

ARTIFACT ANALYSIS OF MONUMENT DEDICATED TO
KARADJORDJE AND MISAR'S HEROES

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Mišar¹ is a village located next to Šabac, town in western part of today's Serbia, and it is a first settlement downstream river Sava on a way to Belgrade. Historically speaking, on the beginning of August 1806., here took place one of the most important battles in the First Serbian Uprising. The earliest tablet dedicated to memory of this event was a wooden cross,² in whose place on the centenary celebrations in 1906. a civil association named Drinosavsko kolo jahača "Knez Mihajlo", (Drina's and Sava's Equestrian Company), built a monument which is unchanged till today. Nowadays settlement is on the same locality of this monumental tablet (Misar's Hill), while locality of the "Old Village" is between river Sava and Hill. A monument is on the locus of crossing today's new Šabac-Belgrade route and former battle trench. Base of monument is rectangular (1,20 x 1,20 x 2,11 meter), continues to be a circular profile height of three meters, on whose top is placed half meter high double-headed eagle with spread wings. Total height of this obelisk shaped monument is 5,61 meter. Access and surroundings of memorial are well arranged and enclosed by low wrought iron fence. Types of delegations that lay wreaths in memory of this event, vary from Endowment Society "First Serbian Uprising" Mišar, local NGO, to official delegations of Serbian Government and Army, Local Government and Serbian Orthodox Church. Monument is located next to road and dedication facing highway reads: "To Karadjordje and Mišar's Heroes", while the other parties as follows: "On the centenary of the Battle", "Drina and Sava Equestrian Company" and "On behalf of a grateful posterity".³ All texts written on a monument are gilded, which is a common phenomenon under construction of official and private grave monuments in Serbia. Such practice could be interpreted as an indicator of developed cult of the dead and the cult of sacrifice, with ingredients of victimization and potential of muddy transformation from status of a hero to status of a victim and vice versa. This monumental tablet is essentially a modest and is originated by initiative of a former local NGO, Drina and Sava Equestrian Company,

¹ Dr Jovan Marković, „Physical and Geographical Display of Sabac“, *Sabac in the Past*, group of authors, 1970., Sabac, p. 33.

² Lj. Pavlović, *About Valjevo and Sabac: selected writings*, (ed) Lj. Andrić, Institution for Public Informing Radio Valjevo, Valjevo, 1990.

³ Dr Vojislav Subotić, „Memorials Dedicated to Fallen Rebels in First and Second Serbian Uprising“, *Memorials of Liberation Wars of Serbia*, book I, volume 1, group of authors, Government of Republic Serbia, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy, 2006. Belgrade, p. 149.

which originally had an intention to primarily dedicate memorial to participations of the Battle.

Ceremony unveiling of the monument on Misar, have began on hundredth anniversary of battle at 26. August 1906. with requiem for battle casualties and consecrating of the monument performed by former Sabac bishop. His former Royal Highness Crown Prince Djordje has been also present as well as representative of former Serbian Parliament and various Sabac and region corporation. Commercial district exhibition, opening Craft Congress, horse races, craft parties and Sabac Women Society parties, concert of Sabac Choral Society and Sabac Theatre performance adapted for population have been organized within the event. Gala performance have held previous evening in Sabac Theatre.⁴ A solemn Archpriest Liturgy and thanksgiving in honor of a birthday of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Djordje also had held and with a great certainty it can be concluded that for this reason celebration did not held on authentic date of historical event, which have occurred on 13. August 1804. Society's views toward this historic battle have changed by replacement of ruling dynasty in Serbia on the beginning of twentieth century and becomes part of official memory culture. Thus rehabilitate political myth of Leader Savior. Depending the social circumstances terms and attention of official institutions have changing, from indifference and almost oblivion till expensive public spectacle, like celebrating jubilee on 1956., when Yugoslav People Army together with residents reconstructed battle, as well Special Forces performed parachute exercise, actors have spoke recitations and military band played on specially designed stage. Namely, in material way almost nothing has been added to memorial till today, except for modest adaptation of local community piece of building into small Misar's Battle Museum. A celebration significance varied depending of interest and needs of ruling ideology. With their active participation in organization of such celebrations, establishment by taking over popular significance tried very explicitly to conduct propaganda of their ideological positions. A tradition of celebrating Misar's Battle among residents was sporadically and irregularly maintained, mostly on jubilees. Thanks to former youth initiatives, since 1967., continuously every year the celebration is held mainly by regular financial support of local establishment. Eventually a celebration turns into a regular large mass gathering which takes on the characteristics of rural fest, so there were a change in folk customs. It was noted that most

⁴ Program of the centenary celebrations of Mišar's battle, *Memory of the centenary celebration of Mišar's Battle in Šabac 25.,26. i 27. August 1906.*, Phototype library/ National Library „Žika Popović“ Šabac; book 3. 1996. Šabac

households by the late eighties considered that village fest is celebration of the battle, instead of traditional Serbian religious village fest (Slava-Prezlava).

Celebrations dedicated to this historical event, during last decade are organized by NGO Endowment Society „First Serbian Uprising“ Misar. A regular celebration of battle continued and also contains programs in the field of sport and culture, as well mixed with presence of media event becomes festival which belongs to the regional culture memories.

On the top of the monument there is a double-headed eagle made of concrete, painted in white, put on hemispherical base that has until recently used to be gilded. The eagle is facing to the west, according to some interpretations to river Drina and Bosnia.⁵ This interpretation of the position of the eagle, that symbol of the nation, has ideological value, produces differences and materialize political correctness.(Horvat, 2007) Interpretation of Misar monument in the context of official state nationalist policy is part of a cultural strategy practice of nineties in Serbia. Politization of the past creates the most essential element of the nationalist ideology (Kuljic, 2006) and conceived the idea of the tradicional concept of national identity was accompanied by an ethnically defined cultural policy.

Misar's Battle monument and its celebration ceremonies related to this historic event became part of local cultural practise. Such a policy of promotion and representation of „national artistic“ production, cultural policy sought to technocraticly contribute to the nationalization of cultural identity. (Dragičević Šešić, 2010) Celebration of Misar's Battle is indirectly involved in maintaining the myth of the last European bastion of Christianity. Analogous to this mythological discourse in Serbian politics of the nineties comes to reviving fears about the vulnerability of the territory and political Leader Savior myth. (Girardet, 1986) Recontextualization of meaning of Misar's myth ran from the fight for freedom to defense of Serbdom and the purity of the territory, and by politization of historical events were fabricated moralistic emotional myths, that have been successfully turned the mass conciusness and activate the latent conflicts inside Serbian society. (Kuljić, 2006) Due to echoes of Blood and Soil ideology that was current in nineties at all ex republics of SFR Yugoslavia, myth about Leader Karadjordje (Vožd Karadorđe) and Misar's heroes takes elements of the myth of territorial purity and nationalist myth of Balkan Leader Savior.

⁵ Miloje Ž. Nikolić, „Rebel Trenches on Drina and Mišar's Sharampov“, *Misar's Battle 190 years later, Proceeding of the Symposium held in Sabac on 9. August 1996.*, National Museum Sabac, Šabac, 1997., p.112.: „At its top is double-heade eagle facing Bosnia and part of Srem.“

Significance of this memorial varied and depended of social and political context on the basis of which is interpreted. That fact can lead as to the point that during the nineties, but also today, for Serbian nationalism Misar memorial represented monumental of political myth and fantasy about great Leader the Savior.

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