

Aleksandar Loma

From Theranda to Prizren, from Skardon to Šarplanina
The toponymy of Southern Metohija as mirroring its remote past

The southwestern part of Serbia is called *Metohija* (OSerb ‘monastery land’, from Greek) since the late Middle Ages, as it was for the most part the landed property of monasteries. The charters issued by Serbian rulers contain abundant onomastic materials (proper names as well as place and spot names) bearing a clear testimony to the prevalence of Slavic population in 14–15th centuries, whereas the Albanian element expanded only since the 16th century, on the wave of the Islamization. Nevertheless in the southern part of Metohija, around the city of Prizren (Slavic **pri-zbrěně* ‘visible’), the region which is focused here, an Albanian enclave is attested as early as the first half of 14th century, and the name of the village *Landovica* corresponding to OSerb *Lutovica* < Common Slavic **Lq̃tovica* (to **lq̃t̃b* ‘linden’) points out, by the preservation of the nasal and the change of *nt* to *nd*, its presence since the time around 1000. Another name, *Teražda*, going back to Roman *Theranda*, proves that in the southern Metohija a population of the eastern South Slavic branch preceded both the Serbs and the Albanians, a fact which may be confirmed also by couple of Slavic place names showing *št*, *žd* for Common Slavic *tj*, *dj*, such a development being characteristic of Old Church Slavic and Bulgarian. Yet the Serbs must have started penetrating there from the northern Metohija long before the early 13th century as they conquered Prizren, if we judge from the place name *Posuđe* north of Prizren, whereupon two early West South Slavic developments **dj > đ* and **q > u* are observed. Some ‘isonyms’ connecting this and the adjacent regions west from the Morava-Vardar axis with Bohemia, Silesia and Poland might give evidence of an even earlier tribal stratification of Balkan Slavs.

The ancient name of Šarplanina, Greek *Skárdon óros*, Latin *Scordus mons*, was supposedly reflected in the mouth of the Slavs soon after their coming as **Skěrdь*, a form which seems to underlie OSerb *S(t)redьska*, the name of a district lying on the northern slopes of the mountain. Its present name *Šara*, *Šar-planina* obviously goes back to the same Pre-Roman (Illyrian?) designation, but an early Slavic adoption is excluded here as well as a genuine Albanian development; on the other hand, the assimilation *rd > r(r)*, strange to Albanian, is attested in the Vulgar Latin of Dardania, cf. the proper name *Scerulaedus* for *Scerdilaedus* in an inscription from the environments of Prizren. Anyway a Romance tongue would have mediated between the original form of the name and both Slavic *Šar(a)*, Albanian *Shar*, cf. Macedo-Romanian *šarǎ* ‘saw’ in view of Spanish *sierra*, Portuguese *serra* ‘mountain range’, all from lat. *serra*, and note the absence of the Albanian long *rr* in *Shar* contrary to Alb. *sharrë* ‘saw’.

The name *Leviša* underlying the designation of the cathedral of Prizren *Bogorodica Ljeviška* ‘Our Lady of Levisha’ derives as a possessive from Slavic **Levysa* < Greek *Eleoûsa* ‘(she) merciful’, related to the Virgin Mary, to whom the church is consecrated. This epithet is actually attested in a 13th century fresco, that was preserved in the church before its recent devastation.