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Josef Obrebski's Anthropological Research on Macedonia

Abstract: It seems that through history, Macedonia, as an anthropological topic, was treated as a peripheral destination, and was not especially attractive for anthropologists. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, Macedonia and the Balkans in general, became interesting for ethnographers and researchers from other social disciplines. Josef Obrebski, who was primarily educated as an ethnographer and Slavist, was one of the first researchers that conducted anthropological research in a Macedonian village of Volche, in Poreche in 1932-33. Josef Obrebski followed the idea that a detailed anthropological research of European cultural and social heritage should be done, thus discovering the most archaic forms of social life of the patriarchal communities in one's own European environment, aiming to better understand the contemporary social events at the Continent.

Key words: ethnography, ethnology, anthropology, Obrebski Jozef, Macedonia, Volche, Poreche

It seems that through history, Macedonia, as an anthropological topic, was treated as a peripheral destination, and was not especially attractive for anthropologists. Thus, up to today one can count only a small number of relevant studies and authors that conducted anthropological research in, and about Macedonia. Here, of course, we are not taking into account the commissioned studies, created by the neighbors, in the periods of emphasized propaganda, which aimed to present Macedonia as part of the neighboring countries or nations.

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, Macedonia and the Balkans in general, became interesting for ethnographers and researchers from other social disciplines. In the period between two World Wars, communities that were seen as "closed" and still "untouched by civilization" up to that moment, and started experiencing the changes of modernization, became part of the research topics of Josef Obrebski (Obrebski, Józef) and Irvin Taylor Sanders. Josef Obrebski, by the end of the '20-ties of the 20th century, already had a

lot of information concerning cultures and societies at the Balkans, since he traveled through Bulgaria and other Balkan countries, at the time being interested mainly on the material aspects of culture. "One of such countries, where the dissolution of folk culture is in its premium stage, and where thanks to that it can be researched in its traditional archaic forms is Macedonia" (Обрембски 2011, 9-10). Most probably, these two researchers were led by the idea to find out even the most isolated and archaic forms of life, that could still be found at the time in certain parts of the Balkan and Europe, and to start researching those forms, as well as the transformations that inevitably happened during the processes of modernization. Thus, Irvin Sanders in the '30-ties of the 20th century stationed himself in the village of Dragalevci, near Sophia in Bulgaria (Halpern 2002, 36), while the Polish researcher Josef Obrebski in the Macedonian village of Volche in Poreche.

Josef Obrebski, who was primarily educated as an ethnographer and Slavist, and Irvin Sanders, educated as a sociologist, were the first Westerners that conducted anthropological research at two locations, in two Balkan villages, aiming to present to the experts and to the general public of the West a part of the features of the cultures, societies and communities which, at the time, still provoked feelings of something exotic and unknown for the people from the West. While the research results of I. Sanders were published in a relative short time, titled "The Balkan Village" (Lexington, University of Kentucky Press) in 1949, the results of J. Obrebski remained unpublished and unknown to the experts and to the general public, not only in Macedonia and at the Balkans, but in an even wider context, until the beginning of the 21st century. The original manuscripts and the rich ethnographic empirical material, glass plates with more than 550 photographs from the time of his research in Volche, Macedonia, are kept in special archive collections in the Archive of Du Bois Library, at the University of Amherst, USA. Along with his materials from Macedonia, there are materials of his research in Polesje and Jamaica. Besides the attempts and the interest from Macedonian side to publish the Macedonia related materials even in the '70-ties of the 20th century, different circumstances, individual, social, political and cultural, resulted with the materials being presented in front of the Macedonian public in 2001, when Obrebski's field ethnographic and folklore materials started to be published, as well as his studies in manuscript in different phases of their preparation, in few volumes (Обрембски 2001a; 2001b; Обрембски 2002). All of the materials were edited by Tanas Vrazinovski. Unfortunately, the Macedonian materials are still not available to the experts and to the general public from the English speaking world, although some of them are written originally in English. Thus, the "Western readers" are still not able to acknowledge the achievements of J. Obrebski, made in the '30ties of the 20th century.

Who is Josef Obrebski?

Born in 1905 in Teplik, Podolia in Ukraine, he grew in Belarus, in a place called Planta, near Slonim, and lived later on in the region Berdichev and Kiev. He studied Slavistics at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow in the period 1925-1930. He gained his main education on Slavic ethnography from the famous professor Kazimierz Moszynsky. His professor of Slavic philology and dialectology was Prof. Kazimierz Nitsch, while Jan Michala Rozwadowsky taught him general linguistics (Engelking 2005, 15). In 1926 he became Assistant of Prof. K. Moszynsky at the Department of Ethnology at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. This enabled him to undertake, during 1927 and 1928, a detailed field research in a number of countries and regions at the Balkans. Thus, he spent more than six months doing field work in the area of Dobrudza in Romania, then in Bulgaria, Macedonia, East Serbia and some parts of European Turkey (Engelking 2002, 56). As a result of his field work he wrote his MA thesis: "Traditional agriculture in the Eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula", (*Rolnictwo ludowe wschodniej czesci Polwyspu Balkanskiego*), specializing in the sphere of material culture, agriculture and traditional hunting.¹

Obrebski, as one of the most talented students and colleagues of Prof. Moszynsky, and a rising star of Polish ethnology, had a strong support, not only from his professors, but also from the institution in which he studied and later on worked. At that time the Jagiellonian University in Krakow hosted the leading center of Slavic ethnology in Central Europe, and the Slavistic studies were one of the most popular and prestigious studies, not only among the interested individuals in Slavic countries, but in general (Engelking 2002, 57). The Krakow school, led by Prof. K. Moszynsky, was funded upon the principles of the Vienna school, on the basis of the cultural-historical method and the theory of diffusion of cultural values, especially in the realm of material culture.

In relation to the features of the theoretical and methodological orientation of the Slavistic and ethnographic studies in Krakow, and his critical stance towards them, in the years after his stay at the London School of Economics, Obrebski wrote the following:

"...when I was still a young student [...] the functional method was something non-existent for me [...] We did not work with problems connected with institutions or structural forms in particular societies. Our only scientific method was examination of elements in different space arrangements, determination of their chronology and their

¹ Based upon field materials collected from the Eastern part of the Balkans, Obrebski published an article: "Przyczynki do lowiectwa wschodniej czesci Polwyspu Balkanskiego", *Lud Slowianski*, 1931, vol. 2, No.2, pp. B165-B181.

origin. [...] The ultimate was not directed towards the folk culture we encountered in particular villages, but on a distant epoch, which was to be reconstructed by a thorough analysis [...] As a consequence, naturally, we used to despite all kinds of monographic research, all work aimed at studying the life of societies, of the culture of villages near our university town. In fact our academic practice diverted us from the immediacy of social and cultural life and its problems which we could have observed if we were able to rid ourselves of the methodological concepts of our school of ethnology. [...] This way [...] we did not see a neighboring village but we saw Tibet here, China there and Northern Africa over there – these pieces which on the map constituted the wider old world. [...] After such university training we developed into scholars ignorant of man and culture in spite of our seemingly enormous erudition. [...] I have characterized my studies so negatively, to underline the background situation in ethnology in which the functional method appeared. Malinowski realized this better than anyone else" (Obrebski 1939, 2-9, quoted according to Engelking 2002, 57-58).

The grandeur and openness of his professors in Krakow, as well as the fact that they had continuous personal and professional contacts with one of the bards of the British and world anthropology at that time, Bronislaw Malinowski, enabled Obrebski to continue his education at the London School of Economics, and obtain an insight into the latest theoretical and methodological approaches. Bronislaw Malinowski, due to his origin and education in Poland, as well as due to the personal connections of his father, Lucian Malinowski, who was also teaching at the Jagiellonian University during the last decades of the 19th century, with some of the Krakow professors, helped young and talented people to attain additional education in the field of anthropology. Thus, in February 1930, Professor Kazimierz Nitsch wrote a letter to B. Malinowski, with an aim to recommend the promising Obrebski regarding his education in Britain.

"Dear Colleague, [...] We have here a very talented young man, about to finish his ethnographical studies. Joseph Obrebski is a student of Moszynski and partly also mine (in linguistics). We would like to send him abroad next year, to you. [...] I am convinced that you will be satisfied to receive this intelligent, cultured and nice boy" (copy of the letter from Obrebski Family Archive, quoted according to Engelking 2002, 58).

Aiming to provide finances for further education, stay and research of J. Obrebski, in 1930 Prof. Kazimierz Moszynsky wrote a letter to the director of the Rockefeller Foundation for Europe, Mr. John V. Van Sicle. In it he clearly expressed the importance of furthering Obrebski's studies, as well as the importance of his staying "...in close touch with English science, and as a result of that, writing and publishing his works in English, thus making the rich Slavic ethnographic materials available to the wider circles". In the same letter, Moszynsky expressed the importance of the continuation of Obrebski's

education, who could, in this way, attain new theoretical and methodological insights, and thus increase the level of his work on Slavic ethnography after his return to Poland. Moszynsky wrote in the letter:

"1) the ethnographic materials, collected by now, that refer to the social folk life of the Slavs, are unusually reach, but there is an absence of a synthetic and critical approach towards their analysis.

2) In the frames of the Slavic word there are territories with quite low folk culture (Polesje, Eastern Carpathian Mountains, Balkan Peninsular); thus, a very useful topic could be the research of primitive social life at those territories, and Mr. Obrebski, who possesses an appropriate basis, could easily do this, since he speaks all Slavic languages

3) There are no specialists on social folk life of the Slavs, neither in Poland, nor in any other Slavic country" (Обрембски 2002, 95).

Starting from 1931, J. Obrebski started his doctoral studies at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences under the mentorship of Bronislaw Malinowski. During the studies, preparing for a field trip in Macedonia, Obrebski started to identify himself with the functional method, and with "the idea of a long-term field research of the ethnologists, of the educated scientist, who stays longer at the place of research, and examines the life of the native community – instead of the short or longer trips of the collectors – amateurs" (Obrebski 1939b, 9, quoted according to Engelking 2002, 58).

Up to the end of 1932 and the first half of 1933, J. Obrebski spent eight months in Macedonia, six of which working and living in the village of Volche in the area of Poreche.

In the beginning of 1934 he defended his PhD from the field of social anthropology at the University of London, titled "Family Organization among Slavs Reflected in the Custom of Couvade". Even though his PhD was written immediately after his field research in Macedonia, which included an examination of the family and family related rituals, it seems that he did not use any materials from Macedonia thereof. His thesis is based upon field materials collected among Eastern Slavs, mostly from Belarus, i.e. Polesje.

Analyzing the subsequent activities of Obrebski, one can accept the thesis of A. Engelkin that the "Macedonian phase" of his research ended sometime during the Second World War, considering the fact that his private and professional activities drove him to other destinations. However, in the period from 1934 to Second World War he tried to systematize and to partly process the materials on Macedonian healers and magicians, as well as the more general materials related to the religious system and the pantheon of Macedonians. It is not completely clear what are the reasons due to which Obrebski has put his Macedonian material aside, and instead of following his ideas on their analysis and publication, clearly expressed in an emotional letter to his profes-

sors, Moszynsky, he partially returned to them during the last years of his life in the USA. As Anna Engelkin puts it, in her analysis of the life and work of J. Obrebski, in December 1961 he presented, at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association that took place in Philadelphia, a lecture dedicated to "Social Structure and Ritual in a Macedonian Village". Most probably due to his perfectionism, this article was not published according to the previous plan, and this happened only after his death, when under the editing of Joel Martin Halpern and Barbara Kerewsky– Halpern, it was published in a journal dedicated to Soviet and Eastern-European studies.

At the beginning of 1934, J. Obrebski returned from London to Poland, but not in Krakow but in Warsaw, aiming to commence a big ethnological project. However, the same year Obrebski started to work at the Institute for Ethnic Studies, so this was the reason he turned more towards sociological and political studies. In this period in Poland the Commission for Scientific Research of Eastern Provinces was formed, aiming to coordinate interdisciplinary research in the Eastern parts of Poland. Thus, in the period 1934-1937, he conducted his field research in Polesje (Engelking 2002, 63-64).

In fall 1946, J. Obrebski was invited by E. E. Evans-Pritchard to conduct a series of lectures dedicated to the changes in social life of the villagers in Eastern Europe. These lectures were published in a book posthumously, titled "The Changing Peasantry of Eastern Europe (1976)", edited by Joel and Barbara Halpern (Halpern 2002, 30; Engelking 2002, 70). At that time J. Obrebski was engaged by the London School of Economics and Political Sciences to conduct field research in Jamaica. This is the source of his third voluminous part of field materials, referring to Jamaica. Finishing his research on Jamaica, as J. M. Halpern concludes, he in fact finalized his anthropological career.

By the end of his life he was a Professor of sociology at C.W. Post College at The Long Island University. He died in 1967.

J. Obrebski's Research in Macedonia

J. Obrebski, through the process of his continuous education, overcame the ethnographic and ethnological discourses of the Eastern-European ethnography, and conducted most probably the first anthropological research in Europe, i.e. in Macedonia, in the area of Poreche. In 1932 and the beginning of 1933 he spent a period of 8 months in a Macedonian area – Poreche, of which 6 months in the village of Volche, living with a Macedonian family: "...I spent six months almost as a member of the zadruga, following the facts in situ, and closely observing what has not been fully observed by now: *the intimate life of the South-Slavic family*" (italic by Lj. R.) (Обрембски 2002, 103).

Josef Obrebski followed the idea that a detailed anthropological research of European cultural and social heritage should be done, thus discovering the most archaic forms of social life of the patriarchal communities in one's own European environment, aiming to better understand the contemporary social events at the Continent. By the end of the '20-ties of the 20th century he spent time traveling through the Balkans, at the time a source of exotic stereotypes, thus arriving at the village of Volche, in the area of Poreche, led by the idea of discovering the most marginal, most archaic and most isolated communities in Europe. At the time of his trip, he had to spend more than eight hours walking or six hours by horse to arrive from the nearest town of Gostivar to Volche. "Poreche people – with all their archaic folk culture and the traditional flow of life – are on the margins of contemporary history, outside the flow of great changes and historical events of contemporary world, isolated and insensitive to the happenings in the great centers of civilization, where the destinies of today's world are formed. In fact, not only in history, but in ethnology as well, according to the accepted ethnological criteria, this people in the best of cases have a place on the periphery. It does not belong to some of the exotic races – black, yellow and red. Racial Levantine mixture, that is characteristic for this people, would easily find its place in some major metropolis of the world – New York, London, Paris, Berlin or Warsaw" (Obrebski 2001, 25). In one of the letters from by Professor Moszynsky to the European office of the Rockefeller foundation, which we have already mentioned, he wrote: "In the frames of the Slavic world there are territories with quite low folk culture (Polesje, Eastern Carpathian Mountains, the Balkans), so the examination of primitive social life there could be highly useful. Mr. Obrebski, who possesses the appropriate knowledge, could easily do that, since he speaks all Slavic languages" (Обрембски 2002, 95). Thus, the idea of researching primitive societies was not only a part of the discourse that referred to patriarchal societies and communities, but it was specially referring to the Slavic ones. At the time there were theories created in Europe on the relation between patriarchal societies and tribal organization on the example of Slavic communities, of which the most representative were the ones of the Balkans.

Josef Obrebski, besides his classical ethnological education, as a result of his Polish ties, succeeded in attaining further education which at the time was considered a pick of anthropological discourse. He became a close collaborator of Bronislaw Malinowski, often visited his seminars where he found ideas and theoretical basis for his own research. Obrebski was thus completely turned towards London, the "ethnological Mecca" as he calls the seminar of Malinowski, in the context of the influence it had on his intellectual development (Обрембски 2002, 106), while the most important for his empirical work were Macedonia and Poreche. What used to be the Trobriand Islands for Malinowski, were the Balkans, Macedonia and the village of Volche for Ob-

rebski. In this way, he found the Trobriands in Europe, where a number of theories on the past and the present at these territories, but also in Europe in general, should have emerged. The best illustration of this conclusion is the thought which Obrebski wrote down in 1939, meaning few years after he finalized the field research in Poreche, and during his deeper immersion into the British social anthropology, in a text dedicated to the functional method of B. Malinowski, remembering the time when he was close to the Central-European cultural and historical school:

"[...] This way [...] we did not see a neighboring village but we saw Tibet here, China there and Northern Africa over there – these pieces which on the map constituted the wider old world. [...] After such university training we developed into scholars ignorant of man and culture in spite of our seemingly enormous erudition. [...]" (Engelking 2002, 57).

It has to be acknowledged that Obrebski was, most probably, one of the most informed and theoretically prepared anthropologists from South-Eastern Europe, that have conducted anthropological research in Europe, using his advantage, that he was considered a relative insider in Slavic cultures. Due to his excellent knowledge of the cultures and the languages at these territories, he easily found his way at the field. Due to the circumstances in which he grew up he spoke Russian, Ukrainian, Belarus and Polish language (Engelkin 64). Later on, due to his Slavistic education, he learned other Slavic languages, and never failed to mention in his bio-bibliographical data his knowledge of Macedonian language (Вражиновски 2002, 23-24). However, he used the traditional ties between Polish ethnographic school and British social anthropology led by Malinowski for his theoretical upgrading. As he mentions himself, working at the Balkans he felt helpless without the huge libraries of Western Europe. "I did not have the time to write the article...but I could not do that in a country such as Yugoslavia, which is absolutely without libraries...", thinking of libraries that could offer the results of fresh and new anthropological research, such as offered by libraries in London. Offering his comment on the new book by Malinowski, *Coral Gardens and Their Magic*, in a letter to him, Obrebski laments saying that". The book initiated again my sentiment for the Trobriand people, to whom I owe my ethnological training" (Обрембски 2002, 105). Speaking about his study of magic in Macedonia and the cultural change in Polesje, he concludes that.. "In essence, theoretically and methodologically [the study] stems from Coral Gardens", as well as from the study of Reo Fortune of magic in the Dobu community (Обрембски 2002, 106, 107). In this sense, Obrebski preparing his study on the "couvade", dedicated to male sympathetic pregnancy at the Balkans, hoped that it would be recognized as a study bearing the sign of the functionalist school, whose bard at the time was Malinowski (Обрембски 2002, 107).

The Macedonian Field

"Macedonian field is extremely difficult for the ethnographer. Here you deal with people that are always willing to treat you as a guest, reducing the contact with them to a formal polite conversation, not wanting to admit any of their originalities, something which, according to their opinion, would be in collision with the ideas, views and the customs of the stranger. Women, on the other hand, hide with great enthusiasm all their knowledge, fearing that if they reveal it to a stranger it could be used by him on their expense. This is why each information should be fought for, each fact should be discovered and spied. The first weeks, even the first months, I was brought to real desperation, until I started to control the situation" (Обрембски 2002, 101)

These are fragments from the letter of Obrebski, sent to his professor, Moszynsky, on his way from Macedonia to London. The letter clearly expresses the emotions and fears of Obrebski in relation to the Macedonian field. From today's perspective, these thoughts could be compared to the personal and emotional reports on the difficulties that Malinowski had during his field research of the natives, noted in his personal diary. Here, on one side, one can note the tendency on creation of auto-reflexive ethnography of field research, that becomes a doctrine in functionalistic research, as well as "mythologization" of the challenges that the field offers. Still, what can be concluded in relation to the attitudes of J. Obrebski on the field work conducted in Macedonia is that it was extremely difficult, but that the biggest difficulties lied in creating communication channels with the members of the local community. It is interesting that J. Obrebski, besides his excellent ethnographic and Slavistic background felt as a total outsider in the Macedonian environment of Volche and other villages in Poreche where he worked. He cannot settle with the fact that the members of the community have kept him for a long time at a distance and in a position of a guest, which prevented him in his normal mobility in the frames of the community, as well as in gaining a more general overview concerning what is happening in it. Surely, this specially referred to women, who were persistent in hiding their whole knowledge. It is interesting that even in these two sentences Obrebski uses the word "stranger" twice, speaking about his own status in Macedonian local community.

His work took place in difficult circumstances of distance, isolation and excommunication from the rest of the world, something which can be established by the series of letter sent from the Jagiellonian University and other institutions to the institutions in Macedonia, at the time Serbian province (*banovina*), aiming to gain whatever information possible on his stay there. Tracing Obrebski, due to the fact that since he left the Kingdom of Yugoslavia he have not appeared for a long time, his family tried, through the University of Krakow and the Embassy of Republic of Poland in Belgrade, "to follow the steps" of his movement. From the official correspondence that took place

between the Universities and from the police reports in relation to his travels, it is clear that on the 3rd of August 1932 he arrived in Skopje. At the 13th of August 1932 he stayed overnight in the hotel "Srpski kralj" in Gostivar, while on the 14th he was already in Poreche, in the villages of Rastesh and Volche. It is interesting to mention that besides his complains on the difficult communication with the local population, even during the first days of his stay he had written down a number of folk songs, something that clearly shows that his approach was easy and direct, and the results visible. In relation to the distance of the researched location, in a letter to the Dean of the Philosophical Faculty in Skopje to the Rector of the Jagiellonian University in Krakow it is written down that: "...Mr. Obrebski is now in the village of Rastesh, in a mountain where there is no post office, in the srez of Poreche..." (Letter of the Dean of the Philosophical Faculty in Skopje to the Rector of the JU, from 26.09.1932, Обрембски 2003, 99).

From the manuscripts, the field notes and the available correspondence one can establish the movement of J. Obrebski after his arrival in Macedonia. On the 3rd of August he arrived in Skopje, on the 7th the same month he traveled to Prishtina, and on the 10th he was again in Skopje. On the 13th of August he went to Poreche, but stayed overnight in the hotel "Srpski kralj" in Gostivar. On the 14th of August he was in the village of Volche where after a conversation with his informants, he has written down a folk song. The next day he was in the village of Rastesh, where he also noted down a number of ethnographic and folklore information. From then on he mainly lived and worked in Volche, but visited other villages as well, mainly the villages of Gorno Poreche such as Trebovle, Bitovo, Zagrad etc. Since then he lived with a family in Volche, trying to accept and adjust to their way of life. The photographs from his legacy show that he dressed in folk costume that was characteristic for this area, and tried not to differ in anything from the local population (Вражиновски 2003, 49).

The "triple reality" of J. Obrebski's personality expressed in his highly emphasized Slavic identification, which tied him closely to Macedonian villages, the Central-European identification as a Polish intellectual, member of the middle class, and last but not least his education at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences in Great Britain, was strongly reflected in his field work in Poreche (Халперн 2003, 64). From his field notes in manuscript one can conclude that he primarily wrote them in situ, during the conversations with his hosts, which he noted in their local language, with Cyrillic letters. Having in mind the fact that Macedonian language did not have a codified alphabeth at the time, for the two specific consonants, kj and gj (ќ, ѓ) he used the Serbian letters that he knew (h, h̄). Often, at the very place of research, he wrote down explanations and the clarifications of the researched problem in Polish. After the primary creation of the field notes at the place of

research, he then processed them and developed them in a form in which they would be easily systematized and classified. He used a system of processing and classification of the primary field material through using codes and classification terms in Polish. In the third phase the field material was typed on a typing machine, always written in its original form, in the local speech of the Poreche people, but transliterated in Polish, using Latin alphabet. Some of his later analysis of the materials were written in academic Polish and English language.

The rich field material that is currently kept in a special archive collection at the Du Bois Library at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, there are more than 550 glass negatives of photographs made during his research in Poreche, as well as a number of illustrations of the village space and kinship diagrams of families that he researched. The collection includes even specimens of different plants, that the healers used.

Macedonian Society, Village and Family in the Research of J. Obrebski

Obrebski chose Poreche and the village of Volche as a location where he would conduct his anthropological research aiming to discover the most archaic, most primitive elements of primary forms of social organization in Europe.

"Two and half hours walk is the distance between Volche and the closest village of Rechane or Turchane, near Gostivar. More than half a day traveling by horse is needed to arrive to the closest town of Gostivar. Traveling to Tetovo takes more than one day. All of these inhabited places are connected to Volche through a small number of walking paths, that are usable only if traveling by horse, but totally unusable if traveling by car. The traveler who tries to reach Gostivar from Volche, or who travels to the villages that belong to Gostivarsko Pole (Gostivar Field), has to climb the high mountain pick of Peklishta, that surrounds Volche from the West, and then to step down using a steep and curvy path, starting from 1200m. This difficult road due to hard snow falls is not usable for few weeks during winter" (Обрембски 2001, 43).

However, soon after he arrived at the field he faced reality, that in spite of the distance, excommunication and the conservative nature of the Macedonian village society, it already lived the processes of its own transformation under the heavy influences of global social events, that took place after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and that were visible through the influence of the newly created state – the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (Халперн 2003, 63).

The Plutocratic Democracy of Poreche

Acquainted with the current theoretical schools in anthropology related to the research of social structure (Radcliff-Brown and others), J. Obrebski tried to implement them referring to examples from Poreche. In his materials, speaking about a possible definition of this social formation, he called it plutocratic democracy, having in mind the patriarchal system that has an established hierarchy, on one side, and an ideal form of equal rights and privileges in the frames of the village community, from the other. The realistic situation of the Poreche society showed that the issues of prestige and authority in the community were not solved through theoretical equality, but on the contrary, that wealth played a key role in social hierarchy, strongly expressed through private property. Thus, in order to illustrate plutocratic democracy, Obrebski wrote: "The rights and privileges are distributed equally, but the wealth belongs only to a number of people. Even more importantly, this does not depend on the individual, on his own qualifications and aspiration, but it depends on his predecessors, it is a result of the work of the predecessors, and it is partly acquired through the collective efforts of the family (Обрембски 2002, 9). Another important feature that J. Obrebski emphasized when it comes to the society of Poreche is that he pointed to the fact that "this society does not have forms of concentration and capitalization of wealth, that would enable the transfer of the acquired wealth from generation to generation" (Обрембски 2002, 9).

According to him, the village society of Poreche is divided into three classes depending on the economical situation: rich class, middle class and poor people. The first class consists of the "zengii" or "chorbadzii", also defined as good house-keepers, reflected through the notions of big families with more than ten adult members, that dealt mostly with stock breeding and had big herds that grazed on the surrounding mountains. In order to be self-sustainable, these households also dealt with agriculture. The second class was the middle village class. According to J. Obrebski this class differed from the first due to the lower level of stock-breeding and agricultural activities that it undertook. It focused mainly upon agriculture, and the households were less numerous. The production of wooden coal was one of the main activities of the members of the middle class, and it was their only product for exchange or sale that could eventually bring them a surplus. "The middle ones do not accumulate wealth, their balance does not contain a surplus; their expenses equal their income. The middle one is the one that does not live, but survives" (Обрембски 2002, 11). The third class consists of the poor ones, and according to Obrebski the village poor class consists mainly of incomplete families, singles, widowers and widows etc. Their existence depended on the philanthropic attitude of the rich ones towards them.

Thus, the idea of the unity of the village society, according to Obrebski's analysis, was distorted, due to the existence of different social interests and due to the conflicts between the members of different classes. The first level of clashes and conflicts between classes referred to the issue of utilization of collective meadows by the big stock-breeders, on one side, and the utilization of the forests by the coal and resin producers, i.e. the members of the middle class, on the other. The second level of conflicts lied in the sphere of tax payment and administering the village space. There were two types of taxes paid by the village. The first one was the state tax that each individual owner, i.e. family, paid for one's own land, and the second tax, that was paid by the whole village, in order to use the village territories. The latter was mainly calculated according to the size of the village territory. Obrebski thus concluded that "the key, that is usually used, is based upon principles related to the utilization of village territory. The two main, most common used ways are grazing herds and coal. Taxes are calculated according to this key" (Обрембски 2002, 13).

Through working upon social division of the village society, and analyzing local economy and accumulation of wealth, J. Obrebski in fact conducted the first research from the domain of economic anthropology of family and the village, succeeding in presenting the key processes of transformation of private and collective ownership, that enabled drastic changes concerning the structure of family and the village in Macedonia. The basic social unit of Macedonian village society, as Obrebski found out, was family economy. This was the nucleus that took care of the natural growth and continuous multiplication, that was directed towards a development of a new production mechanism. The family economy needed to continuously create a surplus of products, that had to go beyond the internal needs of the family (Обрембски 2002, 17). This is why, according to him, "the accumulation of wealth is in close connection with the growth of the family group, but still can not be directly proportional to this process" (Обрембски 2002, 18). He concludes that big households were the most functional form for attaining a surplus of capital and wealth, mostly in Poreche, a surplus in gold and herds, that enabled the members of the big households, in case they divide into smaller ones, to have the same standard as the previous situation and not allow their fall into the lower or the lowest class. In his analysis of the economic situation of the Macedonian village household, he concludes that "after the division there is a temporary economic fall from grace of the family group, until the common work in the frames of the new constellation starts to bring results" (Обрембски 2002, 18). The analysis of the pace with which the accumulation of wealth takes place, and the growth of the economy of Poreche families, was done through a case study of the famous big family Stefkovci in the village of Volche (Обрембски 2002, 19).

Analyzing the economic conditions of the Macedonian village family, Obrebski concluded that it was not possible for it to develop without a territorial expansion of economy, that presupposed increase of reserves of land, that in turn initiated an extremely important social change, that he could observe happening real time, the change of the system of ownership. Territorial expansion of family meant an increase of private ownership on the account of the collective village space. Privatizing a part of the common village land initiated a change of the existing conditions for its utilization. Surely, the most important changes happened in regard to the functioning of the village community. In spite of the ideal images related to the functioning of the village community as a homogeneous unit. J. Obrebski stated that: "the above made description shows that the village is not a homogeneous social and economic unit. On the contrary, the economic stratification of the village consists of classes with property differences, where each of them has different economic tasks, different system of economic notions, that are implemented in order to gain and sustain wealth" (Обрембски 2002, 22).

Religion, Magic and Ritual

Although Obrebski was primarily oriented towards investigation of the social structure of the village community and of the family in Macedonia, the circumstances in which he found himself after arriving in Macedonia, which were also related to his involvement in the preparation of "Coral Gardens" by Malinowski, seem crucial for his turn towards a new research topic, which was related to religion, mythology, magic and ritual, elements which were still an unique and indispensable part of the mythological and religious complex of the world view of the Poreche population, which started to enter into the transitional phases, under the wave of modernization of every-day life. As Obrebski mentions in his letters to Prof. Moszynsky, the investigation of folk religion, especially of magical activities which were mainly a part of the female village culture of Poreche, became his special research challenge due to two reasons. Firstly, due to the fact that the ritual and magical activity was still vivid, and was a crucial part of the concept of mythical thinking of people, and thus a part of their every-day life, and secondly, due to the fact that these activities were a part of a complex system of thinking and behaviour that was eagerly kept in secrecy, outside the touch of everyone who did not belong to this subculture, including the researcher himself, who was for a long time treated as a complete foreigner.

Having in mind the increased involvement in the research and his fascination by the specificities of the mythological and religious system and the magical activities of Poreche people, J. Obrebski immediately after finishing field

research started to analyze and systematize these materials. Thus, the ones dedicated to this topic are the best classified, they are systematically categorized and processed, and the result is a number of his manuscript variants of the attempts to articulate, in a written form, this complex religious system. As a result of these attempts, in 1934 and 1936, only few years after finishing the field research, he published two studies, the first dedicated to black magic in Macedonia (Obrebski 1934, VI-VIII), and the second, dedicated to the religious system of Macedonians (Obrebski 1936a, XIII-XIV; 1936b, XIII). Another text appeared after his death, edited by J. M. Halpern and Barbara Kerewski – Halpern, dedicated to ritual and social structure in a Macedonian village (Obrebski 1977).

The published study dedicated to black magic, as well as other variants of manuscripts from his legacy, one can note that J. Obrebski, contrary to many other of his South-East European contemporaries, was well acquainted with the current results in the research of magic and religion of his time, especially the ones of the Western-European researchers. In his analysis he mentions, and though different comparative analysis he examines the theoretical attitudes of the researchers of religion and of magic as for example Emile Durkheim and his followers Hubert and Mauss. The thing that was unacceptable and strange for Obrebski at the time in relation to the theoretical attitudes in examining magic and religion was the separation of the religious system from the system of magical thinking and practice, which was clearly noticeable in the works of Emile Durkheim and his followers. However, such contrasting of religion versus magic, especially black magic, was most visible with some of the representatives of the historicist school, in Europe (Schmid, R. Lowy), as well as in America (R. Benedict) (Obrebski 2001b, 61-62). Being well acquainted with the mythological and religious world-view of the South-East European villager, especially the one at the Balkans, J. Obrebski found such separation of religion and magic as two different systems, even two different 'poles', strange. "According to this interpretation – in concordance with Durkheim's definition, religion and magic are two poles, that represent the social and anti-social way of manipulation with wonder and holiness (...) These two theses: contrasting black magic and religion, as two totally different entities, and as enemies, that exclude one another from the sphere of sacral life, as well as the anti-social, even criminal character of sorcery in all of its forms and practices, became so general in ethnology, as a negative thought shorthand, that is erased on the road to deeper and positive analysis, upon which those differences are founded, and at the same time push black magic in the realm of pathological life phenomena of primitive societies, or the psyche of the wild" (Obrebski 2001b, 62).

Such dominant attitudes of the researchers of religious and magical systems of native cultures all over the world intrigued J. Obrebski, having in mind the fact that he, based upon the examples from Poreche every-day life in Macedonia, could note that "influenced by magic ritual, Orthodox Christian

Macedonians do not show a clear and rigid limit between a theoretical concept of magic and the one of religion. The formal difference between the magic ritual and the religious cult, similar as with other groups, is not crucial at all. The Macedonian magic ritual finally finds its right of existence, and its justification, in the religious belief in God's providence. And vice versa, the same earthly "material" goals in whose quest magic practice is born, lay on the soil of the religious cult: respect towards God and the saints" (Обрембски 2001b, 65). Thus, speaking about the formal differences between religion and magic, he emphasizes its publicly manifested character, and "the holy places and buildings that serve cult purposes, the pilgrimage and the processions, the public and theatre-like character of rituals, the mass participation of the faithful ones, the festive nature of the ceremony and the baroque apparatus of the liturgy and the priests' activities, (...) gives them vivacity, a character which is concrete, tangible and real" (Обрембски 2001b, 66). Black magic, on the other hand, is a "secretly practiced activity, scrutinized by public opinion, it is not a public ritual, there is no theatrical frame, nor a halo of holiness and justification, which would enable it to gain the place that it deserves, which would be recognized without any objections. It lacks the public ritual nature, the holy and recognized cult places, the priesthood. There is an absence of a fascinating theatrical frame", concludes J. Obrebski (Обрембски 2001b, 66-67).

Thus, J. Obrebski confronts the potential attempts of the ones dealing with theory of religion and magic, to narrow the understanding of the term 'magic' and to separate the mythological and religious reality into good and bad, and to divide ritual acts into social and anti-social (the latter being the ones that do not serve the well-being of the community) (Обрембски 2001b, 61).

Finding that sorcery is a "special system incorporated with local social structure" in Poreche, J. Obrebski points out that "this is not a dead faith, a faith which is not supported by actions", but that magical activities "find their expression and their proof in practice and through procedures, that together make the image of a developed sorcery, that constantly gives a sign of itself, strongly incorporated into the local social structure, possessing an appropriate apparatus of mythological notions and ritual concepts, harmonized with the magical and religious system of the society itself, that give rise to those sides of the system whose special function is the fight against magic and against sorcery. Sorcery, at least in Poreche, is not a random conglomerate of few religious remains, that present its disappearance, lack of progress, or a foreign origin. It leads a real and intensive life" (Обрембски 2001b, 76).

In his analysis of magical life of the Poreche population, J. Obrebski tried to create a typologization of those magical activities, where the first group refers to magic whose motif is revenge or hate, and its aim is to initiate sickness or death. The second group consists of magic that should induce infertility of women, the third group are magic acts that should initiate qua-

rells and hatered, the fourth includes magic acts for initiating impotence of bride-grooms, the fifth are magic acts directed towards stealing of someone else's fruit or milk" (Обрембски 2001b, 81-89).

Analyzing the complex mythological and religious system, J. Obrebski noted that sourcery is exclusively a domain of female culture in Poreche, but also in the wider region. Also, almost all ritual life is a "female job". Investigating the features of social structure of the Macedonian native village community, J. Obrebski concluded that the privileged position of man dominates. He focused upon examination of patriarchal culture of Poreche society that was mostly expressed through patrilocality, as well as through the preference of the patrilineal side of the kinship system, since it was considered stronger and dominant. Thus, in the texts related to magic and religion he tried, through the theoretical prism of functionalism, to give appropriate interpretation of the almost sovereign role of women in ritual and magic activities. Obrebski interprets this role of women as the only compensation of their otherwise subordinated role. "In the area of sacral life she dominates upon man. A major part of rituals, the whole magical and religious ceremony, is done by women. Through rituals she provides, through a supernatural way, health for people and for animals, she initiates fertility of families and the stock, the productivity of agriculture, wealth, abundance and success" (Обрембски 2001b, 69).

In the domain of analyzing the character of folk religion, it seems that J. Obrebski was the first anthropologist in Europe who expressed his definitions and theoretical attitudes ten years before this was done by theoretician of religion M. Eliade, or another researcher of folk religion in Middle Age Europe, Aaron Gurevich. During the period when he had an opportunity to examine *in vivo* the characteristics of the religious system of the Poreche village community, he was deeply into the characteristics of the religious systems of the village population in South-East Europe. He understood the crucial features of the religious systems and behaviours of people in different regions in these parts of Europe, and he established that in all of them there is one key feature that stems from the connection of official religion that is spread in those areas and all other local religious characteristics. Such category of religion, Obrebski found, is "a system, created by a number of elements, genetically different, in which ancient pagan elements are mixed and related through a specific system with the newer elements and the Christian concept" (Обрембски 2001b, 9).

From the beginning of his research of folk religion of the Slavic world he noted that this problematic is not well known even to the specialists in Europe, and that there is a need to conduct detailed research in order to establish the similarities and the specificities of the category of folk culture. "The problem is even more complicated having in mind that folk religion, as it can be found in a sub-Carpathian village, in Polesie or in Serbia, is not a homogenous system" – concluded Obrebski (Обрембски 2001b, 9). The main difficulty in examining

this complex religious system, he thought, was the dynamics of folk religion, which was especially intensive at the time of his arrival in Poreche, due to the processes that have already started, those of "nivelation of traditional culture" under the heavy influences of the official church, as well as the processes of globalization. Understanding this religious system as an indispensable part of the whole traditional culture, J. Obrebski wrote: "This religious system, which is still a part of culture, and belongs only partly to the church organization, is surely a combination of pagan and domestic elements with Cristian layers, combination that creates a unique structure, a tight one, a consequent one, where heterogenous elements are connected into a whole of a certain kind of Orthodox paganism, adapted to the social organization and the needs of Macedonian villagers, and assimilated by its basic concepts and cultural positions (Обрембски 2001b, 10). Following his research, Obrebski called this category of religion – pagan Orthodoxy, or simply, folk religion.

Obrebski found that in the spiritual life of Macedonian villagers there is a dualism concerning the separation of the holy and the profane, as well as dualism in the world view concerning the folk pantheon, in which God and the Devil are almost equal, even presented as brothers. The folk pantheon contained notions concerning saints that according to the folk world-view were in a syncretic coalition with the non-Christian forms of older dieties present in the region.

Analyzing the ritual practices contained in the religious system, he made a clasification and their determination. Most important ritual activities are the sacral ones, that folk culture calls "zakoni" or laws. They are related to the cult towards God and the saints (celebrating Sunday and Friday, following church liturgy during the annual calendar dedicated to the saints, the slava, rituals of the life cycle etc.), whose respect was considered an obligation. "Such a concept of the religoius cult is reflected even in the term 'laws', since for the Macedonian is represents almost the same as 'order' or 'legal system' to us. This term is also used when it comes to profane activities, and relations that have legal character, separating cult activities from the profane ones as God's law" (Обрембски 2001b, 15). The second category of religious practices are called *zarok*, or *zaroci*, which in fact means practicing certain bans in relation to specific issues, mostly field or domestic work during certain days, that have local character, and are defined by individuals or the community, as a kind of obligation towards God and the saints, and an expression of their respect due to certain reason. The third group of activities is called *adeti*, and they are rituals with an emphasized magic meaning. Some of the 'adets' have a clear utilitarian function, and they are commonly directed towards a certain practical issue. In this category Obrebski has put the rituals related to providing beneficial climate conditions, protection from hail, ritual ploughing of the village as protection from diseases etc.

In his analysis of folk religion of the village community in Poreche, Obrebski has focused upon its social aspects. This perspective is especially vivid in his research on the religious behavior and folk morals, i.e. the control of the behavior of individuals by the community.

Conclusion

Josef Obrebski, who was primarily educated as an ethnographer and Slavist, through the process of his continuous education, overcame the ethnographic and ethnological discourses of the Eastern-European ethnography, and conducted most probably the first anthropological research in Europe, i.e. in Macedonia, in the area of Poreche. In 1932 and the beginning of 1933 he spent a period of 8 months in the village of Volche, living with a Macedonian family. Josef Obrebski followed the idea that a detailed anthropological research of European cultural and social heritage should be done, thus discovering the most archaic forms of social life of the patriarchal communities in one's own European environment, aiming to better understand the contemporary social events at the Continent.

However, soon after he arrived at the field he faced reality, that in spite of the distance, excommunication and the conservative nature of the Macedonian village society, it already lived the processes of its own transformation under the heavy influences of global social events, that took place after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and that were visible through the influence of the newly created state – the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Speaking about a possible definition of the local community social formation in Poreche, he called it plutocratic democracy, having in mind the patriarchal system that has an established hierarchy, on one side, and an ideal form of equal rights and privileges in the frames of the village community, from the other. The realistic situation of the Poreche society showed that the issues of prestige and authority in the community were not solved through theoretical equality, but on the contrary, that wealth played a key role in social hierarchy, strongly expressed through private property.

Analyzing the economic conditions of the Macedonian village family, Obrebski concluded that it was not possible for it to develop without a territorial expansion of economy, that presupposed increase of reserves of land, that in turn initiated an extremely important social change, that he could observe happening real time, the change of the system of ownership. Territorial expansion of family meant an increase of private ownership on the account of the collective village space.

Although Obrebski was primarily oriented towards investigation of the social structure of the village community and of the family in Macedonia, he turned towards a new research topic, which was related to religion, mythol-

ogy, magic and rituality, elements which were still an unique and indispensable part of the mythological and religious complex of the world view of the Poreche population. Being well acquainted with the mythological and religious world-view of the South-East European villager, especially the one at the Balkans, J. Obrebski found such separation of religion and magic as two different systems, even two different 'poles', strange.

In the domain of analyzing the character of folk religion, it seems that J. Obrebski was the first anthropologist in Europe who expressed his definitions and theoretical attitudes ten years before this was done by theoreticist of religion M. Eliade, or another researcher of folk religion in Middle Age Europe, Aaron Gurevich. Following his research, Obrebski called this category of religion – pagan Orthodoxy, or simply, folk religion.

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Antropološko istraživanje Makedonije Jozefa Obrebskog

Jozef Obrebski, koji je prvobitno bio obrazovan kao etnograf i slavista, kroz proces svoje produžene edukacije prevazišao je etnografski i etnološki diskurs istočno-evropske etnografije, spovodeći možda prvo antropološko istraživanje u Evropi, odnosno Makedoniji, u oblasti Poreče. Tokom 1932. i početkom 1933. godine proveo je osam meseci u selu Volče, živeći sa jednom makedonskom porodicom. Jozef Obrebski se rukovodio idejom da treba uraditi detaljno antropološko istraživanje evropskog kulturnog i socijalnog nasleđa, otkrivajući tako najarhaičnije forme društvenog života u patrijarhalnim zajednicama Evrope, u cilju boljeg razumevanja savremenih društvenih događaja na kontinentu. Govoreći o mogućoj definiciji društvene formacije lokalne zajednice u Poreču, on ju je nazvao plutokratična demokratija. Analizirajući ekonomske uslove u makedonskoj seoskoj porodici, zaključio je da joj je razvoj onemogućen bez teritorijalnog proširenja ekonomije, na taj način pretpostavljajući uvećanje zemljišnog poseda. Teritorijalna ekspanzija porodice podrazumevala je uvećanje privatnog poseda na račun kolektivne seoske zemlje. U domenu analize karaktera narodne religije, izgleda da je Obrebski bio prvi antropolog u Evropi koji je dao svoju definiciju i teorijski stav deset godina

pre nego što to je takvu definiciju ponudio Mirča Elijade, ili jedan drugi istraživač narodne religije Srednjeg veka u Evropi, Aron Gurevič. Prateći svoja istraživanja, Obrebski je tu vrstu religije nazvao – pagansko pravoslavlje, ili na-prosto – narodna religija.

Ključne reči: etnografija, etnologija, antropologija, Makedonija, Volče, Poreče

Recherche anthropologique de Joseph Obrebski sur la Macédoine

Il semble qu'à travers l'histoire, la Macédoine, en tant que sujet anthropologique, a été traitée comme une destination périphérique, et n'a pas présenté d'attrait particulier pour les anthropologues. Toutefois, au début du XXe siècle, la Macédoine et les Balkans en général, étaient devenus intéressants pour les ethnographes et les chercheurs des autres disciplines des sciences sociales. Joseph Obrebski, dont la formation initiale est celle d'ethnologue et de slavisant, a été l'un des premiers chercheurs à mener des recherches anthropologiques dans le village macédonien de Volche, à Poreche en 1932-33. Joseph Obrebski a suivi l'idée qu'il devait effectuer une recherche anthropologique détaillée de l'héritage européen culturel et social, pour découvrir ainsi les formes les plus archaïques de la vie sociale des communautés patriarcales dans son propre environnement européen, et cela dans l'objectif de mieux comprendre les événements sociaux contemporains sur le continent.

Mots clés: ethnographie, ethnologie, anthropologie, Obrebski Joseph, Macédoine, Volche, Poreche

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