

Bosnian and Herzegovinian tombstones — who made them and why

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I.

Some Observations on Evans' Hypothesis

When the peasants of Bosnia and Herzegovina are questioned concerning the medieval tombstones of that region, (sing. *stečak*, pl. *stećci*) they say that they are „grčki grobovi“, Greek graves, and for them that is a complete explanation. If you ask them why the Greeks made these graves, or how they know the Greeks made these graves, they look askance. After all, they are not scholars, and so a strange race will explain a strange thing. A particularly clever peasant might add that the Greeks rode horses and carried spears, and indeed, people riding horses and carrying spears are often represented on these tombstones. There were, in fact, Greeks in the country at one time, too, though about the 4th century B.C.¹⁾. The peasants are not worried by the fact that the Greeks never produced gravestones like this in Greece.

The Bogomil hypothesis current today is not in fact any different from this piece of peasant superstition. It is claimed that the existence of these stones is explained by the fact that the Bogomils made them or, as is sometimes said, “provided the impetus“. The hypothesis was created by Arthur Evans after a walking tour through Bosnia and Herzegovina at the age of twenty-three²⁾. It has had adherents³⁾. But Bogomils elsewhere did not make *stećci*. It is

¹⁾ Vladimir Čorović, *Historija Bosne*, Belgrade 1940, Vol. I, p. 55.

²⁾ Sir Arthur J. Evans, *Through Bosnia and Herzegovina on Foot during the Insurrection*, London 1876, pp. 174—177. cf. Evans puts forward the possibility that the mysterious tombstones were made by Bogomils, as a sentimental hypothesis to which he is attached, saying that it is pleasing to believe this. Others have found it pleasing to believe this ever since.

³⁾ Adherents do not include archaeologists with direct knowledge of the monuments such as Alojz Benac, Dimitrije Sergejevski, Marko Vego, Šefik

evident from this that the issues involved require a good deal of clarification.

First, let us suppose that it could be conclusively proved, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that all the stećci in Bosnia and Herzegovina really were constructed by enthusiastic Bogomils, Bogomils of the most orthodox kind. Such a proof, interesting though it might be in itself, would explain nothing beyond itself. It would not explain why these Bogomils made the stećci, it would not even tell us that they made the stećci because they were Bogomils⁴). Indeed, the natural inference would be that they did not make stećci because they were Bogomils, for so far as can be ascertained, Bogomils elsewhere, in Bulgaria, Byzantium, etc., did not make stećci⁵). Thus

Bešlagić or Lovre Katić. Adherents do include the historian Alexander Solovjev, who has written seven articles on the subject, almost any one of which will give all the arguments discussed in this paper. They are:

- a) "Jesu-li Bogomili poštovali krst?" Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja (GZM) NS III, Sarajevo 1948, pp. 81—102.
- b) "Les Bogomiles vénéraient-ils la Croix?" Bulletin de l'Académie royale de Belgique (BAR), Classe des lettres, XXXV, Brussels 1949, pp. 47—62.
- c) "Le Symbolisme des monuments funéraires bogomiles", Cahiers d'Études Cathares (CEC) XVIII, Argues 1954, pp. 92—114.
- d) sv. "Bogomili", Enciklopedija Jugoslavije, Vol. I, Zagreb 1955, pp. 640—645.
- e) "Simbolika srednjevjekovnih spomenika u Bosni i Hercegovini", Godišnjak Istoriskog Društva Bosne i Hercegovine (GID) VIII, Sarajevo 1956, pp. 5—67.
- f) "Le symbolisme des monuments funéraires bogomiles et cathares", Actes du X. Congrès d'Études Byzantines, Istanbul 1957, pp. 162—165.
- g) "Bogomilientum und Bogomilengräber in den südslawischen Ländern", Völker und Kulturen Südosteuropas, Südosteuropa-Verlagsgesellschaft, Munich 1959, pp. 173—199.

An excellent criticism of Solovjev's arguments has been given by Svetozar Radojčić, "Reljefi bosanskih i hercegovačkih stećaka", Letopis Matice Srpske (LMS) 137, knj. 387, Novi Sad, January 1961. This work deserves a wider audience outside Yugoslavia.

⁴) That the stećci-making population were all Bogomils, let alone all heretics, is far from established. Further, there is doubt that the heretics, usually called Patarenes, were Bogomils at all. L. Petković thinks that they were not Bogomils at all, but off-beat Benedictines. Cf. Fra L. Petković, Kršćani Bosanske Crkve, Sarajevo 1953, p. 149. His book is excellent in presenting a mass of internal evidence concerning the habits of the Patarenes.

⁵) Solovjev cites some monuments elsewhere which he professes were made, if not by Bogomils, at least by Cathars, or by "neo-Manichees". This is, first, the so-called Cathar sarcophagus of Domazan or Lurs. (Solovjev, CEC XVIII, 1954, p. 67, figs. 45, 46, GID VIII, 1956, pp. 58, 59, figs. 45—47.) But this sarcophagus has been proved by Fernand Benoit to date earlier than the Cathars, and to be decorated in the usual Visigothic, or barbaric tradition. F. Benoit, „Le sar-

such a proof would be like a proof that farmers, or even horsebreeders, made stećci.

It might be suggested that the Bogomil hypothesis, if it could be established, differs from the horsebreeder hypothesis in this respect. Bogomilism is a religious view, and horsebreeding is not. So the former is the more likely candidate for explaining burial monuments. It is felt that people's burial monuments are in some way connected with their religious beliefs. The missing link here is the Bogomil attitude to burial, upon which the authorities are strangely silent⁶⁾. If, for example, we knew from unimpeachable sources that the Bogomils believed that the dead would rise and walk unless held down by large blocks of stone, we should have an explanation of some kind. What would then need explaining would be the absence of these burial monuments elsewhere. The obvious conclusion from all this is that if the Bogomils in Bosnia and Herzegovina constructed stećci, they were not like other Bogomils. Why? Well, they constructed stećci.

At risk of labouring this point, it might equally well be suggested that Catholic or Orthodox Christians constructed the stećci^{6a)}. There is as strong evidence for the presence of Catholic and Orthodox Christians in stećci regions as there is for the presence of Bogomils.

cophage de Lurs en Provence", *Cahiers Archéologiques* X, Paris 1959, pp. 27—70. Second, there are the so-called Cathar grave steles from Lauragais, uninscribed and undated, except by implication to the time of Cathars. (Solovjev, *GID* VIII, 1956, pp. 42, 43, 59, 60) Solovjev compares these discoidal steles with others from Simiova, Herzegovina, like them in being crosses with a rounded top, on which is inscribed a rosette or a further cross. He concludes that they are heretical representations of Christ himself as the cross, a result of Manichean, Paulician belief. But the tradition of such oval-topped gravestones, surmounted with a rosette or cross, has been active in north Spain and south France from the earliest times. Apart from Romano-Iberian prototypes, there are examples dated to the 9th century. (Louis Colas, *La Tombe Basque*, Bayonne 1923, Vol. I, pp. 5, 6, 23—35, Vol. II, fig. 1197.) The so-called Cathar crosses are in the same tradition. Therefore, if Cathars did make them, they did not make them because they were Cathars. A few modern Bulgar, "anthropomorphic" crosses, i. e., with rounded tops, are identified by Solovjev as the result of Bogomil tradition. (*BAR* XXV, 1949, pp. 59, 60.) Such crosses are likewise reported by Colas, *op. cit.*, p. 6, among the Maoris, and I myself know of one in London, in St. John's Wood.

⁶⁾ Dimitri Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, Cambridge 1948, is silent on this point.

^{6a)} Marko Vego favours this view, and supports it with sound argumentation. Vego, *Historija Bročna od najstarijih vremena do turske okupacije*, Sarajevo 1961, pp. 110, 111. Radojčić, *op. cit.*, p. 4, favours it as well. Both grant that a few Bogomils may have constructed stećci too, on the "when in Rome" principle.

But no-one regards this as an explanation, for the simple reason that the construction of *stećci*, which is peculiar to Bosnia and Herzegovina, is not a universal Catholic or East Orthodox habit. In other words, an explanation of the *stećci* must be an explanation of why they are there and not in neighbouring regions such as Albania, where there is no lack of stone.

Behind the Bogomil hypothesis there lie several hidden assumptions which give it an automatic preference, and which will continue to do so until they are brought to light. One of these assumptions is that the Bogomil hypothesis explains the curious decoration on some stones much better than any other reasonable hypothesis. Explanations in this context consist of attempts to relate known Bogomil beliefs with the decorations on the stones. They do not consist, as one might hope, of attempts to connect the decorations on known Bogomil monuments with the decorations on the stones, or to connect the decorations in known Bogomil manuscripts with the decorations on the stones. So far as is known there are, as we have said before, no other well-attested Bogomil monuments in stone, and as Radojčić has so aptly demonstrated, even if certain Bosnian illuminated manuscripts are Bogomil, their illuminations do not resemble the decorations on any *stećci*⁷⁾. Of course, there are many other monuments which do bear decoration upon them resembling decoration on the *stećci*, but they are not Bogomil monuments. So supporters of the Bogomil hypothesis have got to fall back on connecting literary descriptions of belief with pictorial representations on monuments, a notoriously hazardous task, and in this connection they have got to produce evidence so strong that it nullifies the contrary facts mentioned above. This is what Professor Solovjev attempts to do.

Now one of the most striking features of Bogomilism was its dualistic nature, so we are told⁸⁾. Professor Solovjev does not point out any indications of dualistic belief represented on the *stećci*. He fails to notice the large number of opposing paired objects which

⁷⁾ Radojčić, *op. cit.*, p. 2. There is one exception, and that is a portrait of an Evangelist, found in the Kopitar Bosnian Evangel now in Ljubljana, and likewise on a *stečak* at Hočevlje, if the figure on the *stečak* at Hočevlje is in fact an Evangelist. *Ibid.* p. 11.

⁸⁾ Obolensky, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 9.

occur on the stećci⁹⁾, and I gladly bring these to his attention, pointing out, however, that if this is evidence of dualism, there is a good deal of dualism in Western Europe.

The most Solovjev attempts to do is to connect ten nontypical stećci with Bogomil beliefs¹⁰⁾. That is to say, he tries to show that the decorations on these stećci are best explained by the fact that these decorations depict Bogomil belief, priests, objects, etc. Even if he makes his point, which is doubtful, this may be in itself an interesting fact about Bogomils. But the fact that Bogomils made ten, non-typical stećci goes no way to explain the other 58.490 typical stećci, or even the other 5.990 typical decorated stećci¹¹⁾, which differ widely from these¹²⁾. In other words, Solovjev's test cases have decorations that are quite different in content from the decorations appearing on other stećci although, of course, there are some items in common. For example, a man with a book appears on two of Solovjev's stećci and on no others. The word „gost“ appears on two of Solovjev's stećci and on no others. A cock appears on two of Solovjev's stećci and on only two others¹³⁾. Tau crosses appear on seven of Solovjev's stećci and on three others¹⁴⁾. Crescents ap-

⁹⁾ M. Wenzel, "Some reliefs outside the Vjetrenica Cave at Zavala", *Starinar* XII, Belgrade 1961, p. 23, fig. 4, p. 25, fig. 6.

¹⁰⁾ Solovjev, CEC XVIII, 1945, pp. 96—100, *Actes du X. Congrès d'Études Byzantines*, 1957, p. 163. These are supposed to be the tombs of the leaders of the Bosnian Church. Only three bear inscriptions, the others are identified by their especially Bogomil decoration. The lack of inscriptions is explained by the natural humility of these religious leaders, though it is only in the case of the inscribed three that we know they are religious leaders, or at least, religious.

¹¹⁾ I use statistics quoted by Solovjev, CEC XVIII, 1954, pp. 93, 94.

¹²⁾ Solovjev is slightly worried by the body of decoration which cannot be interpreted by the Bogomil hypothesis, and which he describes as "profane". (GID VIII, 1956, p. 30.) Some of it he manages to interpret as being religious, or possibly religious, if not Bogomil. This includes dances of which there are, according to my statistics, 123 examples, hunting scenes, of which there are 113, and single deer, of which I know of 51. He abandons this attempt with horses and horsemen, and does not even mention the numerous monsters and snakes.

¹³⁾ The others are at Gornji Malovan, Kupres region, and at Podgradinje, Stolac region, where they appear with "profane" representations of a man leading a horse, with a lion, a hawk carrying in its talons a rabbit, and with "possibly religious" representations of a deer, birds, and a man killing a bear. There is also a cross.

¹⁴⁾ The others are at Podjaram, Kupres region, Križeviči, Olovo region, and Donji Bratac, Nevesinje region.

pear on two of Solovjev's stećci¹⁵⁾ and on numerous others, but not joined with any more of Solovjev's "Bogomil" elements¹⁶⁾.

It is possible that Solovjev might succeed in proving that these ten stećci were made by Bogomils, and do depict Bogomil belief in some way or another. But it cannot justify the inference that all or most stećci, or even all or most decorated stećci, were made by Bogomils.

In any case, even with Solovjev's ten, carefully selected monuments, the Bogomil evidence is scarcely conclusive. Radojčić has observed that the Bogomil explanation of these ten stećci is not in fact a preferential explanation, and that the decoration can equally well be explained from the Orthodox Christian viewpoint, even if the stones were erected by Bogomils¹⁷⁾. Radojčić does not concern himself with Solovjev's contention that the ovaltopped crosses with anthropomorphic features appearing among the stećci, occasionally surmounted by a rosette, are Bogomil¹⁸⁾, and it would be well to say a word about them here.

There are stećci, and decorations upon stećci, which are plainly anthropomorphic cruciform, that is, which have a rounded top, sometimes with a face inscribed upon it, occasionally with „shoulders“, etc.¹⁹⁾. There are further stećci, and decorations upon stećci, which

¹⁵⁾ Two further forms on Solovjev's stećci which he wishes to say are crescents are not. First that over the seated figure with the book at Hočevlje. Radojčić rightly points out that this form is a nimbus, and thereby concludes that the figure is an Evangelist, not a Bogomil. (Radojčić, *op. cit.*, p. 11.) Second, that on the stećak from Dobrača. This, even in Solovjev's own photograph, (GZM NS III, 1948, Pl. II, fig. 1) is not a ball surmounted by a crescent, but a nimbed head in profile. The same is clear from the original. The figure of St. Christopher carrying the infant Christ on a stećak at Mokro also has a crescent-shaped nimbus. Wenzel, "A Mediaeval Mystery Cult in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXIV, London 1961, p. 100, Pl. 15b.

¹⁶⁾ Another explanation for the crescent, which does in fact explain the incidental material with which it is associated on most stećci, is given *ibid.*, pp. 91—95.

¹⁷⁾ Radojčić, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 11.

¹⁸⁾ Solovjev, GZM NS III, 1948, p. 99 ff.

¹⁹⁾ Solovjev, GID VIII, 1956, p. 42. BAR XXV, 1949, p. 56. Solovjev also considers anthropomorphic, by implication, any cross in a quatrefoil, in circle, or decorated in any way with a rosette. This is because the Manichees thought of Christ as the sun. Neo-Manichees would have used solar representations. Neo-Manichees abhorred crosses except anthropomorphic ones, and all neo-Manichean crosses are anthropomorphic. Neo-Manichees used "solar" crosses. (Here Solovjev cites the 13th century Bosnian Ban Kulin's lapid, which displays six crosses of

are non-anthropomorphic cruciform, that is, which are crosses of all sorts, with no traces of anthropomorphism²⁰). Bogomils abhorred the cross on which Christ was crucified, but not cruciform representations of human figures, which latter they thought in some sense desirable²¹). Solovjev argues legitimately from this that the appearance of anthropomorphic cruciform figures on the stećci is not incompatible with Bogomil influence²²). He then falsely assumes that since some of the cruciform representations on the stećci are plainly anthropomorphic, others which are not plainly anthropomorphic really are anthropomorphic, i. e., still represent Christ, or the cruciform figure, rather than the actual cross. Therefore, what to the uninstructed observer would appear to be plain, uncompromising crosses on, or among the stećci are not incompatible with Bogomils because they are not really plain crosses but anthropomorphic ones, which were approved by Bogomils²³). Even if Solovjev's argument were correct, it would only prove that the appearance of crosses on the stećci were compatible with Bogomil influence, and not that they were the result of Bogomil influence. One might also easily prove that the crosses were compatible with straight Christian influence, without engaging in invalid arguments to do so. So even if Solovjev's argument were valid, we should be no further forward.

The only evidence that has been offered in support of the Bogomil hypothesis, or indeed, that can so be offered, is that stećci began to be erected just after the arrival of Bogomils in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and ceased to be erected with the arrival of the Turks. A certain amount of clear thinking is required at this point. It must be observed that even if the beginning of the erection of stećci were exactly contemporary with the growth of Bogomilism in the country,

different types, all signed with the names of members of Kulin's court. A cross within a circle is signed with the name of an individual whom Solovjev takes to be a neo-Manichee. CEC p. 102.) Therefore all "solar" crosses used by neo-Manichees are (by implication) anthropomorphic. This leads to further confusions which I shall not discuss here. Enough to add that Solovjev thinks that all "solar" crosses used in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a good many elsewhere, are neo-Manichean, and therefore anthropomorphic, though this last step is usually implied rather than stated. It may be subconscious.

²⁰) Solovjev, GID pp. 47, 48, BAR pp. 53, 55. My own researches have shown further plain, non-solar, non-anthropomorphic crosses, not discussed by Solovjev. Some are over six feet high.

²¹) Solovjev, GID pp. 38, 41, 62, BAR p. 57, GZM p. 99.

²²) Solovjev, GID p. 38.

²³) Solovjev, BAR, figs. 11, 13, 17.

this would only suggest as a likely hypothesis that the erection of stećci was in some way connected with Bogomilism, at least in Bosnia, if not elsewhere. It would not explain why the enthusiastic converts to Bogomilism, even if arriving directly from, say, Byzantium, started to do something which the Bogomils in Byzantium did not, in fact, do.

But this problem need not trouble us, because the beginning of the erection of stećci, i. e., of large stone blocks, is not contemporary with the introduction of Bogomilism, or of whatever heresy was introduced²⁴).

The facts of the situation, in so far as they can be ascertained, are these;

1) Heresy, of a possibly dualistic nature, is first mentioned in Bosnia just after 1150²⁵).

2) There are two principle types of stečak; a) slabs, which were a common form of medieval burial monument all over Europe, and b) large, solid blocks, which are found in concentration only in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in one or two other, widely scattered localities.

3) Slabs were being used in Bosnia and Herzegovina as early as circa 1220²⁶), and for all we know, earlier than that.

4) The earliest datable block is circa 1360²⁷).

5) The earliest datable block with figurative decoration, that is, with potentially Bogomil decoration, is circa 1435²⁸). Further datable

²⁴) Radojčić, op. cit., p. 1, mentions that the most elaborate necropolis dates 350 years later, and there is no evidence that the large blocks themselves were used earlier than 200 years after the first complaints of heresy in Bosnia.

²⁵) L. Petković, *Kršćani Bosanske Crkve*, Sarajevo 1953, pp. 97, 98.

²⁶) A slab mentioning the Serbian King Vladislav (1216—1223), from Poljice, Trebinje region, is described by Č. Truhelka, "Nekoliko hercegovačkih stečaka", *GZM IV*, 1892, p. 31.

²⁷) This block, from Vranjevo Selo, north of Dubrovnik, is dated by mention of a nephew of Ban Stjepan Kotromanić, to the mid-fourteenth century. A. Benac, "Stećci od Slivna do Čepikuća", *Buletin Historijskog Instituta u Dubrovniku II*, 1953, pp. 68, 80, 81.

²⁸) A stone from Bujakovina, Foča region, bears figures, and an inscription possibly mentioning Sandalj Hranić († 1435). V. V. Vukasović, "Starobosanski natpisi u Bosni i Hercegovini", *VHAD IX*, 1887, p. 41. If the reading of the inscription is not correct and it does not mention Sandalj, then the next datable stone with decoration is that of Tarah Bolunović, at Boljuni, Stolac region. It is dated to 1477 when the deceased, a horsebreeder and Vlah, is known to have died. Cf. Bogumil Hrabak, "Prilog datovanju hercegovačkih stečaka", *GZM NS VIII*, 1953, p. 325.

figurative decoration all occurs in the latter half of the fifteenth century²⁹).

6) An examination of the figural decoration, including hunting scenes, dances, opposing horsemen, single figures and single horses will show that it is no more connected with Bogomil belief than with Orthodox Christian belief, or even with pagan belief. A suitable selection of motifs will give almost any connection you want³⁰).

7) There is no evidence that Bogomils erected stećci anywhere except in Bosnia and Herzegovina³¹).

8) There is some evidence that there were Bogomils in Bosnia when stećci were erected³²).

These facts do not give any support to the hypothesis that stećci were constructed by, or inspired by, or in any way connected with, Bogomils. What is more, the facts are actually inconsistent with this hypothesis, unless it is assumed that the connection, whatever it may be, of the stećci with the Bogomils, had nothing to do with the fact that they were Bogomils.

In view of the forgoing, it is very surprising that there are people who take the Bogomil hypothesis seriously, as an explanation of the occurrence of stećci, and of the decorations upon them. Indeed, it is apparent that many people are incapable of distinguishing between the truth of the Bogomil hypothesis, and its usefulness as an explanation. One of the points I have tried to make here is that there is very little evidence for the truth of the Bogomil hypothesis, and a good deal of evidence against it. But the other, and much more important point is that, true or false, the Bogomil hypothesis is irrelevant to problems about the stećci. The confusion involved has a more than local importance, and I shall try to explain it more fully.

There is a widespread and possibly natural assumption that the decorations appearing on burial monuments of any kind will be best

²⁹) A. Benac, Radimlja, Sarajevo, 1950.

³⁰) I have prepared a catalogue of all motifs which awaits publication. I should be happy to put it at the disposal of anyone seeking connections.

³¹) See footnote 5.

³²) The arguments in favour of this, which rely mainly on Papal reports and other external evidence, but which are supported by some internal evidence, are presented by Franjo Rački, *Bogomili i Patareni*, Rad Jugoslavenske Akademije VII, VIII, IX, Zagreb 1869—1870), reprinted, *Posebna Izdanja Srpske Akademije LXXXVII*, Belgrade 1931, and by numerous other authors. There is undoubted evidence for „a heresy“ in Bosnia, but less secure evidence for Bogomilism, so called.

explained by consulting the religious beliefs of those who made the monuments. Why this assumption should be made is not altogether clear. It is, of course, a fact that in nearly all cultures burial is one of the chief focal points of religious ritual. It is also a fact that religions which have any kind of dogma at all, usually include a fairly well-defined eschatology, or set of beliefs about the Afterlife. It is also true that it is a practice of some religions to depict their principal beliefs on their monuments. There are certain quite definite reasons why this should be the case, particularly with Christianity. But even a slight acquaintance with burial monuments suggests that the decorations on such monuments do not, as a general rule, directly represent the beliefs of their makers. Thus in a Christian church we may well observe representations of the Fall, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Last Judgement, which are directly representative of Christian belief. But such things do not appear on Christian tombs³³). It is, of course, possible to say that certain signs on Christian tombs are allegorical of these beliefs, but once allegorical, a sign can cohere with anything at all. Certainly, one can scarcely infer, from the contents of a modern English graveyard, the religious beliefs of the local population. This is also the case, say, with muslim graveyards, or with almost any other kind of graveyard one may care to choose. We have only the illusion that there is no mystery about a modern English, or European graveyard, simply because we think we know the beliefs of the people who have erected these stones. And yet the beliefs in fact tell us nothing. The monuments in an English graveyard are not explained by the fact that they were erected by Christians.

Professor Solovjev provides us with a nice example of what can happen if you want to assume that stečak decorations depict belief. Solovjev tells us that,

“Mani says that the moon is a ‘vessel of light’ which wanders in the sky, carrying souls which she transports each month to the greater ship of the sun”³⁴).

He goes on to tell how this belief was transmitted to the Paulicians. An 11th century Byzantine anathema against the Manicheans says,

³³) There are a few exceptions, which I allow the reader to think of for himself, reminding him however that these only prove the rule.

³⁴) Solovjev, CEC p. 100. GID pp. 33, 34. The argument was in fact taken from Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 174, n. 1.

"Anathema to those who say that human souls are consubstantial with God, and return to God from below by means of the sun and the moon, which are considered like ships".

This veneration of the sun and the moon "must have passed"³⁵⁾ from the Paulicians to the Bogomils, Solovjev says, and "explains to us perfectly the so-frequent appearance of the two heavenly bodies on the tombstones"³⁶⁾.

A more fruitful line of approach is the purely art historical one, adopted by Radojčić, which involves a stylistic treatment of the decoration. This approach, although it too does not explain the tombstones, does give us some positive and useful information about them, namely, that certain decorations upon them show stylistic affinities with Western art objects³⁷⁾. It falls down, unfortunately, when the decorations have got no style³⁸⁾.

The obvious question to ask about tombstones is, what are they for? One of the answers could be that they are for the representation or perpetuation of beliefs. But this does not seem a very plausible explanation for tombstones. The function of a tombstone, and indeed, the decoration upon it, is certainly not obviously to perpetuate beliefs. On the face of it, there is no more reason why tombstone decoration should depict people's beliefs than why decoration on anything else should do so. To say that decorations upon tombstones depict beliefs is an indefinite statement. The most obvious precise statement to which it might correspond is that people use tombstones as vehicles of communication, i. e., for instruction, to teach children. Another statement would be that people depict things on their tombstones to cheer themselves up, i. e., to reinforce their belief, or faith.

There are, however, certain things which known tombstones are

³⁵⁾ Solovjev, CEC p. 100.

³⁶⁾ It is unfortunate that there are no crescents on the stećci made to look like ships, or carrying passengers, and that many are upside-down. However, Solovjev can explain these last. They are the moon-ship after it has delivered its souls, and is returning empty. Solovjev, GID, p. 34.

³⁷⁾ Radojčić, op. cit., pp. 4—10. His treatment would be ideal if a dance or tournament on a tapestry could be accepted as reason for the same motifs on a tombstone. And again, there are numerous details on the stećci which do not appear on Western art objects.

³⁸⁾ Ibid., p. 1, Radojčić states that he only considers representations „interesting to a historian of art“, that is, elaborate reliefs, and that he puts to one side slabs with „heraldic or possibly symbolic significance“.

for. The modern Serbian tombstones near Katrega; Čačak, which bear on them pictures of tables with food, and representations of the altar arranged for Mass, are for providing the deceased with the Mass, or with the ritual of eating at the grave, both of which are thought necessary for his comfort³⁹). Other tombstones are for the discouragement of grave robbers, through the pronouncement of curses upon them⁴⁰), or through the representation of amuletic designs which thwart the evil eye⁴¹). Further tombstones are for stimulating the re-birth of the deceased, and bear upon them magical signs to this purpose, such as the outright male and female reproductive organs shown on a tombstone at Slivlje⁴²). These may be elsewhere stylized as enigmatic symbols. More could be said about what tombstones are for, but enough has been said to show that the decorations upon some tombstones have a precise function, either ritualistic or magical, or both, and that allegorically interpreting such decoration in terms of belief is, though perhaps an amusing pastime, otherwise a waste of time. Ask the stoutest Christian to explain, in terms of his belief, the action of knocking on wood.

The peasants of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and indeed, of other parts of Yugoslavia displayed, when questioned by Phyllis Kemp concerning certain of their funeral practices, a remarkable inconsistency between their orthodox religious views and what they did about death⁴³). For instance, well past the time when, according to

³⁹) I am grateful to Dr. Violet Macdermott for bringing these tombstones to my attention. A description of the ritual is given by Edmund Schneewis, „Glavni elementi smrtnih običaja kod Srba i Hrvata“, Glasnik Skopskog Naučnog Društva V, Skoplje 1929, p. 276. The iconographical significance of this ritual in tombstone decoration is discussed in some of its aspects by P. Petković, „Motiv arkada i stolova na stećcima“, Starinar NS VII—VIII, 1956—57, Belgrade 1958, pp. 195—205.

⁴⁰) As at Čerin, Mostar region, Peljavsko Groblje, Tuzla region, Bogutovo Selo, Bjeljina region, Han Pobrđnica, Stolac region, Podgradinje, Stolac region, and Vlahovići, Ljubinje region.

⁴¹) Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets*, Ann Arbor, 1950, p. 99. The tau cross has also, in Germanic symbolism, a protective power against evil, and was put over doors in the time of plague. Richard Wunsch, „Das Antoniterkreuz“, Hessische Blätter für Volkskunde XI, Leipzig 1912, p. 50. This might have something to do with its use on Bosnian tombstones.

⁴²) Č. Truhelka, „Mittelalterliche Inschriften aus der Herzegovina“, Wissenschaftliche Mittheilungen aus Bosnien und der Hercegovina VI, Vienna 1889, p. 536—537, fig. 46.

⁴³) P. Kemp, *The Healing Ritual: Studies in the Technique and Tradition of the Southern Slavs*, London 1955, p. 7.

Christian doctrine, the soul had ascended to Paradise, they were taking steps to make it at ease in the grave. When questioned concerning this difference, the peasants were confused. It did not occur to them, nor, particularly, to Phyllis Kemp, that they might be performing some older, traditional ritual, for which all dogma, had it ever existed, had been forgotten and passed away, or had not been re-phrased into Christian terms. The peasants did not question the efficacy of their actions, nor would they have been able to see the point of abandoning them. Similarly, the action of talking about *stećci* in terms of Bogomils seems, for some, to have efficacy in itself, long after logic has been forgotten, or passed away.

II.

Conclusions Drawn from Datable Inscriptions

The hypothesis presented below is that certain of the decorated, medieval tombstones of Bosnia and Hercegovina, called *stećci*¹⁾, were constructed by horsebreeding inhabitants known as Vlachs. It is suggested that the ethnic background of these horsebreeders may have had bearing on the type of decoration which they employed. The type of decoration which we should like to establish as "Vlach-type", or employed on principally Vlach tombstones, includes deer and deer-hunts, horsemen, both singly and opposing each other with a woman between, horses, dancers, and certain figures with a raised, enlarged right hand. It will be shown that there are both historical and economic factors why only the Vlachs in Bosnia and Hercegovina, and not those in other regions, produced *stećci*, and why they did not produce them before the fifteenth century. It will be further seen that these factors have nothing to do with whatever religion or heresy may have been followed by the Vlachs.

The *stećci*, or monolithic blocks of stone which were used as grave markers, appear thickly in many parts of Bosnia and Hercegovina and some neighbouring regions, but most of them do not bear decoration, and even fewer, pictorial decoration of the nature described above. The area in which nearly all the decorated stones are found may be closely defined. It is the region bounded by the Dinaric Alps on the North, Montenegro on the South, and the Njegoš Mountains, also of Montenegro, on the East, and on the West the

¹⁾ Plural of *stećak*.

narrow coastal strip of Dalmatia. It includes all of present-day Hercegovina, and some of Bosnia and Dalmatia. It is a barren and inhospitable land, consisting of limestone ridges and karst valleys. Even at the present day travel is difficult and there is little other than *stećci*, to attract the tourist. The inhabitants, apart from those growing the relatively recent crop of tobacco, are mainly stock-breeders, and appear to have been so from the Middle Ages.

In green, upper Bosnia, west of the Drina, there are the rich, metal-mining districts of Olovo, Kreševo, Zvornik and Srebrenica. Many new mines were opened in these regions during the reign of Stjepan Kotromanić, Ban of Bosnia from 1314 to 1353. Trading contracts were made with coastal cities, and new roads cut²⁾. Numerous caravans were sent from the coastal, trading centres into the interior, and especially from Dubrovnik. It was necessary that these caravans cross the karst belt between the coast and the Bosnian interior, and by this means certain external influences and material wealth passed to the inhabitants of that region.

The inhabitants of the karst lands throughout the Middle Ages consisted of two kinds of people. There were those who were pure Slav, which included the feudal landlords and certain people who worked their land, insofar as it could be worked. Then there were those who do not appear to have been pure Slav, and these were stockbreeders, called "Vlasi", or Vlachs³⁾. The meaning of the term "Vlach" is not altogether clear. It was originally derived from the name of the Celtic tribe, "Volcae", and was used to describe people who spoke Latin⁴⁾. Vlachs of the Danube region were stock-breeders organized on a tribal or clan basis, of non-Slav origin, who were supposed by some to be the original inhabitants of the country⁵⁾. It has been suggested that the Vlachs of Hercegovina, who were also

²⁾ *Historija Naroda Jugoslavije I*, Belgrade 1953, pp. 523—530.

³⁾ In Serbian documents of the 13th century, a distinction is made between Vlachs and Slavs. Silviu Dragomir, *Vlahii din nordul peninsulei Balcanice in evul mediu*, Bukarest 1959, p. 20. Vladimir Ćorović, *Historija Bosne*, Belgrade 1940, p. 109, reports that the Dubrovnik records use the word "Vlasi" for those who were non-Serb. A document issued at Kotor in the fifteenth century makes a distinction between Vlachs, Slavs and Albanians. Dragomir, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

⁴⁾ Ćorović, *op. cit.*, p. 108. Some early Slav sources use the expression "iz Vlah" for "from Italy". Dragomir, *op. cit.*, p. 139. See also J. and W. Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Leipzig 1922, Vol. XIII, pp. 545—547, sv. „Wahle“.

⁵⁾ Matila Ghika, *A Documented Chronology of Roumanian History*, Oxford 1941, pp. 23, 24.

stock-breeders, were either remnants of the pre-Slav population of the country, that is, Illyrians⁶⁾, or else immigrants from the Danube region, who may have arrived after the Slavs⁷⁾. It is likely that they were, in fact, a mixture of both⁸⁾. It does not seem that the Vlachs of the karst land of Bosnia, Hercegovina and Dalmatia spoke Latin, but some spoke a dialect tinged with Latin⁹⁾.

It is known that the Vlasi of Hercegovina were organized on a clan basis similar to that obtaining among the Danubian Vlachs. Their tribal domains were called *katuni*. The structure and grouping of these tribal domains is of interest. A clan, or family, may have had several *katuni*, or only one. A group of these *katuni* formed a special governmental region, whose leader reported to the local feudal landlord. At the head of each clan was a chief, or *katunar*, whose position appears to have been hereditary. At the head of each group of clans, or governmental region, called a *nahija* in Turkish times, was a prince, or *knez*, who was feudal agent for the local self-government, and a *vojvoda*, who was head of the militia, which was composed of local Vlachs. The *knez* and *vojvoda* appear, in some regions at least, always to have come from select clans. For instance, in the Stolac, Ljubinje and Bileća regions of Hercegovina, inland from Dubrovnik, there was an important governmental region of Vlach tribes known as "Donji Vlasi". More is known about them than about most Vlachs, because they took a key position in providing horse transport and protection for the Dubrovnik caravans and, consequently, careful record was kept concerning them by the inhabitants of Dubrovnik. It is recorded that the *knez* was usually a member of the clan called "Vlasi Burmazi", and the *vojvoda*, always of the clan "Vlasi Hrabreni-Miloradovići", who lived near Stolac¹⁰⁾.

The Slav inhabitants of Bosnia, Hercegovina and Dalmatia were organized on a feudal basis. There were traditional noble families

⁶⁾ Ćorović, *op. cit.*, pp. 108, 109.

⁷⁾ Dragomir, *op. cit.*, p. 167, gives evidence for Vlach migrations into Hercegovina as late as the fourteenth century. Certainly some Vlachs were established much earlier, and are mentioned in Dalmatian documents of the 11th century. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁸⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁹⁾ *Ibid.*, pp. 145—148.

¹⁰⁾ Bogomil Hrabak, "O hercegovačkih vlaškim katunima prema poslovnoj knjizi Dubrovčanina Dživana Pripčinovića", *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja (GZM)* NS 1956, p. 35.

who performed the function of overlords. One of the most interesting of noble families was the Sanković family, who were vassals throughout the fourteenth century to the Bosnian bans and kings. At one point they held "all the territory from the sea to Nevesinje and Konjic, including the whole region of the Vlasi"¹¹⁾. There is some evidence that the family originated in Zagorje, namely, the eastern part of Hercegovina between Gacko and Foča, around the source rivers of the Drina and the foothills of Montenegro¹²⁾. They could, in fact, be described as nobility native to the karst region of lower Hercegovina. But they encountered some enmity in the late fourteenth century, and in 1404 their power was annihilated and their lands divided between two powerful Bosnian nobles, Sandalj Hranić and knez Paul Radinović¹³⁾. Neither of these nobles came from families native to Hercegovina, though knez Paul held much land along the Drina, between Sarajevo and Foča. In 1415 Sandalj took knez Paul out riding, in the company of the Bosnian King Ostoja, and murdered him¹⁴⁾. He then seized Radinović's lands. His claims were disputed for some time by the two young sons of knez Paul, the Pavlovići, but they were both eventually killed, and Sandalj gained all Hercegovina, as well as considerable land in Bosnia, along the Drina. At his death in 1435 the territory passed to his nephew, Stjepan Vukčić, who created for himself the title "herceg od Sv. Save", or Duke of St. Sava¹⁵⁾. Even he was not at ease, quarrelling frequently with his sons, but he held the karst land of lower Hercegovina until his death in 1466¹⁶⁾, after which it shortly passed to the Turks. His title of „herceg" survives in the name "Hercegovina".

The structure of society pertaining in the karst areas was, therefore, a feudal system imposed upon a clan system. The Vlach villages always retained some measure of their tribal independence. There were adequate political and economic reasons for this, especially in the unsettled times of the fifteenth century, after the fall of the native ruling family of Sanković. The new Slav overlords,

¹¹⁾ Jovanka Mijušković, "Humska vlasteoska porodica Sankovića", *Istorijski časopis XI*, Belgrade 1961, p. 31.

¹²⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹³⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 49. The title knez was used of men in varying positions of authority, from heads of tribes and towns to chiefs of state

¹⁴⁾ Čorović, *Historija Bosne*, p. 417.

¹⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 479.

¹⁶⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 585.

fully occupied fighting one another or the Turks, had no incentive to interfere with the Vlachs, who more or less controlled the interior trade routes, as long as these overlords received the customs due them¹⁷). But with the arrival of the Turks, and a stronger central government, the situation gradually changed. For a while certain Vlachs were permitted to keep control of their tribal territories, under allegiance to the Turks¹⁸). Yet as the years passed many Vlasi became converted to the Moslem religion, and their functioning tribal organization died a natural death. At the same time, stećci ceased to be erected.

We have now observed that the medieval inhabitants of the karst regions of Bosnia, Hercegovina and Dalmatia consisted of Slav nobility, of other Slavs, who were generally farmers insofar as the land could be farmed, and of Vlachs, who were horsebreeders, and who made up a large proportion of the population. It will be interesting to see which of these groups constructed stećci, and when. Of course, it may be said that all these groups constructed stećci, and at all times. However, the only definite information that can be gained is that which is given by inscriptions.

There are over 200 inscribed stones¹⁹) but only a very few of these are datable, most of them bearing the names of unidentifiable personages, or succinct reminders to the passerby²⁰). Actual dates are rarely, if ever, given in inscriptions. Definite dates may be obtained only when a historically identifiable personage is named. This is usually a king or nobleman in whose reign the deceased lived or under whom he served or, more rarely, the deceased himself. The utility of such definite dates in dating decoration on uninscribed stones is limited, for on only eight of the datable stones does any kind of decoration appear. In these cases, the dates are of consi-

¹⁷) M. Dinić, "Dubrovačka srednjevekovna karavanska trgovina", *Jugoslavenski istoriski časopis* III, 1937, pp. 134, 142.

¹⁸) B. Hrabak, "Herak Vraneš", *Godišnjak Istoriskog Društva Bosne i Hercegovine* VIII, 1955, pp. 59, 60.

¹⁹) Ljubo Stojanović, *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi*, Belgrade 1905, Vol. III. Some further have been published since 1905, but the original number of datable inscriptions has not greatly increased. Most inscriptions are in the cyrillic alphabet.

²⁰) These say such things as, "You shall be as I am, but I will never be as you", (K. Hörmann, "Starobosanski natpis iz XV vijeka", *GZM* III, 1891, p. 52) or „May those hands be cursed who would turn over this stone". M. Vego, *Zbornik srednjovekovnih natpisa Bosne i Hercegovine*, Sarajevo 1962, Vol. I, p. 63.

Illustration of tombstones bearing datable inscriptions

- Fig. 1 — Police, Trebinje region, 1233—1242
- Fig. 2 — Ljusići, Ulog region, 1353—1377
- Fig. 3 — Vranjevo Selo, Dubrovnik region, 1345—1392
- Fig. 4 — Veličani, Popovo Polje, 1377—1391
- Fig. 5 — Biskup, Konjic region, 1398—1399
- Fig. 6 — Kočerini, Mostar region, 1404
- Fig. 7 — Vladjevine, Rogatica region, 1404—1415
- Fig. 8 — Vladjevine, Rogatica region, 1404—1415
- Fig. 9 — Zabrdje by Toplic, Kreševo region, 1400—1420
- Fig. 10 — Kopošići, Visoko region, circa 1377—1391
- Fig. 11 — Bakri, Visočina, Mostar region, 1423—1435
- Fig. 12 — Vrhpolje, Ljubomir, Trebinje region, 1413—1435
- Fig. 13 — Bujakovina, Foča region, 1404—1435
- Fig. 14 — Boljuni, Stolac region, 1477
- Fig. 15 — Radimlja, Stolac region, circa 1477
- Fig. 16 — Radimlja, Stolac region, circa 1477



derable value, for conclusions about the dating of other, similarly decorated stones may then be drawn. Unfortunately, all such datable, decorated stones are in the karst regions of lower Hercegovina, with one exception in south-west Bosnia, so no conclusions about the dating of the spiral-decorated stones of East Bosnia may be made by these means. I list below the datable stones in order of their chronology, remarking in each case the shape of the stone on which the inscription occurs.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1) Police, Trebinje region,
Hercegovina.
Mentions Serbian King
Vladislav, 1233—1242.

Undecorated slab
(fig. 1).</p> | <p>"† VЪ dni pravovjernago krala
Vladislava prjestavi se ra . . . Bž
. . . нь a porikъlomъ (ž) uraň
Pribilša a . . . i . . . a po Bži
m(i)losti . . . i . . . djed
na noč
ako ra . . .
im . . ." ²¹⁾</p> |
|---|---|

This slab, later cut into a doorstep for the church at Police, and now in the lapidarium of the Zavičajni Muzej, Trebinje, dates from the time lower Hercegovina, called Travunia, was in the hands of the Serbs. It bears no decoration. The inscription is fragmentary, and could be roughly translated,

"In the days of the orthodox King Vladislav is placed God's servant . . . who was by origin the župan Pribliš . . ." ²²⁾.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>2) Ljusići, Ulog region,
between Nevesinje and Foča,
Hercegovina, by the village
Trešnjevići.
Mentions Ban Tvrtko of Bosnia,
before he became king
1353—1377.

Undecorated chest
(fig. 2).</p> | <p>"Ase leži dobri Pribislavъ
(P)eto(i)vićъ na svoi zemli na
plemenitoi. Služiň banu
Тврѣдъку г(ospo) d (i)n(u)
vjeňno, na tomъ pogiboňъ.
P(i)sa Brat(ъ)i(ć). " ²³⁾</p> |
|---|--|

²¹⁾ Ćiro Truhelka, „Nekoliko hercegovačkih natpisa“, GZM IV, 1892, p. 31. I have added a few letters to Truhelka's reading from a photograph donated by Rajko Sikimić, Belgrade.

²²⁾ I am grateful to Dr. Vera Javarek and Professor Dimitri Obolensky for assistance with the translations.

²³⁾ Šefik Bešliagić, „Nekoliko novopronadjenih natpisa na stećcima“, GZM NS XIV, 1959, pp. 243—245, p. 244, fig. 2.

The inscription is written on the long side of an undecorated chest shaped stone, and reads as follows;

"Here lies good Pribislav Petoivić on his land on the family land (na plemenitoi). I served the lord Ban Tvrtko faithfully, and died in that service. Bratić wrote this."

The implications of the phrase „na plemenitoi“ have been discussed by Sima Ćirković²⁴).

- | | |
|---|--|
| 3) Vranjeno Selo, Dubrovnik region.
Mentions Vladislav Nikolić, nephew of Ban Stjepan Kotromanić of Bosnia, (1319—1353).
He died between 1345 and 1392. | „† Ase leži knez Vladislavъ, župana Nikole sinъ bana Stjepana neti, a leži svoi zemli na plemenito. A pisa Pomočan“ ²⁵). |
|---|--|

Undecorated chest
(fig. 3).

"Here lies knez Vladislav, son of the župan Nikola, nephew of Ban Stjepan. He lies on his land on the family land. Pomočan wrote this."

The inscription runs around the upper rim of an undecorated chest-shaped stone. Ban Stjepan had two nephews, Vladislav and Bogiša Nikolić. Together they were joint rulers of one part of Hum, or central Herzegovina, and part of Popovo Polje, east of Vranjevo Selo. They are mentioned in Dubrovnik Archives in 1345, and in 1392 their successor is mentioned²⁶), so their demise, and the erection of the stone of Vladislav, must have taken place in the interim.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 4) Veličani, Popovo Polje, Hercegovina.
Mentions King Tvrtko of Bosnia, 1377—1391.

Chest-shaped stone, decorated with round arches
(fig. 4). | „† ВЪ ime oca i sina i svetago duha. Se leži raba Božia Polihrania, zovomъ miръskimъ gospoja Radača, žoupan Neпъca Ćihorića kučъnica i nevjesta župana Vratъka i sluge Dabiživa i tepčije Stipka, a kъči župana Miлътjena Draživoevika, |
|---|---|

²⁴) S. Ćirković, „Ostaci starije društvene strukture u bosanskom feudalnom društvu“, Istoriski glasnik III—IV, Belgrade 1958, p. 156.

²⁵) Alojz Benac, „Srednjevekovni stećci od Slivna do Ćepikuća“, Anali Histo-rijskog Instituta u Dubrovniku II, Dubrovnik 1953, pp. 68, 69, fig. d, Pl. IV, fig. 1.

²⁶) Ibid., pp. 69, 80, 81.

a kaznъsu Snъku sestra. A pos-
tavi sъ bjeljegъ ne sinъ Dabiživъ
sъ Vožiomъ pomošćiju samъ
svoimi ljudъmi, a vъ dni
gospodina krala Tvrъtka"²⁷).

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Here lies the servant of God, Polihrania, by her wordly name Radača, lady of Nenac Čihorić and relative of župan Vratko and sluga Dabiživ and tepčija Stipko, and daughter of the župan Miltjen Draživoevik, and sister to kaznac Sanko. Her son Dabiživ erected this sign with the help of God and his men, in the days of the lord King Tvrtko"²⁸).

The inscription runs around four sides of the chest-shaped stone, under a series of simple, round arches. It tells us that Radača had taken holy orders and that Polihrania was her name as nun. But it is difficult to tell whether she would have been a Catholic or East Orthodox nun, or either²⁹). She was herself of the Sanković family, mentioned before, and sister to the illustrious kaznac Sanko, who gave the family, formerly called Draživojević, its name of Sanković³⁰). The family had, from the early fourteenth century, held territory around Nikšić in Montenegro, putting them in close relations with the Orthodox Serbs³¹). Her father, the župan Miltjen Draživojević had for a short time served Czar Dušan³²), and her relative sluga Dabiživ was in Trebinje serving the Serbian ruler between 1334 and 1349³³). Another relative mentioned in the inscription,

²⁷) Konstantin Jireček, "Vlastela humska na natpisu u Veličanima", GZM IV, 1892, p. 280.

²⁸) The titles are feudal ones, some originally Byzantine.

²⁹) The name Polihrania might derive from that of Polyrhonia, mother of St. George, martyred at Diospoli under Diocletian, (F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca hagiographica Graeca*, Brussels 1957, p. 215) in which case it would imply a connection with the Eastern Church, or else it could be the female form of any number of Sts. Polyrhonios', celebrated in either Calendar.

³⁰) Kaznac Sanko was active between 1335 and 1370, and is reported deceased in 1372. He held Dabar Polje, east of Stolac, most of Popovo Polje, and further land around Nevesinje, as well as land in Primorje or the coastal strip south of Dubrovnik, and the coastal town of Slano. J. Mijušković, "Humska vlasteoska porodica Sankovića", *Istorijski časopis XI*, 1961, pp. 22—30.

³¹) *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³²) *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³³) Jireček, "Vlastela Humska", GZM IV, 1892, pp. 281, 282.

tepčija Stipko, held land around Trebinje and Nikšić, and was often sent as envoy to Dubrovnik from the Serbian Czar³⁴). Although her husband's family, the Čihorići, followed the nominally Catholic, Bosnian rulers, they had also been in Serbian employ in the past, and there is the possibility that they may at one time have adhered to the Serbian Orthodox Church³⁵). Unfortunately, we have no precise information about the religious views of either the Čihorić or Sanković families. Nor do we know the date of Polihranja's death. As her son Dabiživ, who erected the stone, is not mentioned in the archives until 1383, it would seem that the stone was erected towards the end of Tvrtko's reign.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>5) Biskup, Konjic region,
Hercegovina.
Mentions Goisava, wife
of Radić Sanković,
Hercegovinian noble.
She died between May 1398
and November 1399.</p> | <p>"Ase leži gospoja Goisavъ kći
Jurja Baošića a kućnica
voevode Radiča a prista u kući
kaznca Sanka i župna Bilijaka
s počteniemъ i prija svoju viru
i višnu slavu"³⁶).</p> |
|---|---|

Undecorated chest-shaped stone
(fig. 5).

"Here lies the lady Goisava, daughter of Juraj Baošić and wife of the Vojvoda Radić, who stayed in the house of the treasurer Sanko and the župan Bilijak and who received her faith and greater glory³⁷).

A skeleton was found beneath this stone with a Dubrovnik dinar dated 1377 in its mouth. Nearby were some Venetian coins³⁸).

³⁴) Ibid., p. 282.

³⁵) Most noble families in lower Hercegovina followed the Serbs during the reign of the powerful Czar Dušan (1331—1355), but at his death they wavered, largely going over to the new strong man, Bosnian Ban Tvrtko, who in 1377 pronounced himself king and Bosnia, independent. (Čorović, *Historija Bosne*, p. 287.) After the fall of Serbia to the Turks in 1389, there was no more question of Serbian interests in Hercegovina, and the territory was considered Bosnian. It gained, however, a certain independence under Duke Stjepan Vukčić. (1435—1466.)

³⁶) M. Vego, "Nadgrobni spomenici porodice Sankovića u selu Biskupu kod Konjica", *GZM NS X*, 1955, p. 158.

³⁷) The meaning of this last sentence is not clear.

³⁸) Vego, *op. cit.*, *GZM NS X*, 1955, pp. 158, 159. The chest on which the inscription appears lies with sixteen others inside the ruins of a church with a round

Goisava ist first mentioned as the wife of Radič Sanković in May, 1391, soon after which her husband was imprisoned until 1398. Goisava had, during this time, applied for permission to live in Dubrovnik with her sister, but in May, 1398, she requested two nobles to accompany her so that she might return to her husband. An ominous silence coecerning Goisava ensues, and in November, 1399, Dubrovnik is sending Radič 300 perpers on the occasion of his second marriage³⁹). Sometime around this time it may be assumed that the above tombstone was erected. Radič himself had not long to live. He was captured in 1404 by the Bosnian nobles Sandalj Hranić and knez Paul Radinović, and imprisoned on the Drina. Rumour arose that he had been blinded before his death⁴⁰).

<p>6) Kočerín, Mostar region Hercegovina. Inscription mentions Ban Stjepan Kotromanić, Ban of Bosnia 1319—1353, King Tvrtko 1353—1391, King Dabiša 1391—1395, King Ostoja 1398—1404, Queen Jelena Gruba 1395—1398. The deceased succumbed when King Ostoja went to Hungary. His death was therefore in 1404. Undecorated slab, now set in a wall (fig. 6).</p>	<p>“Va ime oca i sina i svet(a)go d(u)ha aminъ Se leži Vig(a)нъ Miloševićъ, služi banu S tipanu i kralu T(v) (rt)ku i kralu Dabi ši i kralici Grubi i krala Ostoju. I u t o vtime doide i svadi se Osto(j)a kralъ s hercegomъ i z Bosn(o)мъ i na Ugre poe Ostoje. To v rime mene Vigna doide конъчина i legohъ na svo мъ plemenitomъ podъ Kočerinomъ,</p>
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apse. The church was already ruined at the time of the laying of at least four of the graves, which are set on top of the foundations. Vego, “Nadgrobni spomenici porodice Sankovića”, II”, GZM NS XII, 1957, pp. 127—139, Pl. X. Inside the graves were found fragments of gold brocade upon some of which the Italianate design is still evident (Ibid., Pl. VII, VIII, X) and one Murano-type glass beaker. (Ibid., pp. 132—133, Pl. V)

³⁹) Vego, GZM NS X, 1955, pp. 158—159.

⁴⁰) Mijušković, op. cit., Istorijски časopis XI, 1961, pp. 48, 49.

i molu vas ne nast
upaite na me. Ja smъ
bilъ kako vi este
vi ćete biti kako
esamъ ja⁴¹⁾.

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. Here lies Viganj Milošević. He served Ban Stjepan and King Tvrtko and King Dabiša and Queen Gruba and King Ostoja. And in that time came the quarrel with King Ostoja and the Duke (Hrvoje Vukčić) and with Bosnia, and Ostoja went to Hungary. At that time the end came to me, Viganj, and I was laid in my family land near Kočerín. And please, do not step on me. I was as you are, you shall be as I am.

Viganj succumbed during the events following the Bosnian war with Dubrovnik in 1403. Having captured all Dubrovnik's holdings along the coast, King Ostoja of Bosnia, fearing retribution from King Sigismund of Hungary to whom Dubrovnik had sent for aid, decided to declare himself a vassal of Hungary. This move, which put Bosnia back into the dependent position it had held before, was made by Ostoja without consulting his nobles. The powerful Duke Hrvoje Vukčić, of Jajce and Split, was enraged, and plotted to overthrow Ostoja and put in his place a well known heretic, knez Paul Radišić, as king. Ostoja fled to Hungary in 1404⁴²⁾, after which time it may be assumed the above monument was inscribed.

7,8) Vladjevine, Rogatica region,
south-east Bosnia.

Inscription mentions Vlatko
Vladjević († after 1404)
and knez Paul Radinović,
Bosnian noble, 1390—1415.

Undecorated chest-shaped
stone (fig. 7).

"Въ ime oca i sina i svet(a)go
d(u)ha, ase leži Vlatko Vlavićъ
koi ne molaše ni ednoga
človeka tak mogna a obide
mnogo zemle a doma pogibe a
za nimъ ne osta ni sъn ni bratъ.
A na nъ usiče kami negovъ
voevoda Mitošъ služina
Božiomъ pomočju i kneza Pavla
milostoju, koi ukopa Vlatka
pomenu Bga⁴³⁾.

⁴¹⁾ Ć. Truhelka, "Stari bosanski natpisi", GZM III, 1891, pp. 86, 87. M. Vego, Zbornik srednjovjekovnih natpisa, Sarajevo 1962, Vol. I, p. 13.

⁴²⁾ Vjekoslav Klaić, Geschichte Bosniens von den ältesten Zeiten bis zum Verfall des Königreiches, Leipzig 1885, p. 289.

⁴³⁾ Ć. Truhelka, "Die bosnischen Grabdenkmäler des Mittelalters", Wissen-

This large, undecorated block of stone, now in the courtyard of the Zemaljski Muzej, Sarajevo, had another alongside it, reading;

Undecorated chest-shaped
stone (fig. 8).

“Ѡ VЪ ime oca i sna i sveto(ga)
du(h)a. Se leži voevoda Mitošъ
svoimъ (s)inomъ Stjepkomъ
svomu gdnu Vlatku Vlaćeviću
konъ nogu koimu posluži živu
a mrtъra pobiliži Boži(o)mъ
pomočju i kneza Pavla milostiju
a i se kopaite na pl(e)metomъ.
I pravi voevoda Mitošъ i
mnogo ot moe ruke na zemli bi
a je (ja) ni (h)otenie nikogъ ne
bi mrtve ni (krivo?) ubit(i)“⁴⁴).

The two inscriptions may be translated;

“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Here lies Vlatko Vlavić who asked nothing of any man. He visited many lands but perished at home, and for him remains neither son nor brother. And his vojvoda Mitoš cut this stone above him, a service through God's help and the charity of knez Paul, who buried Vlatko and remembered God.”

„In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Here lies vojvoda Mitoš with his son Stjepko, at the feet of his lord, Vlatko Vladjević, whom he served in life and is near to in death, by the help of God and the charity of knez Paul, and is buried on family land. Vojvoda Mitoš truly (could say): many by my hand were on the ground, but I wished none dead, nor killed unjustly.”

Vlatko Vladjević is mentioned as a representative of knez Paul Radinović, when he supported King Ostoja in the uneasy times around 1404. The Dubrovčani speak of him in September, 1397, as a person of some consequence⁴⁵). It is possible that he was a Patarene, or heretic, for there is a “Vlatko the Patarene” who played an important political rôle at much the same date, though his last

schaftliche Mittheilungen aus Bosnien und der Hercegovina (Wiss. Mitt.) III, 1895, pp. 435—436.

⁴⁴) Ibid., pp. 435—436.

⁴⁵) Č. Truhelka, “Crnice iz srednjeg vijeka, I, Vlatko Vladjević, GZM XX, 1908, p. 421.

name is never specified⁴⁶). It is unlikely that the tombstones were erected before 1405.

- 9) Zabrdje by Toplik,
Kreševo region, Lepenica
River Valley, Bosnia.
Inscription mentions a
Bosnian Grand Prince Radoje
and son Radić, presumably
knez Radoje Dragosalić,
active 1400, and son Radić
Radojević, active 1420.
- “(A)se zlamenie kneza Radoe
velikoga kneza bosanskoga. A
postavi e(ga) sinъ negovъ knezъ
Radikъ z Božiomъ pomočju i
svoihъ vjernjehъ, a s inomъ
ni ednomъ inomъ pomočiju
nego samъ”⁴⁷).

Sarcophagus-shaped stone
decorated with crested
shield (fig. 9).

„This is the monument of knez Radoje, Bosnian Grand Prince. His son knez Radić erected this with the help of God and of his faithful men, and with no other help but his own.”

The stone, sarcophagus-shaped with a pointed top, bears on one end the image of a shield, with wolf's crest, inscribed in a medallion. It does not resemble any other stečak decoration. The animal crest is probably derived from that of the Balšić family of medieval Zeta, south of Herzegovina⁴⁸). The deceased may be identified as one Radoje Dragosalić, mentioned in 1400, and his son with Radić Radojević, who was in the service of Bosnian King Tvrtko II Tvrtković (1404—1408, 1421—1443), and who is mentioned in documents of 1420, when he confirmed a gift of Sandalj Hranić to Dubrovnik⁴⁹). The stone was probably erected in the first two decades of the fifteenth century.

- 10) Kopošići, north of Sarajevo
and east of Visoko, between
the Misoča and Ljubina rivers,
- “ѠVa ime otca i sina i svet(o)
ga duha aminъ. Se leži knezъ
Batićъ na svoe zemli na

⁴⁶) Ibid., p. 423.

⁴⁷) Ć. Truhelka, „Die bosnischen Grabdenkmäler des Mittelalters“, *Wiss. Mitt.* III, 1895, pp. 433—434.

Ludwig von Thallóczy, *Studien zur Geschichte Bosniens und Serbiens im Mittelalter*, Munich and Leipzig 1914, p. 300.

⁴⁸) Ć. Truhelka, „Dva heraldička spomenika iz Bosne“, *GZM* I, 1889, pp. 74—75.

⁴⁹) Ibid., p. 75.

<p>south-east of Castle Dubrovnik. Inscription mentions a King Tvrtko, probably King Tvrtko I, 1377—1391, possibly King Tvrtko II, 1404—1408, 1421—1443.</p> <p>Sarcophagus-shaped stone decorated by vertical bands each end (fig. 10).</p>	<p>plemenitoi, milostiju B(o)žiomъ i slavnoga g(ospo)d(i)na krala Tvrtka knezъ bosanъski. Na Visokomъ se pobolihъ. na Duboku mi mednъ doide. Si biligъ postavi gospoja Vukava s moimi dobrimi. Živu mi vjerno služaše i mrtvu mi posluži⁵⁰).</p>
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"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. Here lies knez Batić on his land on the family land, by God's grace and that of the glorious lord King Tvrtko, Prince of Bosnia. At Visoko I fell ill, at Duboko death/the doctor came to me. The Lady Vukava erected this sign with (the help of) my good friends. In life she served me faithfully, and also in death."

The deceased has been assumed by K. Hörmann to have been one Batić-Mirković, active in the reign of Tvrtko I. He can find no Batić in the reign of Tvrtko II. In 1404 a lady Vlkava was living in Castle Dubrovnik, near Kopošići. She could have been the widow of Batić, had he in fact lived in the time of Tvrtko I.⁵¹). Milenko Filipović, writing 28 years later than Hörmann, dates the inscription at the time of Tvrtko II, in the first half of the fifteenth century, but does not discuss his reasons for doing so⁵²). The stone is undecorated except for two vertical bands carved at each end. It is sarcophagus-shaped, that is, it is a chest-shaped block with a peaked top.

<p>11) Bakri (Visočica), beetwen Ljubuški and Mostar, Hercegovina. Inscription mentions Sandalj</p>	<p>"† Ase leži knezъ Pavao Kom- ljenovićъ na svoi (ple)menitoi na Prozrčcu u dni voevode Sandalj, koi ga počteno i</p>
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⁵⁰) K. Hörmann, "Epigraphische Denkmäler aus dem Mittelalter", *Wiss. Mitt.* III, 1895, p. 483, gives the inscription and discusses previous readings. There has been argument as to whether it was death or the doctor which came to knez Batić at Visoko. Either interpretation seems possible, though in view of the conditions of the country it was probably death.

⁵¹) *Ibid.*, p. 485.

⁵²) M. Filipović, "Visočka nahija", *Srpski etnografski zbornik* XLIII, Belgrade 1923, p. 485.

⁵³) M. Vego, "Novi i revidirani ćirilski natpisi iz župe Bročno u Hercegovini", *GZM NS* XIV, 1959, p. 232.

Hranić 1404—1435.

The deceased was known to be alive in 1423. The stone thus dates 1423—1435.

virno služšaše, učrto, učrto na plemenitei⁵³).

Undecorated sarcophagus-shaped stone (fig. 11).

"Here lies knez Pavao Komlinović on his family land at Prozračac, in the days of the Vojvoda Sandalj whom he loyally and truly served. This is carved on the family land."

Knez Pavao, or Paul, is mentioned in the Dubrovnik Archives on May 7, 1423⁵⁴). It seems likely that he died, and his tombstone was erected, between that time and 1435, when Sandalj Hranić, in whose time the stone was erected, also died. The undecorated tombstone stands at the site of 26 other, largely undecorated stećci, slightly west of Čitluk.

12) Ključ, Gacko region, Hercegovina.
Inscription mentions Sandalj Hranić 1404—1435.

"Ase leži Radonja Rašković. Pogiboh pod gradom pod Ključem za svoega gospodina voevodu Sandalja"⁵⁵).

undecorated (chest?)

"Here lies Radonja Rašković. I perished for my lord, Vojvoda Sandalj, near the castle of Ključ."

There is no decoration on this stone, nor is there on any of the forty-six stećci which stand not far from the castle itself, a major stronghold of Sandalj Hranić.

Further inscriptions from the time of Sandalj are of importance to us, giving valuable information towards the dating of certain types of decoration. The first of these, at Vrhpolje, Trebinje region, is carved on the thin end of a chest-topped stele over six feet high, decorated with horseshoe arches, and a border of circles with rosette fillings (fig. 12).

⁵⁴) Ibid., p. 223.

⁵⁵) Pero Slijepčević, "Staro groblje po Gacku", GZM XL, 1928, p. 61.

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| <p>13) Vrhpolje, Trebinje region,
Hercegovina.
Inscription mentions
Sandalj Hranić,
1404—1435.</p> <p>Chest-topped stele
decorated with horseshoe
arches and circle border
(fig. 12).</p> | <p>“Ѡ Vь dni g(ospo)d(i)na
voe(vo)de Sandjala, asej leži
knezъ Pokrajacъ Oliverovićъ.
Bratio i vlastele, ja Pokrajacъ
g(ospodi)nu momu sluga, što
mo(go)hъ vь pravdi i toliko
ho(te)hъ u momъ domi, Bogъ
mi podili, ja mogahъ g(ospodi)na
moga i druga moga u počteni
prijati i u tomъ dobri dogje
smrѣъ u vreme života, domъ
moi ožalostihъ”⁵⁶).</p> |
|---|--|

“In the days of the lord Vojvoda Sandalj; here lies knez Pokrajac Oliverović. Brothers and noblemen, I, Pokrajac, servant to my lord, as far as I was able, in right and in truth, in my house, God granted me that I could receive in honour my lord and my friend. And at that time death came to me in the prime of life, and I brought sorrow upon my house.”

Vrhpolje lies at the lower tip of the fertile Ljubomir Plain, north-east of Trebinje. It is not clear whether Sandalj seized this land immediately after the fall of the Sanković family, or whether it was held for a time by knez Paul Radinović, who had divided the territory of the Sanković family with him. In any case, it was in the possession of Sandalj by 1413, when he issued a letter from there to Dubrovnik⁵⁷). Therefore the decoration of horseshoe arches and circle border with rosette fillings dates between 1413 and 1435, if not earlier.

The next Sandalj inscription, from Bujakovina north-west of Foča and the Drina River, is the first dated monument to bear the frequently repeated rinceau border with trefoil fillings. It is also the first dated monument to have figural decoration, namely, standing figures wearing kilt-like garments, with arms akimbo. Unfortunately the monument may not be datable, for the name „Sandalj“ is assumed from the letters “anda”.

⁵⁶) Jeuto Dedijer, “Bilećske Rudine”, Srpski Etnografski Zbornik V, 1903, p. 677.

⁵⁷) M. Vego, *Naselja bosanske srednjevjekovne države*, Sarajevo 1957, p. 151. Vego says that the fact that the Oliverović monument in Ljubomir mentions Sandalj is proof that Sandalj held Ljubomir from 1404. But it is in fact not proof.

- 14) Bujakovina, Foča region,
Bosnia.
Inscription mentions
Sandalj Hranić
† 1435.
Chest-shaped stone
decorated with trefoil
border and standing figures
(fig. 13).
- „O(vo) i s gr(e)b (k)neza n(aš-
ega) (A)regjje Vasoevića (p)oč-
te(n) vitez v dni (S)anda(lja) i
a . . . “⁵⁸).

“This is the grave of our knez Aragjia Vasoević, honourable knight in the days of Sandalj.”

The remaining inscriptions which are crucial to our dating of decorated stećci all come from Vlach graveyards and pertain to noted Vlachs of the latter half of the fifteenth century.

- 15) Boljuni, Stolac region,
Hercegovina.
Inscription mentions
Vlach katunar Tarah
Bolunović, † 1477.
Chest-shaped stone decorated
with trefoil border, a horse,
a monster and a dragon,
an animal tied to a tree,
dancers, deerhunters (fig. 14).
- “Ase leži Bogovacъ Tarahъ
Bolunovićъ sjame. Ase sječe
Grubačъ. Molu se Bože pomilui
me milosti tvoe“⁵⁹).

“Here lies Bogovac Tarah Bolunović himself. Grubač carved this. I pray God to have mercy on me in thy mercy.”

Bogovac Tarah was katunar or patriarchal head of the Vlach stock-breeding tribe of Boljuni. He is mentioned until 1477, when he is replaced as katunar by Miliš Tarahović, obviously his son. As such a position was held throughout life, it may be safely assumed that Bogovac Tarah Bolunović died about 1477⁶⁰).

⁵⁸) Vid Vuletić Vukasović, “Starobosanski natpisi u Bosni i Hercegovini”, Vjestnik Hrvatskoga Arheološkoga Društva IX, Zagreb 1887, p. 41.

⁵⁹) Ć. Truhelka, “Stari bosanski natpisi”, GZM III, 1891, p. 88. Š. Bešlagić, “Boljuni”, Starinar NS XII, Belgrade 1961, p. 194. Grubač has signed in all four stećci at Boljuni, bearing a variety of motifs, and certain others at Opličići, southwest of Stolac and north of Boljuni, with similar decoration. Ibid., p. 201.

⁶⁰) B. Hrabak, “Prilog datovanju hercegovačkih stećaka”, GZM NS VIII, 1953, p. 325.

The stone bearing this inscription is shaped like a chest, and is richly decorated. It lies in an east-west position along an ancient road, under the village of Boljuni. If followed to the north this road leads over a karst ridge, past several more sites of stećci⁶¹), and descends into the Bregava valley west of Stolac, where are further Vlach tombs. It appears to have been part of a route leading through Vlach territory from Popovo Polje north-east, which can be followed from Hercegovina into Bosnia, and along which trading caravans certainly passed⁶²).

The decorations on this tombstone are remarkable. On the west end there are three creatures, of which only the central figure can be identified at once⁶³). It is a horse. The other creatures are less normal. One has forelegs, a snake's tail, and a protruding tongue. The other is a beast with wide, fringed ears, which J. Kunst finds on musical instruments in Yugoslavia and Java, and which he calls Indo-European⁶⁴).

On the east end is an animal tethered by its neck to a tree, with a bird nearby⁶⁵). On the south side is carved a horned man preceding three women with linked hands, a group reminiscent of Pan and three dancing nymphs. Above, a horseman follows a deer⁶⁶). On the north side a hunter and archer pursue two deer, and below is a row of four men with linked hands, presumably dancing⁶⁷). At the top of the stone, on all four sides, is a trefoil border.

This stone is of special importance because we can now say with accuracy that these strange beasts, the dancers, the horsemen pursuing deer and the trefoil border were all carved around 1477 by someone called Grubač, at the order of a Vlach, and that other

⁶¹) One of these is at Kruševo, where inscriptions point to the deceased belonging to the Vlach tribe of Vlahovići. Hrabak, "O hercegovačkim vlaškim katunima", GZM NS XI, 1956, p. 31.

⁶²) The caravan captain, or kramar, was always a Vlach, and took the caravan the shortest route, usually through his own territory. Dinić, "Dubrovačka srednjevekovna karavanska trgovina", Jugoslavenski istoriski časopis III, 1937, p. 138.

⁶³) Šefik Bešliagić, "Boljuni", Starinar NS XII, 1961, p. 179, fig. 11.

⁶⁴) J. Kunst, *Kulturhistorische Beziehungen zwischen dem Balkan und Indonesien*, Amsterdam 1953, p. 10.

⁶⁵) Bešliagić, op. cit., Starinar NS XII, 1961, p. 179, fig. 10.

⁶⁶) Ibid., p. 180, fig. 12.

⁶⁷) Ibid., p. 180, fig. 13.

stones decorated and signed by Grubač⁶⁸) were made not far from that date. This is the earliest, and in fact the only definite date which can be obtained for representations other than single figures.

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| 16) Radimlja, Stolac region
Hercegovina.
Inscription mentions
Vojvoda Petar Stjepanović
Hrabreni-Miloradović,
a Vlach, active 1477. | "† Sie leži dobri Radoe sin
voevode Stipana na svoi baštini
na Batnogahъ. Si biligъ postavi
na me bratъ moi vovoda
Petarъ" ⁶⁹). |
|--|---|

Chest-shaped stone
decorated with a man with
raised, enlarged right hand,
a bow and arrow, shield and
with horseshoe arches (fig. 15).

"Here lies good Radoe, son of vojvoda Stjepan, on his land at Batnoga. This sign was erected over me by my brother, vojvoda Petar."

Beneath the figure with the raised, enlarged right hand on the monument bearing the above inscription there are three incised squares. (fig. 15) Similar squares are placed under the horseshoe arches which decorate the other three sides of this tall, chest-shaped stone. Those on the east end are placed either side of the arches rather than underneath them, and their origin is not clear. However, at the base of the horseshoe arches decorating the stone of Pokrajac Oliverović, Vrhpolje, (fig. 12) there are small, incised squares which function as column bases. It is apparent that the architectural nature of the horseshoe arches on the Radimlja stone has been completely misunderstood, but the architectural features of the earlier arches have been copied with considerable care.

⁶⁸) Bešlagić, *Ibid.*, p. 201, gives evidence that Grubač himself may have been a Vlach. Certainly the grave of one Grubač is to be found among the other stećci at Boljuni. Among the monuments signed by Grubač at Opličići is one depicting a roe deer pursued by a dog and confronted by a monster. The stone may date circa 1460, if the individual mentioned in the inscription may be identified with a Radivoj Vlatković who died around that date. *Ibid.*, p. 201. Cf. Vego, "Novi i revidirani natpisi iz Hercegovine", *GZM NS XV, XVI*, 1961, p. 273.

Bešlagić, "Stećci u Opličićima", *Naše Starine VII*, 1960, p. 150, fig. 5.

⁶⁹) A. Benac, *Radimlja*, Sarajevo 1950, p. 39.

Near the stone of Radoe there is another, smaller stone, with a similar figure with a raised, enlarged right hand filling the west end. This figure has a rosette in a circle rather than a head. The north, south and east sides are decorated with horseshoe arches. The inscription reads:

- 17) Radimlja, Stolac region "† АЗЪ рабъ б(о)џи Radoe Vuko-
Hercegovina vić sinovacъ voev(o)de Petra"⁷⁰⁾
Inscription mentions voj-
voda Petar
Stjepanović Hrabreni-Mi-
loradović,
Vlach. Active 1477

Small, chest-shaped stone
decorated with figure
having rosette for head and
raised, enlarged right hand.
Horseshoe arches (fig. 16).

"I, the servant of God, Radoe Vuković, nephew of vojvoda Petar".

We have mentioned that the Vlach clan of the Hrabreni-Miloradovići provided the vojvoda, or troop-leader for the group of Vlach clans known as "Donji Vlasi", in central Hercegovina. They were permitted to continue this function for some years after the conquest of the Turks. Vojvoda Petar is mentioned twice in the year 1477, once as being katunar, or head of the Hrabreni clan holdings, and another time as being vojvoda of Donji Vlasi⁷¹⁾. He is also mentioned in 1475, in a document which lists him and a number of the male members of his family⁷²⁾. His brother Radoe is not included among these personages. It may thus be assumed that the first Radimlja inscription, and the carvings accompanying it, date before 1475.

The second Radimlja inscription may be later, but was probably written in the lifetime of the vojvoda Petar. We know that he was

⁷⁰⁾ Ibid., p. 49.

⁷¹⁾ Hrabak, "Prilog datovanju Hercegovačkih stečaka", GZM NS VIII, 1953, p. 326, n. 8, 9. "Chrabrini di chatun di voivoda Petar", and "Petar Stipanovich, voivoda di dogni Vlaxi".

⁷²⁾ Ibid., p. 326.

dead by 1505. There is a slab inside the Orthodox Church at Ošanić, on the plateau north of Radimlja, marking the last resting place of his successor, vojvoda Radosav Hrabren. This slab is unusual in bearing a date. The date is 1505. As Petar was presumably dead a number of years before the death of his successor, the second Radimlja inscription may be dated to the latter years of the fifteenth century, and the decoration on the same stone, the horseshoe arches and the figure with rosette head and raised, enlarged hand, may be given the same date⁷³).

- 18) Ošanić, Stolac region "† Ase leži vovoda Radosavъ
Inscription mentions Hrabrenъ 1505 ljetu aprila kd⁷⁴)
vojvoda Radosav Hrabren,
Vlach, and is dated 1505.

undecorated slab placed inside church

"Here lies vojvoda Radosav Hrabren. April, the summer, 1505."

The slab is unusual both in bearing a date and in being placed inside a church. It is not a monolithic block, and cannot justifiably be considered a stečak. If monolithic blocks were still in fashion in 1505 it might be assumed that the Vojvoda of Donji Vlasi, whose family had erected the elaborately decorated necropolis of Radimlja, would have had one. Therefore it may be assumed that stećci were no longer being erected in 1505.

Let us now review the inscriptions. They have provided us with an earliest date of 1233 and a latest date of 1505 for the use of inscribed slabs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and with an earliest date of 1353 and a latest date of 1477 for the use of monolithic blocks. We shall see what they tell us about the chronology of the decorations.

Location	Date	Kind of decoration
1) Police, Trebinje region, Hercegovina	1233—1242	undecorated slab
2) Ljusići, Ulog region, between Hercegovina and Bosnia	1353—1377	undecorated chest

⁷³) Ibid., p. 327.

⁷⁴) K. Hörmann and V. Radimsky, "Ošanić kod Stoca", GZMIV, 1892, p. 46.

Location	Date	Kind of decoration
3) Vranjevo Selo, Dubrovnik region Hercegovina	1345—1392	undecorated chest
4) Veličani, Popovo Polje, Hercegovina	1377—1391	chest decorated with round arches
5) Biskup, Konjic region Hercegovina	1398—1399	undecorated chest
6) Kočerín, Mostar region, Hercegovina	1404	undecorated slab
7) Vladjevine, Rogatica region, Bosnia	1404—1415	undecorated chest
8) Vladjevine, Rogatica region, Bosnia	1404—1415	undecorated chest
9) Zabrdje by Toplik, Kreševo region, Bosnia	1400—1420	sarcophagus-shaped stone deco- rated with shield and animal crest
10) Kopošići, Visoko region, Bosnia	1377—1391 or 1404—1408 or 1421—1443	sarcophagus-shaped stone deco- rated with vertical bands each end
11) Bakri, Visočina, Mostar region, Hercegovina	1423—1435	undecorated sarcophagus- shaped stone
12) Ključ, Gacko region Hercegovina	1404—1435	undecorated (chest?)
13) Vrhpolje, Ljubomir Polje, Trebinje region, Hercegovina	1413—1435	tall, chest-topped stele deco- rated with horseshoe arches and circle border with rosette fil- lings
14) Bujakovina, Foča region, Bosnia	1404—1435?	chest, decorated with standing figures in kilts, trefoil border
15) Boljuni, Stolac region, Hercegovina	1477	chest, decorated with dances, horsemen and archers pursuing deer, a horse, a dragon and fur- ther animals, a horned man.
16) Radimlja, Stolac region, Hercegovina	circa 1477	chest, decorated with standing figure in kilts with raised, en- larged right hand; horseshoe arches

Location	Date	Kind of decoration
17) Radimlja, Stolac region, Hercegovina	circa 1477	chest, decorated with horseshoe arches, standing figure in kilts with raised, enlarged right hand and rosette instead of head
18) Ošanić, Stolac region,	1505	undecorated slab, inside church

It will be seen that the earliest decoration dated by inscription is architectural, that is, the round arches inscribed on the chest at Veličani. The chest was made for a member of the local ruling classes, and dates between 1377—1391. The next datable inscription, the shield with animal crest from Zabrdje, is also connected with the ruling classes, this time from Bosnia. The decoration is untypical and gothic in feeling. It is a coat of arms copied from elsewhere. The man whose monument bears the next datable decoration, at Vrhpolje in Ljubomir, is not of known importance himself, but was in the service of the new nobility who had replaced the old, local nobility, that is, of Sandalj Hranić, who replaced the stećci-building, noble, Sanković family. The decoration is again architectural, and horseshoe arches are introduced.

The standing figures with arms akimbo at Bujakovina may date to before 1435, if the reading "in the days of Sandalj" is correct. They are more in keeping, however, with other stones made for Vlach clansmen and dated to the second half of the fifteenth century, according to inscriptions at Boljuni and Radimlja. The decoration on these others includes horses, horsemen, dragons, dances, the pursuit of deer, trefoil borders, horseshoe arches of which the architectural significance has been lost, and standing figures in kilts with raised, enlarged right hands.

Therefore the dated stones tell us that the earliest stećci were made by feudal landlords, who sometimes decorated them with architectural features, or crested shields. The custom was later taken up by the tribal inhabitants of the region, that is, by Vlachs, who introduced the rich, figural decoration. Let us see what the dated inscriptions tell us about the religion of those who are mentioned on them. We do not know the faith of the man who was buried in the time of King Vladislav, but the inscription implies respect for that of the Serbian king, and the fact that the deceased, "by origin" the župan Pribliš, may have taken holy orders. We do not know

anything about the faith of the noble Sanković family, commemorated in inscriptions 4 and 5. One of them, Polihrania, may have been Orthodox. The owner of the undecorated slab at Kočerín, bearing inscription 6, served a series of Bosnian rulers who all, at one time or another, declared allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church, often in opposition to their heretical nobles. Inscriptions 7 and 8, from Vladjevine, Bosnia, concern people in direct service of a heretical noble, knez Paul Radinović. Neither stone is decorated. We do not know the faith of the Bosnian knez Radoje mentioned in inscription 9. Even if he were a heretic, he chose to copy on his tombstone the crest of the Balšić family of Zeta, who were not heretics. We do not know the faith of knez Batić, mentioned in inscription 10. We do not know the faith of Paul Komlinović, whose undecorated stečak bears inscription 11. He served Sandalj Hranić, who has often been called a heretic⁷⁵). But there was a Catholic church of St. George mentioned in the fourteenth century upon his land⁷⁶).

The warrior who died at Ključ, commemorated in inscription 12, directly served the heretical Sandalj and died in his service, and if decorated tombstones were necessary to heresy you would think he might have deserved one. Pokrajac Oliverović, whose handsome, architecturally decorated tombstone carries inscription 13, died in the time of Sandalj rather than in his direct service, though he may have entertained him in his house. The clan members of Donji Vlasi, living in territory nominally controlled by Sandalj, served his opponents the Pavlovići at several crucial points⁷⁷). The Pavlovići were also heretics, but as we see from the stones with inscriptions 7 and 8, other people serving the Pavlovići did not have decorated tombstones. The Vlachs of inscriptions 15, 16 and 17 did have decorated tombstones, which they erected in the latter fourteenth century, at the same time as they were erecting the Serbian Orthodox Church at Ošanić. It was completed by 1505, when the Vlach vojvoda Radosav Hrabren, whose stone bears inscription 18, was buried inside. So far as we can tell from the inscriptions, whether or not people had decorated tombstones does not seem to depend on whether or not they were, or served a heretic, or even whether or

⁷⁵) L. Petković, *Kršćani bosanske crkve*, Sarajevo 1953, pp. 171, 173, 177.

⁷⁶) Vego, "Novi i revidirani ćirilski natpisi iz župe Bročno", *GZM NS XIV*, 1959, p. 234.

⁷⁷) Vojislav Bogičević, "Vlasteoska porodica Miloradovića-Hrabrenih", *GZM NS VII*, 1952, p. 148.

not they were, or served a member of the Catholic or Orthodox faiths. It seems to depend on whether or not they belonged to the native nobility in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, and after that, whether or not they were Vlachs.

The preceding material may be summarized as follows. Of the several hundred medieval tombstones in Bosnia and Hercegovina which bear inscriptions, eighteen bear inscriptions which may be dated through the mention of historical personages. This sparse material informs us that any tombstones inscribed before the mid-fourteenth century were not monolithic blocks, but flat slabs of a sort frequent in Western Europe at the same time. There is no evidence that tombstones of a different shape were made before the mid-fourteenth century.

Between the mid-fourteenth and the fifteenth century the block or chest-shape was adopted by certain members of the native nobility and decorated, if at all, with simple arches, or crests. About 1400 there was a general upset in the nobility and the new nobility did not make, or in any case inscribe, tombstones of this nature for themselves. From then on such tombstones were made only for people who served, or lived in the time of, the new nobility. In the hands of what we might call the lower classes the tombstones became bigger and more elaborately decorated. New shapes were invented, such as the tall chest-shaped stele, which has no parallels anywhere else in the world. (fig. 12) Arches were elaborated, and their architectural nature began to be misunderstood.

In the latter half of the fifteenth century, the inscriptions imply that the elaborately decorated tombstones were made almost exclusively by one particular national group, that is, by the Vlachs, who were pre-Slav or heavily Romanized tribal groups settled in the mountainous karst areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were stockbreeders who grew in importance after the mid-fourteenth century, when new metal mines were opened up in East Bosnia, and their horses were in heavy demand to accompany the caravans sent out from the trading port of Dubrovnik. After the fall of Serbia to the Turks in 1389, they were further needed to protect the caravans from Turkish raiding parties. By the mid-fifteenth century the caravan trade completely relied on them, and they retained their new-found economic prosperity well after the conquest of Bosnia in 1463.

In the hands of the Vlachs the monolithic tombstones gained a new iconography. They were decorated with figures. These figures,

often stylistically portrayed in a gothic manner⁷⁸), could yet be proved to be remarkable survivals of Roman ritual iconography⁷⁹). Such facts explain the figure with the raised, enlarged right hand, and other arrangements, particularly a woman between horsemen, to be seen at the Vlach village of Boljuni⁸⁰), and other Vlach villages. Still it might be asked why there are no classical sarcophagi in Vlach regions displaying the same iconography, which instead appears on other ritual objects⁸¹). The reason is that although the Vlachs retained their ritual practices from classical times, they did not retain the custom of making sarcophagi from classical times, because they did not have the custom of making sarcophagi in classical times. This was a sophisticated practice observed by Romans in towns, and not by stockbreeding tribes in the mountains. Likewise, the practice of utilizing monolithic blocks as tombstones did not, as we have shown, originate with the Vlachs, but was introduced into Hercegovina in the mid-fourteenth century, by certain members of the feudal land-owning class. The practice was taken over by Vlachs in that region, and not in other regions, owing to new-found economic prosperity among Vlachs in that region, where the idea of making monolithic tombstones had already been introduced.

It is difficult to account for the introduction of monolithic tombstones. But it may be seen that the earliest ones, such as those bearing inscriptions 2 and 3, are only slightly larger than the slab prevalent everywhere in Europe, and it may be assumed that the introduction was a gradual one, aided, once begun, by the natural outcroppings of limestone, broken into monolithic pieces, immediately to hand⁸²). Hence it is certain figural decoration, and not the

⁷⁸) Svetozar Radojčić, "Reljefi bosanskih i hercegovačkih stećaka", *Letopis Matice Srpske*, godina 137, knj. 387, sv. 1, Novi Sad, January 1961, pp. 5—10.

⁷⁹) M. Wenzel, "A Mediaeval Mystery Cult in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XXIV, London 1961, pp. 89—107.

⁸⁰) Bešlagić, "Boljuni", *Starinar* NS XII, 1961, p. 181, fig. 16.

⁸¹) The iconography on the stećci appeared in Roman times on small lead or stone tablets found in the Danube region, which have been catalogued by D. Tudor, "I cavalieri Danubiani", *Ephemeris Dacoromana* VII, Rome 1937, pp. 189—356. Also, Tudor, "Nuovi monumenti sui cavalieri Danubiani", *Dacia* NS IV, Bucarest 1960, pp. 333—362, and "Discussioni intorno al culto dei cavalieri danubiani", *Dacia* NS V, 1961, pp. 317—343.

⁸²) Štipe Gunjača, of the Muzej hrvatskih starina, Split, has measured a number of limestone stratifications in the neighbourhood of stećci, and finds that the width of the stratification usually corresponds to the thickness of the stećci.

monolithic tombstone itself, which is unique unto the Vlachs.

It will be observed that the above hypothesis explains many facts about the Bosnian and Hercegovinian tombstones and has considerable evidence in its favour. It thus contrasts with the hypothesis that the tombstones were inspired by Bogomils, which explains no facts about the stećci, and which lacks evidence in its favour.

This is especially true in the case of slabs and chests. Gunjača, "Prinos poznavanju porijekla i načina prijevoza stećaka", Istoriski časopis V, Belgrade 1954—1955, p. 140.