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HERITAGE PRESERVATION OF MEDIEVAL DUBOVAC THROUGH THE WORSHIP OF OUR LADY OF DUBOVAC

Abstract

Historiographic analysis of the paper presents the historical continuity of the Dubovac settlement with an emphasis on the worship of Our Lady of Dubovac and her importance and rootedness in the consciousness of the inhabitants of Bili Brig and the surrounding region as religious and patrimonial heritage. The first mention of the Dubovac village, in the Brod-Posavina County, appears in the middle of the 13th century as a wealthy estate, and since then, it has been mentioned in various royal charters and owned by various noble families. The written mention of the village disappeared in the 18th century, but it is considered directly connected with the newly formed nearby settlement of Bili Brig. Particularly important, along with Dubovac, is the medieval church of the Blessed Virgin Mary on today's Gospino polje (Our Lady's field), which was for a time the parish centre but was demolished in the early 19th century. Nevertheless, Gospino polje (Our Lady's field) has remained a pilgrimage destination for many local inhabitants of the surrounding area to this day. This is strongly contributed by the worship of Mary's statue, to which several legends of its miraculousness and mysterious relocations are attached.

Keywords: Bili Brig, Dubovac, Gospino polje (*Our Lady's field*), intangible cultural heritage

INTRODUCTION

On the first mention of the Dubovac estate, many authors cite *codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae* by Tadija Smičiklas (1904–1934), especially the fifth and sixth book (Szabo, 1912; Kolarić, 1977; Andrić, 2001; Milicic and Regan, 2014). So, Szabo (1912), Kolarić (1977: 27), and Lovrić and Berdica (2012) cite the year 1259 when Queen Maria, the wife of the Croatian-Hungarian King Bela IV, gave the Dubovac estate to the nobleman Čeh Pučin. Today, this area corresponds to a larger part of the Municipality of Nova Kapela. It is associated mainly with Bili Brig, which is assumed to have been formed by the migration of Dubovac residents in the middle of the XVIII century, about a kilometre south on the then newly built road “via regia”¹.

Bili Brig is a village in the central part of Brod-Posavina County, in the Municipality of Nova Kapela, along the county road between Vrbova and Nova Kapela. In the north, there is Požeška Gora, and ten kilometres to the south is the river Sava, the natural border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, it belongs to the Vrbovac Parish of St. Juraj the Martyr in the Požega Diocese. The name of the village was first mentioned in 1758 when it contained 34 inhabited houses with 127 “souls confirmed and capable of receiving communion” (Kolarić, 1977: 121). Half of the population were natives, and the other half Bosnian Croats settled at the beginning of the XVIII century, and afterwards immigrants from Lika, Podgorje and Gorski Kotar (Markovic, 2012). The village was relatively small; the population ranged from 163 in 1857 to 705 in 1948 (when it was the largest) and decreased to 215 in 2021 (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The peculiarity of this Posavina place is its centuries-old association with the medieval estate and the village of Dubovac and the shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary on a hill above the village.

Buturac (1934: 87) mentions the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dubovac, citing documents from the collection of the Pope’s tithe in the period from 1332 to 1335. It is unclear whether this medieval church became the parish church of the Parish of Siče – Dubovac from 1694 to 1777, or whether a newer one was built on its foundations, as Kolarić assumes (1977: 79). In its place today, there is a small chapel with a wooden statue of Our Lady (Gospa) from the middle of the XVIII century, which many call miraculous (Kolarić, 1977:

1 The road that follows the course of the Sava River, completed in 1750, is today’s county road along which most of the villages of Brodsko-Posavina County are located. With Maria Theresa’s 1756 Urbarium, the surrounding villages are “re-establishing”, (Cro. ‘ušoravaju’) – getting in order and moving along the new road.

85 – 89; Lovrić and Berdica, 2012). Succeeding the former Dubovac, today's Gospino polje (Our Lady's field), and the statue of Our Lady itself make an important place for pilgrims of the inhabitants of the former parish and beyond. In a way, it is part of the identity of this region, especially Bili Brig, which is broadly written about by Višnja Mikić (2016). The main goal of this paper is to historiographically explore Dubovac and the tradition of worshipping the Mother of God and their connection with the surrounding region, especially today's Bili Brig. Given the problematic availability of primary sources relevant to this paper (records from the Hungarian National Archives, memorial books and records of visitations from dioceses, Ottoman tax lists, et cetera), as well as the language barrier (sources in Latin, Hungarian and Turkish), the papers of recognised historians, who processed (albeit much broadly) subjects of interest to this research, were analysed. A potential downside to this approach is that these researchers have overlooked or omitted data that could contribute to this paper for objective reasons, leaving an opportunity for future, more profound research. Particularly important are Andrić's (2001) works for the Slavonian middle ages, those of Smičiklas (1891), Mažuran (1977, 1988, 1995, 1998), Buturac (1934), and Močanin (1983, 2000) for Požega region and the period of Ottoman occupation, Szabo's "historical - topographical study" defining the boundaries of the Dubovac estate, and Kolaric's "Dvjesta novokapelackih proljeća" where the analysis of parish archives and memorial books brings vital data. In her book "Od Dubovca drevnog pa do naših dana (From ancient Dubovac to our days)",² with a concise historical survey, Višnja Mikić presents many testimonies of pilgrims to Gospino polje (Our Lady's field) and the current cultural value of the shrine.

Location of the Dubovac estate

Dubovac was first mentioned in Queen Maria's 1259 grant. The new owner, the nobleman Čeh Pučin, was introduced into possession by the Požega County Prefect Philip, who in his report to the Queen described the estate's boundaries:

"Under the rocky hill, the creeks of Oroycha and Lypouch are joined, the boundary reaches the Bregorinik creek, and along Bilota's property called Oroycha. Then it goes to the creek called Zuini, past various places to the

2 In her work, Mikić described the history of Dubovac and the appearance of piety in Gospino polje (Our Lady's field). Although written in a publicist style, the book's value is in the description of the pilgrimage to and care of our Lady's statue, the written testimonies of the faithful and the parish priest Bakarić. These records provide insight into the subjective cultural - identity and religious importance of the place.

Kuhnek creek, then goes around to the Zkorin creek, heads to the Dobouch creek, from which it branches off south to Zoaberka, and along the estates of neighbours to the Skopchonik creek, then to the creek Pokolasnik to a place called Inferiora Vrba, where iobagion Mortunus lives. Going along the Pokolosnik creek, it returns to the Doboueh creek, then marked with various trees, it reaches Trichuch hill and winds its way to Zochan to the south of the Zkrabatnik estate, to return there, where it began. Outside this estate lie the fishponds terrae Dobouch. One in fine campi Wnuhleu uocati, the other in Koponicha, the third is the fishing sluice (water channel) in aqua Knesnicha, and the fourth is the pond in aqua Luki.” (Szabo, 1912: 2)

In a 1280 document, Szabo (1912: 125) states that the names of some other toponyms emerge: fluvius Bregounik (Bregorinik), Ziuni (Zuini) creek, Zowabereke (Zoaberke) and some other differently written names. He claims with certainty that this property is located in today’s Municipality of Nova Kapela, recognising the toponyms listed in the record. The Lypouch creek corresponds to a creek in today’s Lipovac, which joins the Grača creek (possibly the former Oroych) under a rocky hill. Kolarić (1977: 26) similarly interprets this: recognising this hill as today’s Motajac, and the several times mentioned Dubovac creek is Kamenica, which flows through today’s Bili Brig. Bregornik creek corresponds to Bregorina near Donji Lipovac, and Zkrabatnik north of the estate corresponds to today’s Škrabutnik. The settlement of Skopčenic has retained the name of the creek of the same name (Skopchonik), and the Kuhnek creek is no longer there. Still, there remained the name of the settlement Kujnik (and the village a little further from that place), near the Pokotine creek, which corresponds to the former Pokolosnik creek. Since these names are not repeated in other parts of Požega County and Slavonia, Szabo (1912: 128) does not doubt that these are the boundaries of the Dubovac estate. The fishponds mentioned above were separated from the estate, near the fields “Wnuhleu”, “in Koponicha” (today’s backwater/puddle along the Sava, Kopanica), the sluice “in aqua Knesnicha” (near today’s Knezopolje) and “in aqua Luki” (probably at today’s eponymous creek). The name of the creek mentioned above, Zuini, Szabo connects with the village of Zwynar (Svinjar, today’s Davor). The estate also included a fort Redemlye, the name of today’s forest (Radinje) along the Sava south of Dubovac. Kolarić (1977: 27) also lists the land of Draža in Donji Dubovac to Orljavica in the east, which corresponds to today’s Magić Mala and Siča.

Another important determinant of its location is the neighbourhood with the Inferior Vrba estate, the southern part of today’s Vrbova, which is often

mentioned in historical documents. Creeks Skopčeničnik and Pokolažnik in the west of Dubovac form the boundary with the estate owned by “iobagion Mortunus”. *Codex diplomaticus* (as cited in Szabo, 1912: 126; Adamček, 1977: 112) states that in 1275 Queen Elizabeth (Jelisaveta) granted Donja Vrbova to Benedict, the son of Ivanka, and the 1282 document also mentions the late Mortunus and his sons, Čeh’s neighbours, and the already mentioned toponyms. In 1356, Vrbova was owned by Stjepan Jr., the son of Stjepan Čimba Dubovački, who died without an heir, so Vrbova (and Dubovac) passed into the hands of the Garai family (Gorjanski). On the eastern side, on the Bregorina creek, Dubovac borders with the Orjavica estate (a name that several places along the creek Orljavica, later Rinovica, had shared), which was, in 1234 and 1244, referred to as “praedium” (land/estate). Adamček (1977: 112) assumes that this is proof that this estate belonged to the complex of royal estates in Požega. In 1275 Queen Elizabeth granted Orjavica to “(Otrok) the Child of Grgur, the son of Beluča and sons of Ševa”, and in 1277 the queen returned the second part of the estate to Aladar, the son of Čeča. Many recognisable names of places and creeks are mentioned here, too: the medieval church of St. Luke in Orjavica (today’s Lipovac), the border with Gradpotok (or Gratkovpotok, later Radkipotok, today Ratkovic) and the creek Orjavica which, under a rocky hill, joins the creek Lypoch and at Pričac flows into the Sava, and through the canal is still connected with Orjava. In the documents of Požega chapter (požeški kaptol) from 1256, Vukota’s land Lužan na Orljavi was mentioned (Kolarić, 1977: 28), which he sells to Bilota, owner of Selce (today’s Seoca) and Orjavica.

A different spelling of toponyms in different periods and by different enumerators presents a difficulty in studying the history of the settlement. In addition to the fact that the wider area included several names similar to the toponym *Dubovac* (Dubovik, Dubočac), it is spelt differently in different sources (Dobouch, Dubovacz). This issue is even more manifested regarding the names of other places, which has been broadly discussed by many authors (e.g. Szabo, 1912: 125; Buturac, 1934; Marjoram, 1977 and 1988; Moačanin, 1997 and 2000; Pal, 1997), which is why it can be suspected that Dubovac is also a topic in a Smičiklas’ (1891: 14) description of the Sanjak of Pojega (Požeški sandžak) when he states that “Ali Čajić Djakovčanin is the lord in Dubovica”.

Noble owners of the Dubovac estate (XIII-XV century)

According to Andrić (2001:88), Dominik Petrov of the Csák gens (genus) was the chief cup-bearer of Bela’s son Stjepan V, and later his palatine. He was

also described as “nobleman Dominik Vukovski”, probably due to his numerous estates in Valkó County (Croatian: Vukovska županija) (for example, Újlak next to today’s Gorjani) or because of the service of the Valkó’s prefect and his father Peter as “Vrbovsky”. Since Čeh Pučin died without male descendants, in 1280, Queen Elizabeth, King Ladislav’s mother, granted the Dubovac estate to her godson Nikola and his brothers Stjepan and Petar, the sons of Dominik Vukovski. Since then, the branch of the Csák gens (genus) has also been called “Dubovački”. Horvat (1944, as cited in Kolarić, 1977: 27) states that the town of Čakovec in Međimurje was named after the noble family Čak, and today, there is a part of Vrbova under that name. Andrić (2001: 90) singles out Stjepan (nicknamed Cymba, Chymba, Chimbo) as the longest-serving and most important. Furthermore, he was mentioned in 1317 as one of the dignitaries in reconciliation and 1322 when he had to hand over part of Dubovac to the sons of a certain Nikola Gregurov. Nikola Csák’s son, Ivan “Crveni (The Red)” (“Rufus”), has been mentioned since 1282 as the lord of Vrbova and the constructor of the fortress of the same name at the turn of the XII to the XIII century. (Sekulić and Radauš, 1989, as cited in Milčić and Regan 2014). Ivan and his brother Mihovil participated in the rebellion of the Gising nobles during the second decade of the XIV century and plundered the estates of Pavao, the son of Emerik, and Pavao and Nikola, sons of Fila, killing thirteen of their subjects. For this reason, King Charles Robert (Karlo I. Robert) punished them by confiscating all estates (by name, there were listed Dubovac and nearby Roholch, possibly today’s Oriovac) in Požega County and seven of them in Valkó County (among them Borh, Borovo and Újlak, probably the one near Gorjani) and handed them over to the wronged family members of the Mikolski (Fila’s sons) and their relatives. Smičiklas’ *Codex IX* (as stated by Andrić, 2001: 91) cites a document from 1322 by which the king exempted the Mikolskis from taxes on their estates in Roholac and Dubovac in Požega County. In 1323 he confirmed their previously acquired estates with some modifications – it seems that the sons of Filo Mikolski had suffered more damage in the rebellion than Emerik’s son Pavle, so he handed over all the confiscated estates to them. However, it seems that they, in some unknown way, had lost their rights over these estates and had never entered their possession.

Andrić (2001: 97) states that Stjepan Jr., son of Stjepan Čimba Dubovački, renounced Donja and Gornja Vrbova shortly before his death in 1356 for the benefit of the Velički family. After that, King Louis I (Cro. Ludovik I) issued a charter stipulating all the estates of Stjepan Jr. and his brother Petar, sons of

Stjepan called Čimba, who had died without heirs, be passed into the ownership of Nikola and Pavle, Andrija (Garai's) Gorjanski's sons. Several charters were issued on the (Garai's) Gorjanski's ownership of Dubovac and the two Vrbovas, among them a particularly extensive one by the judge royal Nikola Szécsi from Visegrad in 1382 in which he resolved the dispute between the Gorjanski (Gerai) and Velički families over the Vrbova estate with the fortress. Although Velički based their claims on the decision of Stjepan Jr., the dispute was resolved in favour of Nikola Gorjanski (Garai). After the death of King Louis I in 1383, his daughter, Queen Mary, confirmed the palatine Nicholas Garai (Nikola Gorjanski) the ownership of the estates of Stjepan Čimba's sons in Valkó County. Moreover, the Queen listed the granted manor estates broadly and in more detail, and with this, the former estates of the Dubovac- Vrbova branch of the Csák gens (genus) were also confirmed. After the rebellion against King Sigismund of Luxembourg led by the Horvat brothers (1386–1395), the Gorjanski (Garais), taking the king's side, further strengthened the position of the throne's main supporters and the great landowners. The king rewarded them with the confiscated estates of the three Horvat brothers asking Kaptol (eng. Chapter) for a list of granted estates. Among the many estates from Valkó County (including islands and many estates in Croatia and Dalmatia), there were Rohowch or Orehovac and Dubovac. Citing these data from 1395 from the Hungarian National Archives, it remained unclear to Andrić (2001: 100) how and when the Horvats acquired this land. In a charter from 1408, King Sigismund confirmed to the palatine Nicholas Garai (Nikola Gorjanski) and his brother Ivan their estates. Furthermore, from a 1432 document, we have learnt that the king had taken the role of mediator in the dispute between Nicholas (Nikola) and his sons Nikola and Ladislav over their numerous estates. Among other things, it read that the palatine Nicholas had taken the curia (court) in Vrbova for himself and his older son Nicholas the curia in Dubovac.

With the transition into the 16th century, due to political turmoil (Andrić, 2006; 2015), the struggles for the throne, family disputes, and Ottoman incursions, which started more and more seriously in the 15th century, the Gorjanskis' (Garai's) estates began to decrease, as well as their power. In 1478, after a protracted lawsuit, Dubovac was allocated to the Hungarian nobleman Nicholas Széchy (Nikola Seč). Citing data from the Hungarian National Archives, Adamček (1977: 117) states that Dubovac got "its city settlement" at the end of the XV century, that in 1477/1478 it was "an estate with a toll house, a stone manor house (curia) and weekly fairs", and in 1500 the marketplace

(simultaneously with Vrbova, oppidum Orbowa). Mažuran (1977: 161; 1998) lists Ottoman incursions across the Sava in 1401, 1422, 1450, 1494 and 1501 and states that, during the autumn of 1536, they set out to conquer Slavonia. Then, among other villages and estates, they conquered Dubovac (Cviko-Hafizović, 1994: 27; Mažuran, 1995: 143), Gorjani, Brod, and a year later Požega.

Under Ottoman occupation (XVI-XVII century)

After the conquest of Slavonia, there were large migrations of the population; a large part emigrated, and a part of those who remained converted to Islam. The people of the Orthodox and Muslim religions from the previously conquered areas settled on the estates that had remained empty. In the occupied territories, the Ottomans established sanjaks, military-political and administrative units. (Cviko-Hafizović, 1994: 27) Furthermore, an important source from this period is Turkish defters (cadastral census). They served to collect the data on the taxpayers, a list of soldiers and feudal lords, and included the Kanun-name (Acts on obligations and taxes of people in sanjak). Sanjak was divided into kadiluks (judicial districts) and kadiluks into nahiyes/nahias (the smallest administrative units). As the conquests continued, so did the number of kadiluks and nahias. According to the defter from 1579, Pojega (Požega) sanjak, founded probably in 1538, had six kadiluks (Požega, Brod, Gorjan, Orahovica, Virovitica and Osijek) and 30 nahias (Cviko-Hafizović, 1994: 31). Pakrac sanjak (later called Cernik sanjak), as stated in the defter from 1565, had 14 nahias. According to Moačanin (1983), it seems that the river Orjava was the border of these two sanjaks. In his second discussion, Moačanin (2000) stated that Ottoman defters are not always the easiest method for cartographic identification because they bring specific circumstances and limitations that should be taken into account. Their particular shortcoming is when listing *mezralar* (sg. *merza*) (fields, former villages) and *chifliks/chiftliks* (segregated villages or estates of wealthy families up to the size of villages).

During the Ottoman occupation, the friars from the monastery of St. Augustine in Velika and St. Ante Padovanski in Našice were the pastors to the remaining Catholic people. The second half of the XVII century and the beginning of the XVIII century was marked by the struggle of Pecs, Zagreb and Bosnia–Đakovo Diocese for the right over the Slavonian parishes (Vrbanus, 2009). Mažuran (1998) states that, at the request of Požega parish pastors, priests and Franciscans, for support against the influence of Bosnian friars, Bishop of

Zagreb, Petretić, sent his vicar general, Petar Nikolić, to visit parishes in Slavonia in 1660. Nikolić's report has been one of the most complete sources depicting the religious life of Catholics in Slavonia in the second half of the XVII century. The parish of Gradpotok had many believers and encompassed four masonry and well-equipped churches: the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dubovac, the church of St. Luke (Luka) in Oriovčić, the church of St. Juraj in Vrbova and the church of St. Michael (Mihajlo) in Gradpotok. Here, Mažuran says Nikolić had left out some churches, but it seems that he was wrong to list the church of St. Luke in Oriovčić and possibly the eponymous in Orljava (today Pavlovci), which is probably the same medieval church in today's Srednji Lipovac. Listing the lords in the Pojega Sanjak, Smičiklas (1891: 14) states that "Ali Čajić Djakovčanin is the lord in Dubovica". It is unclear whether it may be a medieval Dubovac, but it is a possibility since it talks about a wealthy estate not mentioned elsewhere. In the Ottoman occupation, there was an unusual lack of mention of the Dubovac estate, which was once considered particularly rich, with a large forest, a land, a manor house (curia), a creek in which gold was washed away, and ponds. Since the Pojega Sanjak has been elaborated in great detail, and Moačanin (1983) recognised its border on Orljava, the Dubovac estate may have belonged to Pakrac sanjak, which has not yet been sufficiently explored.

After the defeat of the Ottomans at Vienna in 1683, the liberation of Croatian lands began, and a long time of war, withdrawal and reconquest, especially in Posavina and Požega region, finally ended with the Treaty of Karlowitz (Karlovac) in 1699 and the establishment of the border on the river Sava. This period was again marked by large migrations: the Muslim population settled permanently in Bosnia, and Bosnian Catholics and Orthodox Serbs settled in the Požega region (Požeština). Požega County was rebuilt in 1745, but unlike the medieval one, it did not reach the Sava, but only Cernik and Dilj Gora, as well as Ilova and Moslavačka Gora - the rest fell under the newly established Vojna Krajina (Buturac, 2004).

The church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dubovac

In medieval Dubovac, there was a stone church, probably back in the XIII century. It was first mentioned during the papal tithe gathering in 1332, 1334 and 1335 (Buturac, 1934, Kolarić, 1977: 19). The collectors, Jakob Berengar and Rajmund Bonofate, found 83 parishes in the area of the Požega archdeaconry in the Diocese of Pécs (Bösendorfer, 1910, as cited in Kolarić, 1977: 35), or 97 (as

cited in Buturac, 1934). The relative close distance of two parishes, 5 to 7 km, testifies to the densely populated area and the importance of religion. Moreover, many churches were usually under the patronage of nobles on whose estates they were located. They took care of the construction and their maintenance. Buturac recognises 43 parish centres with certainty, and for the remaining 54 parishes, he assumes where they might be. He bases his assumptions on recent documents, later mentions of parishes, the fact that some parts of the Požega archdeaconry are very close-set in terms of parishes. Also, if parishes existed during the Ottoman rule, during great religious persecution and prohibitions on building new churches and restoring old ones, they probably had existed there before. He thus claims that parishes probably existed in the following places as well:

- St. George's (Đurđe's) Parish must have been in Vrbova (in addition to the above mentioned All Saints parish) because, in 1660, the old spacious middle-aged St. George's church stood there. – at the cemetery, away from the road, where the village of Vrbova was located before moving to the road.
- The parish of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dubovac, north of Nova Kapela, was mentioned in 1694. The parish church of this parish, built in the middle of the cemetery on the hill Dubovac, dates back to the Middle Ages.
- Pavlovci (in Matičević parish). In 1730, the ruins of St. Nicholas's (Nikola) Church stood near this village.
- Lipovac. As early as 1275 and 1277, St. Luke church was mentioned here, as well as the cemetery. In 1660, it was said that this church was built of stone in ancient times.
- Škrabutnik (in Matičević parish). That is where, in 1730, the ruins of the old Church of St. Catharine (Katarina) stood.

(Buturac, 1934: 86 - 90)

Buturac's assumption that churches found after the liberation from the Ottomans had been built before the occupation was confirmed by Smičiklas, quoting Fermežin's work *Acta Bosnae ecclesiastica*:

“This great Turkish wariness that Christians should neither build nor repair their house without the permission of the Turkish empire was even greater among the churches. The new churches were not allowed to be built, and many times the old ones were not allowed to be repaired, which is why the traveller in Slavonia (1629 –1630) could recount that “the churches are mostly roofless, all with ancient walls without bells, without altars, and

without paintings.” However, it also tells us a remarkable historical truth, that we consider all churches and monasteries, which we find at the end of the XVII century, both in shape and scope to be older than the Turks in our countries.” (Smičiklas, 1891: 67)

Smičiklas (1891) further states that the most beautiful churches were transformed into the Turkish mosques, especially in larger cities (Požega, Osijek, Brod, Ilok, et cetera.), while in the remote places of Fruška Gora and Požega mountains, they could still survive, but without bells and large ornaments. The Catholic people (pastva) in the area of the Požega region were mainly cared for by Franciscans from monasteries in Velika and Našice. However, the Bosnian bishop, fra Franjo Balicevic, was also given the authority by the Pope to exercise episcopal jurisdiction in all neighbouring countries under the Ottoman rule, and that did not have their own or resident bishops (Kolarić, 1977: 43). As the Bosnian bishop claimed parishes in Požega, Dragotin, Garčin and Ratkov Potok, there was a constant dispute over diocesan boundaries and revenue collection. Of particular importance for the parish in Ratkovic was the parish and monastery in Velika, which, according to a report from 1623, managed nine parishes with about 3500 believers in 28 villages. There are several reports from this time about the population and churches of the Požega region, and particularly important is that of Petar Nikolić from this monastery, the vicar of the Zagreb Diocese for Slavonia. Due to these disputes with the Bosnian diocese, the Bishop of Zagreb, Petar Petretić, asked Nikolić for a list of Slavonian parishes. According to this census, today’s Ratkovic was the seat of the Gradpotaca parish with the following filial churches (Buturac, 1934: 87; Kolarić, 1977: 35):

- S. Michaelis Grathopotochi
- Beatissimae Virginis Mariae in loco dicto Dubovacz
- S. Lucae in Oriavicza
- S. Georgii Verbove

Many authors have stated that the four churches of the parish in Ratkovic were spared the Ottoman devastation (e.g. Djuric, 1974; Kolarić, 1977: 79; Lovrić and Berdica, 2012: 102). As cited in Kolarić (1977: 79), Nikolić claims that, of these four churches, “the brothers of our order have recently built two from the ground up, that is, fra Peter did that, and two others were also built by our fathers before”. The churches were provided with essential things for the service. Furthermore, from 1653 to 1655, the parish priest’s list included fra Luka Ibrišimović, a well-known fighter for liberation from the Ottomans. According

to data from 1673, the parish had 2600 inhabitants. Kolarić (1977: 79) argues that it is difficult to determine from the Nikolić report from 1660 how old the church in Dubovac is, to which churches the words *nostris temporibus* (in our time) refer, and to which words *Olim* (once), and estimates that it was probably built between the years 1600 and 1660 on the foundations of the old medieval church mentioned during the papal tithing gathering in the XIV century. This information, however, contradicts Fermežin's already mentioned view of the condition of sacral buildings during the Ottoman rule and the possibility of their restoration or construction (Smičiklas, 1891) and should be taken with doubts.

As cited in Kolarić (1977: 68, 74), with the departure of the Ottomans at the end of the XVII. century, this area fell under the Zagreb diocese and the archdeaconry Since. At about that time, the parish in Ratkovica ceased to exist, and in 1694 the parish of Siče - Dubovac was founded, including the towns of Siče (with the future Magić Mala and Nova Kapela), Bili Brig, Vrbova, Štivica, Komarnica, Seoce, Batrina, Dragovci, Ratkovica, Stara Kapela, Pavlovci, Lipovac (Gornji), Lipovac Veliki (Srednji) and Šušanje (Donji Lipovac), villages that emerged during that time. Siče was in the XVIII century by far the largest village with the most inhabitants in this area. Kolarić (1977: 79) found the first known trace of the parish in the Nova Kapela Archives in the registers from 1725 as *parochiam Sicsensem id est ad ecclesiam Nativitatis B. V.M. Dubovicensis*. A precious historical contribution to the existence of this parish we owe to Matija Aleksandar Babić, the parish priest of Nova Kapela (1848-1865). Namely, he studied and collected documents on the history of the parish. Sicse (Siche) was mentioned in several canonical visitations, and current Siče and Magić Mala stand in place of this village today. The northern part of Sič where the Chapel of St. Clare (Klara) (built probably in 1708) and the rectory/a parish house were located, was mentioned as *Neo-Capella*, i.e. Nova Kapela (as compared to the "old chapel" ("stara kapela") in Dubovac) (Kolarić, 1977: 81).

In a visitation in 1730, a canon Juraj Bumbović (as cited in Kolarić, 1977: 83) talked about the parish church of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven assumed (Cro. župna crkva Blažene Djevice Marije na nebo Uznesene) in the middle of the cemetery and the village of Dubovac, which encompassed 25 catholic houses. The church was stone, unpainted, with good roofing without a tower. There was a wooden altar, and on the walls, there were paintings of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Lawrence (Lovro) and St. John (Ivan) the Apostle. In the visitation, four years later, as the patron, Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, no longer the Assumption (Cro. Uznesenje), was mentioned, and that it needs a new roof and repair and

plastering of the walls, as well as altars and all furniture. The visitation from 1746 said that the church was neglected and that the people, instead of attending mass in the church, preferred to go to the wooden chapel of St. Clare in Siče. In 1754, it was no longer mentioned as a parish church but a filial/branch church.

By order of Maria Theresa in 1754, in the parishes of Krajina, pastoral activities were entrusted to the secular clergy instead of the Franciscans. By taking the insight into the Memorial book of today's parish in Nova Kapela, Kolarić (1977:85) talks about the arrival of the parish priest Josip Horvat when he revived the religious life of the parish and brought it back to Dubovac. The parish priest replaced the altarpiece of the Virgin Mary with a wooden statue, and it seems that he managed to attract pilgrims from more distant regions. In 1758, the canonical visitor stated that "the church has become too small given the large number of believers who come here and whose number is growing, worshipping the Blessed Virgin Mary," and proposed expanding it with two more naves or building a new church. (Kolarić, 1977: 85)

"But even as it was, the church was refined and beautified compared to its previous condition. On the main altar, as in the box, there was a wooden statue of the Mother of God holding Jesus on her left arm and sceptre in her right hand. The statue is dressed in an elegant dress. Above the altar, on four marble pillars, a beautifully painted baldachin rose. Above it, there was, in the form of the dove, the Holy Spirit and the inscription *Sponsa mea* (my fiancée). The altar was decorated, and on both sides, there was a door that enabled walking around it. On the side of the gospel book, a picture of St. John the Baptist was placed, and on the Epistle side, a picture of St. John (Ivan) of Nepomuk. Near the altar arch, there were two *statues*, the right with the inscription *Utocsisce grisnika* (Refuge of sinners), and the left with *Zdravlje nemocsnika* (the health of the infirm). The third inscription of *Pomocsnicza kerstianjska* (Christian Helper) was on top of the altar. On the side of the Gospel book (pulpit), there was the altar of St. Joseph with a picture, and on the Epistle side (lectern), the altar of St. Ladislaus, whose altar table (mensa) had not yet been arranged for the liturgy. (...) The church had three entrances: a big one on the front of the church and one in each nave on the epistle side, and behind the altar on the gospel side. It served mass on Sundays, on the feasts of the Mother of God and "on other occasions" (Kolarić, 1977: 85 - 86)

The canonical visitation also mentions the chalice and liturgical garments/ vestments donated by Maria Theresa and the Missal, Roman Ritual and Hymnal

donated by the bishop. The church was about 18 meters long and about 8m wide, a tower with a bell of 80 Libras was erected over the roof, and around it, there was a cemetery whose cincture (cintor/cinktor-fence with arcades) was demolished in many places. This is a period of intense pilgrimage of believers to the Dubovac hill, which was named "Gospino brdo "(Our Lady's Hill), "Marijino brdo "(Mary's Hill) or "Gospino polje "(Our Lady's Field) (Zirdum, 2001). With a visit in 1761, the visitor concluded that the church had been thoroughly decorated and rebuilt, with the added nave and a chapel and a new masonry sanctuary/shrine, a new masonry choir/quire, a sacristy on the epistle side and two new confessionals. The reconstruction, however, has not yet been completed (Kolarić, 1977: 87).

Kolarić (1977: 88) states that during the next visitation in 1765, the parish priest was no longer Josip Horvat but Luka Pejaković, a native of nearby Lipovac. The restoration and decoration of the church seemed to have stopped. Namely, the next visitation, in 1769, revealed that the church was found in the same condition as it was during the last visit; nothing had been completed. In 1771, the visitors no longer mentioned Dubovac, but the parish church located "in the secluded place of Bili Brig" and wrongly assumed it was built in 1680. The report said that the shrine was already collapsing, and the roof was in bad condition, too; Namely, it could not be well fixed because of the size of the church. Kolarić (1977: 88) explains this situation by the secession of Vrbova, Komarnica and Štivica from the parish of Siče and their annexation to the newly formed parish in Mitrovo selo (Petrovo Selo) in 1766. The second reason was the distance of the church itself (some villages are even about 15 km far from the church), and the 1756 Maria Theresa urbarium stipulated that all peasant households should be divided into settlement units along the royal road "via regia," which was completed in 1750. With the migration of the population and the formation of new villages, Dubovac became even more isolated, and the rectory and the St. Clare's Chapel remained a quarter-hour walk from the village. In 1758, Dubovac was no longer mentioned as a village, but Bili Brig, a village on the main road about a kilometre south, was cited for the first time (Zirdum, 2001).

With the arrival of the parish priest Tomo Grgurević in 1769, intensive planning began to construct a new parish church and a rectory by the side of the road. (Kolarić, 1977: 89). Thus, the construction of the Church of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Nova Kapela began in 1773 and was completed the following year. All furniture from the church in Dubovac, including the wooden statue of Our Lady, was transferred to the new church, and in 1777, it

was blessed and became a new parish church. The church in Dubovac became a branch/filial, and, as it had only a picture of St. Lawrence left, it has been called after him ever since. Since a new cemetery was opened next to the new parish church at the beginning of 1790, the one in Dubovac, where the parishioners had been buried for years, became unnecessary. In 1807, the church was demolished, and a cincture (cintor/cinktor) with four towers around the parish church in Nova Kapela was built from its stones and bricks (Kolarić, 1977: 129 - 133).

The Dubovac statue of Mary had stood on the main altar of the new parish church until 1796, when a new, bronze statue of the Mother of God arrived from Vienna. The old statue was moved to an oratory above the sacristy (therefore called “the Lady’s choir”, Cro. “gospojinski kor”) to be assigned its altar in the church in 1864. The Lord’s Ascension Chapel (Cro. kapela Gospodnjeg Uzašašća) was built in Bili Brig in 1864, but later it was demolished. Thus, in 1911, a new, larger chapel was blessed, to which the old statue of the Mother of God of Dubovac was transferred from Nova Kapela. On Our Lady’s Field (Cro. Gospino polje), on the old church site, in 1918, the people of Bili Brig built a chapel to which the statue was transferred in a solemn procession. The village was richly ornate, and the believers displayed a banner: “Come to us, Our Lady, to your old residence!” (Cro. “Dođi nam, Gospo, u svoju staru postojbinu!”) Since then, Our Lady’s statue has been there. Our Lady’s Field (Gospino polje) thus continues to be the place of numerous pilgrims, especially in the evening before and on the very day of the Nativity of Mary (Cro: Mala Gospa), September 7 and 8. In 1961, the Nova Kapela priest, Josip Kunkera, had the statue restored, which was successfully performed by M. Hohnjec from Celje (Kolarić, 1977: 228). On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the first mention of the statue, there were attempts to return it to the parish church in Nova Kapela, which provoked great disapproval of the people of Bili Brig. With the decision of the Archdiocesan Curia (Cro. Nadbiskupski duhovni stol) in Zagreb, on April 14, 1967, the filial/branch church in Bili Brig, together with Gospino polje (Our Lady’s Field), was annexed to the parish in Vrbova, thus causing great dissatisfaction among the Bili Brig inhabitants, parishioners and parish priest in Nova Kapela.

“How could it not be so when the parish had to part with the statue of Our Lady and Dubovac, which are inextricably linked with the parish in Nova Kapela. The words that the parish priest once told to a weeping inhabitant of Bili Brig were also understandable: “Your wound will heal, but mine will not. If all could be forgotten, the loss of the statue of Our Lady cannot be.” (Kolarić, 1977: 223)

Our Lady's Field (Gospino polje) today

The twentieth century on Our Lady's Field (Gospino polje) was marked by many devotions and festivities, with thousands of believers gathered on the eve of the feast of the Nativity of Mary (Cro. Mala Gospa). Especially intensive attendance occurred "in times of need" during the 2nd World War and the Homeland War. Mikić (2016: 59) talks about regular processions of believers from Štivica, Staro Petrovo Selo, Batrina, Okučani, Mačkovac, Ljupina and others. The Procession used to go from Lipovac, through forests and fields along the old field road to Our Lady's field (Gospino polje) on the north side. In 1990, the people of Bili Brig started building a new, larger and more luxurious chapel behind the old one and completed it in stages in 2002. In recent years, especially after the arrangement of the road to Our Lady's Field (Gospino polje) and the great efforts of Vrbovac parish priest Stjepan Bakarić³ and the Bili Brig association "Dubovac", the shrine has been highly visited during Sunday masses from May to October, but also throughout the year.

In a way, it is part of the identity of the inhabitants of Bili Brig, as well as the surrounding area. An interesting expression of devotion to Our Lady (Gospa) and Our Lady's field (Gospino polje) can also be identified in the origin of the legend of Our Lady's return. According to Mikić (2016: 24-26), legends began to emerge while the statue of Our Lady was located in Nova Kapela when in 1796, it was moved from the main altar where a new bronze statue was placed. Legend has it that, then the bell-ringer, Smaić heard crying on the "lady's choir", and when he went to check, he saw the Our Lady statue with tears in her eyes. This event was followed by the disappearance of the statue from the church and its finding in Our Lady's field (Gospino polje). Mikić said that this had happened three times and that the last person who returned the statue from Our Lady's field (Gospino polje) to Nova Kapela died the morning after. The stories of the inhabitants of the region mention "Our Lady's path" (Cro. "Gospina staza"), the way from the church in Nova Kapela through the fields and gardens to Dubovac,

3 The author personally collected testimonies about the importance of Our Lady's field (Gospino polje) to the inhabitants of the observed region. Moreover, on this occasion (April 7, 2021), he also spoke with the retired parish priest, Stjepan Bakarić. Speaking about the relocation of our Lady's statue to Nova Kapela, he says that the cult of worshipping the Mother of God was sought to be centralized and transferred. Thus, the new church was dedicated precisely to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the statue from Dubovac was also moved there. The act of culturicide by demolishing the church and cemetery in 1807, he said, was supposed to erase the memory of the place so that people would not return there again, but no one reckoned with the "memory of the believers". For today's pilgrims, he says that there are always fewer people coming: "Not many. Quietly, but they are always there."

where nothing grew except the grass that the locals call “Gospina trava (Eng. Our Lady’s Grass)”, “Gospin plač (Eng. Our Lady’s Cry)”, “Gospina dušica (Eng. Our Lady’s Soul)”, et cetera. Moreover, these legends are well-known to a large number of believers of this region, especially the elderly. There is also a lesser-known legend (Mikić, 2016: 25–26) about an unknown woman in black who approached the children from Bili Brig, who were looking after cattle in the field and asked them to send the good handypersons of Bili Brig to Our Lady’s field (Gospino polje) the next day. When they arrived the next day, the lady in black reappeared and begged them to build a chapel in the site where there used to be a stone church. This chapel with the statue of the Mother of God still stands on Our Lady’s field (Gospino polje). Mikić (2016) has collected many testimonies about the answered prayers of the believers (healing, returning from war, war camps, et cetera) who had visited Our Lady’s field (Gospino polje), and the statue that even previous authors called “miraculous” (see Kolarić, 1977: 89). The interior of the chapel bears witness to this with about twenty marble slabs on which acknowledgements/gratitudes are inscribed.

Conclusion

The first records of the Dubovac estate date back to 1259 and the church on the estate, which, even then, was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to 1332. From the XIV to the end of the XVII century, the church was the branch/filial church of the Ratkov Potok parish. However, from 1694 to 1777, it was the parish church of the Siče – Dubovac parish. When in the middle of the XVIII century, a wooden statue of Our Lady was acquired, Dubovac flourished as a shrine. Since then, a regular pilgrimage to, at the time named, Gospino polje (Our Lady’s field) began. By re-establishing (Cro. ušoravanje/ putting houses in order) the village in the second half of the XVIII century, and building a new parish church in Nova Kapela, where the statue then relocated, Dubovac and the church lost their relevance, and in 1807 it was demolished.

The worship of the Mother of God in Dubovac has not only lasted for at least seven centuries but was not erased even by the attempt of relocation to a new church at the end of the XVIII century. Pilgrimages were made to the shrine even when there was no church or statue, only a wooden cross as a memorial. Even today, there is a folktale about the old church on Our Lady’s field (Gospino polje) and the legend of Our Lady, and the literature and sources can support the foundations of this folktale tradition. The care of the statue and the attendance of

the shrine speak of the heritage importance and part of the identity (particularly) of Bili Brig, but also Nova Kapela and the surrounding area. The long history of the Dubovac estate was followed by the creation of Bili Brig, by moving the inhabitants along the “via regia”. It is significant that in two consecutive parish censuses (from 1746 and 1758), the village of Dubovac disappeared, and Bili Brig appeared. The Bili Brig inhabitants still have estates (fields, vineyards, forests) in the area of old Dubovac and have always considered it part of the village. The areas around Our Lady’s field (Gospino polje) still have the name “Kućište”, which testifies to the former settlement.

Understanding the heritage value of Our Lady’s field (Gospino polje) and the pilgrimage to Our Lady can be deepened by researching the original documents, especially those less studied. New insights could result in archaeological research of the cemetery and, if possible, the foundations of the old medieval church. Although the people of Bili Brig have taken care of the chapel and the environment on Our Lady’s Field (Gospino polje), it is essential to protect the shrine and pilgrimage as intangible cultural heritage and thus recognise and affirm it as part of cultural identity. It is particularly important to dedicate to the maintenance and preservation of the wooden statue of Our Lady, which has had cultural and emotional value and cannot be renewed if neglected.

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OČUVANJE NASLJEĐA SREDNJOVJEKOVNOG DUBOVCA KROZ ŠTOVANJE DUBOVAČKE GOSPE

Sažetak

Rad historiografskom analizom prikazuje povijesni kontinuitet naselja Dubovac uz naglasak na štovanje Dubovačke Gospe te njenu važnost i ukorijenjenost u svijest stanovnika Bilog Briga i okolnog kraja kao vjersko i baštinsko naslijeđe. Spomen sela Dubovac u Brodsko – posavskoj županiji prvi put se javlja sredinom 13. st. kao bogato imanje i od tada je spominjano u različitim kraljevskim poveljama i u vlasništvu je različitih velikaških obitelji. Spomen sela nestaje u 18. st., no izravno se povezuje sa novonastalim obližnjim Bilim Brigom. Osobitu važnost uz Dubovac ima srednjovjekovna crkva Blažene Djevice Marije na današnjem Gospinom polju, koja je jedno vrijeme bila i župno sjedište, no srušena je početkom 19. st. Usprkos tome, Gospino polje je do današnjih dana ostala hodočasničko odredište za mnoge stanovnike okolnih krajeva. Tome snažno pridonosi štovanje Marijinog kipa uz koji se veže nekoliko legendi o njegovoj čudotvornosti i zagonetnim preseljenjem.

Ključne riječi: Bili Brig, Dubovac, Gospino polje, nematerijalna kulturna baština