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Rural Settlement in Gnjili Potok Until the Immigration of Slavs: Geo-Historical Observations

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Abstract

Studies on rural settlements are useful for tourism, research, historical, and educative purposes. Notwithstanding the indisputable global need for studies in the area of rural settlements, little works have been conducted so far. Since Montenegro lags behind most European and even neighboring countries in this respect, we explored rural settlement in Gnjili Potok until the immigration of Slavs using a geographical (spatial) method. Our findings show that the main relics in the field of social life in the considered geo-space were and are still indicative of tribal-brotherhood and family relations. Furthermore, the history rural settlement of Gnjili Potok is not fully explored, so its history, as well as the history of many other rural settlements in Montenegro, cannot be reliably traced until 1744. It is almost certain that the ancient peoples (Illyrians, Celts, Romans) lived in the area of the rural settlement of Gnjillog Potoka and that they were engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding. Therefore, our study contributes to the study of the rural settlement of Gnjili Potok from the aspect of the evolution of the settlement to the immigration of Slavs.

Keywords: Ancient Peoples, Geographical (Spatial) Method, Gnjili Potok, Research, Rural Settlement.

1. Introduction

Homelands occupy an important place in the life of every individual. It is therefore not surprising that the concept of homeland is a very common topic of many debates and public discussions (Botić, 2009). At the same time, knowledge about the homeland is usually reduced to a very narrow thematic circle. Typically, this results in a very low level of awareness and care of one's homeland either through an individual's living space or preserving homeland heritage and tradition. Raising the level of awareness about one's own space also raises awareness about the inclusion of native content. These contents require an interdisciplinary approach in order to gain a complete insight into the native issues in homeland studies as emphasized by Botić (2009).

The rural settlement of Gnjila Potok can be viewed through several different aspects. We look at this work from the geographical – historical aspect of the evolution of settlements to the immigration of Slavs. We define the new rural history as the systematic study of human behavior over time in the rural environment. Historians and geographers of rural life must study these distinguishing marks of rurality because rural Montenegro is characterized by social processes as

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much as by geographical dwelling (Bulatović, Rajović, 2020b). Eugen Weber, professor of history at the University of California at Los Angeles and a leading historian of rural life emphasizes: “the history I thought and taught and wrote about went on chiefly in cities; the countryside and little towns were a mere appendage of that history, following, echoing, or simply standing by to watch what was going on, but scarcely relevant on their own account” (see Swierenga, 1981).

2. Methodology

The core of the methodological procedure used in this research is the geographical (spatial) method and it included geo-space Gnjilog Potoka and environment. The method of observation was supposed to provide insight into the social environment, through direct observation with participation, as well as the creation or use of the following sources: oral, written, and biographical (see Simms, 2004; Rigg, 2013; Campbell, 2018; Markuszewska, 2019; Bulatović, Rajović, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

3. Results and Discussion

Early Development of Man

As is well known, prehistory lasted from the appearance of the first man on Earth (about two million years ago) to the appearance of the first letter and state (about 3500 BC). People first lived in the open, under the open sky (Wenming, 1997). In the Old Stone Age, they settled in caves when it was very cold since these dwellings were most suitable for living in that period. However, they did not stay in one place; they were nomads. That is, they constantly changed their place of residence (Rehatsek, 1885). The main activity of the man at that time was collecting food: hunting, fishing, and collecting fruits in forests and meadows. From the earliest times, people have gradually improved the living conditions of their environments. They improved their tools and weapons, such as hunting spears, which they made of stone, animal bones, and wood. People learned to light fire, as well as to store surplus food for bad weather.

Gradually, they figured out how to make various types of houses for a living such as huts and dugouts. People in the Stone Age also lived in wide communities (hordes). As the climate gradually warmed up, these dwellers gradually switched from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle. They started growing plants and producing food. The first wild animal that man domesticated was the wolf, from whose descendants domestic dogs were born. Then man domesticated sheep, pigs, goats, cattle, cats, chickens, and horses. Along with the knowledge of agriculture, man at the early stages of human development discovered that tools can be made of metal. That is how new professions in crafts and trade appeared.

History of the Territory of Montenegro

We explored the history of the territory of Montenegro from the time of the first human communities, through the period of formation and prosperity of the Illyrians (the oldest historically known inhabitants of this part of the Balkans) to the end of the Roman domination till the arrival of Slavs in the western part of the Peninsula. Our findings are informed by two types of sources: archaeological, i.e. objects of material culture obtained from systematic excavations, and written data on this territory from ancient Greek and Roman authors, as well as data drawn from inscriptions discovered and preserved in the field (Garašanin, n.d.). It should be immediately pointed out that these data are still quite scarce: archaeological research in Montenegro began to develop more intensively only after the Second World War. As for written sources, the data of ancient writers directly related to Montenegro are quite small and rare, and epigraphic monuments' inscriptions do not cover all aspects of life and historical development but only shed light on certain problems. Hence, the image that we can create today about the oldest history of Montenegro will certainly, with new research, have to be significantly supplemented and expanded (Garašanin, n.d.).

Although it has not been established historically, the Celts probably penetrated the considered geo-area of the settlement before the arrival of the Romans in the IV century BC and suppressed the Illyrians in the wider areas. It is quite certain that the Gnjili Potok area, "like other parts of today's Montenegro was part of the Roman province of Dalmatia from the Second Century BC, or, later, the province of Prevalis. Furthermore, the specific population of the Slavic tribes that immigrated there in the 7th century AD is not completely clear, nonetheless, it is reasonably believed

that they were already Romanized Illyrians (Blagojević, 1979). According to Djordjević (1912), in studying the historical component of a population, one should start with the evolution of the population's settlement. In terms of time, the evolution of the rural settlement of Gnjili Potok took place over two hundred and seventy-seven years (Bulatović et al., 2019; Bulatović, Rajović, 2020a; Rajović, 2009; Rajović, Bulatović, 2012; Rajović, Bulatović, 2014; Rajović, Bulatović, 2015; Rajović, Bulatović, 2016; Rajović, Bulatović, 2017; Rajović, Bulatović, 2018; Rajović, Bulatović, 2018).

The first mention of the settlement, under the name Gnjili Potok, is found in 1744 (Rajović, Rajović, 2010). Folk tradition says that formerly the studied area was almost uninhabited (Rajović, Bulatović, 2017). In fact, until the mentioned year – there are few or almost no documents at all about the population of the rural settlement of Gnjili Potok. However, based on the data in the literature, it can be stated that the considered geo-space from the earliest times, was inhabited by people who later disappeared due to migration or wars.



Fig. 1. Locality Njive (Fields) Đinovića

Note: Did the ancient peoples live here? In the close vicinity is the Rajova (Rajović) River – rich in brown trout.

According to Rajović (1995) and Rajović and Rajović (2010), the oldest known population of Gnjilog Potoka was probably the Illyrians. Fundamentally, historical traces of the Illyrians could be seen in the names of individual localities: Banjšor, Bulac, Gropa, Gvozda, Macurski put (Macurski road), Dukovka, Pridor, Tatarka, Krkline, Zaoglina, Latinski krš (Latinski karst), Rutinka, Perinka, and Njive Đinovića (see Figure 1). According to the same authors, it is almost certain that the people who lived in the rural settlement of Gnjili Potok engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding, but due to the great cold and huge snow moved to the parish areas. As proof, Rajović (1995) supports this claim with the presence of ancient peoples' alleges that they left their graves at "Latin Karst", a present site. At an existing location in Orničice, there exist two graves covered by weeds and a tangle of beech veins near an asphalt road. Other graves were covered with an embankment of the road, which cut the site and remained deep in the ground. The name "Latin Karst" says that it is a Latin cemetery, probably Romanized Illyrians, and perhaps the ancient Greeks.

Noting the oral tradition about Gnjilog Potoka, Rajović (1995) points out that the earliest persons in this area are called the "Ancient people", "Latins", "Macure", and "Bukumire" living near Berane are the remnants of that people. Rajović (1995) states the presence of piles of stones at an altitude greater than 1100 m above sea level is accumulated stone evidence with a diameter of 4m or more (it is smaller and smaller) as evidence of their habitations. Some piles of stones are almost overgrown, and many are covered with forest. They mainly occur from the following localities:

Latinsko cemetery, across Krklina, Radmilice, Rudog Brijega, Pridora, Korita, Katuništa to Radmilice, Ornice, and Njive Đinovića (Rajović, Rajović, 2010). Consequently, Rajović and Rajović (2010) also point to the perception that the three plateaus were created artificially, and not naturally.

The first according to Rajović (1995) is located above Kagina Ornica (plateau in a circular shape called Korita). The second and third plateaus are called Rajkova Ravnina and Perinka (private property of Dragoja Krstova Rajović – located between Kraj Novović and Dola Novović). It is interesting to point out that the last two plateaus have a circular shape and spring water at their ends. According to Rajović (1995), the mentioned locations were the habitats of "some or all of the livestock settlements that existed in the ancient times (Illyrians, Celts, Romans).



Fig. 2. Lomovi Locality

Note: Even today, it is rich in wild fruits and many wild animals have found their peace in its area. In the immediate vicinity is the Trešnjevačka Smail River.

Rajović and Rajović (2010) indicate that the aforementioned localities, dotted with meadows and pastures provided excellent opportunities to get food like nettles, hawthorn, walnuts, acorns, dogwood, wild cherries, wild pears, wild apples, hazelnuts, mushrooms, wild strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries. Forest spaces in Lise, Pelinovice, Trešnjevika, and Čukačke Kose provided game habitats for wild rabbits, wild ducks, wild pigs, deer, pheasants, martens, and badgers. This is how these ancient dwellers obtained their meat, skin, and fur using trap hunting. Their main source of fish was caught from Rajova (Rajović) River where fish were caught near large pools near the settlement.



Fig. 3. Southwestern part of the settlement (forest complex as a fox habitat)
Note: Did ancient people know it as today's hunters?

Rajović (1995) rightly concludes that the ancient peoples lived in the considered geo-space and the legends "About the stone fox on Lisa", as well as about "Buried gold and gold horsetail at the site Radmilica" point to his position. Also, Rajović (1995) also bases his claims on the localities that are situated near the rural settlement of Gnjili Potok that have been determined to have been the abodes of ancient peoples like the Zanova Lisačka, Bačko Brdo, and Miravčine (see [Vešović, 1935](#); [Dašić, 1986](#)). It was Vešović (1935) and Dašić (1986) who provided amply information about the neighboring rural settlement of Kralje (the motherland of today's fraternities – the rural settlement of Gnjili Potok) that it served as a pasture for cattle breeders from Kralje. According to Rajović and Rajović (2010), it was the ancestor of Rajović-Rajo with his brother Vuk in 1744, who formed a new abode (settlement) in the considered geo-space. Subsequently, the ancestor of Labović-Labo moved to the settlement after five years in 1749 (see [Rajović, 1995](#); [Rajović, 1999](#); [Rajović, Rajović, 2010](#)).

4. Conclusion

Per the set task of the study, our research records highlighted several evident observations:

- Geographically, the rural settlement of Gnjili Potok is located in the southeastern part of the municipality of Andrijevića. They extend in the belt $42^{\circ} 44' 43''$ north latitude and $19^{\circ} 43' 04''$ east longitude. It covers an area of 8.83 km² and according to the survey data of the authors of this text for 2018, a total of 58 permanent residents live in this area.

- The main relics in the field of social life in the considered geo-space were and still are tribal - brotherhood and family relations. The tradition is so strong in this respect, that almost every inhabitant of Gnjili Potok knows their ancestry from families and fraternities they are related to by blood. Relationships within the same fraternity are traditionally so close that kinship, friendship, and godparenthood are respected and respected to an incredible extent. Within the family, relationships are still based on authority and maximum parental respect.

- On the oldest history of the rural settlement Gnjili Potok, from the time of the first human communities, through the period of formation of the Illyrians as the oldest historically known inhabitants of this part of Montenegro, it should be pointed out that data are still quite scarce. Hence, the image that we can create today about Montenegro, and thus the considered geo-space, with new research will have to be significantly supplemented and expanded. Thus, the historical

evidence of the current rural settlement of Gnjili Potok is not fully elucidated, so its history, as well as the history of many other rural settlements in Montenegro, cannot be reliably traced until 1744. (as is the case with the said settlement). Just in the mentioned years, they settled from Kralj in the rural settlement of Gnjili Potok - Rajo and Vuka (sons of Savić), and five years later (in 1749) – and Labo (ancestors of today's inhabitants - fraternities in Gnjili Potok).

- It is almost certain that the ancient peoples (Illyrians, Celts, Romans) lived in the area of the rural settlement of Gnjilog Potoka and that they were engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding. Comparatively, traces of historical evidence were maintained especially in the names of individual localities: Banjšor, Bulac, Gropa, Gvozda, Macurski put, Dukovka, Pridor, Tatarka, Krkline, Zaoglina, Latinski krš, Rutinka, Perinka, and Njive Đinovića.

- The considered geo-area interspersed with meadows and pastures provided the old peoples with excellent opportunities to easily access food: nettles, hawthorns, walnuts, acorns, dogwood, wild cherries, wild pears, wild apples, hazelnuts, mushrooms. Forest spaces: Lise, Pelinovice, Trešnjevika, and Čukačke Kose served as game habitats for wild rabbits, wild ducks, wild pigs, deer, pheasants, martens, and badgers. This is how meat, skin, and fur were obtained.

- The path from an idea to the realization in this research although clear is burdened with many aggravating circumstances. We hope that the results of this research will be a contribution to the study of rural settlements in our country. We hope that this research will be useful to all those who want to get to know the rural settlement of Gnjili Potok in more detail.

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