population. Its roots lie in economic emigration - quest for work, which has to a considerable extent turned into permanent emigration to cities in Serbia (Prizren, Belgrade, Niš, etc.) as well as to overseas countries, mostly the United States of America, whence many Serbs returned as patriots-volunteers at the times of the Balkan and the First World wars. Although economic and social motives predominated, the influence should not be overlooked, either, of unstable political conditions, which markedly contributed to the syndrome of insecurity and uncertain future.

Serbs and Albanians of the Sirinić župa - a stabilised and polarized ethnic structure

As different from Gora, Opolje and Sredska, the Sirinić župa has a bipolar ethnic structure. According to the early census of 31st March 1989²⁷, the 16 localities of this župa had a population of 12,601 - 9,332 Serbs (66.1%), 4,125 Albanians (32.7%) and 144 others (1.2%). It should be noted here that, despite political turbulence in Kosovo and Metohia, ethnic Albanians responded to this census and cooperated with the census-takers. Albanians of the Sirinić župa boycotted the regular Yugoslav state census of 1991, so that the census results for 1989 and 1991 were comparable only for the Serbs and some lesser non-Albanian communities. This fact, however, has virtually no significance for learning the inter-ethnic ratio and ethnic processes in the Sirinić župa, which have here been stable practically since the second half of the 19th century. A bipolar ethnic structure was established in Sirinić in the later Turkish period and has survived to this day. Islamisation and Albanisation of Serbs have been practically negligible, which makes the Sirinić župa essentially different from the other župas in Šar Mountain, as well as from the rest of the broader region. The number of Serbs here was on a slight rise in the 1961-1989 period (7,560 in 1961; 9,125 in 1971; 9,253 in 1991, 9,332 in 1989) despite considerable emigration, which was traditional among Sirinić Serbs, and was noted also in the

²⁷ A special census of the Štrpce population in the Sirinić župa was carried according to the methodology of the Yugoslav Federal Statistical Office for the needs of a research project effectuated in the 1989-1991 period by the "Jovan Cvijić" Geographical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The results of the census were published in a separate publication of the Serbian Statistical Office in 1990 and, with the results of a poll on the fertility of Serbian and Albanian women (on a sample of 10 percent of the fertile female population), were used in the work of authors: Monografija Opština Štrpce – Sirinićka župa, Demografski razvoj i osobenosti socijalnog prostora (Monograph on the Štrpce Municipality of the Sirinić Župa, Demographic Development and Specific Features of the Social Environment), Special editions of the "Jovan Cvijić" Geographical Institute, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Vol. 37/II, Belgrade, 1990.

French war manual of 1916. The proportion of Serbs in the overall population of the župa in the period from 1961 to 1989 diminished from 68.1% to 66.1%, not only due to emigration, but also because of the high rate of the population growth among the Albanians, whose population rose in absolute terms from 3,201 in 1961 to 4,125 in 1989, and their percentile representation in the national structure rose from 29% to 32.7%. However, it should be stressed here that permanent emigration is not characteristic only of Sirinić Serbs, but of the Albanians as well, who in all homogenously Albanian communities as well as in mixed Serbian-Albanian communities have an extremely negative migration balance. In the four major Serb localities (Štrpce, Sevce, Gotovuša, Vrbeštica), the absolute negative balance for the 1961-1989 period was -1,237, and in the four purely Albanian localities (Brod, Firaja, Koštanjevo, Ižance), it was -1,643 for the same period²⁸. So emigration balanced out to a considerable extent the growth rate of the Albanian population, which until the early 1990's was extremely high: 33.3 per 1,000 in the 1961-1971 period, 24.3 per 1,000 in the 1981-1989 period, with a further diminishing trend in more recent years. On the other hand, the low natural increase rate of the Serbian population (4.7 per 1,000 in the 1981-1989 period), coupled with emigration, produced but a negligible rise in its size until 1989, while the census of 1991 showed even a depopulation trend (9,155 Serbs in 1991, 177 fewer than in 1989, index 97.9).

Finally, it should be noted that Sirinić Albanians have retained an awareness of tribal affiliation and origin, in which respect they differ from all ethnic and declared Albanians in the župas of Šar Mountain²⁹.

Table 1. *Survey of ethnic structure of the population of the Šar Mountain župas in 1991.*

TOTAL POPULATION IN 1991	63910	100,0%
SERBS (Orthodox Christians)	8932	14,0%
Of that number: Gora 70, Sredska 707, Sirinić 8,155		
GORANIES (Native Serbian-speaking Gora Muslims)	16112	25,2%
MUSLIMS (in the sense of ethnicity, native Serbian speakers)	8861	13,9%
ALBANIANS (estimated number in 1991)	28885	45,2%
Of that number: Gora 941, Opolje 21,844, Sredska 1,800, Sirinić 4,300		
OTHERS (Romanies, Yugoslavs, Macedonians, undecided)	1120	1,7%

²⁸ Војковић Гордана., Радовановић М. (1990), *Динамика промена броја становника и густине насељености у послератном периоду (Dynamics of the Changes in the Size and Density of the Population in the Post-war Period)*, Монографија Општина Штрпце – Сиринићка жупа, *Демографски развој и особености социјалног простора (Monograph on the Štrpce Municipality – the Sirinić Župa, Demographic Development and Specific Features of the Social Environment)*, Посебна издања Географског института "Јован Цвијић САНУ, књ. 37/II, Београд, стр. 31, 34.

²⁹ Радовановић Светлана (1988), *Албанци Сиринићке жупе (Albanians of the Sirinić Župa)*, Становништво", год. XXXVI, бр. 1-2, Београд, стр. 49-80.