



DUBRAVKO BAČIĆ

THE CROATIAN NOBLE HOUSE OF ZRINSKI IN THE REGION OF POUNJE

ZRINSKI U POUNJU

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“The Croatian Noble House of Zrinski in the Region of Pounje” (*Zrinski u Pounju*) is a monographic presentation of the findings from a new piece of research conducted under “The Zrinski Family Heritage – the Future of Banovina” project from the year 2019 and the subsequent projects of restoration of several historic monuments in the Croatian part of Pounje and Banovina: the old town of Zrin, the Gvozdansko Castle, the ruins of St. Mary Magdalene’s Church in Zrin and the building complex with a blast furnace in Bešlinac (Rujevac). On some three hundred pages, the book consists of 13 chapters of the main text, with 417 illustrations (historical and contemporary photographs of the sites and individual buildings, photographs of artefacts and archaeological finds, maps, tables, architectural drawings, etc.), and 629 footnotes.

The introductory chapter provides a summary of the four investigated sites under the scope of the restoration projects (the old town of Zrin, the Gvozdansko Castle, St. Mary Magdalene’s Church in Zrin and the building complex with the blast furnace in Bešlinac – Rujevac), followed by six synthetic chapters with topics covering geography, culture and history, presenting the rich natural and cultural heritage of Banovina and the Croatian part of Pounje. Relying on historical sources, literature and previously published research, the authors offer their interpretation of a complete and monographic survey of the political, military, economic, cultural, historical and social development of Banovina and the Croatian part of Pounje from prehistory through antiquity to the Middle Ages and the emergence of the Zrinskis in the area. Two chapters are dedicated to this renowned Croatian noble family, their origin, genealogy and rise, the expansion of their power and acquisition of possessions, their mint, the Zrinski predicate and coat of arms – Zrinskis in Pounje from 1347 to 1578 (*Zrinski u Pounju od 1347. do 1578. godine*), and Zrinskis’ Fortresses and Settlements in Pounje (*Utvrde i naselja Zrinskih u Pounju*).

Chapters 8, 9 and 10 successively cover the Zrin and Pedalj burgs, and the Gvozdansko

Castle. In the analysis of the spatial and historical development of these fortifications, the authors utilise all available cartographic, graphic and written historical sources, architectural surveys of the existing condition, photographic records and graphic reconstructions, as well as comparative analyses and a scientifically based interpretive apparatus. The newly published research findings significantly contribute to the current knowledge of medieval Croatian continental fortification architecture, and general political, social, economic, cultural and historical circumstances in Banovina and Pounje during the time of the Zrinski dukes.

Chapters 11 and 12 are dedicated to the poorly preserved, mostly unexplored and insufficiently known sacral heritage of Banovina and Pounje. These two chapters offer a review of the churches and monasteries of Zrin (11), and the late Gothic church of St. Mary Magdalene (12), thoroughly researched and investigated under the project. After an exhaustive critical analysis of the previously published literature on St. Mary Magdalene in Zrin, and a chronological overview of prior conservation, restoration and archaeological research, the authors present the results and conclusions of their own research conducted during 2019, with a proposed reconstruction of the church and a presentation of all valuable findings.

Chapter 13 covers the building complex with the blast furnace in Bešlinac – the only surviving example of a blast furnace structure intended for iron ore processing in Croatia, and a complex of registered historical, cultural, architectural and ambient value. The authors rigorously explored all aspects of the Bešlinac complex history with almost forensic precision – from its building phases and historical-architectural features, archaeological research and interpretation of finds, to the economic significance and understanding of metallurgical-technological aspects of iron ore processing. Substantial, well selected and extensive illustrative material finely complements the text as more accessible addition to the specialised professional discourse.

Taking into account the geographical and chronological breadth of the opus, the abundance of collected and interpreted cultural, historical, archaeological, architectural and topographical information, and the synthetic-encyclopaedic character of all chapters, the work is intended for a truly wide range of readers – from the general public in Banovina and Pounje, through educated travellers wishing to learn more about this part of Croatia, to the interested professionals of various expert levels (students, doctoral candidates, researchers, scientists, conservators, local government authorities, educationalists and museologists, tourism experts, general cultural public, etc.) and profiles (political and economic history, history of architecture and art, archaeology, metallurgy, etc.).

“The Croatian Noble House of Zrinski in the Region of Pounje” is an exemplary scholarly work, which also belongs to the genre of historical and artistic topography. The scientific and professional relevance of the book is primarily reflected in the presented original new knowledge and conclusions as a result of interdisciplinary research conducted during 2019 under “The Zrinskis in Pounje” project, which covers four valuable examples of architectural heritage, but also in the integral interpretation of new information about the fortification, sacral and palaeoindustrial heritage of Banovina and the Croatian part of Pounje.

The four important examples of architectural heritage (Zrin, Gvozdansko, St. Mary Magdalene in Zrin and Bešlinac), included in the project and covered in the book, together with the supporting chapters that diachronically and synchronically provide a general historical, cultural and political context, make up a kind of Zrinski tetralogy that allows a comprehensive overview of the valuable, significant and layered cultural, historical and architectural heritage of Banovina and Croatian Pounje. Lastly, this work is an exemplary model of scientific research combined with the professional standard of publishing the findings of field research and its resulting new insights promptly and expeditiously in a monograph, all thanks to the experienced and dedicated interdisciplinary team of renowned authors.