

Boban Petrovski

Local roads in Medieval Polog: the Written Sources

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Department of History
Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje
email: boban@fzf.ukim.ed.mk

Road infrastructure is a very important element that concerns communication and transport of goods, but it was also critical for the integration of medieval people¹. Therefore, a detailed study of the medieval road system and its local road variations is seen as a necessity².

The geographic relief configuration of the Macedonian north-west area, Polog, had predestined its natural traffic communications. Locked between mountains on all sides, Polog is a well sealed geographic unit leaning from the southwest towards northeast. The Area is open towards Skopje Valley in two sections only and towards Kosovo, by the Kacanik Gorge in one, and it conditions its road communications accordingly, which in general terms may be split into latitudinal and longitudinal.

Two longitudinal roads cut through Polog. As seen from the north towards south, one road stretched alongside the base of Shar Planina (Shara Mountain), while the other alongside the bases of the mountains Zheden and Suva Gora³. The latitudinal roads stretched over Shar Planina and Suva Gora. Those stretched over Shar Planina passed by the valleys of the more significant left side tributaries to Vardar river and at least three of them led to Metohija (Kosovo and Metohija), while one followed the junctions of the rivers Radika and Drim. There had also been, at least one more road which led to Porece through Suva Gora⁴.

Besides the listed road sections which connected Polog with the neighbouring areas and with the most important major roads in the Balkans⁵, other local roads and

1 M.McCormick (2002), 3-5.

2 K.Belke (2002), 73, 86; J. Koder (2001), 62-65 (=J. Кодеp (2001), 62-65.)

3 The advantage of these roads comes from the fact that they avoided the crossing of the Vardar river to the maximum extent that the terrain allowed, while the downside to that was the constant alluvia originating from its tributaries, especially the road which led alongside the base of the Shara Mountain, see: J.Трифуноски (1976), 126; M.Гашевски (1986), 9.

4 As for the roads which connected Polog to the neighbouring and more distant regions, see Г.Шкриванић (1974), p. 80 and onwards.

5 Trans-regional routes and roads which passed through Polog, as supported by contemporary and authentic evidence, are of interest to me in other research.

byways had also been used for the so-called micro-journeys within one region and/or area⁶. The existence of such roads was a response to the need for communication between the population (peasants, nobility, monks) inhabiting Polog, i.e. from/within villages and their boundaries or from/within towns, forts and watch points in Polog. Such contacts were conditioned by the daily activities of Polog's population in agriculture, husbandry, forestry, trade, as well as by their military-defense activities and religious needs⁷. Communication links had been established as a consequence, connecting upper settlements, lower settlements and upper and lower villages and fortifications in various parts in the area.

Authentic evidence of local roads in Polog are found only in the written sources originating from the Area's late medieval past 13th-14th century. Most evidence is offered by the Htetovo Charter⁸ and the Land Inventory (Бревно) of the Monastery Bogorodica Htetovska (Holy Virgin of Htetovo)⁹.

The authentic records contained in these two sources suggest that the descriptions of the temporalities of Bogorodica Htetovska name the local roads after the names of the villages. However, there are only few authentic confirmations on the existence of village roads in that area. Htetovo Charter only notes the roads in the village of Leshka¹⁰ (лшкого поути; лшка поути; лшкимі поутемі)¹¹. The Inventory contains data on the roads in the villages of Крпена¹² (article 7: поут/ крпенеїска), Trebosh¹³ (article 10: трівошка поут/), Leshok¹⁴ (articles 11 and 24: лшчлімі

6 M. McCormick (2002), 5, 14-16.

7 For the roads of this rank, the so-called "secondary roads", see K. Belke (2002), 86-87, 90. Also see И. Божилов (2009), 29-31.

8 The Charter awarded by the Serbian king Stefan Dusan to the Monastery Sveta Bogorodica (Holy Virgin) in Tetovo in the forties of the 14th century has several publications, but we use: Л. Славева (1980), 306-322; С. Новаковић (1912), 657-661; Chilandar II (1915), 461-468. We have also consulted the specialized diplomatic and sphragistic analyses by Д. Кораћ (1984), 141-163.

9 For the latest information about this source, originating in the forties of the 14th century, see Ђ. Бубало (2002), 177-193. We make use of the editions of: Л. Славева (1980), 283-299; Chilandar II (1915), 483-489; А. Соловјев (1926), 129-132 (the source here is given in short and translated).

10 The existence of the Leshka village has been reported only in the 40's of the 14th century. It seems that the part of the modern literature wrongly identifies this village with the Lesht location, see: V. Kravari (1989), 203; Л. Славева (1980), 283 note 3; А. М. Селишчев (1929), 99-100; Also see Т. Томоски (1999), 140, who considers it as identical to Leshok.

11 It is about article 14 from the Htetovo Charter (see: Л. Славева (1980), 314; Chilandar II (1915), 465; С. Новаковић (1912), 658), as well as articles 18, 19, 21 (two times), 23, 26, 27, 41 (two times), 60, 66, and 68 from the Land Inventory (see: Л. Славева (1980), 286, 287, 289, 295, 296; Chilandar II (1915), 484, 485, 487, 488. Also see А. Соловјев (1926), 129, who has completely neglected these articles).

12 The existence of the Krpена village (in first instance as a temporality (метох)) has been authentically reported in between the mid thirties and the late forties of the 14th century. In the Modern Literature the village has been registered in: К. Адиевски (1997), 24-25; V. Kravari (1989), 199-200; Л. Славева (1980), 133, 315 note 30 и 317 note 36; В. Мошин-Л. Славева (1981), 85-86 note 27. Also see early publication by М. Пурковић (1940), 107.

13 Written sources testify about this village in the period between the mid thirties and the late forties of the 14th century. Literature that has registered the village: V. Kravari (1989), 224-225; Л. Славева (1980), 136, 270-271; Ј. Трифуноски (1976), 439; М. Николић (1976), 45; М. Пурковић (1940), 148.

14 The written sources give evidence for the continued existence of Leshok in the period between the 9th and the 15th century. Also see V. Kravari (1989), 202-203, with a short overview of the sources that contain a mention of it; И. Микулчић (1996), 326-330; Л. Славева (1980), 136, 270 note 29; Ј. Трифуноски (1976), 327-329, with a short background about the town and the village of Leshok, predominantly taken over from Р. М. Грујић (1933), 43-44 (the same (1932), 129); Т. Томоски (1999), 140; М. Николић (1976), 44-45.

поутемі), Htetovo¹⁵ (articles 21 and 60: поутіі вті Хтітове; поутіі втітобіск/), Poroj¹⁶ (article 22: поройска поуті), Hvalishe¹⁷ (articles 29 and 41: Хвалишка поуті; Хвалишки поутіі), Rechica¹⁸ (article 49: Річичами... под поутемі), Leskovjani¹⁹ (article 50: Ліскова2ни... под поутемі), Hrashtani²⁰ (article: поутемі вра;аніск/мі), Drenovec²¹ (article: Дріновчемі под поутемі), Velgosht²² (article 52: Велго;омі под поутемі), Brodec²³ (article 67: Бродчи...до поуті)²⁴. According to these data, the road accesses to and from the villages above-mentioned had names identical to the names of the villages. Therefore, it seems plausible that in real life the number of local roads in Polog had been far greater, that they had connected all villages and had been named after the names of the respective villages.

In a large number of cases these village roads intercepted and crosscut each other, and were often named so in the sources, if they had no specific names. Examples of unnamed crossroads are found in articles 25 (распоуті2), 45 (распоуті3мі) and 71 (Междоупоуті3) of the Land Inventory²⁵. Confirmations on intersections of specifically named roads are found in the articles 41 (лішкимі поутемі како се стаз ввалишки поутіі), 60 (лішка поуті ниві поутіі втітобіск/), 68 (лішка поуті и ниві никифоровіски поутіі) and 76 (поуті подлоушка, оуц поут мліччки) of the Land Inventory²⁶.

15 The written sources give evidence for the continued existence of (H)Tetovo in the period between 13th and 14th century. Literature that has registered the village: V.Kravari (1989), 190 with a short overview of the sources that contain a mention of it in the period between 13th and 15th century; Л.Славева (1980), 131, 311 note 12; Т.Томоски (1976), 75; Also see early publications by: М.Пурковић (1940), 154; Р.М.Грујић (1933), 38, 47, 48; А.М.Селищев (1929), 77, 87, 93.

16 The written sources give evidence of this village only in the forties of the 14th century. Literature that has registered the village: V.Kravari (1989), 211; J.Трифуноски (1976), 349; М.Пурковић (1940), 130.

17 The written sources about this village are from the first half of forties of the 14th century. Literature that has registered the village: V.Kravari (1989), 193; Л.Славева (1980), 133, 314 note 24; J.Трифуноски (1976), 429-430; М.Пурковић (1940), 153. Р.М.Грујић (1933), 48.

18 The written sources give evidence for the continued existence of Rechica in the period between the middle of the 13th and forties of the 14th century. Literature that has registered the village: V.Kravari (1989), 215-216; Л.Славева (1980), 134-135; J.Трифуноски (1976), 371-372, 375 (the same (1988), 243); М.Пурковић (1940), 136.

19 The written sources give evidence for the continued existence of Leskovjani in the period between the middle of the 13th and fifties of the 14th century. Literature that has registered the village: V.Kravari (1989), 201; Л.Славева (1980), 312-313 note 18, 450 note 5. Also see early publications by: М.Пурковић (1940), 111; Р.М.Грујић (1933), 47, 48; А.М.Селищев (1929), 101, 108, 117.

20 The written sources about this village are only from the forties of the 14th century. Literature that has registered the village: V.Kravari (1989), 189-190; Л.Славева (1980), 131, 311 note 13, 440 note 49. Also see: М.Пурковић (1940), 154; А.М.Селищев (1929), 94.

21 The written sources about Drenovec are only from the forties of the 14th century. Literature that has registered the village: V.Kravari (1989), 186; Л.Славева (1980), 440 note 50; Р.М.Грујић (1933), 47, 48.

22 The written sources about this village are only from the forties of the 14th century. In the Modern Literature only V.Kravari (1989), 226, has registered it, with doubt (village (?)).

23 The written sources about Brodec are from the forties of the 14th century. Literature that has registered the village: V.Kravari (1989), 182; Л.Славева (1980), 132, 440 note 51; J.Трифуноски (1976), 357; Р.М.Грујић (1933), 47.

24 About articles 7, 10, 11, 21, 22, 24, 29, 41, 49, 50, 51, 52, 60 and 67 from the Land Inventory, see: Л.Славева (1980), 284, 287, 288, 289, 293, 295, 296; Chilandar II (1915), 483-488. Also see А.Соловјев (1926), 129-131, who has left out these articles.

25 Л.Славева (1980), 287, 289, 297; Chilandar II (1915), 485, 486, 488; А.Соловјев (1926), 131 (only article 71).

26 Л.Славева (1980), 289, 295, 296; Chilandar II (1915), 485, 487, 488; А.Соловјев (1926), 131 (only article 76).

Byways had also been used, in particular as shortcuts, named as traversal in the sources. Evidence for them can be found in the articles 5 (поўти пр1чна), 7 (пр1чнога поўти), 32 (пр1чнога поўти) and 62 (пр1чнимі поўтемі) of the Land Inventory²⁷.

Within the boundaries of the villages byways had existed and connected internal locations. Records on such byways are found in Konstantine's Charter²⁸ and in Milutin's Charter²⁹, in the description of the boundaries of Rechica village. The Konstantine's Charter makes a note of a road which led into the forest through the hillside (пбтемі вїї врїдѡ до г(о)ра), as well as of a road on Suva Planina ((п)бтемі на (С҃)ѣб Планинѣ)³⁰, while the Milutin's Charter contains evidence of a road which passed alongside a forest (поўтемі о҃҃ї гвоѣдї)³¹. A number of such byways were reported in the description of the boundaries of the Htetovo Monastery temporalities, as shown in articles 3 (где се ста3 поўтї и браьда), 8 (поўтї по ср1д нивѣ), 9 ((месноста) Мог/личомї, под поўтемї), 15 и 55 (пр1с-поўтї), 17 (доѡнега поўти), 23 (л1шкімї поўтемї и нивї дро҃҃ги поўтї), 24 (л1;ч1мї поўтем), 44 (междоу поўтемї и междоу браьдизмї), 50 (о҃҃ѣраши под поўтемї), 67 (до поўти) and 75 (по ср1д1 нивѣ те поўтї) of the Land Inventory³². A road of this rank is also noted in the General Hilendar Charter³³, in the description of the boundaries of a donated parcel within the Mlachice village, as a road leading from the Nikifor(ov)ci location to the mountain slopes (вдї Никїфорча како греде поўтї на шпогорї)³⁴.

Besides the above-mentioned, regularly used roads, there had been old roads, which had been maintained and used. Such evidence is contained in the Land Inventory's article 32 describing the location of a Monastery owned field and a meadow, partially bordering with the old road (до старога поўт/). Such records indirectly suggest that besides the long used roads (originally referred to as "old"), new roads and byways had also been created, in parallel with the development of the existing and the establishment of new settlements in Polog.

27 Л.Славѣва (1980), 284, 288, 296; Chilandar II (1915), 483, 485, 487. Also see А.Соловјѣв (1926), 129-130, who has completely neglected these articles.

28 On the Charter of tsar Constantine Tikh Asen of Bulgaria awarded to the Monastery of Saint George (Gorg) near Škorje in 1258 or after 1258, compare the publications of: В.Мошин-Л.Славѣва-К.Илиѣвска (1975), 183-204; И.Иванов (repr. 1970), 581-587.

29 Regarding the Charter awarded by the Serbian king Milutin to the Monastery of Saint George (Gorg) in Skopje in 1299/1300, besides its latest publication by В.Мошин-Л.Славѣва-К.Илиѣвска (1975), 209-241, we considered the publication of С.Новаковић (1912), 608-621. We also compared the source text against the translation of the Charter offered by А.Соловјѣв (1926), 69-82 (about Polog p. 74-76, articles 32-35).

30 В.Мошин-Л.Славѣва-К.Илиѣвска (1975), 192; И.Иванов (repr. 1970), 584; В.Начѣв (1996), 50.

31 В.Мошин-Л.Славѣва-К.Илиѣвска (1975), 224. Description of boundaries at С.Новаковић (1912), 614, is left out. Also see А.Соловјѣв (1926), 75.

32 About articles 3, 8, 9, 15, 17, 23, 24, 44, 50, 55, 67 and 75 from the Land Inventory, see: Л.Славѣва (1980), 283, 284, 285, 287, 289, 293, 294, 296, 297; Chilandar II (1915), 483, 484, 486, 487, 488; А.Соловјѣв (1926), 129, 131 (only articles 3 and 75).

33 Tsar Dushan's Charter awarded to the Hilander Monastery in 1348, during Dushan's visit to Mont Atos (Sveta Gora), according to the analysis of Л.Славѣва ((1980), 426-427) is not original and the kept copy is merely a transcript made after 1365. We use Л.Славѣва's ((1980), 430-446) edition prepared on the basis of photographic records of V.Moshin's personal archive, as well as the editions by С.Новакочић ((1912), 418-423) and В.Коравлѣв (Chilandar II (1915), 493-497) who consider the Charter original.

34 Л.Славѣва (1980), 439; Chilandar II (1915), 496; С.Новаковић (1912), 422. About the meaning of the Old Slavonic word "шпогорї"-mountain slopes, see Л.Славѣва (1980), 388 note 157.

In our concluding findings on the local roads in Polog, we affirm that in the medieval period, especially in the period between 13th and 14th century, the Polog area disposed of a dense and rather busy local road network. We base these conclusions on contemporary written sources which in their modesty, do unambiguously report about the existence of village roads, traversal roads and byways within the boundaries of villages, but also about the use of the old, long known roads, by the Polog's population.

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Р е з и м е:

Локални патишта во средновековен Полог: пишани извори

Во Полог во средновековието (особено во XIII и XIV век) постоела густа и мошне фреквентна локална патна мрежа. Ваквите наши согедувања ги темелиме врз современи пишани извори, кои, иако скромни, недвосмислено известуваат за постоење на селски патишта, потоа напречни патишта, а исто така и патчиња во рамките на самиот селски атар, но и користење на старите одамна познати патишта од страна на полошкото население.

Бобан Петровски