

A SERBIAN VILLAGE

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By JOEL MARTIN HALPERN

Illustrations by BARBARA KERESKY HALPERN

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CLARKE F. ANSLEY AWARD

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FOREWORD

OUR KNOWLEDGE of the folk base of civilization and its various national traditions continues to grow. In growing it gives us a surer basis of comparison of the civilizations of the world and a better understanding of the currents of social and cultural change flowing from metropolitan centers of invention and elaboration into the countrysides of Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa. The inherited ways of life that have shaped folk and peasant tradition continue to exert themselves, and there seems less fear to think they will disappear. Rather, there is today more expectancy that they will continue, in transformation to modernity, to exercise some of the particularizing force that has given us the richness of national and regional peculiarities. If the world now in emergence combines old and new, and somehow merges the ancestral and the modern, the view of a changing Serbia that we get here by looking from the village outward and upward will serve us well as a foretaste of the future of those countries which will combine peasant persistence and urban sophistications, technical, political, or cultural.

That we can have such foretastes we owe to the continuing scholarly use, in social and anthropological science, of the community study method. Dr. Halpern worked within the anthropological tradition of the lone investigator. Although he was bolstered by a courageous and helpful young wife and by stout advice and encouragement from Yugoslav scholars who were fairly close by, he worked by himself without the complex apparatus of team work among survey specialists and technicians so common today. There are advantages in the continuance of the tradition in which a lone

investigator takes on a whole small community. What persons and events he himself can reach represent to him a whole round of life and exemplify in their own activities and interrelationships a living and changing culture. Insight, sharpness of detail, sympathy, verisimilitude, a sure grasp of the real connections among forces are some of the rewards as they are here. If an overview of national or world influences is difficult to keep before oneself when one is immersed in the "grass roots" of real lives of real persons in a real and intensely particular village and countryside, the book one writes after one comes home, with field work backed with sound reading, can weave together the local and the national. Dr. Halpern's *A Serbian Village* is such a book. Looking upward and outward from the village gives one the indispensable realistic view from below of these influences which no other method can so well obtain.

It is encouraging, thus, to realize that community studies like this one, sounding in depth, are giving us deeper and truer knowledge of the ways of life of so many modern countries. Britain, France, Spain, Germany, our own New England, West, South, and Middle West—in recent years these have been sounded through community studies in the anthropological (or, as Europeans say, the "ethnographic") tradition of objective and comparative social research. Coupled with the many problematic studies current in such countries and areas, these community studies enrich our perception of social and cultural realities. They substitute truth and clarity for our previous too-easy self-images and our sometimes too-hasty national prejudices about ourselves and our neighbors. The gain accrues both to social science in the abstract and to its application in private and public problem solving.

It is the abstract gain that is of most importance to the future of social and cultural studies and anthropology in the widest sense. Here Dr. Halpern's foray into one of the heartlands of the Yugoslav national spirit, and one of the hearths of European man, is most welcome. Much of older cultural anthropology implicitly and explicitly contrasted the European or Western world with the outer lands of alien or primitive civilization. It took a long time before the comparative story of Man and the comparative analysis of his cultures and societies embraced more than the preliterate and

“barbaric” lands outside high civilization. Today the gain for inclusiveness has been won. The civilizations of China, Japan, India, the Moslem world, known at first only to culture historians and orientalists, are under study today as human cultures and as social systems, with techniques ranging from community study and local surveys up to an analysis of art and literature. Anthropology’s treatment of human achievement and adaptation, in its immense variety, now includes high civilizations other than the European.

But the full comparison will not be possible, and the record not complete, until the same techniques of cultural study have been turned upon the European world as well. Today cultural anthropology and comparative ethnology are completing the record and thereby conveying to us the real place of European ways of life, peasant or not, in the history and variation of mankind. This account of Serbian village life takes its place in that perspective.

CONRAD M. ARENSBERG

July, 1957

Trappe, Maryland

PREFACE

YUGOSLAVIA was chosen as the locale for a study of cultural change for several reasons. Because the area on which it lies has always been a meeting ground of cultures, it affords an excellent laboratory for the study of cultural dynamics. For the anthropologist interested in Slavic studies, Yugoslavia is at present the only country open to American investigators who wish to work *in situ*, a condition preferable to working with emigrant informants. It is an area which has been little studied by Western anthropologists, although Yugoslav ethnologists and human geographers with a somewhat different orientation have been actively working there for over half a century. Most notable among these are Jovan Cvijić and his students, who have been concerned chiefly with various types of environmental adaptations and population movements.

A decade ago practically nothing was said about field technique. Field methods were evidently viewed as something of an art, and every anthropologist seems to have kept his own counsel, like a prize chef with his favorite recipes. Since the end of the Second World War, however, this tradition has broken down and discussions of field techniques have become more frequent. Nevertheless, field methods still retain something of the aura of an occult art. These facts were brought home to the author as a fledgling anthropologist on his first major field research project.

The village of Orašac in the region of Šumadija was originally selected because it had been chosen as the village for the People's Republic of Serbia to be the site of a projected United Nations program in community development. It was also sufficiently far from Belgrade and any other big town so as not to be directly influenced by them. In August, 1953, my wife and I went to Orašac

after spending over a week in Jarmenovci, another village in the same general area, with Professor Borivoje Drobnjaković, Chairman of the Department of Ethnology at Belgrade University, and two of his assistants. This period with the Serbian ethnologists was very helpful, although their methods and interests, focusing largely on material culture and origins of the population, are somewhat different from those of most American anthropologists.

With a letter from the official Yugoslav Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreigners we went by train to the rural county seat of Arandjelovac, about 50 miles south of Belgrade. Our letter was addressed to the County Cooperative Union, since we had evidenced an interest in the United Nations program in Community Development, a joint project of the United Nations Technical Assistance Administration and the Central Union of Yugoslav Cooperatives. When we arrived at the Cooperative's county headquarters, the President of the Orašac Cooperative happened to be there. He decided to allow us to return with him to his village, several miles away. Upon our arrival in Orašac, a conference as to where we would be lodged was immediately held among the leading officials: the Director of the school, the President and Secretary of the Village Council, and the President of the Village Cooperative. The house of the Secretary of the Village Council was unanimously agreed upon, and there we remained for our year's stay.

His house had the disadvantage of being located some distance from the center of the village. This was more than compensated for by the fact that there were six members—three generations—in the household: his parents, his wife, and his young son and daughter, all of whom were very friendly and later proved themselves to be eager and dependable informants. Since our host was Secretary of the Village Council, however, many of his attitudes and those of his family could not always be called typical. For example, he was more in favor of the present government and was to a greater extent susceptible to urban influences than was characteristic of the village on the whole. Although much valuable material was obtained from the members of this family we contacted as many other people as possible, by means of conventional

participant-observer techniques and by extensive interviewing of selected individuals.

Whatever measure of merit this work may have was due in large part to the extreme friendliness with which we were received by almost everyone. From the beginning we were welcome guests wherever we went at any time, mainly because of the traditional attitudes of Serbian hospitality toward strangers. In fact, as we began visiting different households, chatting with people, casually interviewing them, and just "sitting around," we found that others were offended because we had not yet come to their homes. For two people in a village of over 400 households this was a difficult situation. Naturally, our selection of informants was based on their position in the culture, reliability, and other qualifications, of which an elucidation to the average villager was a nearly impossible task.

The usual cautions were observed, one of the most important being noninterference in the internal affairs of the villagers. From the outset we made it clear to Communists and non-Communists alike that our purpose was to collect data about their way of life and not to meddle in their politics. Some exception to this was made during the Trieste crisis in October, 1953, when villagers asked us about the American position. But by that time we were sufficiently established in the village so that our status was not affected, although we were subjected to earnest and persistent questioning. Our acceptance in the village was often based not so much on the fact that we were foreigners in general but rather Americans in particular. This always ensured a warm reception and a very friendly relationship. It gave rise to some minor discomfort, however, when I was on numerous occasions enthusiastically embraced by stalwart peasants who, following Serbian customs of camaraderie, rubbed their grizzly cheeks against mine in impulsive demonstrations of affection.

Another factor which I believe aided us on two counts—avoiding suspicion and being able to approach people easily—was that at the time of the field work, 1953–54, my wife and I were both in our early twenties. Because of our youth, we were obviously not to be taken too seriously according to the peasant ethos. This in-

spired some interesting attitudes on the part of several older men who addressed me as “*Vi, dečko*” (You [formal form], Boy). In spite of this, to the villagers the fact that we had traveled the great distance from America to Orašac meant that we had some sort of importance.

In explanations of our stay in the village, historical circumstances worked in our favor. The statement that we had come to study their history was often satisfactory by itself, for Orašac was the site of the First Revolt against the Turks in 1804, where Karadjordje—the founder of one of the two Serbian royal dynasties, which lasted intermittently until the Second World War—organized his forces. Any additional explanation was provided by the statement that we wished to learn about their interesting customs. This usually had a very positive effect on a people so consciously patriotic as the Serbian peasantry.

A typical first encounter was taken up mostly by the informant questioning us, about ourselves and America, and then revealing spontaneous expressions of interest in America and gratitude for United States economic aid to Yugoslavia. It is considered good form for the fieldworker not to project his personal background into the situation, but we adopted the policy of not going to the extreme of concealing ours. Since we were received in an open and friendly manner we decided to act similarly, and although the remarks were in no way solicited, of course, it would have been impolite to ignore them. We consciously tried, however, to express a minimum of value judgments regarding their culture and not to take sides in any controversial discussions which did not affect us directly.

On the latter point, it was necessary to yield somewhat when it was a question of establishing better *rappport*. It was not our intention to be adopted into the culture, for such was not their ethos—the peasants preferred us for what we were. We came to the village equipped with old clothes for tramping around over fields and muddy lanes, but I was discreetly informed that I should dress “like an American.” So for most of our stay in Orašac I had to wear shoes instead of old boots, and trousers in place of Army fatigues. Yet at other times we were able to blend convincingly

into the scene, as when one old man refused to believe I was an American but rather an official from Belgrade who had come down to work on the "Plan." And my wife was approached several times by bachelors from neighboring villages when she went to the market town with the young women from Orašac.

All work was done in Serbian, which we studied intensively for almost two months in Belgrade before starting field work. Our knowledge of the language was far from flawless, but it improved considerably in the field. The fact that it was never completely perfected did not turn out to be a handicap.

Written material was a source of supplementary information. Several essay contests were held for the school children, and the winners were given small prizes. They wrote on such topics as "My Childhood," "What I Want to Be," and "My Favorite Holiday." Several men wrote their autobiographies, and a number of women were interviewed extensively—they seldom had the free time or schooling to write personal histories. No questionnaires were used, although I believe much valuable data could have been gained from them. This was again because the two of us could not cover the entire village adequately. An agency in Belgrade expressed interest in sponsoring such a survey, but action was never taken.

The physical and cultural landscapes and the yearly cycle of activities were recorded in over 500 photographs. Tape recordings of folk songs and instruments were made. Quite a bit of attention was given to the material culture, especially house furnishings and costumes, since an ethnographic collection was made for the American Museum of Natural History.

From county and village records numerous statistics were collected, and all local officials and some county ones were interviewed. In the majority of cases they were anxious to be of help and supplied me with all data requested, although the full accuracy of their material cannot be confirmed. The Statistical Office of the People's Republic of Serbia provided much valuable data, particularly the complete Orašac census reports for 1948 and 1953, from which material on social organization and nonagricultural employment was obtained.

I am deeply grateful to Professor Milenko S. Filipović, of the Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and currently of the University of Sarajevo, for his constant interest and insights into Serbian peasant culture. The other ethnologists at Belgrade University and the Ethnographic Museum of Belgrade, particularly Miss Bosiljka Radović, were all extremely helpful.

In general, the Yugoslav authorities, on the national as well as on the local level, were quite cooperative. A mild form of pressure was applied by some county officials, who made it clear that they were being helpful because they assumed I would write a sympathetic report. Contact with a few of the formerly wealthy peasants, now looked upon with disfavor, was discouraged although never prohibited.

This study is in a sense something of a restudy, since the area (all the villages in pre-war Jasenica County, now mostly in Orašac County) has been covered in a monograph by Jeremije M. Pavlović, *Život i Običaji Narodni u Kragujevačkoj Jasenici u Šumadiji* (Peasant Life and Customs in Jasenica Region of the Kragujevac District in Šumadija), published by the Serbian Royal Academy of Belgrade in 1921. Jeremije Pavlović was a village schoolteacher interested in ethnology. He lived in the region prior to the First World War, and his work is almost entirely descriptive but with broad coverage. His study is valuable chiefly for comparisons on various details, but it is also strongest in the sphere where this study is weakest—namely folklore and oral literature. Another publication bearing directly on this area is *Jasenica*, by Professor Drobnjaković, also published by the Serbian Royal Academy, in 1923. A monograph in the series *Naselja i Poreklo Stanovništva* (Settlements and the Origin of Populations), it follows the pattern established by Jovan Cvijić in his *La Péninsule Balkanique*, and gives, for every village in the county, including Orašac, brief descriptions of the topography and origin of each clan group. Also included in *Jasenica* is a brief history of the general area from prehistoric times and a detailed discussion of the various waves of migration which settled the county. Still another valuable monograph is the massive work on the ethnography of the neighboring region of Gruža, compiled by Petar Petrović and based on field

work there in the 1920s. It was published by the Serbian Academy of Sciences in 1948. This, too, is largely a compendium of neatly categorized facts without much attempt to synthesize or evaluate, but it is nevertheless useful for supplementary documentation, although there are some minor differences between Gruža and the region dealt with in the present study.

Milislav Lutovac's *Privredno-Geografska Karakteristika Sliva Jasenice* (Economic-Geographic Characteristics of the Jasenica Basin), published by the Serbian Academy of Sciences in 1951, provided helpful information. The only works on Šumadija approximating community studies are by a physician, Dr. Aleksandar Petrović. Published by the Central Hygiene Institute in Belgrade, they deal with the villages Banjane (1932) and Rakovica (1939) and emphasize public health and nutrition, with an attempt to integrate other aspects of culture. Some additional publications, by Cvijić, Jovan Erdeljanović, Tihomir Djordjević, and others have been used as references, since the general region in which Orašac is located has been relatively well studied by Serbian scholars for over half a century, although not by the "community study" approach.

It is impossible to fully acknowledge here all those who helped in one way or another to make this study possible. Certainly most significant were the warmhearted, cooperative people of Orašac. In addition to the ethnologists in Belgrade, Tihomir Kostić aided enormously in the translation of songs and old church documents. Edwin Henson, a community development expert with the United Nations, helped in the selection of Orašac as the site for my study.

Several Serbs originally from Šumadija now residing in New York checked innumerable details and discussed general impressions obtained in the field. To Budimir Sreckovich I owe a special debt of gratitude for his great patience and aid throughout the preparation of my manuscript.

I am grateful to Professors Milorad Drashkovitch, Harvey Moore, Philip Mosely, Harry Shapiro, Jozo Tomasevich, and Charles Wagley, to M. B. Filipovic and others for helpful comments, and especially to Professor Conrad Arensberg, who encouraged and guided this project.

To my parents, Nettie and Carl Halpern, I am indebted for

both their faith and financial assistance, enabling me to spend a year in the field and a year writing up my material. My wife, Barbara, in addition to sharing field experiences and collecting useful information, helped during all stages of preparing the manuscript. Especially invaluable was her assistance in drawing the illustrations, preparing maps and diagrams, and assuming some of the thankless and laborious tasks connected with compiling statistics—but most important of all were her inspiration and enthusiasm in this project.

This book is a somewhat condensed version of my doctoral dissertation under the Department of Anthropology, Columbia University; a limited prepublication edition of this study has been issued by Human Relations Area Files, Inc., New Haven, Connecticut, in 1956.

JOEL MARTIN HALPERN

Luang Prabang, Laos
April, 1957

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A SERBIAN VILLAGE

*Cultures are infinitely perfectible
and everything indicates that all cultures
are in a constant state of change.*

RALPH LINTON, *Acculturation
of Seven American Indian Tribes*

NOTE ON PRONUNCIATION

IN THIS STUDY all proper names and other Serbian words are given in their customary form in Latin characters (Croatian), except for names with established English equivalents, for example, Yugoslavia (Jugoslavija), Belgrade (Beograd), Serbia (Srbija).

CHAPTER 1

THE SETTING

A DIRT ROAD winds over gentle slopes. In the summer it is a ribbon of powdery dust, and when it rains the wheels of cow carts cut deep ruts and ridges into the mud. Small fields of wheat and corn, and meadows, where sheep graze, stretch across the rolling landscape. Studding the fields are whitewashed cottages topped with red tiled roofs. Neat plum orchards, now rows of bare-branched trees, now obscuring the cottages in clouds of pink-white petals, now hung with purple fruit, surround each homestead. The road dips down toward the new Cooperative Home and a cluster of peasant cottages, and there, where it bends around Preseka Hill, Orašac village lies, its homes sprinkled over slope and plain.

Orašac is in the region of Šumadija in Serbia. Its people think of themselves primarily as Serbs rather than Yugoslavs. Their way of life is characteristic of that of central Serbia and represents a picture of the largest—and possibly the most homogeneous—ethnic unit in the cultural mosaic that is the modern Yugoslav nation.

GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

A glance at Map 1 serves to emphasize one of the most critical factors in the shaping of the culture of the Yugoslavs: a geographic location between the Eastern and Western worlds, which has given rise to Yugoslavia's characterization as a halfway station,



Map 1. Yugoslavia, Showing Region of Šumadija in Central Serbia

not only in modern times but also in historic and to a certain extent even in prehistoric periods.

Beginning in the sixth and seventh centuries, there occurred migrations of Slavs from the Carpathian regions, who in turn either eliminated older inhabitants or else amalgamated with them. After a period of competition between the Bulgarian and Serbian kingdoms began the wars with the Turks, culminating in the defeat of the Serbs at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389.¹

But different parts of Yugoslavia have different backgrounds. Slovenia, in the north, bordering on Italy, Austria, and Hungary,

¹ Although preeminent in traditional Serbian literature, this battle is more of psychological than historical significance; the Battle of Marica in 1371 had a greater military significance. It was not until 1459 that the Serbs were completely subdued.

was under the Hapsburg Empire until the First World War (as was Croatia, its neighbor to the east). Today one of the six republics of the Federated People's Republics of Yugoslavia, Slovenia has a predominantly Roman Catholic population of approximately 1,500,000, who in personality, attitudes, and material culture resemble more nearly the neighboring Austrians than they do their fellow Yugoslavs. Croatia, with a population of 4,000,000, and neighboring Serbia are the two largest ethnic and political units in Yugoslavia.² Although they speak a common language, the Croats write mainly in the Latin alphabet and are Roman Catholics while the Serbs use chiefly the Cyrillic and are Eastern Orthodox. Antagonism between the Serbs and Croats was one of the major disruptive factors in Yugoslavia prior to the Second World War. In fact, the tension was so strong that Yugoslavia was never consolidated from an internal point of view. Aside from the Austro-Hungarian influence, which was strong in the interior, the control of Italy and Mediterranean culture was dominant along the Dalmatian Coast.

Serbia is the largest republic and ethnic unit, with a total population of some 7,000,000. There are two autonomous areas within Serbia. The province of the Vojvodina, the flat plains area north of the Danube, was, like Croatia, under the Hapsburg Monarchy (the Hungarian part) until the First World War. The Vojvodina, which has a population of 1,714,000, has the richest farm land in the whole of Yugoslavia and is inhabited mainly by Serbs, although it has large groups of Hungarian and Rumanian national minorities. In addition, scattered throughout the province are villages of Slovak, Czech, Russene (Ukrainian), and German minority groups.³ Serbia also has the autonomous region of the Kosmet (Kosovo-Metohija), center of the Albanian minority, which has a population of 800,000. They speak their own language and are of the Moslem faith for the most part.

The remaining three republics are Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia. Bosnia is populated by Catholics, Or-

² From the twelfth to the fifteenth century Croatia was united with Hungary and later became part of the Hapsburg Empire.

³ Most of the Germans left Yugoslavia during or soon after the Second World War.

thodox, and Moslems, all of whom speak Serbo-Croatian. The Moslems are part of the original Slav population which accepted Mohammedanism at the time of the Turkish conquest. This area was ruled by Austria-Hungary, which succeeded the Turks in 1878, until the First World War.

Montenegro, with its population of less than 500,000, is a small mountainous country bordering on Albania. Its people managed more successfully to resist conquest by the Turks because of their security within the rocky, rugged terrain. In language, religion, and general culture they are Serbs; although never directly ruled by the Turks they were nevertheless influenced by them.⁴ Montenegro was independent until the end of the First World War.

Macedonia, a center of the medieval Serbian state, remained under Turkey until 1912, when her withdrawal was forced by Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece. It is here that the Turkish influence was strongest and persisted for the longest time. The old section of Skoplje, the capital, is more "Turkish" today than much of Istanbul. Macedonia's population of some 1,300,000 is a mixture of Moslem and Orthodox.

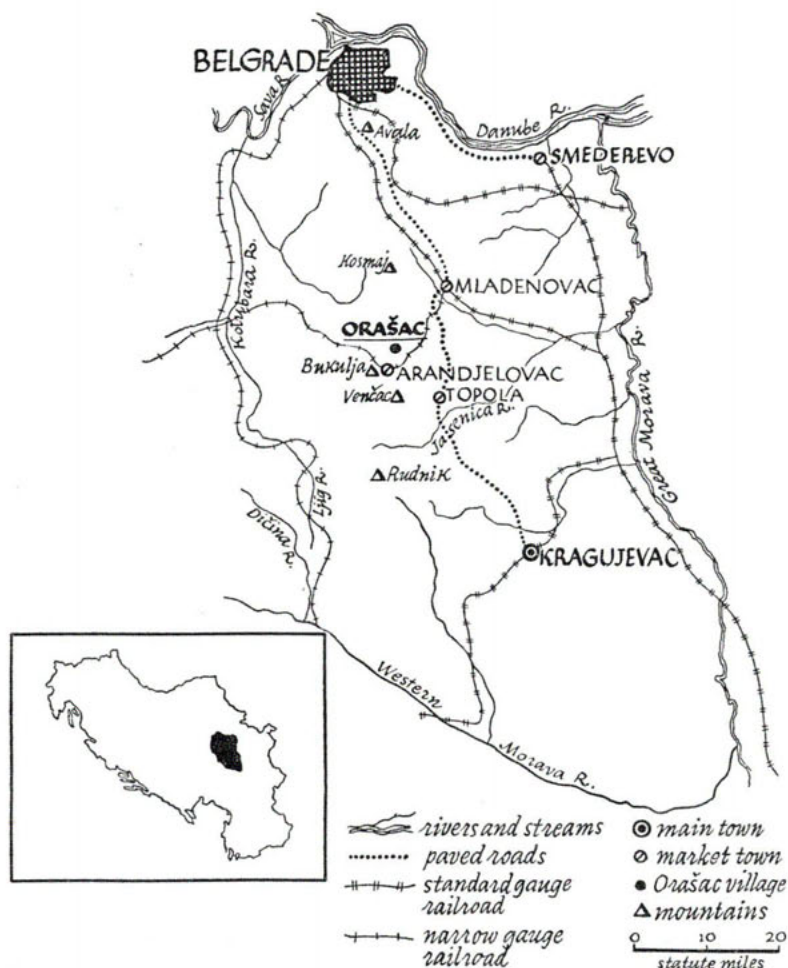
This very brief summary, then, gives some idea of the cultural diversity of present-day Yugoslavia. An understanding of this diversity is essential in placing the village of Orašac in any perspective, or, for that matter, in understanding the village itself, for the inhabitants of this village, unlike some of their fellow farmers in other parts of the world, are acutely conscious of national differences and of what they consider to be their place in the national and international picture.

In contrast to the differences underscored above, the Republic of Serbia (exclusive of Belgrade and the two autonomous regions) has in general a very homogeneous population; this is especially true of the region of Šumadija, in which Orašac village, in Orašac County,⁵ is situated. Here anyone who is not an Orthodox Serb is something of a peculiarity, although this situation has been

⁴ There are, however, many minor distinctions related to environmental and historical differences, both in cultural traits and psychological orientation, between the Serbs of Montenegro and those of Serbia proper.

⁵ Unless otherwise specified, in this book Orašac always refers to the village.

altered slightly since the Second World War, with its accompanying population movements. This cultural homogeneity and central geographic location explain why the area is called the "heart of Serbia." There are also important historical reasons. It is in Šumadija, in fact in the very village of Orašac, that the first revolt against the Turks began.



Map 2. Šumadija

Šumadija derives its name from the Serbian *šuma*, or woods, for at the turn of the nineteenth century, when its intensive settlement began, the entire region had a rich oak forest cover. Today only small scattered patches of the original forest remain.

Šumadija is bounded on the north by the Sava and the Danube and on the east and south by the Great Morava and the Western Morava; within the region's western border lie the valleys of the Kolubara, Ljig, and Dičina Rivers (see Map 2). Its area is about 3,500 square miles, approximately one half the size of New Jersey. Šumadija is on the margin of the basin occupied by the vast Pannonian Lake of the Neocene. Pleasant rolling hill country, the region actually consists of three distinct topographical features: enclosing and transversing river basins, mountain massifs, and glacial lake terraces, which gradually decrease in elevation from south to north, to the Danube. The tops of the mountain massifs were islands in glacial times. Shoreline terraces are still visible today to an altitude of about 2,000 feet, almost to the summits of the small mountains. Kosmaj, Bukulja, Venčac, and the highest massif, Rudnik (3,714 feet), still rise clearly above Šumadija's undulating fields and meadows. Overlaying the crystalline core and the semicrystalline Cretaceous limestone of these massifs are Neocene sediments, horizontal layers of clay and yellow-colored sand.⁶

On the lower slopes of the mountains are thin stands of oak and beech, and above a thousand feet there is a thicker coniferous cover. The rolling lowlands below, where most of the villages are located, can be characterized as mixed deciduous forest. Except for an occasional patch of oak, acacia is seen everywhere, in groves, bordering roads, and lining paths.⁷ In addition, there is a variety of cultivated fruit trees, especially plum.

Šumadija has a marked continental climate, like that of most of inland Central Europe. The nearest meteorological station is Bukovička Banja, about four miles from Orašac. Its records indicate the general meteorological pattern for Šumadija and give specific data on the immediate area of Orašac. July is the warmest

⁶ Lutovac, *Priredno-Geografska Karakteristika Sliva Jasenice*, p. 1.

⁷ This is not part of the aboriginal forest cover but was introduced into Šumadija in the nineteenth century.

month, with an average temperature of 74°F., while January is the coldest month, with an average of 35°F. Rainfall is constant all year, with maximum precipitation in May and June. The average annual precipitation is 30 inches.

Within this pattern, however, there is a good deal of variation. Readings as high as 109°F. have occurred in the summer and as low as -17°F. have been recorded in the winter. Total annual precipitation often registers as little as 23-25 inches and sometimes as much as 38 inches. It is estimated that the average date for the first frost is October 21, and an extreme for the region is the end of September. The last frost occurs about April 13, with extreme records for the first week in May. Again, the area is subject to great variation, but in general an eight-and-a-half-month growing season prevails, from the middle of March through November. In spite of the many deviations from average conditions, the occurrence of maximum rainfall during this period is, of course, very favorable for agriculture.

At the beginning and end of winter, and often before the first frosts, a bitter cold, dry wind called the *košava* blows into the region. Coming from across the flat, wind-swept plains of the Vojvodina, it loses much of its force as it passes through the hill regions of Šumadija. Often it blows steadily for a few days and sometimes for longer periods, causing damage to agriculture, especially to the fruit trees.

Šumadija, still overwhelmingly a land of peasants, contains a few small commercial and industrial centers. These originally developed during the period when the railroad came through in the latter part of the nineteenth century, although they may have existed previously as peasant villages. This is the case for Mladenovac (population 6,206), Topola (population 4,588), and Arandjelovac (population 5,746), the towns nearest Orašac. In Arandjelovac, about four miles south of Orašac, small factories producing refractory material and porcelain insulators for electrical equipment have recently begun operations and are largely responsible for the population increase. The town is also endowed with natural mineral springs, around which a wooded park and several inns have been built. Yugoslav city folk come from as far away as Macedonia

to enjoy the hot springs. This development, unlike the new factories, has had little effect on the peasants, and the primary function of Arandjelovac is as a county seat and market town for the twenty-odd villages in the surrounding region.

PREHISTORY AND EARLY HISTORY

Yugoslavia in general, and Serbia in particular, is rich in antiquities and reveals evidences of human occupation even from as early as the paleolithic period.⁸ The regions surrounding Orašac village have many archeological remains. In Lipovac, about seven miles south of Arandjelovac, there is a large neolithic site. The finds from Lipovac are closely comparable to those from the famous site at Vinča, on the Danube near Belgrade, and are analogous to finds at other neolithic sites in the Moravo-Danubian area. The material includes fluted and ribbed ware and incised and burnished decorated ceramics in the form of bowls, cups, and large storage vessels. There are also clay figurines, celts, knife blades, scrapers, and milling stones. Bones of domestic cattle and pigs have been found.⁹

It has been suggested that the present day economic structure of the Moravo-Danubian area reflects a heritage derived from neolithic times, that the neolithic pioneers found a physical environment essentially similar to that of the present day, that the Slavic emigrants adopted the traditions established here by their neolithic predecessors, and that the culture of the present Šumadijans still reflects much of the aboriginal mode of life.¹⁰ Undoubtedly, most of the crops and animals raised by the peasants today, as well as some of their implements and techniques, had their origin in neolithic times. But what specifically the contemporary peasant population has received directly from the prehistoric inhabitants of Šumadija is something else again. Although this area has been inhabited in neolithic and Roman times, there is a long period of

⁸ Knowledge of paleolithic cultures in Serbia is at present imperfect, but in 1955 a site near Arandjelovac was excavated by Brodar and identified as Mousterian, by associated artifacts and accompanying Pleistocene fauna, according to a communication from Professor Brodar.

⁹ Fewkes, "Neolithic Sites in the Moravo-Danubian Area," *American School of Prehistoric Research Bulletin*, No. 12 (May, 1936), pp. 5-82.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

history, up to and including part of the early Middle Ages, for which there is little or no record of settlement. It would seem, therefore, that a direct tradition would be hard to trace. Probably what is meant is the general basis of the peasant economy, a combination of sedentary agriculture and stock breeding, supplemented by hunting and fishing. In Šumadija today, however, the latter are almost negligible.

In the second and third centuries the neighboring region of Rudnik was an important Roman mining center and was relatively well settled. The Jasenica drainage basin, in which Orašac is situated, was also settled by the Romans at this time, and both were part of the province of Moesia. Peasants from Orašac and several nearby villages have found Roman coins in the course of their plowing, and many Roman sites have been discovered by professional archeologists.

From the recorded history of Belgrade, it is known that the city was held by the Illyrians. In the fourth century B.C. they were replaced by the Celts, who lived there for over three hundred years. It was under the Celtic name of Singidunum that Belgrade later became a Roman trading center. Before the arrival of the Slavs, the Belgrade region was fought over by the Huns and Avars as well as the Romans. Then, with the Slav migrations, the area was settled again. This Belgrade region was all frontier territory, and if the locale of Orašac, some sixty miles still further south, experienced these vicissitudes at all, there seem to be no records of it. Nor are there many reliable records for the area for the next thousand years.

POPULATION MOVEMENTS TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Because Šumadija¹¹ was a frontier and subject to almost constant warfare, the population fluctuated greatly. According to Drobnjaković, an authority on population movements in Šumadija, the development of the region's population in historic times can be divided into three phases.¹² The first phase was after the defeat at

¹¹ The name Šumadija dates only from the eighteenth century.

¹² Drobnjaković, "Sur la composition ethnique de la population de la Šumadija," in *Comptes rendus du III Congrès*.

Kosovo in 1389. People migrated north to Šumadija from the Turk-invaded areas and presumably mingled with earlier inhabitants. At this point there is little data, probably due to the lack of sources, but all indications, including the historic records of several churches in this area, point up the fact that the section was relatively well populated at the beginning of the fifteenth century.¹³

This northward migration to Šumadija continued until 1459, when the Turks conquered Smederevo, the last Serbian feudal stronghold. At this time, conditions evidently became increasingly difficult for the peasantry, resulting in the beginning of the second phase. The majority of the population emigrated to other areas, namely, farther north to Hungary and west to Bosnia and the mountainous Dinaric regions. It is estimated that less than 10 percent of the people stayed behind. In the second decade of the sixteenth century a traveler wrote of the area as being completely deserted, without any villages.¹⁴ Yet a century earlier, in the 1420s, another traveler crossing the same general area had noted the many prosperous towns and villages.¹⁵ The immediate area of Orašac village appears to have been largely uninhabited during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

During the periods 1683–99 and 1716–19, Serbia was the scene of continuous warfare between the Austrian and Turkish Empires. This was a time of constant population movements, the greatest of which occurred in 1690 and was known as the Great Migration, when about 30,000 Serbs crossed the Danube into Hungary. The Hapsburg Empire welcomed these newcomers and used them to populate their border regions and fight against the Turks.¹⁶

Upon defeating Turkey in 1718, Austria occupied Šumadija from that time until 1739, and large-scale repopulation occurred. Orašac is not mentioned in the detailed Austrian records of this

¹³ A parish priest in the village of Bukovik, near Orašac, wrote a local history in which he claims that according to tradition his present church is built on the foundations of one dating from the time of Stevan Lazarević (1389–1427).

¹⁴ Drobnjaković, *Jasmica*, p. 225.

¹⁵ Drobnjaković, "Stanovništvo u Srbiji za Vreme Prvog Ustanka," in *Srpskog Geografskog Društva*, special publication, No. 32, p. 37.

¹⁶ Tomasevich, *Peasants, Politics, and Economic Change in Yugoslavia*, p. 36.

period, so it is fairly safe to assume that it was not founded until the latter part of the eighteenth century.¹⁷

With the ending of Austrian rule the Turks again came back to power in their former Pashaluk of Belgrade. Despite the return of Turkish control, the mid-eighteenth century seems to have witnessed a substantial build-up in the population of Šumadija by immigration into the area. This was no doubt brought about by pressures in the overpopulated Dinaric mountain areas from which most of these immigrants came as well as by the return of many inhabitants who had fled during the previous war.¹⁸

But again, mass depopulation occurred in the period of the Austro-Turkish War of 1788–91. Before this war there were approximately 80,000 households in Serbia; after the war the number dropped to 20,000.¹⁹ In the same tradition of the Great Migration, many emigrants crossed the Danube and went north to the Vojvodina, some of them remaining permanently to form the basis of the present Serb population there.

Immediately after the war a temporary period of stability set in. Once more repopulation of Šumadija occurred. This is what Drobnjaković refers to as the third phase. Many returned from the Vojvodina, and larger numbers of new settlers came from the mountain regions to the south and west. This constant returning of settlers to Šumadija would appear to be an eloquent tribute to the attractiveness of the area. Despite the constant wars it seems to have been more habitable than the relatively barren mountains or even the Vojvodina, which was at that time still full of swamps and marshland.

SETTLEMENT OF ORAŠAC

It was in the period between the two Austro-Turkish wars that Orašac was settled. The first recorded mention of the village is in

¹⁷ Some villages in the vicinity of Orašac existed at this time: Donja and Gornja Šatornja had ten households, Topola six, and Lipovac two. See Popović, *Srbija i Beograd*, p. 23.

¹⁸ T. Djordjević, *Iz Srbije Kneza Miloša: Stanovništvo-Naselja*, p. 24.

¹⁹ Filipović, "Selo u Srbiji Krajem 18 i Početkom 19 Veka," in *Srpskog Geografskog Društva*, special publication, No. 32, p. 74.

an account written by an Austrian officer who was making a pre-war reconnaissance in Serbia. This was in 1784, and at that time he states that Orašac had fifteen Christian (Serbian Orthodox) households and a well-built log inn, or *han*, where local Turkish officials resided.²⁰ Additional supporting evidence is found in the traditional family histories. According to the descendants of the Maričević clan, which is generally conceded to be the oldest in the village, their ancestors first settled in Orašac around 1750. By this time some degree of stability existed in Šumadija; at least, despite future wars, many of the ancestors of the present population of Orašac had begun to establish permanent homesteads.

The people who came to Orašac in the latter part of the eighteenth century were mainly from the Dinaric regions to the southwest, that is, from the general region where the present-day southern Serbia and the Republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro meet, particularly from around Sjenica and Bjelo Polje.²¹ The reason for their movement was primarily economic and ecological. The mountain regions where they had lived were capable of sustaining only a limited number of people and seem to have been overpopulated.

Immigrants to Orašac did not arrive as a group but rather as small family units, usually brothers accompanied by their wives and children. Because they were settling in a new homeland these pioneers founded clan groups. Their descendants derived their family name from the first name of the ancestor who originally settled in the village.²² Occasionally a woman would be the founder of a clan if she were a widow when she came to Orašac. This is what happened in the cases of the present day Nedić and Anić clans, the names being derived from the widows Neda and Ana.

²⁰ The fact that Orašac existed at this time is confirmed by another source, stating that a certain Milosav Milošević of Orašac went to the Vojvodina to fight against the Turks in 1788. Arsenijević, *Istorija Srpskog Ustanka*, I, 394.

²¹ Some authorities think that Sjenica was a concentration point for future immigrants to Šumadija rather than a place of origin. Other regions from which the ancestors of the Orašac population came are Novi Pazar in the Sandjak region and Nikšić Župe in Montenegro. With regard to the origins of its population, Orašac is typical of the entire Jasenica region within Šumadija.

²² The clan name is formed by adding the suffix *ić*, *ović*, or *ević*—Nedić from Neda, Stojanović from Stojan, Matijašević from Matijaš.

The case of Neda is fairly typical; according to Nedić family tradition, she arrived in Orašac in 1786. She and her husband had originally come from the region of Sjenica, and they first went to the village of Rogača in Kosmaj County. After her husband was killed by the Turks, she fled to Orašac with her children and possibly with some widowed sisters.²³

During the period from 1790 to 1810, Orašac and Šumadija in general received the heaviest influx of immigrants. Once settled in their new homes the pioneers encouraged relatives who had remained behind in the Dinaric mountains to join them. The first settlers constructed their homes in the section now known as *centar* (center of the village). These were small log huts built in a glen to conceal them from the Turks. But having come from mountainous regions, where people were accustomed to living far apart, they evidently wanted more breathing space and before long started to scatter their homesteads. Several of those who arrived after 1800 established their homes directly in the outlying sections.

TURKISH RULE IN SERBIA AND ITS EFFECTS

Although Orašac was founded when Turkish rule in Serbia was in its final phases, an understanding of the present-day inhabitants and their culture would be incomplete without giving some attention to the preceding period of almost five centuries, when the Turks ruled not only Šumadija and Serbia but most of the Balkan peninsula. While it is true that Orašac as a village did not exist for most of this period, the inhabitants' ancestors were greatly influenced by Ottoman rule, even those who were not under its direct control (as in Montenegro, for example). It is impossible to converse with a Serbian peasant without having him mention the *pet stotina godina pod Turcima* (five hundred years under the Turks)²⁴—whether as a reason for the low standard of living, a comment on national history, or an excuse for a neighbor's behavior.

As was the case with most of the rest of Europe, what is today

²³ Although a few clans are named for widows, most bear the names of men. The usual Serbian pattern is to trace descent through the male line.

²⁴ Actually it was closer to four hundred years, since it was not until the fifteenth century that Turkish rule was consolidated.

Yugoslavia was during the Middle Ages controlled by feudal lords. At times parts of Yugoslavia were united by strong rulers, such as Stevan Nemanja and Stevan Dušan. These empires were short lived, although Nemanja founded the dynasty which ruled Serbia intermittently until the Battle of Marica in 1371. The expansion of the Serbian state during this period gave impetus to the development of feudal forms which, although built upon a Serbian cultural base, were copied from Byzantine models but which also had some West European influences. The system was crystallized in the Code of Tsar Dušan in 1349, at the height of the Serbian medieval state. At this time all lands in actual ownership belonged either to the ruler, the Church, or the feudal lords, although the ruler possessed the right of eminent domain over all the land. These estates were worked by serfs whom Dušan's Code bound to the land. By virtue of its ownership of huge estates, the Church had tremendous wealth and secular power but was nevertheless under the control of the temporal king. The feudal lords had even less independence than those of the Church, being subject to economic and military levies from which Church estates were exempt. It was during this period that many of the famous Serbian monasteries were built. This era saw a flowering of Serbian culture, especially in religious art.

But all this was changed by the Turkish conquest. The importance of the date of conquest would be hard to overestimate. Every peasant today, even if he is illiterate, is aware of its significance. It is an interesting commentary on Serbian character that the date is preserved as a national holiday, *Vidovdan*, when the names of all those who have died in the nation's wars are read in the parish churches.

There are several reasons for the peasants' acute awareness of their national history. First, there is the *guslar*, closely akin to the wandering medieval bard of Western Europe, only the *guslar* chanted heroic ballads exclusively. Accompanied by his *gusle*, a single-stringed instrument played with a bow, he would travel from village to village reciting the long epic poems for which the Serbs have become famous. These ballads dealt with heroic deeds in the struggles against the Turks. The defeat at Kosovo gave rise to a