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SERBIAN HOLY PLACES AND MIRACULOUS EVENTS Based on Nineteenth-Century Travel Books

„People from all over know all too well about every place and church in ruins reputed to have saints that work miracles, miraculous tombs, icons, and wells, and they retell generation after generation about them“
(С. Л. Поповић, Путовање по новој Србији... 485)

„Prejudices and superstition are very strong. everything in life is explained by them: they comfort people and give them hope. After each misfortune, the sufferer is consoled with the Turkish kismet or the Serbian ‘it was destined this way.’“ (Б. Ђ. Нушић, Косово..., 90)

Abstract: Serbian holy places to which nineteenth-century travel books ascribed miraculous powers are numerous. With their supernatural power, they healed the sick of different religions from numerous illnesses, or protected Orthodox shrines from Turkish devastation. The belief that Serbian holy places were invested with such powers could be explained by the fact that in the 19th century the organized medical service did not exist in the Principality (Kingdom) of Serbia and Serbia Proper (Old Serbia), and by the hopes of the subjugated Serbian population that holy places could protect them from the severe harassment of the Turkish conqueror.

Holy places are of great significance and play a prominent role in the history and tradition of each nation. The role and significance of holy places in the history of the Serbs were even greater in view of the fact that Turkish conquests destroyed the medieval Serbian state, so that the only organized institution of the Serbian people that had survived was the Serbian Orthodox

church. Exposed to the severe harassment of the Turkish conqueror, the Serbs expected the church to offer them not only comfort, but physical salvation.¹ The clergy, „always among the people and with the people, had but one thought: to keep people in their faith, to preserve their name and imperial endowments.“² However, over many centuries, neither the Serbs nor their Orthodox church were capable of mounting better organized resistance of longer duration, whose end result could have been the autonomous Serbian state. Apart from individual opposition, acts of banditry, short-lived uprisings, and hopes in the assistance of the great Christian powers always betrayed anew, the only consolation left to the ordinary man, who did not want or could not consent to either migration or conversion, was belief in the existence of supernatural, miraculous powers healing him, saving and protecting Orthodox temples where he addressed God. He was convinced that those powers sojourned in holy places.

Written records about Serbian holy places and miracles existed as early as the Middle Ages. Depending on a number of objective circumstances, they were more, or less, abundant in different epochs.³ The 19th century was the period in the course of which many such accounts were produced. Since in that century the Balkans saw many socio-political changes, the interest of Serbian and foreign politicians and scholars in the everyday life of Serbs considerably increased. A lot of travellers, diplomats, patriots, spies, naturalists and enthusiasts travelled over unexplored, just liberated, or still enslaved, Serbian lands, in their quest for political information, natural riches or exciting adventures. These travellers could not but write down a few words

¹ „Since the Christian law is barely allowed and tolerated, therefore it is impossible either to build or renew churches and monasteries in Serbia without the permission of the Turks, which is not only hard to obtain, but always requires very much money“...“Therefore even the remotest village in Serbia has no churches, and people mostly go to monasteries“...“Each *nachye* has at least one monastery, and some have three or four. All Serbian monasteries are in woods and by streams“...“Up to the present day they have been the genuine and only pillars and guardians of the Christian law and the Serbian name“. В. Ст. Караџић, 107-108. Cf. И. Иванић 1903, 72; Б. Ђ. Нушић, 1986, 109-110.

² С. Ј. Поповић, 1950, 277.

³ On miracles in the Middle Ages cf. Младраг Ал. Пурковић, *Светишћелски култови у сџарој српској држави према храмовном посвећивању*; Рагислав Мартић, *Чудесна исцељења и знамења у сџарим српским живојћојисима*; Леонггје Павловић, *Култови код Срба и Македонаца*; Леонггје Павловић, *Преглед светих мошћију кроз истћорију у Српској ћравославној цркви*; Ст. Стапојевић, *Белешке о неким сџарим иконама*.

about the appearance of particular holy places in Serbia and about their impressions. Such testimonies were frequently accompanied by references to miraculous instances. All these travel books, composed by Serbian writers - Joakim Vujić, Đorđe Magarašević, Miloš S. Milojević, Vladan Đorđević, Sreten L. Popović, Mita Rakić, Branislav Đ. Nušić and Ivan Ivanić, or the foreign ones - Otto Dubislaus v. Pirsch, Georgina Muir Mackenzie and Paulina A. Irby, Alexander Gilferding, and Felix Kanitz, collected and classified according to a particular system, offer a very interesting picture of the disposition and ways in which miracles were manifested, the spirit of the local population and the attitude of the authorities towards Serbian holy places.

Holy places or those in which miracles occurred, mentioned in the works of the aforementioned writers, can be classified into three large groups: the first is comprised of monasteries, churches or former church-sites, the second of tombs in open space, while the third includes waters (streams and wells).

Relics of saints buried in churches invested them with miraculous power: St. Symeon Nemanja and the Holy King Stephen the First-Crowned in Studenica, the Holy King Stephen Dečanski and St. Helen in Dečani, St. Sava II, St. Nikodemos, St. Ioaneikios II and St. Ephraim in the Patriarchate in Peć, St. Ioaneikios in the Monastery of Devič, and so on.⁴ According to the writers of these travel accounts, this supernatural power was manifested in two ways: causing the sick to be cured and protecting certain shrines from the destructive tendencies of the Turks.

Nineteenth-century Serbia was a very backward country. There were few doctors, and in those places where they could be found people did not abandon their superstition easily to place trust in a frequently unknown physician distributing strange „remedies“.⁵ Vuk Stefanović Karadžić therefore wrote down that the Serbs „rarely take the sick to a doctor, but rather to a

⁴ „And in this country kings, archbishops and other men of prominence were buried in nartexes. The Church of the Patriarchate in Peć offers the best examples of that. As legends of miracles performed by the relics conferred in these churches on the sick and the healthy usually spread all over, the number of visitors was constantly high. The number of sick men who came to venerate holy tombs expecting to be healed was especially large. The more popular the person buried in the church, the more visitors it attracted. The stream of people increased on the days of the patron's death, when over his relics, famous for their miracles, a service was conducted, often in the presence of the ruler and the highest ecclesiastic and state dignitaries.“ (P. Петкович 1906, 181; cf. С. Ј. Поповић, 1950, 199)

⁵ Ф. Кашић 1987 I, 286-287; II, 74, 241; В. Кашић 107-108.

priest or monk to recite a prayer for him, either short or long.⁶ Đorđe Magarašević remarked that „the sick are brought from faraway places to be read prayers or to be annointed with oil in their particular illness, next to a certain church”,⁷ while Pirch noted down that „peasants do not have faith in doctors”, so that when „a family member is stricken with a serious illness, they put him on a horse and take him to the nearest monastery, where prayers are read to him so that he will get well.”⁸ As a matter of fact, what was said by Joakim Vujić for the relics of St. Stephen the First-Crowned was relevant to others: the healing power of holy relics was manifested only to the sick who believed in the possibility of such a recovery.⁹

In the main, relics or prayers in a particular church had universal healing power.¹⁰ However, most frequently mentioned illnesses were mental diseases,¹¹ leprosy,¹² female complaints,¹³ fever¹⁴ and „hundreds of others, not always openly disclosed wishes awaiting fulfilment...”¹⁵ The relics of „the Holy King Stephen the First-Crowned” healed and worked miracles in Studenica.¹⁶ M. S. Milojević came across a sick man sprawling beneath the shrine of St. Ioaneikios in the Monastery of Devič.¹⁷ The famous doctor, writer and politician Vladan Đorđević devoted a large section of his travel account of Studenica to the moving event he had witnessed: the healing of a sick man suffering from a serious mental illness above the relics of the Holy King Stephen the First-Crowned.¹⁸ The duration of the aforementioned treatments and the manner in which they were conducted were different, but, in the majority of cases, they amounted to lying on the tomb or next to it, and to crawling or lying beneath a shrine in which the relics of a particular saint rested. Only the Monastery of the Patriarchate in Peć was mentioned to have treasured an icon of the Holy Virgin which the faithful took home in case of

⁶ Т. Р. Ђорђевић 1983, 149-185.

⁷ Ђ. Магарашевић 1983, 302.

⁸ О. Д. Пирх 143.

⁹ Ј. Вујић 1983, 152; Т. Стапковић 1910, 46.

¹⁰ И. Иванић 1901-2, 147 - 148; М. С. Милојевић 1903, II, 155. Cf. notes 20 and 21.

¹¹ А. Гилџердинг 1972, 115; И. Иванић 1903, 124; С. Л. Поповић 1950, 485; Б. Ђ. Нушић 1986, 137.

¹² Г. Г. Јуришић 1852, 123; И. Иванић 1903, 123.

¹³ Ф. Каниц 1987, II, 285; И. Иванић 1903, 45.

¹⁴ С. Л. Поповић 1950, 152.

¹⁵ Ф. Каниц 1987, II, 74.

¹⁶ Ј. Вујић 1901-2, I, 152.

¹⁷ М. С. Милојевић 1877, II, 155.

¹⁸ В. Ђорђевић 1865, 31-34, 60, 71-75.

illness.¹⁹ In his travel account Josif Veselić recounted that in the church of the monastery of Tuman was the tomb of Zosimus of Sinai whom Miloš Obilić accidentally killed with an arrow while hunting. According to popular belief, leaning on this tomb could cure many diseases.²⁰ During his journey, Veselić came across a number of such places: in the ruins of the monastery of Divostin was the tomb of a Serbian saint who „aids in illness“; in Ravanica was the tomb of St. Romulus of Sinai on which the sick men lay and „were restored to health“; there were two such tombs in the ruins of the church below the Straževac hill near Jagodina; the tomb of Saint Nicholas in the monastery of Nimnik helped in various illnesses.²¹

The healing power of holy relics was not only manifested in the curing of the sick men of the Orthodox religious affiliation. We should not disregard the fact that in „European Turkey“, especially on the territory of the subsequent Principality (from 1882 Kingdom) of Serbia and Old Serbia, or Serbia Proper²², many mosques were erected on the foundations of Orthodox shrines or with their material, or they were just rebuilt Orthodox churches.²³ Miloš S. Milojević made mention of examples he had heard during his travels of the Muslims appropriating Orthodox saints. The relics of St. Nestor were, for instance, in a Turkish *tekija*.²⁴ Moreover, Orthodox believers were not forbidden to pray in some Muslim places of worship - former churches on particular Orthodox feasts.²⁵ In the Pirinaç Mosque, the Serbian consul in Priština Branislav Đ. Nušić saw a saint revered both by the Serbs and Turks. The tomb was venerated because it had the healing power. The Serbs were allowed to come to that tomb and light candles.²⁶ The same tomb was mentioned by P. Balkanski who pointed out that believers of all religious affiliations, except Jews, prayed there. P. Balkanski found the reason why the Serbs came to pray in that mosque in popular belief that the church in which Prince Lazar had been buried before being transferred to Ravanica used to

¹⁹ А. Гиљфердинг 1972, 160.

²⁰ I. Веселић 134.

²¹ Ibid., 32-33, 45, 89, 147.

²² On the term Old Serbia (Serbia Proper) and the territory it included cf. С. Терзић 1995-1996, 91-110.

²³ А. Гиљфердинг 1972, 188, 261; М. С. Милојевић, in several passages; Д. Бојовић 1998, 45.

²⁴ М. С. Милојевић 1877, II, 80-81; III, 135.

²⁵ М. С. Милојевић 1877, I, 178-179.

²⁶ Б. Ђ. Нушић 1986, 179-198.

stand on that site.²⁷ In Vranje, there was the so called „Mosque of Crusaders“, constructed out of a former church („church-mosque“), whose minaret kept collapsing until both a crescent and a cross were placed on the top. In the mosque there was also a tomb „visited by Muslims and a great number of Serbs, who lay on it in order to regain health“.²⁸ The Vicar who travelled with Mackenzie and Irby ridiculed the Muslim inclination to turn to Christian priests in illness, but the Muslims were of the opinion that it would do not harm, but could help.²⁹ The healing water from the Ružica church at Kalemegdan (Belgrade Fortress) was used both by Serbian and Turkish women,³⁰ and the Muslims brought their insane to an Orthodox priest in the Banja Monastery „to read the Gospel over them“.³¹ The *Arnauts* (Albanized population), who for „recovery from any illness attached more importance to reading, writing amulets, and putting charms than to doctors and their medicaments“, sometimes sought salvation in the prayers of friars or Orthodox priests.³² A disease befell the Arnauts who had stolen the cattle from the Devič Monastery, which disappeared as soon as the cattle was returned. Therefore, they dreaded „the punishment of the relics of St. Ioaneikios“, and the instances of cure brought „the godless Arnauts closer to this monastery“.³³ M. S. Milojević's remark that the Arnauts revered the Dečani Monastery as much as their mosques certainly bears much interest to this: „they visit the monastery, where prayers are read to them; the men lying beneath the relics of the holy king, and the women beneath the relics of St. Helen; they take oil and ointment from the icon lamp and rub them in, they take thyme, eat wafers, and do everything else as the Orthodox do, except for kissing the cross and other icons, apart from those of the Holy King and St. Helen.“³⁴ In spite of their respect for the Serbian monastery of Dečani, „fre-

²⁷ П. Балкански 1894-96, 51; И. Иванић 1903, 80, 92 - 93.

²⁸ С. Ј. Поповић 1866, 483 - 484.

²⁹ G. M. Mackenzie. A. P. Irby 1866, 474 - 475; Cf. T. Stanković 1910, 45 - 46.

³⁰ С. Ј. Поповић 152-153; М. С. Петровић 14-15.

³¹ А. Гилффердинг 1972, 115.

³² It is interesting that, according to Todor Stanković, friars in Kosovo knew how to treat with certain medicaments which they distributed to the Arnauts before the prayer, and then they made use of the recovery in promoting their faith (Т. Станковић 1910, 45 - 46; cf. Б. Ђ. Нушић 1986, 137). The term *Arnauts* was used by travel-writers to denote the Serbs assimilated with Arnauts in the long period of Turkish rule (Lj. R).

³³ И. Иванић 1903, 124.

³⁴ М. С. Милојевић 1877, III, 102.

quently praying to the relics of the Holy King for their recovery³⁵, the Arnauts nevertheless harassed the monks and plundered that same monastery.³⁵

Having established that the Turks were „inclined to the destruction of“ Serbian churches, A. Boué concluded that „in that Turkish vandalism political reasons are to be sought“, because monasteries reminded the Serbs of the glorious past of the medieval Serbian state and cherished their hope in the renewal of such a state.³⁶ For this reason, the Turkish authorities strove „to exterminate all Serbian relics everywhere and at each place, resorting to all means so that the Serbs would move out of Serbia Proper, or be exterminated there“.³⁷ The Turks demolished Serbian places of worship and used that material to construct mosques, *tekijas*, bridges, Turkish baths or mills at the same or another site.³⁸ The destruction of Serbian churches could have seriously harmed the organization of the Serbian Orthodox church, which, on its part, would have accelerated the disappearance of the national sentiment and facilitated the conversion of the Serbian Orthodox population to Islam.

As regards unusualness, instances of miracles when particular Orthodox temples were saved from damage, partial demolition or total destruction are not inferior to instances of healing. Most frequently, orders to demolish churches were issued by higher Turkish authorities, or came from Constantinople. However, it was registered that on several occasions consuls of some western Powers induced the local Muslim population to violent action.³⁹ The local Muslims consented to demolish churches only if instructed by the authorities to do so, believing that in that case the sin for such a deed would be visited upon those who had given the order. But if someone attempted to destroy an important Orthodox church, a miracle occurred. When the converted Serb Machmud-bey ordered that the Patriarchate of Peć be demolished and he himself took up that job, some of those who had attempted

³⁵ А. Гиљфердинг 1972, 174 - 175. Cf. А. Гиљфердинг 1972, 116 - 117; И. Иванић 1903, 101 - 104; Т. Ђорђевић 1896, 30 - 31, 35 - 36, А. Урошевић 1938; А. Урошевић 1940.

³⁶ А. Boué II, 383; „These monasteries, or their very walls, are the only remains of and monuments to the old Serbian power and nobility. Studenica and Dečani can be compared to the first Christian monasteries in Europe; and for the ruins of Žiža and Manasija the Turks themselves say that they are signs testifying that the Serbs once had emperors and kings.“ Вук Ст. Караџић 1827, 110.

³⁷ М. С. Милојевић 1877, II, 8.

³⁸ Ф. Каниц 1987, II, 311; М. С. Милојевић 1987, I, 141, 178, 208; II, 67; И. Иванић 1903, 34, 70, 81, 130 - 131; Т. Ђорђевић 1896, 46.

³⁹ М. С. Милојевић 1877, II, 60 - 61, 184, 187 - 188; III, 183 - 184. Cf. В. Трпих 74 - 75, 105; Т. Станковић 1910, 45 - 46.

to do that became deranged, while the others became crippled.⁴⁰ The same monastery was saved from Tartars by St. Sava II and St. Ephraim, who sent terrible fire on them.⁴¹ A similar fate befell the Turkish („Tartar“) army while attacking Dečani at the end of the 17th century: „a horrible shot“ and „the fire lit the gunpowder in the turret above the monastery gate; so that part of the Tartar army was killed, and the others exterminated each other while fleeing“.⁴² The khoja who attempted to convert the church of the Holy Virgin in Prizren was killed by a stone which had fallen from the belfry.⁴³ A Turkish emperor („Tatarkhan“) wanted to convert the monastery of Dečani into a mosque. However, the khoja who intended to pray in front of the church gate was killed by the stone lion that had fallen from the facade. The relics of „the holy king“ and „the holy queen Helen“ started to belch fire, so that the emperor was terrified and took to flight with his army.⁴⁴

The description of the salvation of the church in Lipljani „one of the oldest Serbian churches“ stands apart by its unusualness and length. At the great entreaties of the Serbs not to demolish the church, the Turks decided to respond to the petition if a Serb would run to Priština in an hour and fetch Jašar Pasha's permission not to pull the church down, „carrying in his teeth seven okes of nails“. To the surprise of both the Turks and the Serbs, the feat was performed by a certain Đorđe Vojinčetović who had said on his departure: „God will fetch them“. He explained his speed by the fact that „the quicker I strode, the easier it was to me, as if I had been carried by something“. This was perceived as God's grace.⁴⁵

Although after liberation a number of churches and monasteries in Serbia was restored, often inexpertly, very few cases of reconstruction being undertaken as a condition for someone's recovery announced by a ghost in a dream were reported. Such an occurrence was associated with the renovation of the demolished church in the village of Štrpci. That was the task assigned to one woman in a dream by a ghost as the condition for her child's recovery.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ М. С. Милојевић 1877, II, 197 - 198, 258 - 260.

⁴¹ М. С. Милојевић 1877, 255.

⁴² М. С. Милојевић 1877, III, 97 - 98.

⁴³ М. С. Милојевић 1877, 174.

⁴⁴ Г. I Юришић 1852, 7 - 8; G. M. Mackenzie, A. P. Irby 1866, 424; А. Гильфердинг 1972, 174; С. Голчевић 1890, 217.

⁴⁵ М. С. Милојевић 1877, I, 147 - 148; М. Веселиновић 1895, 39-44; И. Иванић 1903, 34 - 44.

⁴⁶ М. Ристић, М. Валтровић 1889, 75 - 81; F. Kanitz included this account into his travel book, cf. Ф. Каниц 1987, II, 363.

There was a great number of churches and monasteries in Serbia, for in the Middle Ages, after Dušan's law code had been passed, these edifices were not constructed only by rulers, feudal lords and church dignitaries, but also by „many well-off peasants on their estates“.⁴⁷ Even if bearing in mind that M. S. Milojević's reports of the number of ruins were exaggerated, and in spite of the fact that numerous churches were demolished during Turkish rule, F. Kanitz was right when noting down: „It is easier to imagine deserted Hungary without a tent than a Serbian mountain without a monastery.“⁴⁸ However, one remark of his, made at an earlier time, unusual at first sight, can be explained in the context of this study: „The Turks chiefly spared monasteries, while destroying churches.“⁴⁹ It is common knowledge that the Turks did not „spare“ monasteries. But, in accordance with the former examples of the preservation of particular monasteries thanks to holy relics, it is clear that not all Serbian ecclesiastic monuments could have been preserved. The other explanation lies outside the sphere of miraculous powers. As it is known, churches were situated in populated areas, while monasteries were out of them, frequently in mountainous, remote places. Whenever possible, the Turks gave wide berth to mountain paths, for they dreaded sudden attacks of brigands. Besides this, excessive destruction of Serbian places of worship could have triggered off more frequent rebellions of the utterly humiliated and subjugated people. Thus, a certain number of monasteries survived, either partially preserved, or slightly damaged.

The second group of holy places in Serbia possessing the power to perform miracles comprised of tombs of known or unknown persons in open space. Of tombs in the open, the healing power of the tomb of Miloš Obilić was most striking. Riding a horse with his decapitated head under his arm, Miloš Obilić fell only when a girl loudly remarked that he was headless, and was buried in the vicinity of that spot. His tomb was gifted with the grace of healing and the ability to perform miracles, so that „it cured all diseases and helped all religions; especially giving strength to and invigorating weak children and sickly people; giving milk to those women who do not have it; and those who cannot bear children, when visiting the tomb and bowing to it, give birth to a child, and so on. Truth to tell, it helps all faiths without any

⁴⁷ М. Ал. Пурковић 1939, 159; see also С. Ј. Поповић 1950, 57, 496.

⁴⁸ Ф. Каниц 1987, II, 192.

⁴⁹ Ф. Каниц 1987, I, 269. See notes 36 - 37.

difference: it is the tomb of Miloš Obilić.⁵⁰ The instance of one tomb is illustrative of the attitude of the Muslims and Orthodox to holy tombs: although it was not known whether it belonged to Čerkez Pasha or Starina Novak, the tomb was nevertheless venerated by both religions.⁵¹ A strange occurrence, worth of mentioning, is that people around Prizren believed that even the tomb of Sima Andrejević Igumanov, the great Serbian benefactor and endower, possessed the ability to heal. S. Andrejević performed so many good deeds that people believed that he could be revered as a holy man.⁵²

The third group of miraculous places include healing waters, that is springs - wells with „the power to heal“. They are much more numerous than places with miracle-working relics. According to the testimonies of a number of travel-book writers, healing waters most frequently cured all diseases,⁵³ but there were also some springs acting especially well on eye diseases,⁵⁴ epilepsy,⁵⁵ malaria,⁵⁶ scabs or leprosy,⁵⁷ fever,⁵⁸ female complaints,⁵⁹ and so on. The healing quality of some of these waters can be understood in today's sense of the word. A. Ubcini mentions five places with mineral springs which were under state surveillance: Kissela-Voda in the district of Kragujevac, Bania-Brestovatchka in the district of Tzerna Reka, Bania-Alexinatchka in the district of Aleksinac, Bania-Ribarska in the district of Kruševac and Bania-Koviliatchka in the district of Podrinje.⁶⁰ During his travels, Felix Kanitz paid a visit to Bania-Koviliatchka „ranking among the best health resorts in Serbia“, Bania-Bukovitchka „the first health resort in the country which was, thanks to the support of Prince Mihailo, arranged as a western spa“ and Sokobania whose „well was attributed with special healing qualities and considered holy by the people.“⁶¹ According to legends,

⁵⁰ М. С. Милојевић 1877. I, 133; II, 53 - 54; П. Срећковић 1875, 348 - 349; Б. Ђ. Нушић 1986, 263 - 264.

⁵¹ М. С. Милојевић 1877. I, 188.

⁵² П. Костић 1911, 210, 221.

⁵³ I. Веселић 1867. 10, 33, 66 - 67, 71, 149; Ф. Каниц 1987. I, 262 - 263; 345; 291 - 392, 439, 444; II, 31, 326, 396, 548; М. С. Милојевић 1877. I, 121; II, 68, 178 - 179; 181; А. Гиљфердинг 1972, 271; И. Иванић 1903, 74; М. Ракић 1880, vol. 13, 12 - 13.

⁵⁴ Ф. Каниц 1987. I, 529, II, 31; М. Ракић 1880, vol. 13, 13.

⁵⁵ Т. Станковић 33; М. С. Милојевић II, 147.

⁵⁶ Ф. Каниц 1987, II, 115.

⁵⁷ Г. I. Јуришић 1852, 123; М. Ракић 1880, vol. 13, 13; Т. Станковић 1910, 118.

⁵⁸ М. С. Милојевић 1877, II, 115.

⁵⁹ М. С. Милојевић 1877, 157.

⁶⁰ А. Убисини 1865, 57.

⁶¹ Ф. Каниц 1987, I, 391 - 392, 465 - 466; II, 115.

however, the majority of these waters was associated with the name of a holy man. Before setting off to Kosovo, Miloš Obilić bathed in the stream of Banjska near Kuršumlja and „became spellcast“, and therefore people believed that repeated bathing in this water could be curative.⁶² As it seems, there used to be several such spas like „Miloš’s“.⁶³ „The imperial well“ was a spring in which the empress-mother bathed the dead tsar Uroš, and so from that time that water acquired healing powers, curing all illnesses and people of all religions.⁶⁴ „Loud Water“ gushed at the site where „the holy king“ Milutin slept when the monastery of Gračanica was being constructed. The well could not run dry and healed both Serbs and Arnauts.⁶⁵ While the „Loud Water“ flowed all the year long, the healing spring from Vidov Kamen („Vidovica or Vidovska Voda“ i. e. Vitus’s Water) on Vidova (or Vitus’s) mountain near Prokuplje burst into a stone bed only on St. Vitus’s day and that quantity was, allegedly, sufficient „to cure everyone who would come during the year of all illnesses, especially of scabs and diseases of the eye“.⁶⁶ There were numerous instances of waters with healing power springing from the ruins of an Orthodox church. Thus, the healing qualities of the „Vidova Voda“ spring near Velika Plana was explained by the fact that it gushed from the ruins of an Orthodox church.⁶⁷ If one spent twenty-four hours tied three-fold to the lime tree planted by St. Ioaneikios of Devič next to the well, one would be cured of epilepsy, while the holy water that sprung next to the ruins of the two churches in the vicinity of the village of Kruševo not far from the Patriarchate of Peć, cured women of all religious affiliations.⁶⁸

Apart from all these references to different waters with healing qualities, we should not forget the universally accepted belief that the water consecrated on particular Christian feasts in churches or monasteries has a special beneficial effect. Therefore, it is distributed to believers as medicine.⁶⁹

It is evident that the „healing power“ of waters brought to health the Orthodox and the Muslims alike. There are very few instances of waters not curing the Muslims, so that it can be concluded that in the main the curing qualities of healing waters, as well as the healing power of particular relics in churches, were not selective.⁷⁰

⁶² М. С. Милојевић 1877, I, 120 - 121; М. Ракић 1880, vol. 14, 212.

⁶³ И. Иванић 1903, 93 - 94.

⁶⁴ М. С. Милојевић 1877, I, 203 - 207.

⁶⁵ И. Иванић 1903, 74.

⁶⁶ Ф. Каниц 1987, II, 326; М. Ракић 1880, vol. 13, 12 - 13.

⁶⁷ Ф. Каниц 1987, II, 548, cf. note 30.

⁶⁸ Ф. Каниц 1987, II, 147, 178 - 179.

⁶⁹ Ф. Каниц 1987, II, 31.

⁷⁰ Ф. Каниц 1987, I, 121.

On the basis of the outlined classification and the analysis of the descriptions of miracles in the aforementioned travel accounts, several inferences can be drawn.

It would be very interesting to establish the truthfulness of the claims of the writers or narrators. However, hardly any writer witnessed a miracle himself. Stories about miracles are always second-hand, or part of folk tradition. Thus, in his books published in the eighteen-seventies Miloš S. Milojević wrote about strange events that happened that morning,⁷¹ six years ago,⁷² or in the remote past. Only in one paragraph did he mention that he found a youngish man crawling beneath the shrine of St. Ioaneikios in the Devič monastery, but he did not state what he had suffered from or whether he had been cured.⁷³ F. Kanitz came across the sick in many monasteries, expecting a miracle that would help them, but he himself did not witness any.⁷⁴ Mackenzie did not notice that the child who had spent some time lying next to the shrine of St. Helen in Dečani was restored to health, but she pointed out that his mother believed in that.⁷⁵ The only writer who saw a mentally deranged young man and was an eyewitness to his healing brought about by the relics of the Holy King and the prayers in Studenica was Vladan Đorđević. He had seen a youth named Bojan before he was cured. The young man, possessed by „the unclean spirit“, was first read „Basil’s prayer“, and then he was brought to the shrine „to kiss the Holy King“. After recovering consciousness, Bojan, who, before his illness, had given rich donations to the monastery on several occasions, exclaimed: „The Holy King worked a miracle on me, too“.⁷⁶

Hence, no writer, except Vladan Đorđević, was in the position to witness the healing itself and personally confirm the healing power of a holy place. In most cases, narrators after whose stories descriptions of miracles were noted down did not claim that they themselves had witnessed the described event. In the selected travel books several passages have been found in which certain doubt in miraculous powers was expressed. Father Sima from the Devič monastery complained that „our faith has thoroughly weakened and lost vigour, while the Turkish is strong and powerful indeed“, and

⁷¹ М. С. Милојевић 1877, II, 244-245.

⁷² М. С. Милојевић 1877, 256.

⁷³ М. С. Милојевић 1877, 155.

⁷⁴ Ф. Каниц 1987, I, 268-269; II, 74, 326.

⁷⁵ G. M. Mackenzie, A. P. Irby 1866, 426-427.

⁷⁶ В. Ђорђевић 1865, 71-75.

„when the Turkish violence was less, St. Ioanikios performed miracles, and now when it is so great that it cannot be borne or tolerated any more, he does not give signs that he is alive: he just grins and bears it. working no miracles to frighten the Turks.“⁷⁷ M. S. Milojević recounts that the church in Lipljani was saved since a youth carried out the demand of Jašar Pasha to reach Priština in an hour, a journey which can only be done in three hours, carrying seven okes of nails.⁷⁸ However, Milojević could not but write that „this event was so unusual that it can hardly be believed in without great devoutness and belief in miracles.“⁷⁹ F. Kanitz criticized the superstition of the Serbian peasant and denounced the behaviour of monks. Nevertheless, he moderated his judgement asking: „Do they not try (the clergy in the West - Lj. R.), despite all scientific progress, with all their might, to foster the superstition of people, occasionally fabricating new miracles.“⁸⁰ Mita Rakić admires „the strength of faith“ of those who sought cure in the neglected, humid and stuffy church of St. Prokopios near Prokuplje.⁸¹

According to these travel books, the regulations concerning the stamping out of superstition in the Serbian Principality seem not to have applied to holy places, so that the Serbian authorities neither prohibited nor prevented gathering or seeking help there. But the Muslims who visited the church of St. Petka in Kalemegdan were criticized and even punished by their authorities while they ruled in Serbia. In spite of the fact that the travel books often make mention of the Muslims of Old Serbia seeking rescue from troubles in Serbian holy places, there are no records of their being punished because of that, but only occasionally being exposed to mockery.

Claims that both Muslims and Catholics (the latter, to be true, more seldom) prayed at Orthodox holy places can be interpreted in two ways. The first and more reliable interpretation is that the majority of the Muslim population living in the territories dealt with in this paper was of Christian origin. One-time members of the Orthodox church, who, in their struggle to survive the Turkish oppression, converted to Islam in recent or distant past, could not forget so easily the beneficial effect of their ancestors' holy objects. The second, not less reliable, interpretation is of a psychological nature: people in great trouble - in most instances having an illness either terminal or hard

⁷⁷ М. С. Милојевић 1877, II, 151-152.

⁷⁸ Cf. note 46.

⁷⁹ М. С. Милојевић 1877, I, 147-148; cf. note 46.

⁸⁰ Ф. Каниц 1987, I, 268-269.

⁸¹ М. Ракић 1880, vol. 13, 9.

to cure at that time - sought salvation everywhere, often disregarding the fact that the saint or the holy place from which aid was requested belonged to a different religion. These two interpretations together provided sufficient justification to every Muslim for turning to an Orthodox holy object, when necessary.

Nineteenth-century travel books state that the number of holy places with miraculous power was larger in Serbia Proper, i. e. Old Serbia, than in the Principality (Kingdom) of Serbia. It is understandable in view of the fact that the heart of the medieval Serbian state was in the region of Old Serbia, that in the course of the Middle Ages a lot of Orthodox temples were erected there, and that distinguished personalities of the medieval Serbian state and church dignitaries, subsequently canonized, were buried in some of them.⁸² This region was interesting for writers of travel accounts because the interests of several states clashed there, so that more accounts of Old Serbia were left than those of the Serbian Principality (Kingdom). We should bear in mind that that area remained under Turkish rule in the course of the entire 19th century, and so the stories of miracles could have had a certain moral influence on the Orthodox population. Besides this, people probably sought cure from diseases in prayers and in the church more frequently than in Serbia, because of the slower development of the medical service.

After making such conclusions, although objectively unable to check in any way the claims of travel writers concerning the miraculous power of the holy places in the Principality (Kingdom) of Serbia and Old Serbia, we can assert that Serbian holy places with miraculous powers not only played a significant role in the spiritual life of the Orthodox Serbs and Muslims, and even Arnauts, but they also exerted a crucial, that is decisive, influence on the preservation of Serbian tradition and culture. These were the places where cure or consolation were sought. But, above all, these were the places where the Serbs gathered, most often on great feasts. At such a place, in a group, an individual could feel stronger and safer, protected by an imaginary, supernatural power. The belief in God and the hope that the new Serbian state would soon expand to the south kept the Serbian spirit in the subjugated regions alive for a long time.

Translated by Radmila Popović

⁸² Cf. notes 3 and 48.

СРПСКА СВЕТА МЕСТА И ЧУДОТВОРНЕ ПОЈАВЕ

- ПРЕМА ПУТОПИСИМА ИЗ XIX ВЕКА -

Резиме

Број места или објеката који имају обележја светости је, у српским земљама, тако велики да би и само њихово регистровање одузело прилично времена и простора. Зато се овај рад ограничава на мањи број оних значајнијих светих места која су помињали и необичне појаве везане за њих описали путописци који су током XIX века путовали по Кнежевини (Краљевини) Србији и по Старој - Правој - Србији. Ова два простора тада вештачки подељена српско-турском државном границом су, управо због те поделе, интересантни за истраживања српских светих места.

Према путописним белешкама света места на којима су се манифестовале чудотворне појаве могу се поделити у три групе: 1. манастири, цркве и црквине, 2. гробна места у слободном простору и 3. воде. Чудотворно дејство лечења од најразличитијих болести испољавало се и код православних и код муслимана а веома ретко код католика. Други вид чудотворног дејства испољаво се у самозаштити светих места (углавном манастира) од рушилачких намера Турака и Арнаута.

Ретки су путописци који су присуствовали манифестовању чудотворства али је, према путописним белешкама, приметна дубока вера појединаца у њихову делотворност. То се може, пре свега, тумачити непостојањем организоване медицинске службе те настојањем становништва да у натприродним силама тражи лек различитим болестима. Истовремено, православно становништво које је трпело страшан терор Турака и Арнаута веровало је да га његови свети преци, штитећи света места, могу заштитити и сачувати до коначног ослобођења од турске власти.

Стога је посебна пажња посвећена: 1. односу домаћих и страних путописаца према светом месту које је имало одређену натприродну моћ; 2. односу локалног становништва (православних и католичких хришћана и муслимана) према истом месту; 3. односу власти према том месту и његовом поштовању. Према овоме могуће је утврдити значај (национални и верски) одређеног светог места и његову улогу у животу становништва сходно веровању у натприродну моћ.

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