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ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH OF LAZAR'S TOWN IN KRUŠEVAC

ABSTRACT

In the work the results of archaeological excavations in the city of Lazar's town Kruševac were represented. The brief overview of the oldest historical sources relating to medieval Kruševac was presented. Research has shown that the plateau of Lazar's town was inhabited during all periods of prehistory. Individual findings, testify about life in ancient and early Byzantine period, while there are also indications of the medieval town, which was preceded to a great construction achievement, when the capital of Moravian Serbia was raised. The question is, how will future archaeological excavations of Lazar's town supplement our understanding of this complex, and how this research can be presented in accordance with the requirements of the times in which we live.

KEYWORDS: KRUŠEVAC, LAZAR'S TOWN, ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH, PRESENTATION.

Medieval capital of Prince Lazar, is located almost in the center of today's Kruševac, which provides great opportunities for the presentation and tour of the locality. At the same time, there is a question of how this medieval fortress can be incorporated into the core of the third millennium.

If you take into account that the flow of modern life do not pass this area, which, over the last decade, got several construction stamps - the construction of a church home of Lazarica, partial reconstruction of the interior of the church chapel Prince Lazar, the construction of footpaths in the Archaeological Park, reconstruction and adaptation of National Museum of Kruševac and construction of public toilets. In a view of the fact that there is increasingly thinking that it is necessary to reconstruct medieval walls in their full extent and height, thinking about it is inevitably, how archaeological research of Lazar's town, can be incorporated in this process.

BEFORE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Potential, which Kruševac has through the remains of the medieval period, was noted back in the XIX century. Then the need was spotted that Lazarica Church, whose appearance was significantly altered as a result of a number of unskilled work and intervention, return to its original appearance. By order of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, on the May 29, 1887 the commissions visited Kruševac, consisting of experts Mihailo Valtrović, Aleksandar Bugarski and Dušan Živanović. The Commission having examined the condition of the building and submitted a proposal on how to repair.

M. Valtrović states: „Once restored Lazar's Church, and when it arises again in its first form, composition and structure, Kruševac will be able to boast about old times, what no other town in the Kingdom does not have.“ The same commit-

tee in 1889, according to personal preference of Queen Natalija, produced a plan of restoration. By the queen's desire, too, mortar was broken, on the south facade, in the form of strips of 40 cm wide, in order to at least partially perceive the masonry of the church (Ристић 1983: 129).

Before the big campaigns of archaeological research of Lazar's town, which was carried out in the seventh decade of the XX century, only Lazarica church and the remains of Donjon tower, with traces of the ramparts were known. Architect Aleksandar Deroko tried to reconstruct the appearance of fortifications, but due to the scarcity of data, only managed to present his vision of the former seems of Donjon tower.

Quote from Deroko works best reflects how much, just sixty years ago, was known about medieval Kruševac: „Today of the town only the parts of tower - donjons rest, through which entered into the city, and with it some of the city wall. The tower was built with white stones (which is rare). On the floor walked up by the stairs made in the wall. At the city there was the Lazar's court church of St. Stephen – Lazarica, which has been preserved to this day“ (Дероко 1950: 122-123).

Historical data do not show a lot about the time when Kruševac was raising. The earliest known reference to Kruševac in historical documents found in Bologna transcript of Ravanica founding charter, which was probably issued in 1377.

His most valuable endowment, the Ravanica, Lazar started building in 1376/77. Construction lasted until the 1381. During that period, the founding charter of the monastery was issued. As noted above, for the year of issue 1377 is usually referred. Charter of Ravanica, which the original is not preserved, we know on the basis of three transcripts (Vrdnik, Bologna and Ravanica). For the theme of our work is a significant rewrite of Bologna.

Foregoing transcript of Ravanica charter is preserved in the University Library in Bologna. The transcript is, part of the collection of the Count Ferdinand Luigi Marsili. Count Marsili, in

the period from 1699-1701, as an Austrian officer, was the chairman of the commission made for determination the Austrian-Turkish border along the Sava river.

Text of Bologna transcripts occupies five pages written in script, which was characteristic of Serbian Cyrillic in the late XVIII century. On each side there are 43 printed lines, except the last, on which there are 27 rows. In this text Kruševac is given as a place, in which relation the geographical position of village Spizla is determined, the village nearby Kruševac. Today is not known about which village was talked about. Although the transcript does not state explicitly that the city of Kruševac, we can accept the hypothesis, was already a significant, and probably fixed area, in relation to which the position of the other places were determined (Младеновић 2003: 91).

The first explicit mention of medieval Kruševac, defined as the place or city, can be found in the charter issued on the feast of St. Stephen, at January 9, 1387. This charter the Prince Lazar was issued to the people of Dubrovnik “in the famous town of Kruševac my dominions.” Original charter was preserved and it is located in the Historic Archives of Dubrovnik. Prince Lazar by this Charter confirms the benefits to the Dubrovnik, given through the earlier commands and laws. Charter was written in script on paper. Unfortunately, the document is damaged and lacks the lower middle section (ten written lines), and some part are torn in places where the paper was folded (Младеновић 2003: 191).

The question arises, whether the prince Lazar issued the charter with which he determined to raise his capital city. There are no indications to suggest that such a charter was drawn up. To the eventual happy discovery documents, we must satisfy with the archaeological findings that testify about the establishment of capital of Moravian Serbia.

ARCHAEOLOGY PROVIDES ANSWERS

Systematic studies of medieval Serbian capital have been carried out between 1961-1971. Excavations took place, because the urban construction plan of Kruševac covered decoration the plateau of Lazar's town. National Museum of Kruševac, demanded they carry out preliminary archaeological research before it. Since the proposal is accepted, the National Museum of Kruševac participated in this research, in collaboration with the Archaeological Institute in Belgrade and the Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments of Belgrade (Васиљевић 2007: 125-127).

After a great campaign, archaeologists are still a few times, on a smaller scale, have investigated Lazar's town. Thus, at the 1986-1987 the area, where the building of Old Menzulana is situated, was excavated, in 1995 the audit excavations were carried out at the small town and Donjon tower. In 1998 the place, where previously the old Parish Church of Lazarica was situated was examined. In 2002 the rescue excavations were carried out along the projected route of the access path to the church of Lazarica. The last time in 2010 and 2012 the sounding excavations were done around the museum building (Васиљевић 2012: 2-3).

Archaeological researches have enabled to gain basic knowledge about the city, determine the direction of the walls and determine the existence of forty buildings. Archaeologists have expressed to light the remains of palaces, stables, blacksmith, tanks, craft workshops. Movable archaeological material, provided an insight into the daily life of courtiers of Prince Lazar, through the findings of pottery, jewelry, glass, craft tools, implements and weapons.

The excavations have shown that the plateau, where the medieval Kruševac emerged, was inhabited in the Neolithic period. Continuous settlement was rarely interrupted, as confirmed by the findings from the Bronze and Iron Ages, as well as preserved traces of Roman and early Byzantine

period. Serious indications point to the existence of a medieval settlement, which existed before the big architectural enterprise of Prince Lazar.

Prehistoric layers, found in the area of the Lazar's town, speaks of continuity of settlement from the Neolithic period, Copper, Bronze Age and Iron Age. Based on the findings, the largest prehistoric settlement in this place belonged to the holders of Starčevo culture. Findings from the Vinča period are scarce, but are of great importance, since they belong to the very beginnings of this cultural group.

Relatively scarce, but very distinctive pottery, dating from the Eneolithic epoch points to the existence of smaller settlements from several phases of cultural groups Krivodol-Salkuca-Bubanj and Kostolac cultural group. More numerous pottery from the Bronze Age, documenting life in this location in the early and middle Bronze Age, during the Cultural of double handled goblets, from Protovatin and Vatin period. More prevalent is ceramic of Brnjica cultural groups. Numerous finds of pottery, characteristic of the Iron Age, found the Great Morava river basin. Community, which at that time lived in Kruševac, ethnocultural will connect with the group from Great Morava basin. Typical ceramic, Kalakača horizon, then the one from the phase of Lanište I, Lanište II –Basarabi and the early Iron Age, suggests that this area until the arrival of the Romans, seemed ethnocultural unity with Great Morava Basin (Стојић, Чађеновић 2006: 101-121).

Ancient layer, within the complex of the Lazar's town, is not yet ascertained. Individual findings suggest the possibility of its existence. Thus, during the archaeological excavations, found a metal figurine of young Roman clad in a toga. Figurine is represented standing, in the reverse position. Roman has stretched forth his right hand, which is missing the handful where the most likely holding upright spear or long stick. Pursuant to the cavities of the left hand fist, it is assumed that in that cavity was located the end of money bags, roll or similar small object. Figurine was found "in a layer of

brown earth and rubble from recent period”.

From the area of the Lazar's town, and his close environment, come the Roman coins. During the systematic archaeological survey were found six pieces of Roman bronze coins. Field diaries recorded that in 1961, two Roman coins were found, “in the fifth layer of excavation, in the third square, bronze coins of Constantine the Great”, and in the humus layer in the fifth sector and the first square: “Large Roman bronze”. During excavations in 1962 the following Roman coins were found: on the October 10 “Roman coins”, October the 13 “large bronze – Mark Antoninus”. During excavation, on June 29, 1965 the “Roman copper coin with a lot of obscure characters, diameter 2.5 cm,” was found and on the August 14 of the same year “at a depth of 90 cm one Roman coin was found”. It is not known where the referred coins are today.

During the excavation in 1998, at the area where previously the old parish hall of the church of Lazarica was situated, Roman layer was not captured again, and the only undisputed finding is the ancient Roman bronze coins from the third century *Hereni Etruscilla*, minted in *Viminacium*. It was noted that, near the medieval fortress, about a hundred meters away to the west, a silver penny, minted during the reign of Emperor Nerva was found (96-98 AD). It is worth to mention a description of the findings, which dates from 1953. The findings were found near the northeastern corner of the Kruševac fortification. On the occasion when the holes for the tank petrol pump at 1.30 m depth was digging, “five burner for a weevil made of baked earth” were found. This might be the Roman lamps – weevils. The trace for these objects is lost, so it is unlikely that we will be able to find accurate information about them (Рашкович 2000: 9-24).

As we discovered, the ancient horizon in the area of the Lazar's town was not caught. The logic of continuity of the settlement of this area, point to the possibility that the Kruševac had a rich ancient history. Large construction activity at the time of Prince Lazar, who produced well-known

buildings and walls, on the other hand may have destroyed the traces of activities of the ancient man on the site.

Just a bit more information we have about the early Byzantine period in this locality. During the archaeological excavations on the site where the Old Menzulana was situated, postal station from the Turkish period, near the northeast corner of the fortress, pointed to the possibility of the existence of buildings from the sixth century. During the excavations, which were carried out in 1986-1987 early Byzantine bricks and money of the emperor Anastasius I, were discovered (491-518). Copper coins of Anastasius were discovered “in the layer of burnt which corresponding to the log cabin”. According to the head of the excavations, O. Vukadin, “money and the bricks most likely belongs to some structure located in the immediate vicinity” (Вукадин 1988: 288-289).

Indications for the existence of the facility from the early Byzantine period, are very indicative. When we add to this the incidental findings from the immediate environment, the version of the existence of fortifications whose crew consisted of Gothic unit it becomes possible. From the circle of former factory “22 July”, about two hundred meters north of the town of Kruševac, derived incidental finding of belt buckles with clamp shaped like the letter S. The buckle can be approximately dated to the V century and can be associated with the presence of the Ostrogoths. There are indications that, at this point, there was a large necropolis, which covered a wide range of Kruševac fortifications. It is possible that the necropolis had a late antique and early Byzantine phase (Рашкович 2002: 45).

In the connection with the above mentioned findings and indications we can also bring a gold belt buckle with a massive thorn. Clip comes from an unknown site from Kruševac. It is now in the National Museum in Belgrade. The clip is purchased at the beginning of the XX century in Kruševac. Z. Vinski says: “It was additionally determined that the clip comes from a destroyed

tomb in Kruševac" (Vinski 1964: 173).

As we move away further in the later centuries of the Middle Age, we come to a situation that archaeological findings do not confirm the logical possibility that Prince Lazar built his capital at a place where the medieval settlement existed earlier than the eighth decade of the fourteenth century.

About the possibility of the existence of settlements or necropolis, a precursor of Lazar's town, testified tombstone built into the belfry of Lazarica church. On the board, within the text of the tomb, names Vukota and Medoš were carved. Part of the inscription on which the year of building of the tombstone is inscribed is damaged, so the years can not be precisely determined. Most often mentioned year is 1300 (Ковачевић 1980: 26-27).

Since the board is probably not taken from a greater distance, it indicates the possibility of existence of a necropolis from the XIII-XIV century, and with it on, the possibility that there was a church and a nearby a village, which belonged to the necropolis. If this assumption is correct, Vukota and Medoš would be the oldest residents of Kruševac, which we know the names.

The excavations from 1961 noted the existence of the building, which by their characteristics points indicated the possibility that it was a church building. On the eastern side of the field at the boundary between the plateau and the slopes, where the continuation of the wall was expected, there was not superior result. It was discovered the part of the building, which by means of its construction, width and position of the walls does not match the known elements of the defensive wall. It is the wall width 0.60 m, built of boulders and oriented in a north – south direction. From inside the building, two administrative walls enclose a rectangular room. The distance between them is 5.30 m. The outer wall is continued in both directions. On the opposite side from the administrative walls, from the outside, there is a semicircular wall that closes one apsidal area. In the following over the slope, there is a level of plastered surfaces with large stones, which follows the slope

(Јордовић, Јуришић 1970: 289-320).

Although only a small part of the object is discovered, it could be recognized as a church of the settlement which preceded of the Lazar's Kruševac. Next to the church, there could be graves with tombstones. This older church could be demolished at the time of raising Lazarica. Then, its construction materials, along with the nearby tombstones, was used for the construction of a new church. Of course, all of this remains theoretical, for which we have no confirmation of sufficient evidence in the archaeological record.

KRUŠEVAC OF THE PRINCE LAZAR RETURNS FROM EPIK TO THE DAYLIGHT

The results of archaeological excavations have shown that Lazar's town erected in two construction stages. The first a small city was erected, protected by a trench and a tower, and then, in the second phase of construction, by walls made of crushed stone the whole plateau of Lazar's town was protected. In this way, the fort was established, which extended in the direction of north-west-southeast and included an area of the approximately 300 x 200 meters.

Rampart, strengthened by towers at unequal distances, closed space within the ellipse. Within the protected area, the two groups were separated, small and large city. Small Town, "fort in the fort", was located on the northeast, the lowest part of the plateau. In contrast to a small town in the southwestern part of the fort was a large city, where a church and a whole Lazarica secular constructions were built (Fig. 1).

The city was built on two occasions. The first a small fortified city was built, protected by a dry moat, which could be filled with water from a nearby stream Kožetinski, and protected with a powerful Donjon tower. This part of the fort was built with rude stone. Then with the walls, which were made of quarry stone, a plateau was surrounded,



Fig. 1 Complex of secular buildings in Lazar's town (photo: Ljubiša Vasiljević).

which formed a Large town and fortress complex was completed (Ковачевић 1980: 12-68).

It was noted that the buildings erected in the fort, were not organically tied to the walls, but they stood alone in space. This is another indication of a new time, despite constant attempts to connect it with the glorious era that preceded it, however, it presented a first act of the last Serbian medieval drama, known as the Moravian Serbia.

The complex of Lazar's town included Lazarića church. Besides not large dimension, church has, with its beauty and harmony of architecture, decoration of façades and numerous plastic decoration charmed contemporaries who described it with adjective *The Most Beautiful*.

Built in honor of the eldest son of Lazar, the church was dedicated to St. Archdeacon Stephen. As a source of Moravian architecture, most original creation of Serbian medieval and the last great

contribution of Byzantine cultural to the world heritage. Lazarica is a mythical place where, according to tradition, Kosovo heroes took communion before going on a decisive battle.

Moving archaeological finds (pottery, weapons, armors, tools, coins, jewelry, glass) are allowed to complete the picture of the life of the inhabitants of the medieval Krusevac. The most numerous and the most illustrative is ceramic. Maybe not so attractive, but unavoidable reflection of the spirit of that time, is the table pottery that shows the wealth of ornaments and beauty of the color.

Ceramic describes a style of an era in which the Byzantine forms and motif of decorating once again shined. Belts with floral ornaments, rosettes, spirals, concentric and twisted circles were decorated bowls, dishes, cups and three foil jugs.

At this point one has to wonder about the reasons that led Prince Lazar to raise its capital city

right at this location. We can notice the fact that the Holy Prince, even he was trying by all means to present itself as legitimate prosecutor of the continuity of the state of Nemanjić, he decided not to select any of the old Serbian capital for the new center, but to build a new capital.

Slightly elevated plateau, on which is placed a Serbian city that is mostly mentioned in songs, with its strategic advantages is far behind nearby Bagdala, and not to mention the nearby mountain Jastrebac, whose elevations provide opportunities for much better protection.

It becomes more clearly, that military and strategic reasons did not led Prince in choosing the location of its new capital. The real reason is, probably, the that the Kruševac is a major transport hub on the Serbian medieval roads. From the north – south direction, right around the Kruševac passes the road which at the north, with Braničevo and Belgrade, connected it with the old center of Nemanjić State, Bela Crkva or Kuršumlja and, through it, with Novo Brdo and Prizren and foreland. Just behind Kruševac, that communication intersected with transversal that church centers – Banja, Arilje and Žiča connected with a roadmap that, even as the ancient Via Militaris, connect Constantinople with Central Europe (Бошковић 1980: 7-11).

Prince Lazar is in the history and tradition, the best known as a warrior and martyr, suffered for freedom and Christian faith. These data indicate that the prince, while he built the foundations of the state, in another way, imagine his historic role. As we have just seen, the Prince raised the capital in the area, which is dictated by the choice of commercial and economic reasons. State of Prince Lazar, was a place where some of the noblest men and greatest artists of his time were welcome and accepted in, which were at the Moravian Serbia found refuge from the tempests which covered the southern Balkans and threatened the rest of Europe.

One gets the impression that the prince wanted to make the economic leader and cultural center of this part of Europe, which, strengthened after the economic and cultural boom, could become an

insurmountable barrier to external threats. That's why the parallels with ancient Greece can be imposed. We can imagine the prince's ambition, that among scattered Serbian areas, rise his state up to the leaders place, in the why that Athens has been between the ancient Greek states, which with economic power and the culture protecting Balkans from the Persian invasion for a half a century.

Concatenation of historical circumstances led to the fateful Battle of Kosovo, when the wheel of history and memory has been reversed, and the memory of Prince Lazar was transferred to the battlefield and a harrowing plight, a trait that is associated with another ancient superpower – Sparta. Consequences of the Battle of Kosovo, in terms of tradition and epic poetry can be compared only with the famous battle at Thermopylae gorge. In both cases, the defeat on the battlefield turned into a great spiritual victory, which provides strength and inspiration for future generations. Although some other areas, eventually brought the same qualities, we can say that Prince Lazar, symbolically, want to build the Serbian Athens, but, during the ruthless historical events, his state took a place in consciousness of Serbian people, similar to the spirit of the Greeks, as well as Europeans, which occupied Sparta.

After the Kosovo tragedy, Kruševac remains the center of Serbia until the early XV century, when Despot Stefan moved to the capital, Belgrade. Despot will continue to temporarily reside in his hometown, as evidenced by numerous letters that were signed in Kruševac. During the first half of the XV century, Kruševac alternately ruled by Serbs, Hungarians and Turks. There is evidence that the Hungarian King Vladislav Jagelonac (1424-1444) lived in Kruševac, where between 6 and 13 January 1444, issued a memorandum (Покаи 1985: 145-150).

The Turks finally take Kruševac in 1455 year, with brief interruptions, and ruled the city in next four centuries. This is the period in which the Kruševac was named Aladža Hisar, translated Šarengrad, when it became the center of the homony-



Fig. 2 Discovered ruins during archaeological excavations 2010 (photo: Sanja Rutić).

mous Sandžak (Амедоски 2007: 157-169).

Lazar's town still keeps many doubts, whose solution is a task for archaeologists, who will looking for a solution in a future researches, but also in interpretations of already discovered findings. During the archaeological excavations carried out in 2010 and 2012 the findings about the continuity of settlement in prehistoric times have been confirmed, from Starčevo culture through layers from Copper, Bronze and Iron Ages. On the investigated area were not detected ancient and early Byzantine traces. The existence of smaller buildings that can be determined in the fourteenth century, and the layers of the XV and XVI centuries, have been established (Vasiljević, Rutić 2014: 78-79). (Figs. 2, 3).

During this study there was an unusual discovery of three skeletons of horses, which were carefully placed at the exact distance of five meters between the skeleton (Fig. 4). Archaeological material found near the skeleton probably belongs to the period of the XV-XVI century. The most char-

acteristic findings were the large number of stone cannonballs and large pieces of metal that could be left over after the making cannonballs, which is typical for that period. This discovery certainly has to do with some historical event that occurred during this period in Kruševac, regardless if it comes to a battle or stay rulers, nobles and church dignitaries, where something unexpected happened which led to a storage substructure in this way.

Instead of conclusion the question is imposed, how archaeological excavations in the Lazar's town which will be implemented in the future, can supplement our understanding of this complex, and how that research can be presented and accessible to people who live in the third millennium. Previous research has enabled it, in large part, to study how Kruševac looked in the XIV century, and even in earlier times.

New research should be conducted, preferably every year, even if it would be possible to open only few probes. We believe that the results of the research conducted should be presented to the



Fig. 3 Construction of stone (photo: Sanja Rutić).



Fig. 4 Horse skeleton (photo: Ljubiša Vasiljević).

public as quickly as possible, through exhibitions, which do not have to be a megalomaniac than informative, or in the form of attractive presentations. Archaeology exhibition of paintings, which the National Museum of Kruševac prepared for the manifestation Museum Night at 2012 showed that the audience was very interested to learn about the process of archaeological research, and the recently discovered findings. Archaeology at the exhibition of paintings, presented the six sites, including Lazar's Town, which the National Museum of Kruševac explored in previous years (other locations are Ukosa in the Grad Stalać, Bedem in Mascare, Gradac in the Donje Leviće, Branik in Dedina and Suvaja). The sites are represented through photos and videos, which presented characteristic moments and findings obtained during the researches.

In any case, Lazar's town hides many uncertainties, of which someone maybe will figure out by the results of the future research.

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REZIME

ARHEOLOŠKA ISTRAŽIVANJA LAZAREVOG GRADA U KRUŠEVCU

KLJUČNE REČI: KRUŠEVAC, LAZAREV GRAD, ARHEOLOŠKA ISTRAŽIVANJA, PREZENTACIJA.

U radu su predstavljeni rezultati arheoloških istraživanja Lazarevog grada u Kruševcu. Prikazan je i kratak osvrt na najstarije istorijske izvore vezane za srednjovekovni Kruševac. Istraživanja su pokazala da je plato Lazarevog grada bio naseljen tokom svih perioda u praistoriji. Pojedinačni nalazi svedoče o životu u antičkom i ranovizantijskom periodu, dok postoje i indicije o srednjovekovnom naselju, koje je prethodilo velikom građevinskom poduhvatu tokom čije je realizacije podignuta prestonica Moravske Srbije. Postavlja se pitanje koliko će buduća arheološka istraživanja Lazarevog grada dopuniti saznanja o ovom kompleksu i na koji način rezultati istraživanja mogu biti prezentovana u skladu sa zahtevima vremena u kome živimo.