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THE RISE AND FALL OF ISLAM AND ISLAMIC CULTURE IN A HERZEGOVINAN-DALMATIAN AND MONTENEGRON BORDER AREA: DABARSKO POLJE, 1458- 2006*

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Introduction

Despite the fact that the "Plain of Dabar" was for more than two centuries an Islamic land its history appears to be wholly unknown, forgotten by both Muslims and historians of Islam. Neither the old nor the new *Encyclopaedia of Islam* contains one word about it. With the old as well as the monumental new edition of the Turkish *İslam Ansiklopedisi* the situation is not better. In the otherwise rich and detailed *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije* from the 1960s and 1970s the district is mentioned in the course of only a few lines. Mustafa Imamović's 635 pages *Historija Bošnjaka*, (Sarajevo, 1998) does not mention it at all.

In this contribution we would like to give a "micro-history" of the "Plain of Dabar" and draw the main outlines of the past of this beautiful, albeit poor district. We shall describe the process of Islamisation and the outlines of the village economy with help of the Ottoman population and taxation records and bring together some information on the vanished Islamic buildings. The whole will be flavoured with some small but highly illustrative stories as told by my 'patron saint', Evliya Çelebi, and with my own observation on the spot during extensive travels in 1971, 2002, and July of 2006.

Some local historians and ethnographers have written useful works on aspects of the history of the district. Their works, however, are difficult to find and are hardly known outside of the Hercegovina. In 1954 Petar Šobajić,¹ and in 1990

* This study is dedicated to the memory of two pioneers, Hifzija Hasandedić and Petar Šobajić, without whose works this study could not have been written.

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¹ Petar Šobajić, "Dabarsko Polje u Hercegovini," in: Srpski Etnografski Zbornik, No 67, Beograd 1954 (small monography).

the veteran scholar Hifzija Hasandedić,² brought together useful material collected from living memory but written in Serbo-Croat, a language known to few Ottomanists from outside the region. On the one hand, these works provide many useful details and half-forgotten facts, however they lack the solid foundation given by the *tahrir* defters and are therefore full of vague suppositions and groundless theories, as we shall see. It should be added that the *tahrirs* were inaccessible for both pioneers. Šobajić was an ethnographer without Ottomanist training; Hasandedić was in his eighties when he wrote his work.³ With the Dabarsko Polje, however, as well as with a number of other districts in the Balkans, the Islamic facet of local history is much less known than that of remote little oases in the desert of the Fezzan or mud brick settlements of the inland delta of the river Niger.

The Dabarsko Polje, or the "Plain of Dabar", in the Southern Herzegovina formed a separate *nahiye* and was part of the Ottoman Empire from 1468 to 1878. In spite of its very limited fertility, the plain has been inhabited at least since the early Byzantine period and throughout the Slavic middle ages (12th – 15th centuries) to which some written evidence and a large number of massive and monumental sarcophagus-like gravestones (*stećak*) still witness. In the 16th and 17th centuries the "Plain of Dabar" was a land of Islam, with well over 80% of the population adhering to the religion. It was a district where a number of buildings essential to the Islamic way of life— mosques, mekteps, hamams, caravanserais etc.—had been erected. A number of Islamic scholars had their roots in the Plain of Dabar. The region also supplied at least one man of great fame and importance: Cezzar Ahmed Pasha, Governor of Akka in Palestine, the man who stopped Napoleon. However, the Dabarsko Polje was situated at the very edge of the Islamic World, bordered by the Dalmatian territories of the Venetian Republic, a powerful Roman Catholic power, and the very warlike Montenegrin mountain tribes. As a result of a number of long and violent

² Hifzija Hasandedić, *Muslimanska Baština u Istočnoj Hercegovini*, (Sarajevo 1990).

³ The irreducible Hasandedić, however, had access to local sources difficult to use for outsiders such as the archives of some Franciscan monasteries in the Herzegovina, the *kadi sicils* of Blagaj, valuable sources for the little known 18th century and the *Gruntovne knjige* (*Grundbücher*) of the Austrian administration. The latter are preserved in the Court building of each district centre (*Općinski Sud*) and lay down the border of the property of mosques, schools and Muslim cemeteries most of which disappeared without leaving other traces. Like the monastery archives they are hardly accessible for "outsiders."

wars,⁴ the most recent in 1992/95, Islam entirely disappeared from the area as did the monuments of architecture it had created.

The Dabarsko Polje is a 21 km long and 2.5 km wide valley in the uplands of south-eastern Herzegovina 15 km east of the town of Stolac. The plain slopes down from an altitude of 560 meters above sea level in the northwest to 473 meters in the southeast. It is a closed plain with a surface of almost 30 square km. In the winter over one third of its surface is flooded because of a total lack of run-off. The mountains Trusina, Hrgud, Kubaš and Crno Osoje rise up over thousand meters above the edges of the plain. In spite of its very limited fertility allowing only a small population, the Dabarsko Polje has been inhabited since the earliest recorded times. Here, the once important road from the Dalmatian merchant metropolis of Dubrovnik to the Balkan interior via the Plain of Nevesinje crossed the road from the Neretva Valley via Stolac to the Plain of Garko and further on via Southern Bosnia and to Kosovo and Istanbul. Nowadays, both roads have lost almost all their importance. In wintertime, the road to Nevesinje is almost impassable, as the writer of these lines himself experienced at his own peril. In the Middle Ages and the greater part of the Ottoman period (1466-1878) this was rather different and the function as crossroad in the transport system gave the Dabarsko Polje its importance.

Below we shall give short descriptions of some of the more interesting villages of the district, their population, economy and buildings, beginning with Dabrica, about which the most documentation is available.

Dabrica

Today as in the past Dabrica is one of the "largest" villages of the area between the towns of Stolac and Bileća. It is still a predominantly Muslim settlement. As the crow flies the village 10 km NNE of Stolac in a hilly and wooded area but more than 20 km over the very bad road. Although Dabrica *stricto sensu* is not situated in the Dabarsko Polje it is directly linked with the district through its name.

Dabrica is supposed to be the successor of the medieval fortified settlement of Koštun. The ruins of this sizeable castle⁵ can still be seen, one hour walking to

⁴ 1645/69, 1683/99, 1914/18, 1941/45.

the east of Dabrica. The name Koštun is thought to be a corruption of the Greek "Kastron." In 960 Constantin Porphyrogenetus, in his *De Administrando Imperio*, mentions a castle "Dobriskik." Marko Vego suggested that this place was identical with Koštun.⁶ In the 12th century, Pop Dukljanin mentions the Župa Dabar. In the time of Emperor Manuel Comnenos (1143 -1180), the castle was one of the Byzantine strong points in the wider area.

In 1285, a caravan from Dubrovnik was robbed at Dabar. Some merchants from the coast are known to have passed through the village in 1384 and 1404.⁷ Other sources from Dubrovnik mention Dabar in 1421.⁸ In 1404, an important local nobleman, Radić Sanković, born in Dabrica, died in misery in the prison of the famous Vojvoda Sandalj Hranić (1392-1435), predecessor of Herceg Stjepan, the man who gave his name to the entire land. It is not directly clear if the above notes refer to the district (župa) of Dabar or to its largest settlement, Dabrica, with its nearby castle.⁹ Dabrica and its territory became an Ottoman possession in 1466. The village is mentioned in the census- and taxation register of 1468 as having 23 Christian households.¹⁰ The register of 1477 has with 37 households, still all Christians.¹¹ In 1508 a Turkish "Voyvode" is mentioned as having his seat in Dabrica. By 1530 Islam had made much progress. The village had 33 Muslim households and 23 of Christian ones. The settlement was apparently privileged by the Ottoman State. The register (T.D. 167, p. 495) mentions explicitly that the "tithes and taxes and the customary tax on sheep as well as the tax on the land of the Muslim inhabitants and the Avariz tax was levied according to an 'imperial order' (*hükm-i Hümayun*)." This was a measure to encourage the growth of the village. In fact it did not. It declined, like many other villages of the plain below. In 1585 there were 23 Muslim households in Dabrica, the

⁵ It is 210 m. long and 50 m. wide. The walls and six towers are still standing to the height of six meters. See: Hamdija Kreševljaković – Hamdija Kapidžić, "Stari Hercegovački Gradovi," in: *Naše Starine II*, Sarajevo 1954, p.14.

⁶ Marko Vego, *Naselja Bosanske Srednjeevokovne Države*, Sarajevo, 1957, p. 29.

⁷ Konstantin Jireček, *Die Handelsstrassen und Bergwerke von Serbien und Bosnien während des Mittelalters*, Prag 1879, p.27.

⁸ N. Iorga, *Notes et Extraits pour servir a l'histoire des Croisades aux XVe siècle*, II, Bucarest 1915, p. 198.

⁹ For the entire confused period of late-medieval history of the area, see John V.A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans*, p. 453 – 481.

¹⁰ Istanbul Atatürk Kitaphığı (Belediye Kütüphanesi) Muallim Cevdet Yazmaları, O.76 p. XXX.

¹¹ Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA) T.D. 5, p. 414.

Christians had gone down to 17 households. Beside these households there were 15 unmarried young men.¹² The memory of the medieval Christian population is still kept alive by the necropolis called "Crkvište" (Church Place) outside the village, containing 145 *stećaks*. The foundations of a small church still stand in the centre of the necropolis.

In the year 1610 Sefer Ağa Begović built in Dabrica a (for local standards) sizeable mosque flanked with a typical "clock Tower" or "Campanile Minaret." **(See below)**. Above the entrance of the mosque was an inscription in Arabic, carved in a slab of stone 60 x 35 cm, which in four lines praises the builder. It gives the date of construction in the form of a chronogram: (*ma`bedü'l-ibrâr ve dârü's-sâlihîn*) which yields the date of H. 982 (1574/75). The text is of high calligraphic quality and local lore records that it was actually written in Istanbul, implying that there was no skilled calligrapher in Dabrica or its district. Below the text the date of 1019 (March 1610 - March 1611) is written in numbers. This date was thought to be the date of construction of the building. In our opinion it is the work of a half-ignorant stone cutter who added the date in numbers as a kind of afterthought while using a stencil for the rest of the text. The text is too good to believe in such a big mistake.

Sefer Ağa must have had some pretensions. His title suggests that he has been a military man, a captain, with a good education. According to the local lore, he came from Anatolia and settled in Dabrica. His descendants still live in Dabrica today and a number of them are buried in the graveyard around the mosque. The text of the inscription of the mosque and some of the old gravestones were published by Mehmed Mujezinović.¹³ Next to the mosque Sefer Ağa had constructed a small hamam, a *han* for the travellers and a *mektef* for the education of the children. Together they constitute one of the *külliyes* made by the Ottomans in this area. These buildings do not exist anymore. They were demolished during World War I. The name "Hanine" still marks the place where the *han* once stood and the site of the hamam is also remembered locally. The mosque follows the orthodox Ottoman style customs better.

¹² Ankara, T.K.G.M. 7 (Eski) 484, fol 89 a/b.

¹³ *Islamska Epigrafika III*, Sarajevo 1982, p. 390- 392.

than other examples in the area. The four-centred arches above the windows are purely Ottoman. Local elements include the pyramid-shaped wooden roof, covered with heavy stone slabs, rhombic slates in the specific Herzegovinan manner, following the better buildings of Mostar.

The detailed *mufassal* registers of 1477 and 1585 provide us with some information on the economy of Dabrica and villages of the Dabarsko Polje. They list the tithe on the main agricultural products village by village and the average fixed prices (*narh*) per product. The measure used were the local ones, the relation of which to the Imperial Bushel of Istanbul (26.5 kg.) is not known. We have to reconstruct it by way of comparison. The net result should not be taken as exact numbers but rather as pointers to an order of magnitude.

Very often, the great Ottoman population and land registrations are preceded by surveys of the local laws and rules, usually including the relation of the local measure to the bushel of Istanbul. For the Herzegovina this information was not available to us. There is a detailed *kanunname* from 1585 but it does not mention the size of the local measures. We compared the agricultural yield of Dabar with the yield of two other districts with a comparable climate and the same mediocre soil: the former *Kaza* of Athens-Attika, and that of island Eğriboz/Euboia. The *Kaza* of Athens contained the "City of the Sages" and 55 villages of various size. The island of Euboia contained the town of Chalkis and (in 1506) 176 villages. The load (*himl*) of Attika and Eğriboz /Euboia was the equivalent of 205 kilograms. In 1490 the price of a load of wheat in Eğriboz was 30 *akçe*, in Dabar 24 *akçe*. The load used in Dabar was thus around one fifth lighter than the load on Euboia, thus about 165 kg. The price of a load of Attican barley or millet was 20 *akçe*, in Dabar 15, that of the inferior grain *yulaf* (oats) was 9 *akçe*. Wine was taxed as must of crushed grapes (*şıra*) and the price per *medre* was 5 *akçe*. In 1506, the price of an Athens- and Eğriboz *medre* was 10 *akçes*, in Dabar 5 *akçe*. The weight of an Eğriboz *medre* was 70 kg. Thus, the Dabra *medre* must have been about 35 kg. As tax one *akçe* was taken per three sheep. One *akçe* was taken for one pig fattened at home, and half an *akçe* for an animal roaming around free. Two *akçe* were taken for a sheaf of flax and one for each beehive. The *Kanunname* of the province of Hersek from 1585 (published by Akgündüz) states that the tithe on grape must was one seventh for Christian producers and one eighth for Muslims. We have to assume that in 1477 this rule

was also in force. With this knowledge we can now venture to reconstruct the village economy of the Dabarsko Polje, remembering, however, that all is only a rough estimate.

Economic aspects

In 1477 the total tax value of the main products of Dabrica (wheat, barley, millet, and oats) was 2.709 *akçe*. The economic importance of these products for the village economy can easily be seen in the percentage of the total tax value. It should be remembered that—in many hundreds of villages in the fertile plain of Macedonia, Thessaly, Thrace and Danubian Bulgarian—wheat and barley together were often 50 or 60% of the total, with sheep and wine making up the bulk of the rest of the economy. Here, in dry and stony southern Herzegovina wheat was only 13% of the total, barley was 14%. Inferior cereals like millet and oats made up 10% together. The products that sustained the economy were grape must, good for 43%, followed by sheep, 14% and honey, with 6% filling the gap. Thus wine and sheep were the pillars of the Dabrica economy. A tax of 405 *Akçe* was taken as “customary sheep tax.” This means a total of 1.215 head of sheep, or 33 sheep per households. In this context it is good to remember that during the 1960s the average family of mountain nomads in Eastern Turkey could live from 50/60 sheep.¹⁴

The economy of Dabrica in 1585 shows remarkable changes. Wine production had grown from 43 to 66%, but at the expense of cereals, sheep and honey. The three cereals had declined from 37 to 28 percent, the sheep from 14 to 5 percent and the honey had almost disappeared. A comparison with the numbers of the other Dabar villages shows that this was the general tendency. Wine became the pillar of the local economy, sheep breeding came second.

Recent developments

After World War II, which saw many victims among the Muslim population, the village was still large, in 1948 having 853 inhabitants and in 1971 842. The census of 1991 shows that the total number had gone down considerably, to 478 people due to emigration. The composition now was 269 Muslims, 127 Serbs, 77

¹⁴ Wolf-Dieter Hütteroth, *Bergnomaden und Yaylabauern im mittleren kurdischen Taurus*, Marburger Geographische Schriften 11, (Marburg 1959).

Croats, and some of undeclared nationality.¹⁵ In 1991 Dabrica, thus was mostly Muslim, as it had been in the 17th and 18th century.

During the Bosnian war, in 1994, the Dabrica mosque was blown up by the Croat nationalist forces (HVO) and the Muslims and the Serb inhabitants of the village were driven away. Seventy percent of Muslims returned some years ago and in 2005 the mosque was almost fully reconstructed as it had been exactly before. The story of Dabrica somewhere sets the tone of the events in the other settlement in the Plain of Dabar.

The Villages of the Plain

Berkovići, the Ancient Dabar

From 1961 to the 1980s, Berkovići was by far the largest of the villages of the district. In fact, it is a cluster of hamlets, each with its own name: Donji Klečak, Gornji Klečak, Poratak and Trebesin. It is located at the point where the road over the mountains from the Plain of Nevesinje, via Zovi Dol, meets the Stolac - Bileća road. In older times, the former road was of great importance, as mentioned above.

Berkovići must have existed in the Middle Ages. In Trebesin, near the strong spring that gave the hamlet its name is a necropolis with over a dozen stećaks. "Dabar" is mentioned in 1285, 1384 and 1404 (see Dabrica). But it is not clear if this is the name of a district or of a village. In 1508 a Turkish Voyvoda is mentioned, residing in the "village of Dabar."¹⁶ Local memories among the Christian inhabitants of Berkovići point to the remains of an old building near the hamlet of Klečak (part of the agglomeration of Berkovići). In the pre-Turkish time it had been a church. This was taken by the Turkish conquerors and turned into mosque. The local tradition of the Muslim inhabitants of Berkovići (in 1981 only four persons) refers to the same ruins as those of the mosque built at the end of the 15th century by the important Djulep family.¹⁷ From this doubtful information Hasandedić constructed an entire story.¹⁸

¹⁵ Stanovništvo Bosne i Hercegovine, *Republika Hrvatska, Državni zavod za statistiku*, (Zagreb, 1995), p. 232, 33.

¹⁶ Jireček, *Handelsstrassen*, p. 27.

¹⁷ Hasandedić, 1990, p. 71/72. The detailed 1585 register has no inhabitants with that name.

¹⁸ For the use of oral history as a source for historical information see for example: Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition, a study in historical methodology*, (London 1963); Paul Thomson, *The Voice of the Past, Oral History* (Oxford 1978); Niethammer Lutz, *Lebenserfahrung und Kollektives*

According to this story the medieval Dabarsko Polje was inhabited by people adhering to the (heretical) Bogomil faith. Upon the Turkish conquest, the rich feudal families of the plain accepted Islam in order to preserve their property and privileges and converted the church into mosque.

In the last decades of the 20th century, the “Bogomil Theory” came under heavy fire. It was declared a product of the 19th century and especially promoted for political purposes by the Austrian administration. However, among many Bosnian Muslims the theory is now firmly believed and became an important ingredient of the Bosnian-Muslim self-understanding. The theory that the important families of Bosnia accepted Islam to preserve their property is definitely a construct of the 19th century and was already discarded by Bosnian Ottomanists shortly after WWII. The Ottoman registers from 1468 and 1477 we have used to date do show that, at first, the local ruling groups were indeed left in charge. The essential difference is that they remained Christian! In 1468 the village of Zagrad in the “Nahiye of Dabra” was a *timar* of “Avlan son of Begić, Non-Muslim, Vlach.” Lapas was a *timar* of “Brayak son of Rado,” Мера was a *timar* of “Radosav son of Bogdan” and Suzine of “Radoje son of Obrad (Cevdet Yazmaları O.76, fol. 99b - 100a). All of these are good Christian-Serbian names. In 1499 the Dabra villages of Kalac, Kukričje, Zdodlak and the important and rich village of Vatnica were *timars* of the soldiers of the garrison of the castle Ključ near Cernica. (Kepeci 697, fol. 79a - 88b~) These soldiers came from everywhere in the Ottoman Balkans as is shown by the register and were certainly not formerly rich members of the local nobility. Our findings give the same picture as the Bosnian Ottomanists found elsewhere in the country.

According to the previously accepted theory, the mysterious, sarcophagus-like massive stećak tombs were made for the Bogomils, the heretical and partly neo-Manichean religion related to the Cathares of Southern France. Later research tried to show that they were in fact made for the Herzegovinan Vlachs, the Romance-speaking nomadic or semi-nomadic autochthonous Balkan population in the process of being Serbianised. However, a number of people mentioned on the stećaks were well-known persons and known to have been members of the heretical “Bosnian Church.” Among them were the Sanković family and the

Gedächtniss, die Praxis der Oral History, (Frankfurt/Main, 1980); Ken Howard, *Oral History, a Handbook*, Stroud/Sutton, 1998. Robert Perks, *The Oral History Reader*, (London, 1998).

family of Hranić-Kosača, from where the Dukes (Hersek) of the Herzegovina descended. The area where stećaks can be found is almost identical with the borders of the medieval Bosnian State and its offspring, the Herzegovina. This similarity has yet to be explained. It can also be seen that the stećaks as an object to mark burial appeared in the 12th century together with "Bogomilism" and disappeared in the first decades of the Ottoman period, together with the survivals of the "Crkva Bosanska."¹⁹

Let us return to Berkovići. There we arrive on safer ground in the mid-17th century. Shortly before 1650, Hadji Huseyin Lakašić from Mostar founded a *han* for travelers and a *mektep*, or primary school for Muslim children at "Trebesin in the nahiye of Dabra." Both buildings were part of the pious foundation (vakf) of Hadji Ahmed Aga Lakašić in Mostar. The Mostar mosque, (1061/1651), part of this foundation, still stands. Ahmed Aga had his Vakf-nâme drawn up in 1669. The *han* in Berkovići disappeared long ago. Its foundations have been excavated. It was located close to the great Muslim cemetery of the Djulep clan and the Trebesin spring of fresh water. The building was of cut stone and measured 15 x 5 m. It was thus one of the smaller representatives of an Ottoman *han* of which some examples are still extant such as the Mihaloğlu Han in Gölpazar near Bursa, or the Han of Gazi Evrenos in Ilıca – Loutra Traianopolis near Alexandropolis/Dedeağaç in Greek Thrace. How long the *han* in Berkovići functioned, and when and why it was destroyed, is unknown.²⁰

¹⁹ For the "Bogomil Tombs" and the vast literature about them see: Marian Wenzel, "Bosnian and Hercegovinian tombstones - who made them and why," *Südost-Forschungen* 21, München 1962, p. 102-143. A large number of "Bogomil Cemeteries" have been published by mefik Bešliagić in the rich periodical "Nafe Starine," (Sarajevo 1953-1990).

For the Bosnian church the existing literature is also vast. A key to it is Srećko M. Džaja, *Konfessionalität und Nationalität Bosniens und der Herzegowina*, (München, R. Oldenbourg: Verlag, 1984). Serie: Südosteuropäische Arbeiten. Südost Inst. herausgegeben von Mathias Bernath. For older literature in English see the classic of Dimitar Obolensky, *The Bogomils, A Study of the Balkan Neo-Manichaeism* (Cambridge, 1948).

²⁰ For the *vakfiye* of Hadji Hüseyin Lakašić see: H. Hasandedić, "Zadužbine hadži Ahmed Age Lakišića u Mostaru," in: *Glasnik Vrhovnog Starješinstva Islamske zajednice* 12, (Sarajevo 1961), p. 390 vv. For the *han* of Gazi Evrenos see: M. Kiel, "The oldest monuments of Ottoman-Turkish architecture in the Balkans, the Imaret and Mosque of Ghazi Evrenos in Gümülcine/Komotini, and the Khan of Evrenos Bey in Ilıca/Loutra in Greek Thrace, 1370-1390," in *Sanat Tarihi Yılıhı - Kunsthistorische Forschungen* XII, Istanbul 1983, s. 117-144. Easier accessible in: M. Kiel, "Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans." *Variorum*, (Aldershot-Brookfield USA, 1990).

In 1664 Evliya Çelebi passed through the village of “Dabra” after descending the terrible road over the Trusina Mountains, from Nevesinje via Zob Dol. Between 1645 and 1669 the Cretan War was fought between the Ottomans and the maritime Republic of Venice. This war may have been the turning point for the fortunes of Islam in this border zone. The Dabarsko Polje had seen two centuries of peace and recovery. Now bands of robbers, hayduks and the much-feared Uskoks plundered and devastated the land, being or pretended to be in the service of Venice as irregulars. There is little written evidence about these actions, as they took place far from the great centres. We find the echo of these troubled times in old local songs and in the very clear descriptions of Evliya. Bosnian scholars found a number of documents about the sale of Bosnian Muslim slaves in the Venetian archives, which give the names of the slaves sold and the place where they came from. The documents are from 1661, three years before Evliya passed through the district.²¹

The following fragments from Evliya capture the atmosphere of this time of war and insecurity.²²

“Zob Dol, meaning Barley Village, is a spacious village with 100 houses [NB. in 1585 91, and in 1910 137 houses M.K.] situated at the mouth of four passes. And every house has its own stone-built tower. They fight day and night with the unbelievers of [the Venetian base of] Kotor since the Sultan stationed here 500 valiant *segbans*. This night we slept like dead. Formerly the village of Zobdol had been a prosperous town. It is a Muslim village with a mosque but became ruined bit by bit.”

From there, in company of fifty soldiers armed with rifles they crossed over the mountain in six hours on terrible roads. They had to walk on foot because the stones had ruined the shoes of the horses and the soles of their own boots as well. With thousand difficulties they descended to”

²¹ See Aleksandar Sobovljević, “Trgovina Bosanskim robljem godine 1661,” in *Glasnik Zemaljskih Muzeja*, (Sarajevo, 1946), p. 156-160.

²² Seyahatnâme vol vi, 440/41. See also the new edition of the autograph (T.K.S.K. Revan 1457) by Seyit Ali Kahraman - Yücel Dağlı, *Evliya Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, 6, Istanbul 2001, p. 261; and the Serbo-Croat translation of Hazim Šabanović, Evliya Çelebi, *Putopis, odlomci o Jugoslovenskim zemljama*, II, (Sarajevo 1957), p. 183-185.

“The *menzil* village of Dabar. The length and width of the place is an hour walking. Within this tiny plain there are 15 slate-covered houses situated in gardens and vineyards. The place has a small mosque, which can take only fifty men. It is a Muslim village. Because of fear of the unbelievers, the inhabitants sleep every night in the mountains. From there, we went straight down the plain of Dabra heading west and arrived after four hours in the *kasaba* of Dol (Predolje).”

It is said that Berkovići is identical with Dabar. If so then Evliya Çelebi only saw the hamlet of Trebesin at the important road junction with its the strong spring of good drinking water. Trebesin was one of the hamlets together making up the village of Berkovići today.

A mektep functioned in Berkovići until 1942. Whether it is the same as that of Hadji Huseyin Lakašić, or if it is a successor building is not known. Its last *muallim*, Muhammed Brezić still lived during the 1980s Tuzla in Eastern Bosnia. The family tradition of the once important Djulep clan of Berkovići records that almost all of the family died during the plague of the early 19th century. Only Hasan Djulep survived. He produced six sons and their descendants now live in Stolac and elsewhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina.²³ In Berkovići only the cemeteries, with their hardly readable *nišans*, keep the memory of this big village's Islamic past alive.

Bijeljani

The village of Bijeljani on the edge of the Dabarsko Polje, lies on the road from Divin and Berkovica to Stolac. Until World War II it was the centre of an *Općina* which included the nearby villages and hamlets of Kljenci, Kuti, Milavići, Prisoje, Vrijeka, and Zasada. Until 1875, a number of families lived in Bijeljina that originally had come from Herceg Novi, Trebinje and Bileća. Only the family of Telarević, one of the oldest Muslim families of the entire Dabarsko Polje, belonged to the “original” inhabitants of Bijeljani. It was the only family than was still living in the village in 1991. Bijeljani is not mentioned in the Ottoman *tahrirs* of 1477, 1520 and 1585. It must have been founded later, or it had been disguised behind a different name. The presence of a cemetery comprised of

²³ Hasandedić, Baština, p. 73.

some dozens of *stećaks* outside the village, on the road to Stolac testifies to the presence of a medieval settlement at this site.

In the early-17th century, a mosque was built in Bijeljani. It was a well-constructed edifice measuring 10 x 8 meters. It had a square, clock-tower-like minaret of twelve meters high. A mektep must have been built with it. The founder of the complex is not known but would likely be one of the Telarević family. In 1885, during the Austrian period, the mosque was demolished. It was rebuilt in exactly the same size and form in the 1890s by Ahmed Zečo. During World War II, when many of the Muslim inhabitants of the Dabarsko Polje were murdered by Serbian nationalist gangs (*četnik*), the mosque was badly damaged. The roof collapsed and only the four walls and the curious minaret remained. As the Muslim inhabitants were almost gone, there was no need to rebuild the old mosque. In 1991, Bijeljani had only two Muslim inhabitants, and 136 Serbs.

In 1994 Amir Pašić published a photograph of the mosque of Bijeljani taken about 30 years before.²⁴ When we visited the place, on 29 and 30 July 2006, we found the building back with the help of friendly inhabitants. The site was totally overgrown with ivy and prickly shrubs. Only the *alem* on top of the minaret still appeared above the leaves. Sections of the walls up to four meters high also looked through the greenery. The ruin is situated at the southern extremity of the village, below the main road and beyond the last uninhabited houses and barns of the village.

The remains of this mosque survived the systematic destruction of all traces of the Islamic past by Serb nationalist bands. The Bijeljani mosque was simply forgotten by them; but it was not forgotten by the local Serb inhabitants of the village, who were very friendly and helpful in guiding us to this rare specimen of “Islamic” architecture.

Fatnica

Until the 1980s the village of Fatnica had 270 inhabitants more than a third of whom were Muslim. By 1991, half the Muslims had left the village and settled in the nearby towns. During the same years the number of Serbs had also declined,

²⁴ Amir Pašić, *Islamic Architecture in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, (Istanbul, 1994).

from 173 households to 111.²⁵ Fatnica had a mosque built at an unknown time by members of the important Ljubović family. The mosque had no minaret and was built of cheap broken stone. It was situated 300 meters below the road leading to Stolac. The mosque had been destroyed in World War II and rebuilt in 1960. During the war of 1991-'95 the last Muslims of Fatnica, ten families, disappeared but no great physical destruction took place.

Fatnica is a very old village. A *Župa of Fatnica* is mentioned in the 12th century by Pope Dukljanin. It was also mentioned in 1406, when a group of merchants from Dubrovnik went to visit the Duke Sandalj Hranić.²⁶ Between the hamlet Orjahovica and Fatnica, along the main Stolac - Gacko Road, is a group of about 70 *stećaks*, mostly undecorated. They testify to the presence of a medieval, pre-Ottoman population in this area. With in 1499 116 households Fatnica was the second largest settlement of the area. By 1991 it had sunk to the fifth largest. The large population of the village had can for the greater part be explained by its economic capacity. The "plain of Fatnica" is locally known as fertile. The small amount of information available on the village economy confirms this. The 1477 register shows that the economy of Fatnica was very different from that of Dabrica and other places in the *Polje*. In 1477 year, and using the same methods of calculation, Fatnica produced no less than 3.237 kg of cereals per household. When we use the model of 2000 kg per household for consumption, taxes, and seed for the next harvest Fatnica had a surplus to sell, or could accommodate a larger population. Moreover, in 1477 the village had 31 head of sheep per household and produced 4013 litres of wine for the same unit. Fatnica paid 158 Akçe tax per households, which is very high and does illustrates convincingly the fertility of its little plain.

Between 1477 and 1499 Fatnica more than doubled in population (from 46 to 116 households). It was the result of high birth rates, immigration, or both. In the next 20 years Fatnica was able to grow a bit, however, between 1520 and 1585 it lost a third of its inhabitants. The population of the village never again reached the high number of 1520. When we convert the number of inhabitants of the second half of the 20th century into households (with a low number of 4,3

²⁵ *Stanovništvo Bosne i Hercegovine*, pp. 54, 55.

²⁶ Vego, *Naselja*, 1957, p. 39; Jorga, *Notes et Extraits*, II, p. 111.

people p.h.) we can see that in 1961 Fatnica had only two dozen more households than in 1520. In the years between 1961 and 1981 it fell to 270 households and from 1981 to 1991 its population shrank by half. In fact, in 1991 Fatnica had just the same number of households as in 1468! A part of the reason behind these drastic changes appear to be connected with the limited size of the arable land of the village. The Plain of Fatnica measures slightly over 6 x 1,7 km and has a surface of 9,8 km² but the lower part, flooded in the winter, remains partly swampy in the summer. In theory a peasant family can live from one hectare of good land, providing that they grow potatoes and not difficult cereals like wheat. The Fatnica peasants would have needed three to four ha. per family to survive. Moreover, the inhabitants of the nearby Kalac (14 households in 1499 and 21 in 1520) also lived from the same land. The production data from 1585 seem to hint that scarcity of land was among the main reasons for the rise and decline of Fatnica. With 131 households in 1520 the village had evidently outgrown its capacity. In 1585 the village produced only 1130 kg cereals per household, which was evidently below the minimum need. Even if the local measure was a bit bigger than our theoretical reconstruction the village suggests, the village hovered at the edge of the sustainable. Fatnica must have survived on its high wine production, estimated at 2.800 litre per household.²⁷ We find a related economic pattern in the other large village in the plain, Predolje.

In 1585 the picture was rather different. It seems that village had lost a third or more of its population. Here we encounter a difficulty with the numbers. Aličić, in his great overview of the population of the Herzegovina in 1585, lists 38 Muslim households in Fatnica and 37 Christian houses.²⁸ Our own calculation based on the register, however, shows a total of 112 adult male inhabitants. According to the tax on houses and land (*ispendje* of the Christians of 25 Akçe per household and 22 Akçe as *resm-i çift* for the Muslims there were 28 Muslim households and 58 households of Christians. The 26 others must have been the

²⁷ The tax taken from wine, 345 medre was good for no less than 32% of the value of the agricultural production. The fact that three times more millet was grown than wheat, is another indicator to the limited fertility of Fatnica's land. Millet is an inferior grain that grows on land of mediocre or poor quality.

²⁸ A. Aličić, "Privredna i konfesionalna struktura stanovništva u Hercegovini krajem XVI stoljeća," in: *Prilozi Orijent.* Fil. 40, (Sarajevo 1990), p. 166.

unmarried adult males (mücerred, which gives an acceptable proportion of this group, 23%. What caused this difference we cannot say. It is interesting to see that in 1585 there were no converts among the Muslims of Fatnica. The conversion to Islam must have taken place a generation earlier and than stopped. In 1585, according to our calculation, Fatnica's population was 25% Muslim (Aličić 50%), in 1991 it was 28%. Now (2006) it is zero and the village mosque is also gone.

Local lore in the village was preserved until at least until the beginning of the 20th century the memory that Fatnica was place of birth of the later so famous Džezzar Ahmed Pasha, governor, and in fact creator, of the great Palestinian town of Akka. Ahmed Pasha is first of all remembered as the man who, in 1799, stopped Napoleon. Ahmed was a son of one of the oldest families of the village, the *ṣarabi* family of Fatnica.²⁹ Napoleon is reported to have said about Ahmed: "Had this man not been here, I would have been master of the world."

Hatelj

With about 500 inhabitants in the late 20th century, the village of Hatelj was the second "largest" in the Dabarsko Polje. Hatelj is situated on the asphalt road from Stolac to Bileća, midway between Berkovići and Bijeljani. The Ottoman *defters* from 1468 to 1520 do not mention Hatelj. The village first appears in the 1585 register with three Muslim households. Hatelj, however, is evidently of medieval origin. About 300 m. outside the village of Milavići down in the Dabarsko plain, is one of the largest medieval necropolises of the Herzegovina, counting 352 *stećaks*. One of them has an inscription in Bosančica, mentioning Bogdan of Hatelj. This man was a servant of the local nobleman Radić Sanković, who was born in Dabrica. Bogdan must have died shortly before 1404 and must have been born in the mid-14th century.³⁰ This shows that Hatelj existed with certainty in the early 14th century.

The Ottoman registers from 1468 to 1520 do not mention Hatelj. The register of 1585 lists it as having only three households, all Muslims, it must have revived

²⁹ Jefto Dedijer, *Herzegovina, Antropogeografske Studije*, (Mostar 1991), p. 184.

³⁰ More details in: Marko Vego, "Nadgrobní spomenici porodice Sankovića u selo Biskupu kod Konjic," in: *Glasnik Zemaljskog muzeja* 1955, sveska Arheologija, p. 157-215. For an edition of the Milavići text see: Ljubomir Stojanović in his famous: *Stari Srpski Zapisi i Nadpisi*, number 4835, (Belgrade 1908), reprinted Belgrade 1982, number 4835.

during the 1560s or '70s but was still very unimportant in that time. Hatelj came to flourish in the 17th and 18th centuries, by which time it was partly or largely Muslim and had one important mosque. Eight great Muslim cemeteries around the village still testify from its former importance as a Muslim settlement. In 1981 and 1991 the population of Hatelj was entirely Serbian Orthodox, showing that dramatic changes must have taken place here.

Hasandedić (1990, p. 76) collected some information on the mosque of Hatelj, which he describes as a 500 year old building constructed by a member of the Gül Baba family who, according to local tradition, lived here from the time of the Turkish conquest (1466) onward. Gül Baba must have been the Sheikh of a dervish order whose descendants settled here. The whole story sounds apocryphal. The 1585 register shows that there were no members of the Gül Baba family living in Hatelj.³¹ If there is an element of truth in the local legend than it must have its origins much later.

The mosque of Hatelji as described by Hasandedić (1990, p. 76/77) was a rectangular structure measuring 8 x 7 m. It was topped with the usual Herzegovinan pyramid roof of great rhombic slates. It had a "square stone-built minaret" about 10 meters high. From its outer appearance it must have looked like the Mosque of Hasan Pasha Predojević in Bileća and may have been built at the same time." In the summer of 2006, the latter was still standing as a ruin. It was indeed built by Hasan Pasha Predojević, perhaps shortly after 1575 when Hasan had become a Pasha and in any case prior to his death in the Battle of Sisak on June 22 of 1593. (See below under "Bileća."). The Hatelj mosque can best be dated in the first decades of the 17th century, the same time that the mosques of Dabrica (1610/11) and Plana (1617) were built.

³¹ Ankara, T.K.G.M. no. 7, fol. 85b, where we find that Hatelj numbered only three small inheritable and inhabited estates, *baština*. The first was the *Baština* of Iskender, which had been in the hands of the brothers Memi and Şaban, sons of Mehmed b. Yusuf and was now in the hands of the brothers Osman Ağa and Safi and had to pay a fixed yearly tax of 50 akçe. The second was the *Baština* of Hızır, that had been in the hands of the sword bearers (*Silahdarân*) Memi and Şaban and now was in the hands of Osman Ağa and his brother Safi and had to pay the fixed sum of 263 akçe. The third was the "Baština of Rayko" that had been in the hands of Nikola but was now in the hands of Osman Ağa and his brother Safi for a fixed yearly sum of 200 akçe.

All three have the remark that they were "filuri" estates and not taxed as usual but by a lump sum. There is no trace of descendants of a mid-15th century dervish saint. We can see, however, that the *baštinas* existed at least three generations and that there was a bit of a struggle for land, the mentioned Osman Ağa being an empire builder in miniature.

The fate of the Hatelj mosque was different from other mosques in the area. During the wars and revolts of the 19th century, the mosque was damaged but not destroyed. Following 1878 the Austrians used it as a station for the gendarmerie. After the First World War it was wholly rebuilt but it was again damaged in W.W.II. After that war the mosque was used as primary school for the village. It was finally demolished in 1961. This suggests that up to 1940 Muslims were living in Hatelj but that they perished or were expelled in 1941/42 by the Četniks who behaved particularly violent in these regions. However, this was not a topic about which in 1990 a local historian like Hasandedić could write.

Kuti

The hamlet of Kuti (1991 15 houses) lies in the south-eastern part of the plain below the hill Kutsko Osoj. The *tahrir* of 1585 mentions Kuti as a mahalle of the great village of Dažilj. Dažilj is mentioned in the register of 1468 as having a total of 29 households, all Christians. By 1477 the village had grown to 42 households, still all Christians. In 1520 it had expanded to 104 households of which a quarter was Muslim. It must have been divided into several wards and also had evidently outgrown its economic possibilities. In 1585 Dažilj had 65 households, now mostly Muslim (53 households or 81%). In the 17th century the Muslim families of Abaza, Čelebić, Čišić, Čumurija (from Turkish "Kömür"), Hadji Omeri, Hamzići and Husein Agić lived in Kuti. Of the latter it is said that they originally had come from Herceg Novi in 1687 following the Venetian conquest. The Čumurina family built a three-story towerhouse in the village which still exists. Next to the towerhouse was a mosque of which is thought that the Čumurija family, being the richest of the village, was responsible for its building. It was destroyed by Bajo Pivljanin and not restored afterwards. In the yard of the mosque in earlier times were, according to Hasandedić (1990, p.79) many beautiful old gravestones, now all disappeared. Near the towerhouse was a special family graveyard of the Čumurija family, with beautiful old gravestones with Ottoman inscriptions. These are also gone.

In the middle of the 19th century the Abaza, Čelebić, Čišić and Čumurija families moved to Mostar, the Hadjić and Huseinagić families to Gabela. Shortly after 1850 the descendants of Hadži Ahmed Bey, possessor of the large Čiftlik near Kuti, moved to Mostar, being unable to live any longer among a Christian

population that continually harassed and attacked them. From then on, no Muslims lived in Kuti.

Ljuti Dol

Today Ljuti Dol, on the edge of the northern part of the Dabarsko Plain is, by local measures still a sizeable village (now 75 houses). Its population is entirely Serbian Orthodox. In the past this had been different. Although evidence is scant. Ljuti Dol is not mentioned in the Ottoman defters from 1468 to 1585. It should thus be of 17th century origin - that is if it is not identical with any of the unidentified villages the defters. Here Dragljevo (1585 nine Muslim and one Christian households) makes a good chance. According to Šobajić the Mostar family Cumurija and the Krgla and Rizvanbegović families had much landed property in Ljuti Dol, suggesting that they originated from there.³² This property is described in a document from 1845. In Stolac lived the family of Tuka, originating from Ljuti Dol. Zilkada Tuka made a little vakf consisting of a house and four plots of arable land to have from its revenue extra prayers said in the mosque of Kaptan Ismail Šarić in Mostar. The mosque of Ismail Šarić survived the war of 1991/95. Its inscription mentions the date it was completed; i.e. the month Redjep of 1154 (September-October 1741. This gives an indication to when Lady Zilkada lived.

It is thought that repeated epidemics of the plaque during the 19th century led to the disappearance of the Muslims of Ljuti Dol.³³

Meča

Meča lies in the northern part of the Dabarsko Polje, below the mountain Hrgud. In 1468 Meča had only four households, all Christians. In the decade between 1468 and 1477 the village doubled in size, having 11 Christian households but no Muslims. In 1520 there were 11 Muslim and 10 Christian households in Meča. In 1585 the population had dropped to 12 households of whom only one was still Christian. The little available arable land evidently did not allow the village to grow beyond a certain number of inhabitants. In the 20th century the population pattern was entirely reversed. The last Muslims

³² Petar Šobajić, "Dabarsko Polje u Hercegovini," *Srpski Etnografski Zbornik*, no. 67 (Beograd, 1954), p. 41.

³³ Hasandedić, Baština, p. 79, 80.

disappeared during World War I. In 1981 there were 134 inhabitants in Meča, all Serbs. By 1991 the number had sunken to 88 people, or 20 households, less than in 1520.

Locally, the toponyms Čantruša and Čantruvina preserve the memory of the Čantro family of Meča who, by the end of the 18th century had moved to Stolac and Mostar. Omer Efendi Humo of Mostar (1808 -1880) was originally from Meča. He was the man who introduced the printing of books in the Bosnian language using the Arabic script.³⁴

Milavići

The small village of Milavići (now some 15 houses), located on the edge of the plain below the mountain Gradina is, like Hatelj, of medieval origin. About 300 meters outside the village is the famous gravestone (stećak) of Bogdan Hateljević from shortly before 1404 referred to in our section "Hatelj" above. The Ottoman defters from 1468 to 1585 do not mention Milavići, which, consequently, must have resettled in the 17th century. The Habuli family of Milavići arrived as refugees from Hercek Novi after this harbour town was captured by the Venetians (1687). The Muslim Milavić family to which the village owes its name, later moved to Mostar. From this family originate a number of *medrese* professors, muftis and writers.³⁵ In the village three old Muslim cemeteries with gravestones from H. 1112 (1700), 1798, 1810 en 1852 still testify from its Islamic history.

Until the 1991/95 war four Muslim families still lived in Milavići. In 1991 descendants of the Milavić and the Habuli families still lived in the town of Gabela on the Neretva.

In 1961, 129 people lived in Milavići, in 1981, 105, and, in 1991, 72. (census of 1991). In 1981 there were 17 Muslim inhabitants, the others were Serbians. In 1991 the number of Muslims dropped to 8 persons and that of the Serbs to 64. Today, the village or, better said, hamlet has only Serbian inhabitants.³⁶

³⁴ About this man and his work see Ibrahim Kemura, "Prva štampana knjiga arabicom na našem jeziku," in: *Glasnik Vrhovnog starješinstva Islamske zajednice*, (Sarajevo, 1969), vol 5-6, p. 208-223.

³⁵ For more details see the study of *Hasandedić*, *Mostarske muftije*, p. 34.

³⁶ On the inscription see our section "Hatelj".

Potkom

The village of Podkom consists of two parts, Potkom-Prisoje en Potkom-Osoje, and is situated in the N.W. part of Dabra below the mountains Volujače and Hrgud. The Ottoman register from 1468 to 1585 does not yet mention Potkom. Somewhere in the beginning of the 17th century a mosque was built in Podkom. Its foundations were still seen by Hasandedić some decades ago. (1990, p.81). The site where the mosque stood is now called "hanine" (The Han). Surviving Turkish toponyms point to a certain Turkish presence: "Beyluk, Maydan, and Bayrak." At the end of the 17th century, the mosque was destroyed by the notorious Bajo Pivljanin and his Uskoks. It was not rebuilt afterwards because the small number of remaining Muslims could hardly afford one. After 1860 a number of Serbian families settled in the village. Since the end of the 19th century no Muslims live in Podkom.

Ponikva

Ponikva is a village that no longer exists. In 1477 it had 4 Christian households and in 1520, 19, half of which were Muslim. In 1585 there were 21 Muslim households and only one of Christians. Ponikva is a pre-Ottoman settlement. Jorgo Tadić mentions the 14th century artist, woodcutter and painter Peter Miljenović who had studied in Dubrovnik, and was born in Ponikva in the Dabarsko Polje.³⁷

Predolje

Predolje is now an unimportant hamlet of 15 houses located 10 km from Stolac on the road from Mostar to Bileća and Trebinje. In the Ottoman past it was one of the largest settlements in the district and during the 17th century developed into a small town and local centre of Islamic culture. Its subsequent fate is characteristic for the de-urbanisation of the area during the second half of the Ottoman period. The village lies in a deep valley of the Bregava brook below the Kubaš Mountains. In the later part of the Turkish time this mountain became known as a meeting place of Uskoks and Hayduks who, using the mountain as their base, regularly attacked the Muslim population in the dales. The name "Kubaš" is well known through preserved local songs.

³⁷ For details see: Jorgo Tadić, "Gradja o slikarskoj školi u Dubrovniku XIII-XVI v." vol. I (Beograd, 1952), p. 252.

The village must be pre-Ottoman. The register of 1468 lists it as having 46 households, all Christians. This is much too big for a newly formed village. In 1477 Predolje had grown slightly to 51 Christian households. It started to Islamise earlier than other places in Dabra. The register of 1499 mentions 39 Muslim households and 66 households of Christians. Whereas most of the Dabra villages had remained largely Christian, Predolje was already one-third Muslim. It reached the peak of its development in 1520 when it had 118 households and therewith-ranked second in size of all the Dabra villages, only surpassed by Fatnica. In 1585 Predolje was smaller but was for 80% Muslim.³⁸ Whereas other villages in the plain stagnated, Predolje made the jump to *kasaba*, to a small town and centre of Islamic culture.

Economic aspects

The detailed (mufassal) registers of 1477 and 1585 give some valuable information on the economic activity of the village. In 1477 the total tax load of the village was 6588 *akçe* or 129 *akçe* per household, which is relatively much. It immediately strikes the eye that the otherwise so fundamental cereal production was minimal here. Wheat, barley, millet and oats even together, accounted for only 321 *akçe* whereas honey alone was worth 310 *akçe*. Per household, only 96 kg of wheat was produced, with is almost negligible. The total production of the four cereals together was barely 1300 kg per household, or just below the vital minimum. Wine and sheep, on the other hand, carried the village' economy as in the case of Dabrica. The tax on sheep was 532 *akçe* that means that the village had a 1.600 head of sheep, or 31 head per family. On top of that came 1240 *medre* of wine. In the villages of the plain the tax on a *medre* of grape must was not 5 *akçe* as in Dabrica) but 4. The total production was thus 8680 *medre*, or 243.040 litres. This is no less than 4765 litres wine per family. Taken together the value of the village production look as follows:

In 1477: 81% from wine	In 1585 79%
9% from sheep	11%
5% from cereals	7%
5% from honey	3%

³⁸ Mualim Cevdet Yaz. 76; T.D. 5, p. 413/14; Kepeci 697; T.K.G.M. No 7, p. 74b-75b.

The economy of Predolje of the years 1477 and 1585 show no great changes. Extraordinary remains the almost exclusive dependence on viticulture.

Per household the village produced only 200 kilogram of wheat and barley, the staple food, together - just the vital minimum for one single individual. The fact that a very inferior cereal like millet was cultivated in greater quantities than wheat and barley tell us much about the poor quality of the soil of Predolje. Grape vines, one the other hand, a plant which loves stoney and chalky soil as well as much sun, flourished abundantly in this village. The villagers must have sold much wine and many sheep in order to buy the necessary cereals. Wine from the area of Predolje as well as the fruits from the village were of very high quality, as is attested by a connoisseur like Evliya Çelebi. The village economy was not closed but open and dependent on commerce. We might suggest that this is among the main factors that enabled Predolje to grow from a village into a *kasaba*.

In 1664 Evliya Çelebi visited Predolje. His account is the only one we have about 17th century Predolje which, by then evidently had developed into a small town. The terrible raid on Predolje by irregulars during the Ottoman-Venetian war for Crete is not mentioned anywhere else. The information he gives speaks for itself:

“Predolje has been a small town built from stone and surrounded by gardens and vineyards, housing a beautiful mosque, two mescids, one tekke, one small hamam, one han, and 15 shops. But shortly before our arrival there had been an enormous fight with the unbelieving Uskoks and many Muslims were taken prisoner and the entire population fled to the mountains via difficult roads. In the gardens and vineyards were, through God’s grace, delicious juicy fruits laying on the ground everywhere. By God’s judgement it (Predolje) is a paradise-like village looking like the (mythical) garden of Irem. However, this poor one saw that in this kasaba there was not a single son of men, and because all had fled we also fled and went from here, going in western direction straight through the valley of the little river Dol (now called: Bregava). On the left side of the rivulet the entire earth -- three hours going long -- was covered with fine

gardens but their owners had all brought themselves in safety and were unable to harvest the fruits.”³⁹

After extolling the superb quality of the musk-smelling juicy grapes of Predolje and the delicious wine that could be made from them Evliya and his party arrived in the small town of Stolac containing 280 stone-built houses with slated roofs. Many of the houses had defensive towers with iron-clad gates. One day before their arrival in Stolac, a force of "5.000 men" attacked the town, taken many prisoners, carried off much booty and set fire to the houses. Some fires were still burning when Evliya and his group arrived. When the Muslims who had locked themselves in the towers saw that the new comers were also Muslims, they came out and offered them a tower in which to stay. A short time later in the lightning action of an Ottoman force under Suhrâb Mehmed Pasha beat back the Venetian force and liberated 300 prisoners from Stolac. The numbers given by Evliya about Zob Dol, Dabra, Predolje, and Stolac look perfectly acceptable. Although his story is adorned with literary clichés it does give us the smell of that violent time.

On the basis of Evliya's account, Hivzija Hasandedić concluded that, in the mid-17th century Predolje had been a small town with a number of religious-educative institutions and also a place of trade and crafts in which a number of learned people lived, as well as traders and craftsmen. Some of the towerhouses mentioned by Evliya were still standing in the time of Hasandedić's visits.

It is unknown by whom and when the mosque mentioned by Evliya was built but it is likely that the mosque dates to the second decade of the 16th century. In 1520 Predolje had 39 Muslim households, constituting over one third of the village's population, by far the largest group of Muslims of all the Dabar villages. The construction of the mosque could have been encouraged by the state as in the nearby Stolac where in 1520, Sultan Selim I ordered the construction of a mosque in a time when one third of Stolac' 57 households was Muslim. The foundations of this small Sultanic mosque were found in 2002 during the reconstruction of the building.

³⁹ *Seyahatnâme* vol vi, 440/41. Seyit Ali Kahraman, Yücel Dağlı, vol. 6 (Istanbul, 2001), p. 261.

Hasandedić examined the remains of a mosque in Predolje when parts of it were still standing in the area called "Meydan." In 1936 the remaining walls and the minaret of the mosque were taken down and their materials recycled. Folk traditions, collected in 1904 by Stefan Delić, mention that Osman Pasha Kazanac (d. 1685) was the builder of the mosque of Predolje. He also built a mosque, medrese, mektep and şadırvan in his native village of Kazanci (between Bileća and Gacko, directly at the border of Montenegro) as well as mosques in Predolje, the village of Slivlje near Gacko, and *muđi'cima* in the Sutjeska district.⁴⁰

Hasandedić also saw the foundations of three other buildings, mektep, medrese and tekke, all mentioned by Evliya in 1664. In 1959 Professor Salih Bajrić from Mostar found among the ruins in Predolje the fragment of an Ottoman inscription from 1255 (1839) mentioning the name of the founder (Mehmed - - - - zâde) and suggesting that it belonged to a repair of one of the buildings.⁴¹

In 1684, during the great war against the Christian coalition, Predolje suffered another catastrophic blow from which it never recovered. As in 1664 a force of irregulars in Venetian service ("Uskoks and Hayduks) under the ferocious Bajo Nikolić Pivljanin attacked Predolje. The irregulars killed a large part of the population, plundered and burnt down the little town, and carried off the survivors as slaves who were later sold to Naples and other Italian towns. The story made an enormous impression on the people of the Herzegovina. Long ballads were sung relating the events in detail. Some of the ballads were collected in 1892 by Stefan Stočević and published in *Bosanska Vila*.⁴²

Predolje did not recover from this blow, most probably because Stolac was so close. Stolac, which in the mid-17th century was barely larger than Predolje, expanded greatly after the reconstruction of its medieval castle beginning in 1699 and the organisation of a military force (Kapetanat) with Stolac as its centre. With Stolac taking over the administrative and economic functions,

⁴⁰ Stefan Delić, "Gatačko polje" in *Školski Vestnik* (Sarajevo, 1904), p.795, 796.

⁴¹ The inscription was brought to Stolac and kept in the Careva džamija of Sultan Selim I. If it survived the destruction of this mosque in 1992, and stored in the courtyard of the resurrected building of 2003/04 is to be seen.

⁴² St. Stočević, "Bajo Pivljanin i Limov Harambaša pala džamiju u Predolju," in *Bosanska Vila*, XVII, No 21/22, Sarajevo 1892, p. 222-223. See also: Aleksandar Sobovljević, "Trgovina Bosanskim robljem godine 1661," in *Glasnik Zemaljskih Muzej*, Sarajevo 1946, p. 156-160.

there was no great incentive for the revival of Predolje. It remained a small village which by our time had declined to a hamlet of 15 houses. Its inhabitants, however, preserve the memory that once it had been a town.

Strupići

Strupići is one of the middle sized-villages of the Dabarsko Polje, situated midway between Suzina and Milavići on the southern edge of the plain opposite Hatelj, two and half km away. There is no medieval and early Ottoman information on Strupići which appears has emerged in the course of the 17th century. Hasandedić found a document from 1728 confirming the existence of the village and mentioning that the village had fortified tower houses that had been the seat of some local lord. The important Buzaljko family lived in Strupići. They are regarded as descendants of one of the ruling feudal families of Dabarsko. In 1981 Strupići had 338 inhabitants of which only 19 were Muslim. Between 1981 and 1991 Strupići lost almost half its population through emigration. The Muslims had declined to 12 people and the Serbs to 294. Today, no Muslims live in Strupići. The Buzaljko family now lives in Stolac. Of the Muslim presence in Strupići only the cemetery remains.⁴³

Suzina

Suzina is located at the edge of the plain below the hills of Glavica and Kubaba. In the plain one can still find the foundations of houses. Hasandedić suggested that this was the site of the Muslim settlement destroyed by the Uskoks of Bajo Pivljanin. Suzina is first mentioned in 1468, having nine Christian households and no Muslims. Via eleven households in 1477 it crept up to 19 households in 1499, still all Christians. In 1520 it still had 19 households but now five of them had become Muslim. Between 1520 and 1585 the village decline to eleven households, now all Muslims. It could be imagined that some of the inhabitants who did not want to convert left the village to settle elsewhere.

Between 1981 and 1991 Suzina shows the patters characteristic for the Plain of Dabar. In 1981 it had 194 inhabitants (or about 45 households) of whom only eleven were Muslims. In 1991 the village had declined to 38 households (162

⁴³ Hasandedić' remark (1990, p. 82) that since the mid-19th century no Muslims lived anymore in Strupići is difficult to understand. The official census records of Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1981 and 1991 tell us a very different story.

inh.). The Muslims had all left and the place was purely Christian (Serbian). It had thus returned to the situation of the early 16th century. A large Muslim graveyard with one very beautifully decorated 'nifan,' still testifies from the once numerous Muslims of this village.

Vrijeka

Vrijeka is a part of the long drawn-out village of Bijeljani, located a bit above the modern asphalt road. The toponym "**Harine**" in this hamlet points to the presence of an 'ahar,' or Stables, where guests could spend the night. When and by whom it was built and when it was destroyed or demolished is not known. Other toponyms (Hadžovići, Milavići etc.) point to a Muslim population once living there. Since World War II no Muslims live in Vrijeka. Neither Vrijeka nor Bijeljani appear in the Ottoman registers. The "Harine" thus must have been a creation of later time, most probably the 17th century.

Other places near the Dabarsko Polje

We began with a small description of Dabrica, just to the north of the plain of Dabar. We will end with a few notes on three places just south of the plain: Plana, Bileća and Kazanci.

Plana

The small village of Plana (1991: 120 inhabitants, three quarters Muslim) is situated on the plateau just five km south of the southern end of the Plain of Fatnica. Until 1992 Plana had a small mosque with a slate-covered pyramid roof in the usual style of the area as well as a conspicuous church-tower-like minaret. Between 1948 and 1991 Plana, situated on dry and unfertile land, declined; rapidly, of the 319 inhabitants of the village in 1948 two thirds have since departed for a better life in the surrounding towns.⁴⁴

The mosque of Plana was one of the smallest in the entire district, measuring only 5.70 x 5.35 inside. Unlike most other mosques with campanile-like minarets, it is well dated. An inscription in Ottoman Turkish prose preserved above the entrance, mentions that the original mosque was built in the year 1027 (A.D. 1617) and that it was renewed in the year 1210 (1795) at the expense

⁴⁴ *Stanovništvo Bosne i Hercegovine*, 1991, (Zagreb 1995), pp.56-57.

of the villagers of Plana.⁴⁵ The founder of the mosque was Avdo Avdić, a son of an Orthodox family of the district who, after converting to Islam, built the structure. The building was therefore known as Avdića džamija. Avdo is the founder of the Avdić family that till 1992 still lived in Plana. Several members of this old family are buried in the Muslim graveyard just south of the village. Avdo Avdić is said to have also built a small church for his mother 500 meters away of the mosque. During the Cretan war, Plana, like many other villages of Dabar suffered from the devastating raids of irregulars in Venetian Service. An account from 1661 mentions three people from Plana, a mother of 35 years with two children of ten and eight years old, sold at the slave market of Venice.⁴⁶

The text of 1795 on the mosque is related to another violent attack of Hayduks and Montenegrans from the south.

In 1992, during the Bosnian war, Serb nationalists drove away the Muslim majority of Plana and blew up the mosque, a registered "Monument of Culture protected by the State." In the summer of 2006 the village looked depressing, most of its 25 houses still in ruins. The Muslim cemetery, however, was left undisturbed and a gravestone for Derviš Avdić from 2004 shows that the tie with history is still unbroken.⁴⁷

Bileća

Bileća, situated at the edge of a plain at an altitude of 470 metres above sea level, is the largest urban centre of southern Herzegovina. It is one of the few local places that grew to importance in the 20th century. The Baedeker travelguide "Österreich-Ungarn" of 1913 lists the place as having only 1.500 inhabitants. In 1991 it had 13.284 (!) inhabitants, of which almost 2000 were Muslims.⁴⁸

Bileća is an old settlement. It is first mentioned in 1387 in the Dubrovnik Archives and again in 1403, 1430 and 1438 being the name of a *župa*.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁵ For the inscription see: Mujezinović, *Islamska epigrafika*, III, p.356.

⁴⁶ Aleksandar Sobovljević, "Trgovina Bosanskim robljem godine 1661," in: *Glasnik Zemaljskih Muzeja*, (Sarajevo 1946), p. 139-162 (Plana on p. 161).

⁴⁷ For more on Plana see: Camil Avdić, "Plana kod Bileća," in: *Novi Behar* VI, br 7-8, Sarajevo 1932. u.P. "Intresantna džamija kod Plane," in: *Sloboda* 31, Mostar 1955, 358.

⁴⁸ Stanovništvo, 1991, p. 54/55.

⁴⁹ Vego, *Naselje*, p. 11-12 with further references.

town lies on the old caravan road from Dubrovnik via Trebinje to Gacko and from there via Tientište and on to the trading centre Foča on the Drina and furthers to the Balkan interior and Istanbul. A cemetery filled with *stećaks* at the western edge of the town testifies to its medieval existence.

In August 1388 a Turkish invading party, joined by a force of George Sračimirović Balsić, Lord of the nearby Northern Albania, was wiped out in the plain below Bileća by of the leading nobleman in Hum (Southern Herzegovina) Vlatko Vuković Kosača. The important Battle of Kosovo in the next year found its direct cause in the Ottoman defeat at Bileća.⁵⁰

Bileća became part of the Ottoman territories in 1466, together with the rest of the southern Herzegovina. The settlement is not mentioned in the *tahrirs* from 1468 to 1585, perhaps because it is in the missing Vol. III of the 1585 *tahrir*. Evliya Çelebi passed along the caravan road but also does not mention Bileća.

In 1574/75 Gazi Deli Hasan Pasha Predojević, a colourful character born in the direct neighbourhood of Bileća, constructed a small but well-built mosque in local Herzegovinan style, with a slate-covered pyramid roof and “campanile-minaret.” The mosque survived the wars of the 20th century as a ruin, but still with its characteristic minaret fully erect. The building is situated in a large fenced plot of land in the “Polje” of Bileća at the northern outskirts of the town.

Hasan came with the *devshirme* to Istanbul; his Christian name is remembered as Nenad. He converted to Islam and later became Çakırcıbaşı (Head of the Falconers) and, in 1562, Bey of the Sandjak of Füleak in northern Hungary. From 1573 onward Austrian sources knew of him as Sandjak Bey of the Herzegovina and Montenegro (Karadağ). He had also been Sandjak bey of Herceg-Novi on the Adriatic coast. Several travellers during the second half of the 16th century mention that he had a caravanserai built in Bileća, as well as a big cistern for water storage and a *türbe* for his family. In 1573 the caravanserai was mentioned by Philippe Dufresne-Canaye as newly built by Hasan Bey, Lord of Herceg-Novi. It is mentioned again in 1580 by Paolo Contarini and in 1587 by

⁵⁰ John Fine, *Medieval Balkans*, p. 408, Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1481*, p. 35. For the complicated political history before and after the Battle of Kosovo, see especially T.A. Emmert, *The Battle of Kosovo: A Reconsideration of its Significance in the Decline of Medieval Serbia* (Ann Arbor, 1973). A solid overview of the medieval rulers of Hum (Herzegovina) is given by Mihajlo Dinić, *Humsko-Trebinjska Vlastela*, S.A.N. Posebna Izdanja 90, Belgrad, 1932.

Hans Ludwig von Lichtenstein.⁵¹ Later, Gazi Hasan Pasha became Sandjak Bey of Segedin in Hungary and in 1591 Beylerbey of Bosnia. It was in this capacity, in 1592, that he conquered the important fortress of Bihac in Croatia, only 60 km south of Zagreb, together with the strongholds surrounding it. The Bihac district was to become the northern-most reach of Bosnia and was to remain part of it till today. In June 1593, during the fateful Battle of Sisak Deli Hasan, along with other Pashas, and a large part of the Ottoman army, drowned in the swollen water of the river Kupa.⁵²

The life and death of Deli Hasan Pasha left a deep imprint in the memory of the people. Many legends are told about him and folk ballads about him were still sung in the early 20th century. Nine letters of Hasan Pasha to Pavle Pridović, an Ottoman spy in Dubrovnik, are preserved.⁵³ An anonymous poet wrote a panegyric in Ottoman Turkish about him. A copy of it is preserved in the vast collection Zbornik Enveri Kadić in the Gazi Husref Bey Library in Sarajevo.⁵⁴

Locally it is told that Hasan Pasha also constructed a church for his mother in the village of Prijedor, four km from Bileća near the road to Plana and Gacko. The local population called the place as "Predojevića Crkva" after Hasan's family name. At the end of the 19th century people still sang about the construction of the mosque and the church by "Nenad Pasha."⁵⁵ The ruins of this church are still to be seen. It is registered in the Gruntova Knjiga as property of the Orthodox Church. Ottoman dignitaries who were said to have built mosques as well as

⁵¹ The career of Hasan Paşa can be pieced together from the notes by Mehmed Süreyya, *Sicill-i Osmani*; Markus Köhbach, *Die Eroberung von Füleki durch die Osmanen, 1554*, (Wien Böhlau 1994), p. 295; Hamdija Kreševljaković, *Hanovi i Karavansaraji u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Sarajevo 1957, p. 55; Mihajlo Dinić, "Tri Francuska putopisa 16. vijeka o našim zemljama," in: *Godišnjica Nikole Čupića*, vol XLIX, Belgrade 1940, p. 97. For the travellers see also the originals: Du Fresne-Canaye, *Le voyage du Levant, Publié et annoté par M.H. Hauser*, (Paris 1897), p. 24; Paolo Contarini, *Diario del Viaggio da Venezia a Constantinopoli*, (Venezia 1856), p. 14; von Lichtenstein, *Reisen und Begebenheiten von... etc. herausgegeben von Hermann Freiherr von Rotenhan*, (München 1902).

⁵² For the conquest of Bihac and the defeat at Sisak see: Ismail Hami Danişmend, *Izahl Osmanlı kronolojisi*, 3, (İstanbul, 1972), p. 122, 23 and 127-129. The dramatic Battle of Sisak and the events prior and after it is dealt with in great detail in the collective work edited by Josip Kulanović, *Sisak u obrani od Turaka. Izbor gradje, 1543-1597*, (Zagreb 1993).

⁵³ See: Dr. Aleksa Ivić, "Pisma Hasan-paše Hercegovac iz 1573," in *Spomenik Srpske Kraljevske Akademije*, XLIV, drugi razred 42, p. 20-26.

⁵⁴ See: Hazim Šabanović, *Književnost muslimana Bosne i Hercegovine na orijentalnim jezicima*, (Sarajevo 1973), p. 86. The original work of the panegyric was in the private library of the well-known Bosnian scholar Osman Sokolović, now in the Gazi Husref Begova Library, Sarajevo.

⁵⁵ See: "Knez Bajagić i Nenad Paša (narodna pjesma), in: *Bosanska Vila* 13, Sarajevo 1894, p. 101.

churches are favoured characters in local folklore (compare Plana). Here, however, we have an actual historical case.⁵⁶ Folk tradition written down at the beginning of the 20th century attribute even more churches to Deli Hasan Pasha Predojević, including the great monastery churches of Moštanica and Rmanj in the north of Bosnia, directly facing Croatian territory. According to a note in the Old Church Slavonic *Paternik* 172 in the Serbian monastery of Hilendar on Mount Athos, the great church of Moštanica was completed in 1579.

Gazi Hasan Pasha is said to have conquered the Croatian fortress of Petrinje (50 km south of Zagreb) in 1575. It is suggested that he constructed the churches of Moštanica and Rmanj as symbols of his victory over the Roman Catholic (Croat) Christians at Petrinje. Most notably, the great church at Moštanica shows strong influence of Ottoman construction techniques and decoration elements.⁵⁷ During W.W. II Croat nationalist forces blew up the monastery of Rmanj and heavily damaged Moštanica as revenge for the defeats of the 16th century and as an endeavour to "correct a mistake of history."⁵⁸

In the same war, in 1942, the Mosque of Hasan Pasha Predojević was set ablaze by Serb nationalists. The four walls and the church-tower minaret survived. The large terrain surrounding the ruins of the mosque is now solidly fenced to prevent further theft of its stonework. The building is an officially registered "monuments of culture, under the protection of the state."

⁵⁶ More about this building by: Desimir Kojčić, "Crkva Vezira," in: *Sloboda* 16/352, Mostar 1954.

⁵⁷ Many detail on Hasan Pasha is found in H. Šabanović, *Evliya Čelebija Putopis*, I, p. 246, note 29. Compare also Aleksandar Olesnicki, "Kritički pregled turskih izvori o Sisarkom boju u njihovoj uzajamno konsektivnoj vezi," in: *Vjestnik Hrvatskoga Arheološkoga društva* N.S. XXII-XXII, (Zagreb 1941/42), p. 144-170. For the mentioned monasteries see the provoking study of Andrej Andrejević: "Prilog proučavanju Islamske uticaja na umetnost XVI i XVII veka kod Srba u Sarajevu i Bosni," in: *Prilozi za proučavanje istorije Sarajeva*, I,1, (Sarajevo 1963), p. 51 - 71; and also, more in detail, his: "Manastir Moštanica," in: *Starinar*, XIII-XIV, (Beograd 1965), p. 163-175. For the Serbian monasteries in Eastern Bosnia Orthodox in general are two excellent works: *Ljiljana Ševo, Monasteries and wooden churches of the Banja Luka Eparchy*, (Banja Luka 1998) (121 pages, richly illustrated). and: *Marica Šuput, Spomenici Srpska crkvenog graditeljstva XVI-XVII vek*, (Beograd 1991).

⁵⁸ Moštanica has been restored in the 1960. The totally destroyed Rmanj (on the river Una, 12 km south of Kulen Vakuf) in N. Bosnia was carefully reconstructed in the 1980s. At that occasion some fragments of fresco painting were discovered stylistically pointing to the end of the 15th or the early decades of the 16th century. There are also some historical notes from the late-15th and early 16th century but it is not certain if they pertain to Rmanj or to another monastery. For detail (also of the appalling state of the building after 1945) see Šuput, *Spomenici*, who deals with the problem of the date very carefully (p. 235/36, with further literature).

Kazanci

The last locale we shall address is the hamlet of Kazanci situated directly at the border of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro two-km from the little-used road from Gacko to Nikšić on the Montenegrin side. In 1948 Kazanci had 276 inhabitants, all Serbs. By 1991 this figure had fallen to 201 inhabitants, (Stanovništvo, 212/13.), who lived in 24 farmhouses scattered over an unspoiled hilly country of great beauty. Like Predolje Kazanci it had been a small Muslim *kasaba* that was destroyed during the Great War of 1683-1699. A lonely minaret, once the centre of a small town, remains as a pathetic relic of the Islamic past.

The area in which Kazanci is situated became part of the Ottoman Empire in 1465. Because it was situated in a border area it belonged alternatively to the *kazas* of Foča, Cernica, and Gacko; it could also have been registered in the *nahiye* of Onogost, today Nikšić in Montenegro. We have therefore been unable to trace Kazanci down in the Ottoman registers. The presence of many prehistoric *gradina*, the circular stone hill forts, show that the district was inhabited since ancient times. From the Islamic past, the most spectacular object is the lonely minaret. The Muslim cemetery with its centuries old gravestones has been destroyed. A hundred meters below the minaret still is a source of fresh water called "Stubanj." A double flight of steps descends into the well-preserved and well-built subterranean vaulted chamber where the water bubbles up. The Muslims of Kazanci disappeared 300 years ago.

More than a quarter of a century ago Hasandedić still saw the foundations of the stables and the mansion of Osman Pasha Kazanac, who in the 17th century promoted the hamlet to a small *kasaba*. Osman Pasha was born around 1650 in Kazanci and therefore called Kazanac. Local tradition relates that he was born a Christian and at age 13 was brought to Istanbul where he accepted Islam and took the name Osman. His Christian name had been Drago. He was a son of the Orthodox Papović family, or, in a second version of the story, Tepavčević. Through his natural gifts Osman rapidly made rapidly. In 1671 he became Bostancibaşı at the Ottoman court and in 1675 was made Governor of Damascus. In 1678 he became Beylerbey of Anadolu and in 1683 Vezier of Bosnia. He fell in 1685 at Eğri (Eger, Erlau) defending Ottoman Northern Hungary.

In the 1670s Osman Pasha Kazanac constructed at Kazanci a mosque, a medrese, a mektep, a şadırvan and, most probably also a number of shops. He also was active in Predolje (as mentioned before) and built mosques in the village of Slivlje near Gacko, and, in *µadi'cma* in the nahiye of Sutjeska. The mosques of Slivlje and Predolje were destroyed in 1684 by the terrible Bajo Pivljanin and never rebuilt. That of Šadićima survived till 1942 when it was destroyed by Serb nationalists. The mosque was rebuilt in 1961 only to be destroyed once again by the very children of the same people who had destroyed it a generation earlier.

In 1684, during the great war against the Christian coalition, the much-feared Bajo Pivljanin together with 700 – 800 *hayduks* attacked Kazanci, burned down the mosque, the *konak* of the Vizier, and a hundred muslim homes. The Muslim inhabitants were murdered or made slaves, including the Hodja of the mosque, his wife and children. The event was long remembered by the local population. Folk songs about the destruction of Kazanci were collected as late as 1906 (Bosanska Vila 2 and 3). The survivors of the raid on Kazanci later settled in Gacko and its villages. Hasandedić was able to trace eight families from Kazanci, whose descendants still had property rights in Kazanci, as noted in the late 19th century Austrian Grundbücher, preserved in the Law Court of Gacko. For the Serbs and the Montenegrans, Bajo Pivljanin became a folk hero.⁵⁹ A number of important streets in the towns of Montenegro bear his name. For Islam in the Southern Herzegovina, his exploits were the turning point. From 1465 till 1683 Islam had slowly gained ground by a spontaneous conversion that stretched out over a period of more than two centuries. At the end of the 17th century between two thirds and four fifths of the entire population was Muslim. After 1683 the Muslim population rapidly and violently declined, the Cretan War marking the beginning of its fall. After the Venetians had conquered Herceg-Novi and Risan on the coast, the Muslim population fled to the inland. A part settled in several villages of the Dabarsko Polje, thus bolstering the Muslim population there. The memory of refugee origin from Novi or Risan was preserved by a number of families in the plain. In the first decades of the 19th century the Plain of Dabar

⁵⁹ See: Marko Vujačić, *Znameniti crnogorski i hercegovački junaci*, knj. III, (Belgrade 1953). For a more serious study of the life of the same important historical person see: Jovan Tomić, *Poslednji dve godine iz života i rada Harambaše Baja Pivljanina (1684 i 1685)*, po arhivskim podacima, Beograd 1901 (a booklet of 34 pages).

suffered again, this time from repeated epidemics of plague (1813, 1815). In the same years, groups of Muslims fled from persecutions in Montenegro and settled in the Dabarsko Polje. During the great Herzegovinan uprising of 1875 and after the Austrian annexation of 1878, many Muslims from Dabar emigrated to Turkey.⁶⁰

In 1926 the population of the Dabarsko Polje included 24 Muslim families living in 80 houses, altogether 350 people.⁶¹ During World War II terrible massacres of Muslim population took place, as elsewhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁶² During the war of 1992-95 not much remained to be done to destroy the Muslim presence in the Dabarsko Polje and throughout southeastern Herzegovina, along with the monuments associated with its history. Almost everything was already done. Today, the lonely minaret of Kazanzi still stands as a reminder of a period when matters were rather different.

The Campanile-Minarets of the Dabarsko Polje and adjacent regions

The strange square towers serving as minarets are completely alien to the Ottoman architectural tradition, have been treated by several writers on Bosnia-Herzegovina. Amir Pašić in his work on the architecture of Bosnia-Herzegovina aptly called them "Campanile-Minarets" and had no difficulty relating them with Romanesque and Gothic church towers.⁶³ Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi, on the other hand vehemently opposed this idea. He based his opinion on one example only: Dabrica.⁶⁴ It could not have been a minaret, he held, rather, it must have been a clock tower. Ayverdi did not know the rich architectural tradition of Dalmatian coast and did not use the equally rich Ottoman documentation of the 16th century, through which we have learned that Ottoman governors and

⁶⁰ Hasandedić, Baština, p. 71.

⁶¹ Šobajić, Dabarsko Polje, p. 19.

⁶² On September 1941 a group of 450 Muslims from the Dabarsko Polje and the Plain of Nevesinje, largely women, children and old people, were killed by a Serb nationalist gang (Četnik) and their bodies thrown in a karst grotto in the Trusina mountains separating both plains. From the entire Čatovića family, 144 people, only Handžera Čatović survived, in the 1970 living in the village of Lastva near Trebinje (Hasandedić, Baština, p. 177). For many more examples see: Smail Balić, *Das unbekannte Bosnien*, Köln-Wien 1992, p.6, or: Dedijer and Miletić, *Genocid nad Muslimanima*, Sarajevo 1990. See also: Avdo Sućeska, "Istorijski korijeni genocida nad Bošnjacima – Historical Roots of the Genocide against the Bosniaks," in: *Prilozi Orient. Fil.* 42/43, (Sarajevo 1992/93), p.191 – 199.

⁶³ Amir Pašić, *Islamic Architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, (Istanbul 1994), p.191.

⁶⁴ E. H. Ayverdi, *Avrupa'da Osmanlı Mimari Eserleri*, Yugoslavya, II, 3 (Istanbul, 1981), p.483.

officials summoned master builders from the coastal region or from Dubrovnik. Ayverdi's views may have more to do with damaged pride than with art historical observation.⁶⁵

Inspection reveals that the "Campanile-Minaret" was the common type at the mosques of the Field of Dabar and the wider surroundings. There are at least ten examples known to have existed intact or as ruins prior to the 1991-/95 war. Two examples escaped destruction and are still standing, in the village of Bijeljani and in Bileća-Polje. That of Dabrica was faithfully reconstructed in 2005-06 as said. In the past there must have been many more of this very un-Ottoman towers. A list includes:

Bijenja near Nevesinje, undated
Bileća-Polje, (Predojevića džamija) ca. 1575
Bijeljani - Dabar, first half 17th century
Dabrica, Sefer Ağa, 1610/11
Hatelj, ca. 1600-1630
Kljuni (Općina Nevesinje), undated
Korita, (Općina Bileća), 18th century?
Kruševljani (Općina Nevesinje) undated
Mostar, Fatime Kadun, shortly before 1633
Plana, Avdića, (Općina Bileća), 1617.

Pašić mentions some more names, Opličići near Čapljina and the mosques of Čejvan-Čehajina and Sinan Pasha in Mostar. The latter, however, must be a slip of the pen. Sinan Pasha's mosque, the "Old Mosque" of Mostar, was demolished in 1948; however good photographs of it show a standard Ottoman minaret alongside this building. Čejvan's mosque still stands and also has the normal Ottoman minaret. The Mosque of Fatime Kadun in Mostar, however, also mentioned by Pašić, did have a square clock tower minaret until it was demolished in 1947. If we plot clock tower-minarets on a map we see that they occurred over a relatively large area in southern Herzegovina with Mostar as the northernmost point and Bileća at the Montenegrin border as the southernmost. We can be sure that many more once existed. In the Ottoman territories towers like this are totally alien.

⁶⁵ These notes either come from the Dubrovnik State Archive and are well-known to Bosnian scholars, or from the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul (Mühimme and Ahkâm defters).

The classical Ottoman minaret has a slender round or a polygonal shaft, never square. Only in south-eastern Anatolia, in important cities like Diyarbakır they are known from Umayyad times onward. The type was still used by the Turkish dynasty of Ak Koyunlu that preceded the Ottomans in Diyarbakır. However, art historically southeast Anatolia was outside the core area of Ottoman art and had an Islamic tradition dating to the Umayyad period. In the Balkans there is only one square minaret still standing. This is on the Old Mosque of Yambol on the Tundja in Bulgarian Thrace, a structure from the early Ottoman times (1370/80) whose form was never repeated again.⁶⁶ The clock-tower minarets of the Dabarsko Polje vividly illustrate that source of inspiration was not the art of the fully Ottomanized cities of the interior of the land like Mostar or Sarajevo, but the much nearer Gothic and Renaissance building traditions of the Christian Dalmatian coast whose very same masters constructed them. Note that even the arch of the mihrab of the Predojević Mosque in Bileća-Polje has a Gothic profile.

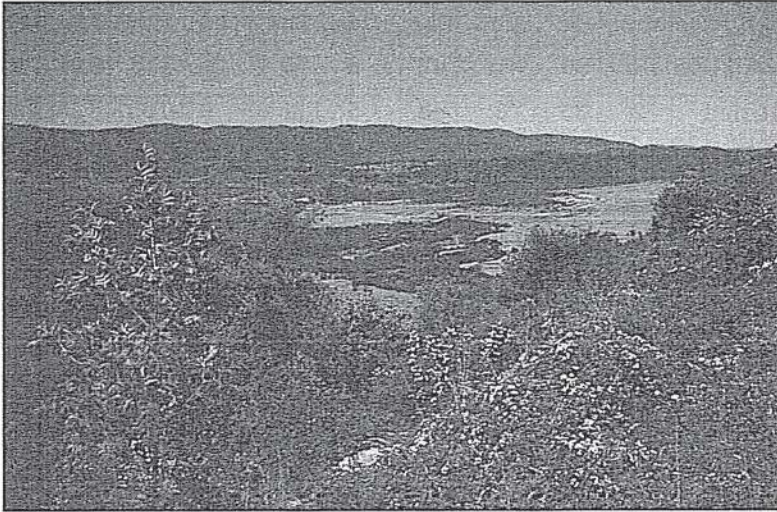
Concluding remarks

With help of solid data we have shown that the spread of Islam in the “Nahiye of Dabra” was a process stretching out over more than a century. From zero in 1468 it rose to almost 80 percent in the late 16th century. The emergence of the little town of Predolje and the foundation of the *kasaba* of Kazanci were expressions of a clear urbanisation policy, which was only to be undone in late-Ottoman times. Only some monuments of Islamic culture in the area could be retraced in one way or another. There must have been many more such monuments in the past but the evidence is lost. The spread of Islam in the district was, as elsewhere in Bosnia-Herzegovina, spontaneous, voluntary, and, most important, very gradual. The end of Islam in our area, on the other hand, was the result of brutal violence beginning during the Cretan War and ending during the war of 1992/95, when the “job” was finally finished.

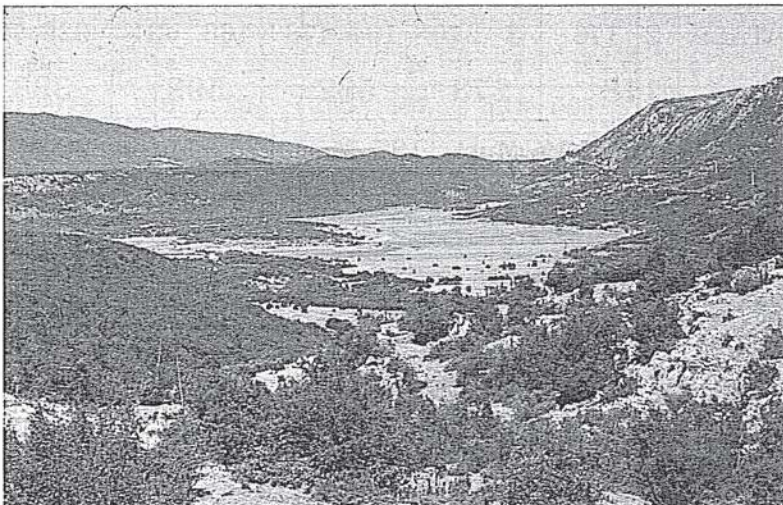
The phenomenon “campanile-minaret” of which only two examples survive, vividly illustrates the fact that the Dabarsko Polje was really at the edge of the Islamic world. Information on the cultural institutions in the district has been

⁶⁶ For the Diyarbakır buildings see Metin Sözen, *Diyarbakır'da Türk Mimari*, (Istanbul 1971). For Yambol see: M. Kiel, “Some Early Ottoman monuments in Bulgarian Thrace, Stara Zagora, Jambol and Nova Zagora,” in: *Bellekten*, XXXVIII, sayı 152, 1974, S. 635 - 656 (Easier accessible in: M. Kiel, *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans*. (Aldershot-Brookfield: Variorum, 1990). Ayverdi, in his great work on Early Ottoman Architecture missed this important building.

assembled piecemeal. In a poor and stony district such as the Dabarsko Polje it could only be small and unimpressive. More could be done about this subject. We hope to have succeeded, on paper, to have retrieved at least some aspects of the little known and almost forgotten Islamic history of the Western Balkans.



001-Dabarsko Polje (Photo M.Kiel)



002-Dabarsko Polje (Photo M.Kiel)

Dabarsko Polje 1468 – 1585

A century of recovery and change

Twelve Dabra villages of which a complete sequence could be made

Village Name	1468		1477		1499		1519		1585	
	Musl.	Chr.	Musl.	Chr.	Musl.	Chr.	Musl.	Chr.	Musl.	Chr.
Dažilj (Kuti)o	29		o 42		5 70		26 78		53 12	
Fatnica	2	35	3	43	5	111	2	109	38	28
Hatelji	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	3	o
Kalac	o	o	o	o	[2 12]		3	18	24	11
Kukričeje	o	o	o	o	o 10		3	11	4	6
<i>Lapas</i>	o	10	o	19	15	21	9	20	18	3
<i>Lapšici</i>	o	9	o	18	9	40	22	8	30	1
Meča	o	4	o	11	5	14	11	10	11	1
<i>Ostrovič</i>	o	25	o	55	18	85	36	64 [‡]	57	3
Predolje	o	46	o	51	39	66	40	78	60	7
Suzine	o	9	o	11	o	19	5	14	11	o
<i>Zagrad</i>	o	9	o	20	6	30	11	21	17	o
TOTALS:	2	176	3	270	104	478	168	431	326	72
	178		273		582		599		398	
	1%	Musl.	1%	Musl.	18%	Musl.	28%	Musl.	82%	Musl.

Name in Italics (*Lapas*) = disappeared village

‡ Between 1519 and 1585 the big village of *Ostrovič* was split in two smaller ones: Upper and Lower *Ostrovič*. The apparent decline of the old village is thus not caused by a sinking population but by re-settlement elsewhere.

The numbers of 1585 are from Aličić, *Privredna*, P.O.F. 40, p. 165/66.

research M.Kiel '06

3-dabar population 1468-1585

Dabarsko Polje 1477 - 1499 - 1519 - 1585

Village Name	1477		1499		1519		1585	
	Musl.	Christ.	Musl.	Christ.	Musl.	Christ.	Musl.	Christ.
Belo Brda disapp.	o	8	[3	11]	9	10	10	2
Dažilj disapp.	o	42	5	70	26	78	53	12
Dolnja Ostrobić	o	55	18	85	20	48	31	1
Dragljevo disapp.	o	o	o	13	3	9	8	1
Fatnica (still exists)	3	43	5	111	22	109	38	28
Gornja Ostrobić	o	o	o	o	16	36	26	2
Gradac disapp.	o	o	[o	9]	1	13	o	14
Hatelji (still ex.)	o	o	o	o	o	o	3	o
Kalac (still exists)	o	o	o	14	3	18	24	11
Kukrićeje (still exists)	o	o	o	10	3	11	4	6
Lapšici disapp.	[o	18]	9	40	22	8	30	1
Lapaš disapp.	o	19	15	21	9	20	18	3
Meča (still exists)	o	11	5	14	11	10	11	1
Ponikva disapp.	o	4	1	33	9	10	21	1
Predole (still exists)	o	51	38	88	40	78	60	7
Suzine (still exists)	o	11	o	19	5	14	11	0
Trusina (still exists)	o	o	o	o	mezraa		0	1
Zagrad unknown	[o	20]	6	30	11	21	17	o
Zdodlak disapp.	3	12	o	19	3	12	9	2
TOTALS:	6	294	105	587	213	505	374	93
Total Househ.	300		692		718		467	
Percentage Musl.	2%		15%		30%		80%.	

Total 19 Villages; 8 of them still exist, some others may have changed their names. The sizeable village Dažilj (4 Mahalles) must be identical with Kutl of today, a mah. of Dažilj that survived. See also Hasandedić.

In the 15th and 16th century Fatnica was the second village in size of the Dabarsko Polje.

Research and design: M.Kiel '06

**The Population of the Dabarsko Polje in the second
half of the 20th Century after the Census of 1991**

(Stanovništvo Bosne i Hercegovine, Zagreb, Travanj 1995).

	1961	1981			1991		
	Total Inh.	Musl.	Christ.	Total	Musl.	Christ.	Total
Berkovici	747	4	612	616	4	155(!)	159
Bijeljani	243	3	174	177	2	136	138
Divin	173	34	53	87	25	41	66
Fatnica	341	94	176	270	44	111	155
Hatelji ca.	600	o ca.	555	550	o	468	468
Kalac	102	28	17	45	9	11	20
Kuti	178	o	94	94	o	61	61
Ljuti Dol	616	o	441	441	o	316	316
Meča	152	o	134	134	o	88	88
Milavići	129	17	88	105	8	64	72
Orahovice	186	86	6	94	62	9	71
Predolje	134	3	115	118	1	90	91
Prisoje	69	o	27	27	o	11	11
Strupici	401	19	319	338	12	194	206
Suzina	308	11	183	194	o	162	162
Trusina	256	o	173	173	o	122	122
Zasada	291	o	154	154	o	96	96
TOTALS	4.926	299	2.437	2.736	167	2.135	2.302

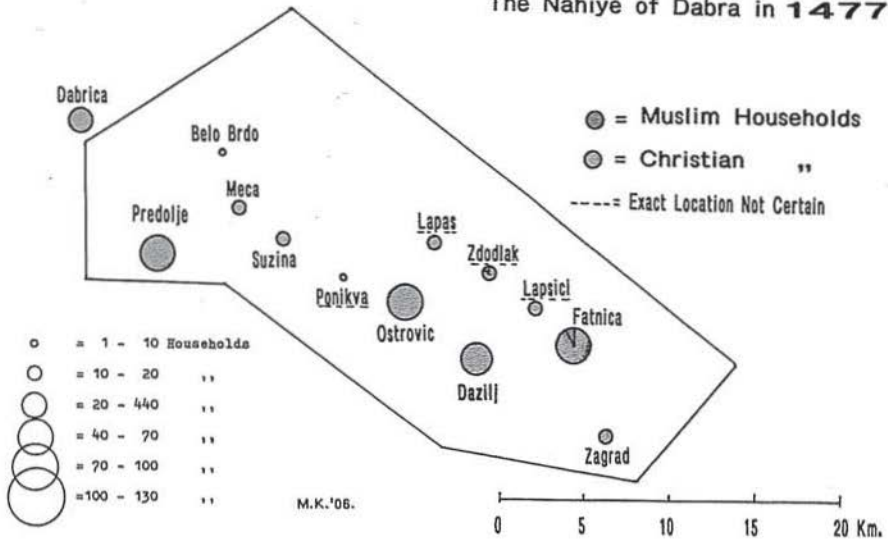
= 11% Muslim = 7% Muslim

Between 1961 and 1991 the population of Dabarsko Polje sunk to less than a half of its former size, caused by the industrialisation of Mostar, Bileća and Stolac and the prospects of more money and a better life. The number of Muslims sunk much faster than that of the Christians, pointing to mounting tension between the groups.

In 1981 and 1991 the Polje had far less inhabitants than in 1499! M.Kiel '06

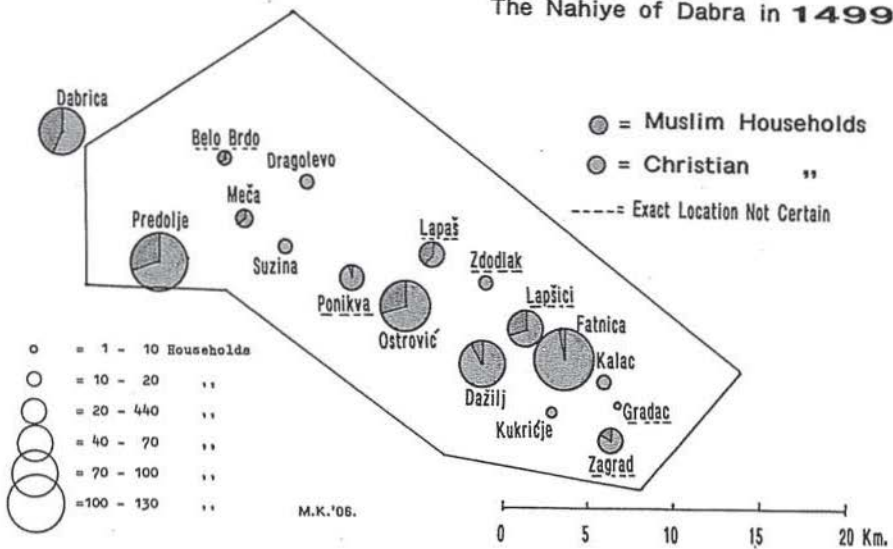
5-dabar population 1991

The Nahiye of Dabra in 1477



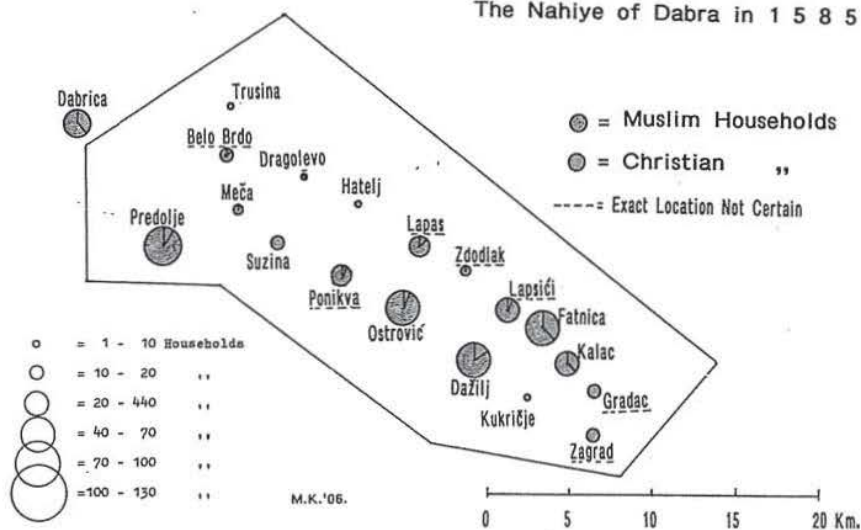
6-map 1477

The Nahiye of Dabra in 1499

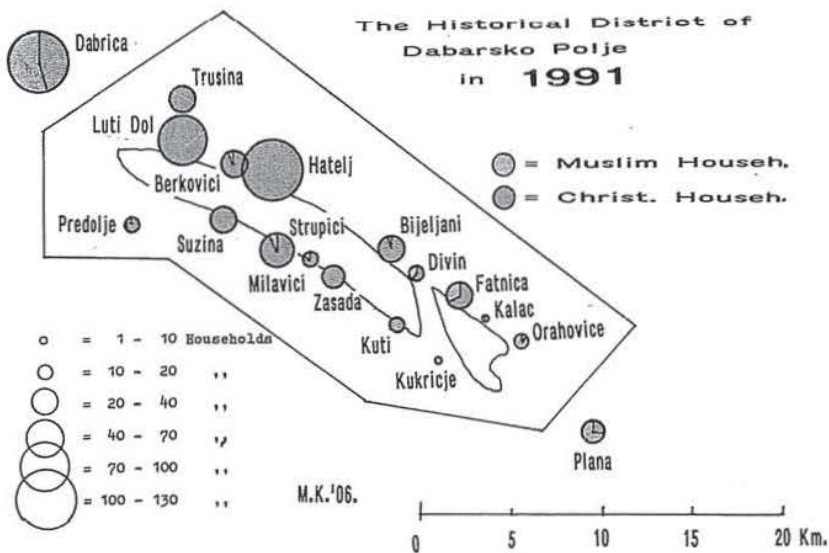


7-map 1499

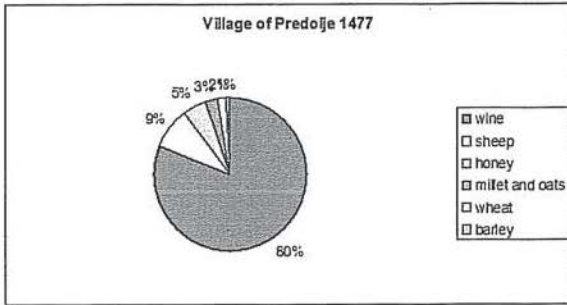
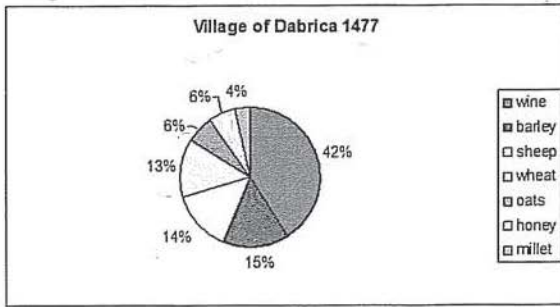
The Nahiye of Dabra in 1585



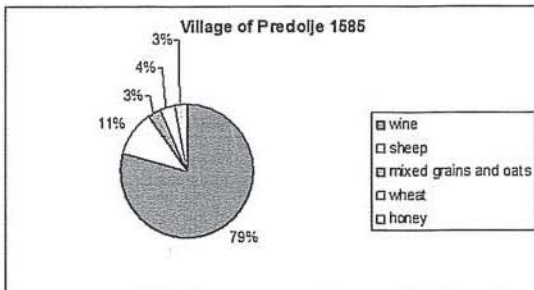
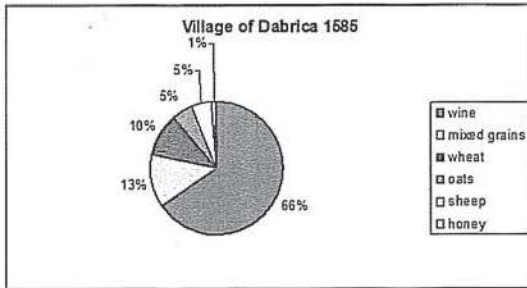
8-map 1585



9-map 1991



Contrasting Economies: The monetary value of the agricultural production

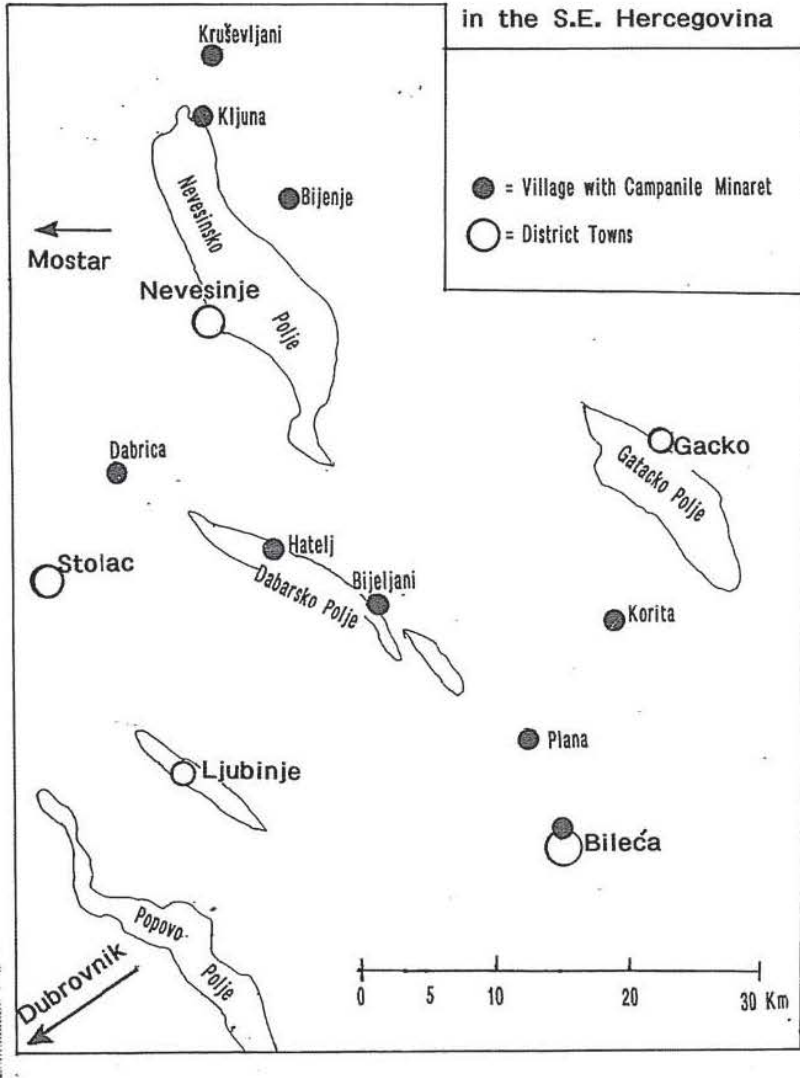


Contrasting Economies: The monetary value of the agricultural production

10-Pie Graphs

11-Pie Graphs

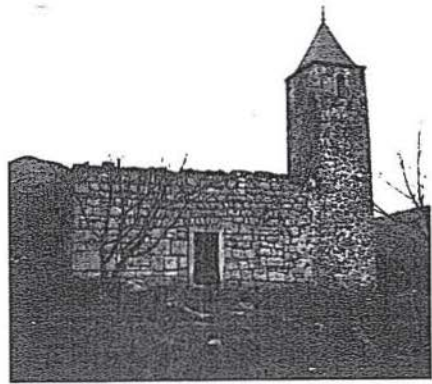
The Geographic Distribution of the Churchtower-Minaret
in the S.E. Hercegovina



12-churchtower minaret



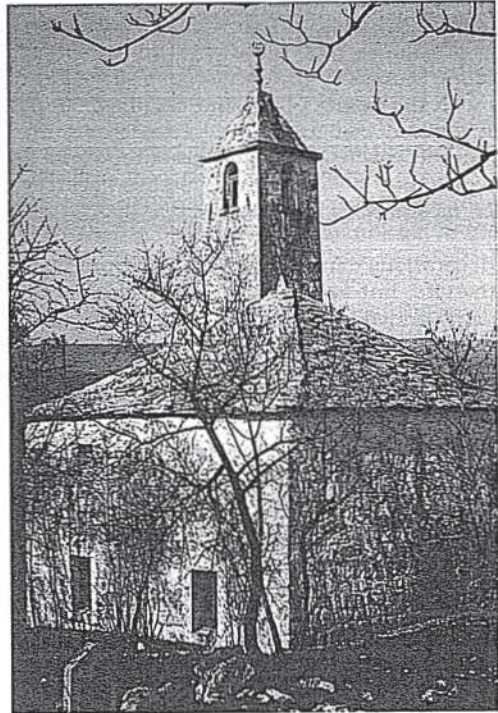
13-1 Mosque of Dabrica (IRCICA Archives)



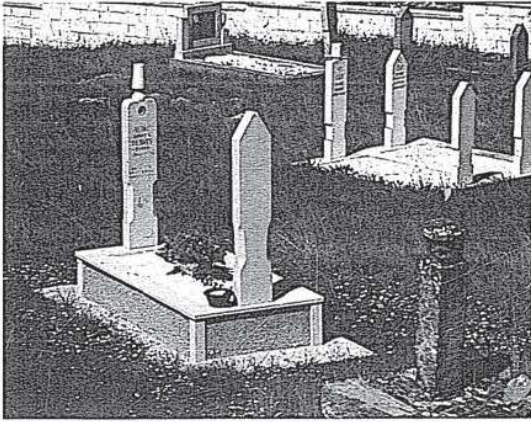
14-2 Mosque of Bijeljani (IRCICA Archives)



15-3 Mosque of Plana (IRCICA Archives)



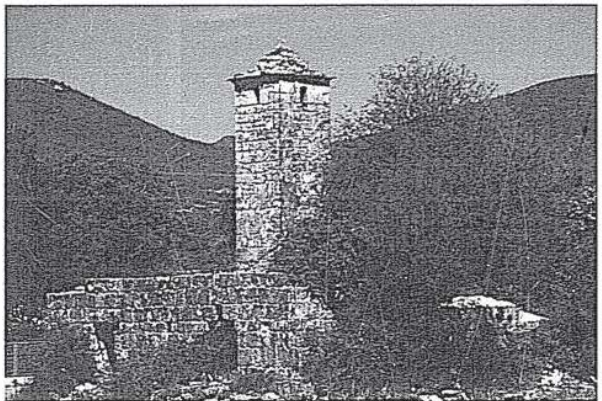
16-4 Mosque of Plana (IRCICA Archives)



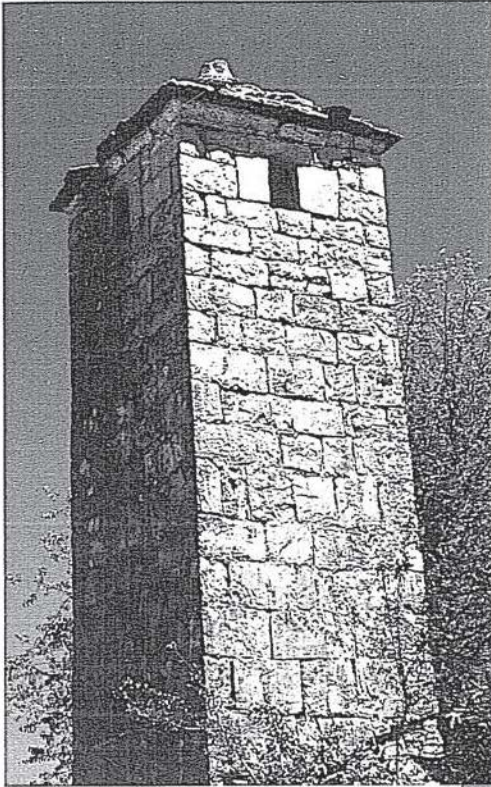
17-Plana, Tomb of Dervish Avdic
(Photo M.Kiel)



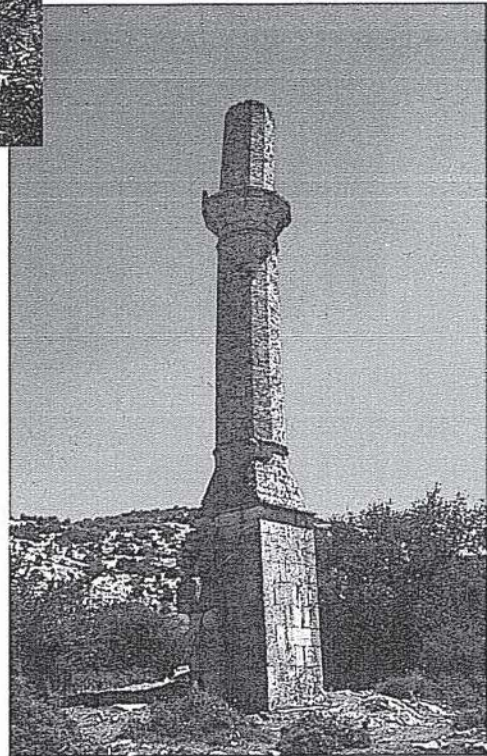
18-Bileca Predojevic
Mosque (Photo
M.Kiel)



19-Bileca Predojevic
Mosque (Photo M.Kiel)

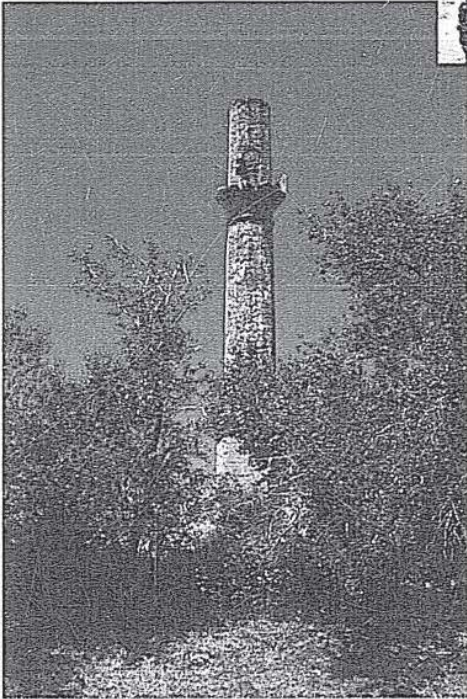


20-Bileca Predojevic Mosque (Photo
M.Kiel)



21-Kazanci, Minaret of Osman Pasha
Kazanac (Photo M.Kiel)

22-Kazanci, Entrance of Minaret of
Osman Pasha Kazanac (Photo M.Kiel)



23-Kazanci, Minaret of Osman Pasha
Kazanac (Photo M.Kiel)