

# MARIOVO – VIRGIN BEAUTY MACEDONIA PALENZO

*A battle is fought,mother,Old Mariovo  
Old Mariovo,mother,at the Greek border  
At the Greek border mother high on Kaymakchalan*

.....  
.....

*Old Mariovo mother,fire was burning it  
Fire was burning it mother on the peak of Kaymakchalan  
On the peak Kaymakchalan mother there Dobro Pole...*

## INTRODUCTION

Kaymakchalan – the pride of Nidze, an ancient old mountain which with its 2.520 meters above sea level enables you to have Mariovo on your palm. It is close to us, but yet far, unreachable, unconquerable. But the day came when our great wish came true. We set out on the most exiting and long-awaited journey towards the ancient Kaymakchalan.

On September 16<sup>th</sup> 2001 – in the early morning hours we set out towards the “paradise”. But where is the “paradise”? Only one road leads towards it. The traveling with the terrain vehicle wasn't very comfortable, but we were very happy and excited, and we didn't even think about the bumpy roads.

My words will be very meager to describe the feeling which overwhelmed me when slowly but surely we approached towards our goal. The pictures through the window of the vehicle changed very quickly. The rocky figures seemed like sculptures, the bushes became even more glamorous and they assimilated into the beech or oak woods. I was overtaken with warmth and great joy that I am part of this nature, pure, untouched by human hand, the way God created. The forest became thicker, the oaks and beeches were replaced by the centuries old fir trees and pine trees, which hid the blueness of the vault of heaven.



*Forest cottage on Kaymakchalan*

After traveling for several hours, in front of us appeared a meadow and a wonderful mountain cottage of stones. We were overexcited. We left our rucksacks and everybody took only what was necessary. I, of course, took my faithful friend – the camera. Our voyage towards Kaymakchalan began. Step by step, foot by foot we climbed and we didn't feel any exhaustion when we left the thick beech woods. We walked along the battle road and we couldn't but not think about the freedom fighters that left their lives on these heights, fighting for the freedom of Republic of Macedonia.

The sun had raised high above us, but we quenched our thirst with blueberries which were already a bit dried. Their leaves had that yellow-red autumn color and they gave an impression of a spread carpet on the peaks of the Nidze Mountain. As every next curve was conquered, the excitement was even bigger. As every next curve was conquered, the excitement was even bigger. Already the church “Sts Peter and Paul” could be seen, and we knew that we succeeded to conquer Kaymakchalan. But, it also conquered us with its beauty. Watching the scenery which spread in front of us, I had the feeling that nothing in the world is that important, as the spiritual peace. In the beauty which surrounded us, we voraciously inhaled the pure mountain air, we cleared our lungs, at the same time the mountain fed our brain with each greenery. We left a



few pennies in the church of Dr.Rice,and we realized why his last wish was that his hearth rest here on these heights.His love towards Kaymakchalan remained in his heart to live for ever.At 50 metres from the church is located the ossuary of the fallen fighters from World War I.We all fell silent from the sight that we saw in the necropolis.Skulls and skeletons shot by bullets or stabbed by bayonets,evidence of the horrific wars.



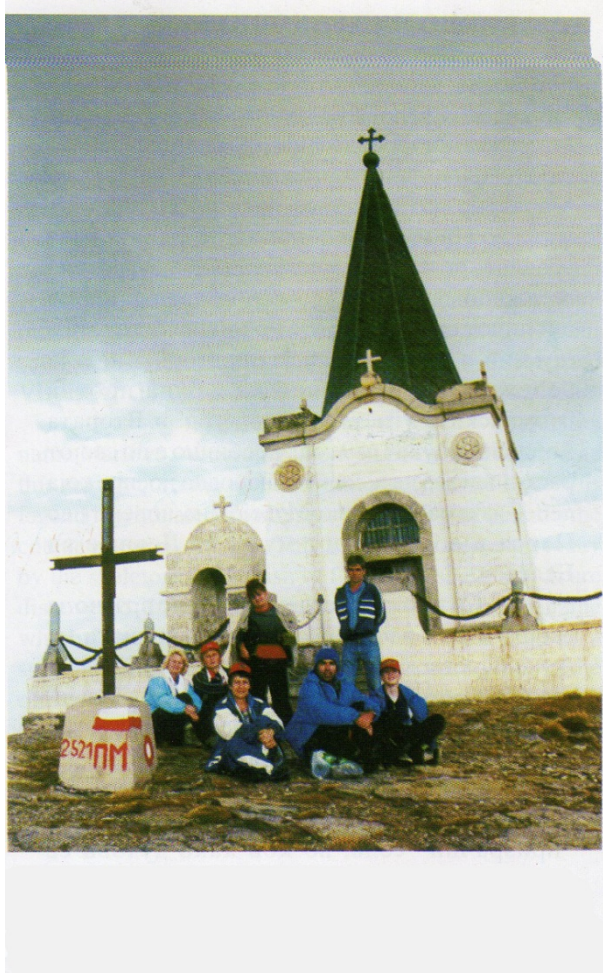
*Blubberies on Kaymakchalan*

In the eve we returned to the mountain cottage.After a short rest,we lit a fire on the meadow which was in front of the cottage.The flames danced on the quite breeze,rustling in narrated about the sad mountain story.Eased and relaxed,a bit intoxicated from the mountain air,we did not notice when the darkness started to surround us.The breeze stopped,we could hear the rustling of the trees.We heard the breathing of the mountain.It was peaceful and calm,and with our presence we gave it life.That evening we lived for it.

Our song echoed and got lost as an echo through the fir tree woods,which protected us in its bosom,unveiling the enchatments of the night.Culmination was the appearance of the moon and the sky full of stars.It was magical.

The spell of the dream started to reghn with us.In that enormous field,surrounded with shadow of fir trees woods,besides the fear,we awaited the birth of the new day bravely and boldly.And that was a song.Emanating from the shadows and the magical power of the mountain,we were happy with the rising sun,which struggled and defeated the clouds that wanted to hide it from us.It melted them and proudly rose on the horizon.

The moment came near when we had to leave the "paradise".That is why we stole a bit of the beauty and with sad sighing we departed with consolation and hope that we will return again and continue with our socializing form where we stopped.



*The church "Sts Petar and Pavle" on Kaymak-chalan*



The marble urn in which the heart of Dr.Rays was placed ( doctor from Switzerland)



## MARIOVO THROUGH THE CENTURIES

Mariovo is unusual by many things: it is unusual because it's an upland valley, most probably from lake origin (for which bear witness the fish fossils found in the diatomite land in the vicinity of the village Manastir, which today are kept in the National museum in Prilep); it's unusual for its wild beauty for its location enclosed with mountain ranges, whereby isolated from the surrounding world; by its natural resources, forest and mineral wealth; by its history which marks the first Mariovo mutiny against the Ottoman tyrants in 1564 and the second Mariovo mutiny in 1689; it is unusual by its luxurious embroidery of women's national costumes, which today take place in the Human Museum in Paris and Tito's Museum of Dedinye in Belgrade.

With centuries the people were connected with the hearth, not knowing the tradition of emigration and work abroad, to be separated almost immediately from the hearth and start wholesale departure of this region, resettling through whole Europe, and even over the ocean in Canada, USA and Australia.

Today in Mariovo there are phantasmal villages, in which the shadows of the last prisoner or prisoners as spirits wander on its own ground. When you step on any place in the area, you will feel the spirit of the past. Every stone, every wall has its own history, and that history is drawn from the legends and traditions which are passed from one generation to another.



Remnants of the Roman fortress "Peshta"

As the archaeologists and historians of this region claim the region of Mariovi is full of traces of a civilization and culture since the oldest times. The material evidence speaks of the at least two millennium continuity of civilization and culture. We should mention that the traces of Mariovo are found yet in the writings of the oldest historians Pliny and Strabo. They mention them as descendants of the ancient people under the name of Peoni that are characterized with old and highly developed civilization, in the archaic period sixth and seventh century B.C. Also the archaeological remains clearly point out the existence of bigger and quite magnificent settlements since Roman times connected with the road VIA EGNATIA which most probably passed through here.

There are several legends about the name Mariovo. According to one of them, in Roman time this region bore the name Morina, and according to this legend it originated from a sea, which flowed out into the course of the river Crna. This is substantiated even today by the skeletons of the fish or fossilized shells which are discovered during various excavations. Another name which is mentioned is Morihova, most probably by a superior officer Morih since the Byzantine period. In the old geographical maps of the former Yugoslavia, Mariovo stands as Morihovo.



*Petrified shells*

But in recent time the name Mariovo is used, for which it is considered that originated from the queen Maria. She was the daughter of the despot Gurag Brankovich, and his wife Irina. Maria is married to the sultan Murat II, but because she did not want to become a Muslim as she spread the Christianity, the sultan was forced to banish her from Constantinople. The sultana Mara or Kala Mara as the Turks used to call her went to the monastery Treskavec to take Communion, but the priests considering her as a "sinful soul" did not allow her. Maria got very angry she set the monastery on fire and went to the "Peaceful land" to live in the village Vitoliste.

Even before the ancient period, the people from this region were occupied with cattle breeding and lived a nomadic life for a long time. According to the scientific evidence by Slavonic tribes. The historians notice that the Slavonic population in this region christened in the wholesale Christianizing of the Slavs on the Balkan in the second half of the IX century, and in Mariovo are preserved a few antique churches and monasteries very important from a cultural and historical aspect. For this mountain stock-breeding region, Byzantium, Bulgaria, Serbia, struggled for century's until the arrival of the Turks on the Balkan in 1394, the Turks created an autonomy in Mariovo. Thanks to the sultana Mara which exempted them of paying taxes and the people lived a little more freely. After her death these privileges were lost. There was no Turkish pasha directly in Mariovo, but indirectly, the people of this region were subordinated to the Turkish reign. This is confirmed by the information which says that the people annually paid tax of 700 cattle, 400 loads of wheat and barley, 45 000 small bags with golden coins and other. In that period the Turks intensified their damages, because of this several villages were destroyed among which are: Trnovo, Petalino, Tumanovo, Kostenovo, Leshnica, Lisec, Satoka and Crnicani. The Ottoman administration intensified the violence of every kind. In 1548, children from Mariovo were grabbed from the market in

Prilep. New robberies and damages from the qadi ( Muslim judge ) from Prilep were made in the the village Chanishte, when the beautiful young girl Kales Anga from Staravina was kidnapped when visiting Chanishte for " St. Dimitria's Day. Because of these damages, the People from Mariovo organized the first Mariovo mutiny on the Balcan against the powerful Ottoman Empire. The rebels led by the Priest Jakov and Trajko Sirme from Staravina, succeeded to save Kales Anga and the children taken for janissary, whereby defeating the army of the qadi in Prilep. The turks were very angry, they could not stand the defeat and they prepared revenge.

All the participants in the mutiny together with their families, cattle and lots of food, settled in the Roman fortress Peshta, because its high walls and gates was unconquerable. They provided water from the spring Brensko, brought in copper jugs in the fortress. So prepared, they awaited the attack from the turks. The turkish bey's, subasha's ( police superintendent in the ottoman Turkey), gendarme, bailiff, armed guards, big shots, messengers i.e. all the Turkish robbers and hoodlums, around 1000 armed soldiers could not conquer the fortress Peshta. With the betrayal of two people from Prilep, bribed by the turks, with wiliness discovered the water and after and after three days the defenders had to open the gates. Here in the last battle for freedom several people were killed. Dimitia Stale from Satoka and Mato Nicola from Beshiste took their own lives took their own lives in front of the fortress gates, not wanting to give themselves up alive. The priest Peyo and Petko Gorgo from Staravina were hanged elm in front of the fortress gates, and priest Jakov and Trajko Sirme were burned alive in Prilep, shouting: "We are dieting for the holy orthodox religion and the golden freedom".

After the brutal quashing of the First Mariovo mutiny, the people of Mariovo continued to rebel and confront the Turkish tyranny. In 1688/89, the second Mariovo mutiny broke out against the tyrannu of the Pasha Musa. After that the villages Gradeshnica, polchista and Peshtani suffered.

The hospitable and freedom loving Mariovo with its permanent fighting spirit and massive national movement served as an example for a long time to the rest of the enslaved Macedonian people in the neighboring and further Macedonian regions, and the other enslaved Balcan people. Besides the suffering and violence, Mariovo succeeded to keep its Macedonian identity, without changing the national structure of the territory. According to authentic sources in regards to the population number, the Turkish authority after performing a census in the year 1467 in the Mariovo district registered 3415, and in the year 1519 – 9264 exclusively Christian population. Every attempt to Islamize Mariovo was unsuccessful. It is said in a legend, which is passed among the people : the qadi ( Muslim judge ) from Prilep sent mullah to Islamize Mariovo. Scarselly had he just arrived in the first village, he was caught by the people and closed from the first evening to sleep in a pigsty. The next day they let him loose and head first ran away straight to the qady in Prilep. He told him about everything that happened in Mariovo, and they came to an conclusion that the people there are punished from God himself, that they are bad people, wild and if tax can be collected from them will be good. The mullah predicted that not only will the Islamisation be unsuccessful, but Turkish population will not be able to live among those bad people.

Because of the terror and other man sufferings from various tyrants, outlaws, road thieves, the people were forced to abandon this region. But besides all that, the people continued to give resistance and the period of the haiduks ( rebels against the turks ) started. One of the first haiduks Balto Voivode ( guerilla leader), then Gane and Gelo, Gorgi Lazot who assassinated the well known by evil outlaw – thief Chukchuk Sulyeman from Prilep, then Crne voivode and others. Local voivode became the well known and lauded character of Pasha Tole from Krusheva, Trajko Zojkata from Ziovo, jovan Gurov from Vitholiste, Andov Volkanov from Dunye, trajko Kralot from Brnik, Ivan from Guidakovo, Cicot from Beshiste and others. The gang of tole Pasha nad the honor to protect Petre Acev on the congress in the village Smilevo. Tole pasha before attack of the numerous Turkish army on October 14<sup>th</sup> 1904 in the locality Klensky Dol at the village Guidakovo, lost his life together with his older son, but his personae and the personae of several others, became a personification of the bravery and resolution of the Mariovo people and the Macedonian people wider.





*The grave of Tole Pasha in Krusevica*

The young Turkish revolution and the movement for freedom ( Huriet ) did not bring any changes in Mariovo. But on the other hand the Balkan Wars caused new shocks. Black days happened to the people. In Mariovo as well as in the other areas of Macedonia, the neighbors Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece infiltrated their armed troops with tendencies to win over this Macedonian population for achieving their goals to occupy a bigger part of Macedonia. Among the Balkan " allies " grew tension for redistribution of the Macedonian territory and this is how the First and the second Balkan War happened. In Bucharest on August 10<sup>th</sup> 1913, under the influence of the Big European Forces, a peace agreement was signed, by this agreement the borders between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria were established and Macedonia was divided into three parts. On that day Macedonia experienced its biggest tragedy – losing its national unity.

The first World War began when Serbia went into war with Austria – Hungary, this war brought a lot of damages to the Macedonian people. A lot of cities and villages were set on fire, properties were destroyed etc. 50.000 sheep, 100.000 goats, 10.000 cattle were extinguished. The villages Graesnica, Staravina, Grunishta, Zovik, Polcista, Beshista and Vitholiste were demolished to the ground. Many people from Mariovo were killed on this front. About half a million warring factions patrolled on Kaymakchalan, Dobro Pole, Zmeica, Kravica.



*The ossuary on Kaymakchalan from World War I*



After World War I, the population that had run away returned to their hearths, impoverished and forced to feed on flour from oak – apples and pine cones but united to build their homes again. The Vardar part of Macedonia together with Mariovo which was totally impoverished and devastated, especially the villages in the near vicinity of the front which spreads from the mountain range Kozyak, Dobro Pole, Sokolot, Malo Nidje and Kaymakchalan, were included in the newly created country the kingdom of SHS (Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia). The conclusion of the war pact between the kingdom of Yugoslavia and Germany on March 26<sup>th</sup> 1941 and the rapid cancelling of the pact on March 27<sup>th</sup> 1941 with the help of Robert Winston, the son of Winston Churchill – the English prime minister, made Hitler very angry and on April 06<sup>th</sup> 1941 he declared war to Yugoslavia. World War II intensified and brought new sufferings to the Macedonian people and new carving of the territory of Vardar Macedonia. The west part of Macedonia was under the occupation of Italy, and the remaining part and the part from Aegean Macedonia were under occupation of the occupation of Bulgaria and instead of Serbian they received Bulgarian rule. The ending of the Macedonian surnames from “ICH” was replaced with “OV” Now the Bulgarian authority took economic advantage of the villages. They took the sheep wool and sent it to Bulgaria, and half of the quantity of milk was sent to the state sheepfolds. Because of lack of basic products, sugar, salt, oil, the people from Mariovo went secretly to the villages Karadzova and vodensko to exchange goods.

Because of the robberies, requisition, mobilization of the men, the assimilation policy etc., the hatred of the Macedonian people towards the Bulgarian occupier raised even more. They began to form Partisan units and battalions, which stood up to the occupation boot. The Macedonian mountains were full of partisans. The Bulgarian army not being able to exterminate the Partisans took revenge on the innocent civilians. After having the first session of ASNOM on Elia's day (second on August) in 1944 many partisan units and battalions arrived in the village Zobrsko under Kozuv Mountain – Aegean Macedonia and officially formed the seventh Macedonian brigade, consisted of fighters from Bitola and Prilep area. During the National Liberation Struggle, Mariovo was a suitable terrain through which new fighters – partisans were redeployed. Even today the paths along the river “Crna”, along which the young people were led to join the Macedonian partisan units, can still be recognized. Part of the legendary February Expedition is connected to the terrains in Mariovo.

After the creation, and by the order of the Commanders Headquarter in the National Liberation Struggle, the seventh Brigade set out in an unstoppable fighting expedition. During the night of August 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> 1944 the brigade left the village Zobrsko and broke through to the Greek – Macedonian Border at the place called Kravica. According to the plan of the fighting activities, the second battalion first attacked the watch tower Urup, their leader was the fighter for freedom Stevo Tapandziovski from Gradeshnica, who knew the mountain very well. The watch-tower in Cerova – Polena was attacked and after the successful defeat of both watch-towers, the Bulgarian soldiers were taken by surprise, some of them gave themselves up and some fled in a panic escape towards Poroyot, Rechkov Rid, Cerikata and Vodenikot, towards the villages Gradeshnica and Staravina. The enemies help arrived with lorries at the posted machine gun nests above Gradeshnica, but in a short time they were defeated by mine throwing partisan troops which was led by the first sniper gunner, the Italian Stefany, who joined the Partisans voluntarily. So successfully the enemy was forced to withdraw, and the freedom fighters with unfurled flags entered in Gradeshnica. On August 25<sup>th</sup> the brigade set out for Bela Reka, Bazerot and spend the time in the Vlach cottages in Nidje. On August 26<sup>th</sup> 1944 they started fierce attacks for liquidation of the Bulgarian garrison and took over the watch tower and chapel on Kaymakchalan. In this battle were bravely killed the Vice-commander of the battalion Mordohay Nahmiyas – Lazo, the orderly-freedom Jovan Nalev – Johnny and the young woman partisan Estreya Ovadiya - Mara. On August 27 1944 the seventh Macedonian Brigade withdrew in the village Popadiya, south from Kaymakchalan and then moved to Baba Mountain.



*The monument of the fallen liberation fighters from the World War II*

*For many years after the liberation of Macedonia the people told and narrated about the bravery of the freedom fighters from the seventh Macedonian brigade and the battles which they led in the region of Mariovo in the national liberation war participated all which were born from 1914 till 1926, the ones which could not participate were active in the rear lines helping the national liberation movement with clothes, food, cattle etc. And in this battle the courage and the fighting spirit did not abandon the people from Mariovo. Impoverished but free, and the freedom is sometimes paid with lives.*

*After the liberation, in the period from 1946 till 1948 a law was brought, by which unfortunately, all the goats in the Republic of Macedonia and in Mariovo were exterminated, supposedly they caused deforestation on the Macedonian territory. The attempt for collectivization of the village did not succeed. Opposite to the expectations, the villagers completely impoverished. The national authorities gave up from that attempt, but the people from Mariovo never strengthened economically again. The migration process started from 1955, first to the closest cities, Prilep, Bitola, Kavadarci, and later on to Europe and to other sea countries.*

*Today Mariovo lives everywhere around the world. In the Macedonian cities are held Mariovo evenings, in the villages Mariovo meetings, in Toronto an Association of the people from Mariovo has been registered, in Melbourne there is an association "Stale Popov", in New Jersey there is also an association from the people of Mariovo. Since not long ago in Vitoliste are held Mariovsko – Meglenski cultural meetings, as a symbol of the mutual existence and combat for survival of that region. Today through Mariovo leads a good asphalt road from Prilep to Vitolishte, an achievement of the society and the youth working actions of Yugoslavia. From Bitola to Rapeshe enters another such road which who knows when it will be finished, at least to Staravina, and an asphalt branch has been constructed from Kavadarci to the foothill of Rozden. I hope they will be used and will open the doors for returning the life in Mariovo.*



*The rocks – mute witnesses of the wars*

## **GEOGRAPHIC – ETNOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

Mariovo is spread on the middle confluence area of the river " Crna " , under the bosom of the mountain chain, which as wreath surrounds it from all sides. From the north side is the Mountain Dren, which from the west side makes an arc with the mountain " Selecka ". On the south spreads the massive Nidge with the legendary Kaymakchalan and Kozuv which leads to the east and with Kozyak closes the circle from the north. These mountain Massifs contribute to its isolation. The river " Crna " under Bitola makes the historically well known curve and enters into Mariovo from the south-eastern area, passing through the centre of this valley, to exit on north-east under Kavadarci, flowing into the river " Vardar ". The river " Crna " in fact divides Mariovo to Big and Small or Old and New Mariovo. According to the geographical position and the access towards the big city centers, Mariovo is divided to Bitola's Mariovo, Prilep's and Kavadarci's Mariovo. The most accessible places towards the Mariovo valley are : toward's Prilep of the settlement " Sliva " with 1 135m above sea level and Klen with 998m above sea level; towards Bitola at the village Skochivir and Makovo with 1 037m above sea level; towards Kavadarci and Tribor – Kozyak with 1 397 m above sea level. According to several historical facts, in the Beginning Mariovo was inhabited with Trachani, Iliri, Brysaci and Vlachs, and later develops a pure Slovenian population. The people were physically strongly built and big, with extremely limpid eagle look and Bright eyes. They are emotional, with deep sense towards a human, solidary, and very dedicated. Since always and even today they respect the head of the family – the father.



*A part from the road to Staravina*



If today Mariovo is nearly without its inhabitants, in the beginning of the twentieth century there lived 13 890 Macedonians, 265 Vlachs and 149 Roma people, which as blacksmiths were mostly inhabited in the villages Vitolishte, Dunje and Staravina. The people in Mariovo are quite religious. They believe in their traditions, customs, habits and Afterlife. But besides the religiousness the people are always cheerful, merry and hospitable. The main occupation of the population is cattle breeding, which is a basic source of their existence. Agriculture is second level occupation. Every family has its own gardens, lands, from where they are supplied with the basic consumables. Several were employed in quarries, mines which today are abandoned, and several dealt with wood processing, sawing, woodcutting, coal selling etc. The people possess rich furnishings which are handmade. Every house has several : woolen home made thick blankets, carpets, rugs, coverings, blankets from goat's hair/wool, sheepskin coats, and shepherd's plaid. From wood are made long dining tables, chairs and benches, round baking trays, round boards for kneading bread, granaries, chests, svetilnicimvirushki, and kneading trough for bread. Round loaves of bread and puff pastry cheese pies were baked in earthenware lid and iron coverings. The food was kept, in vaults, where they placed the : vats, tubs and casks. Inside of them, they kept winter stores, salted peppers and tomatoes, salted meat, sour milk, salted sour milk, brine, dried mutton, wine, autumn and old cheese and other consumables. The wheat, rye, barley, oat, millet, corn and similar were kept in granaries, the flour for the whole year was kept in granaries. Every family besides the sheep and the cattle fed a few pigs and several chickens and a few bee hives.



*Host worked - parts*

Their clothes were worked out of wool, goat's wool and cotton canvas which they wove themselves. Ordinary and formal garbs were worn in Mariovo. The ordinary garb was consisted of a white shirt, a dress pleated in dark red, grlce ( a white cloth decorated with lace and silver coins placed on the chest ) and a apron. The formal garb is exceptionally decorated and reaches weight up to 30 kilograms. It is decorated with silver and copper coins, with buttons and several chains. Another decoration on the mariovo garb is the embroidery. For the younger women, the sleeves in front and rear parts of the shirt, the waist coat are embroidered with with bright red color, for the elder women in black embroidery. Certain parts of the garb are decorated with laces and silver gilt cords. Grlceto ( a white cloth decorated with lace and silver coins placed on the chest ) is decorated with various trinkets and laces. The headscarf is part of the garb, which depending on the age is white or black. The "tulben" ( a white headscarf ) is worn on a holiday it is decorated with fringes in bright red and green colours. The brides on their weddings wear an "obrus" ( garland ) which is decorated with bright red and silver gilt bouquet.



*Young girl filling water at a spring*

One of the happiest events in every person's life is their wedding. The mariovo wedding is rich with a lot of interesting customs. In old times, the girls and the boys got married with matchmakers. The matchmakers had to go to the girl's parents and ask for an approval from the father to give his daughter for the bachelor. If the girl gives her approval, then the father agreed and as a sign of consent they sent a "raun" ( a bag with an apple, flower and part of the girl's clothing ) at the boy's house a party is organized, the mother-in-law returns the " raun" with a shirt, socks and a flower for the bride. Since that moment it was considered that the couple is engaged. In the coming two or three weeks the wedding is prepared. The week before the wedding at the groom's and the bride's house, a girl close friend of the young couple would knead a round loaf of bread so called "Svaka" ( daughter's/son's mother in law ) and "bulina" ( small loaves of bread ) . Then the girl which kneaded the round loaf of bread dresses as a bride and with a formal bag filled with the " bulina" walked through the village and invited the guests to the wedding. While she kneaded the round loaf of bread, she sang the song:

*"My dough is being kneaded, who is kneading it,  
The groom's sister and first cousin."*





*Formal Costume*



The wedding begins on Saturday evening. Beans and corn are cooked and brandy is drunk and songs are sung till the morning. The garland is weaved for the bride from ivy and a song is sung:

*“A garland is weaved for me, who is weaving it,  
the groom’s sister and first cousin.”*

*“Hey you tree, ivy tree  
Winter, summer, you remain evergreen  
In spring you become a little yellow  
You give black grapes  
You make a bride of every girl.”*

On Sunday at eight o’clock, the best man shaves the groom, and the groom is tricked out in festive groom clothes : white jons ( pants ), below his knees are tied straps decorated with bouquet of yarn, a white kilted dress and a white embroidered shirt and of top of the shirt a black outer wear lined with fur rimmed with decorative braid, on the head a black round cap with a silver coin on the forehead, and on the cap a garland knitted with grape vine and red yarn.



*Everyday national costume*



*Bride*

The groom all dressed up like that, together with forty in laws, on horses decorated with white and red woolen home-made thick blankets went to take the bride, singing the song:

*“The hunters set of of  
To hunt a mountain partridge  
It wasn’t a mountain partridge  
But a young bride”.*

Also at the brides home it’s very merry. The girls dress up the bride in the bride gown: first they put on her a white shirt, embroidered on the lower edge and on the front part of the waist coat which is rimmed on the front part, and on the edges of the sleeves with bright red silver-gilt fringe, 20 cm long. On her chest they put a white grlce ( a white cloth decorated with lace and silver coins placed on the chest) richly decorated with lace, trinkets and silver coins. On the arms on top of the shirts are placed sleeves decorated so bright red velvet, and on the feet knitted bright red socks. Above the waist coat they placed an apron of two parts, weaved of red yarn and decorated with gilded and silver gilt braid, with silver coins, and on the lower hem with fringes the same as the waist coat. On the head they put a woolen headscarf decorated with bouquet of yarn in various colours. On top of the headscarf they put the NETOP – it’s a metallic decoration with silver coins. On the plaits they tangled the veil, knitted with black yarn with fringes, long till the heels. On the apron they tied on the sides’ decorative headscarfs, silver jewelry, buckles with chains of silver coins. On the forehead they put a few rows of trinkets.

When the in-laws arrived, the older best man went to the bride and put her shoes on. She returned them back to him saying that they are too big. So she argued like that up to three times, until the best man puts money inside the shoes. Then the bride would put the shoes on and give the towel for a gift. After this the younger best man would put on the garland on her head and she would return it to him up to three times. When the younger best man pays money to her, the bride puts the garland on her head and then she gives him a towel for a gift. During this event this song was sung :

*“Missy dear missy  
Don’t surrender yourself to two best men  
To two best men, to two devils.  
They will give you mended shoes  
Mended shoes, vlach socks”.*

Then the bride would go to the godfather and she would bow to him three times. Then this song was sung:

*Lassie goes to the respectful godfather  
to complain with a big grievance  
Hey you godfather, respectable godfather  
to complain, with a big grievance.  
Hey you godfather, respectable godfather  
They gave me mended shoes  
Mended shoes, vlach socks  
Hey missy you beautiful one  
It doesn't matter as long as they are fortunate for you  
Let them be fortunate for you and for eternity*

The bride is climbed on the horse, which is decorated with a woolen thick blanket which is hand-made. The horse is led by the bride’s brother or sister, and on both sides she is supported by the best men. At that time this song is sang:

“Be even earlier in the dawn my Lord  
So I can stay in father’s yards  
To listen to father what he has to say”

Thus with song they went to the church to get married. From the church the in-laws returned to the groom’s house where the celebration continued. When they arrived at the father-in-law house, the bride would bow three times in front of the father-in-law and she would kiss his hand, and the in-laws would kiss his hand, and the in-law would sing the song:

“Hey, young bride decorated with bunch of flowers  
Don’t you have any close relative  
To teach you a little bit  
To bob a curtsy often to  
Your father-in-law up to white knees  
To your mother-in-law up to white shoulders  
And to your godfather to the ground”.

When she bobs a curtsy to her mother-in-law, they sang the song:

“A cloud came and brought me a star  
Be happy mother of a hero  
A daughter-in-law came, a daughter-in-law for relief  
daughter-in-law for relief, for white changes  
for difficult kneading, for white laundering.”

Before sunset, the bride was taken to the spring and there she gave presents to the children. Again a song is sung:

“Bride, thin and tall  
How calm you walk to the spring  
Are the jugs too heavy for you  
or the silver jewelry  
or maybe your passion is too heavy for you  
The jugs are not heavy  
Nor the silver jewelry  
But my passion is very heavy  
My passion is in Bitola  
In those dark dungeons”.

After six weeks the bride together with her mother-in-law went to church and from there they went to her parents house for lunch. On her way for home she would start to unbraid her plaits worn since her wedding day and she would wash her hair.

The Macedonian people have a lot of things with which they can be proud of. Besides of the very difficult life they led, the song filled with emotions, regardless for love of the Macedonian people. The songs sang by the people is a national treasure, because in them is lauded life through the centuries, in joy and in grief.

These songs will never be forgotten and they will always remind us of the thorny road walked by our people.

## **MARIOVO TODAY**

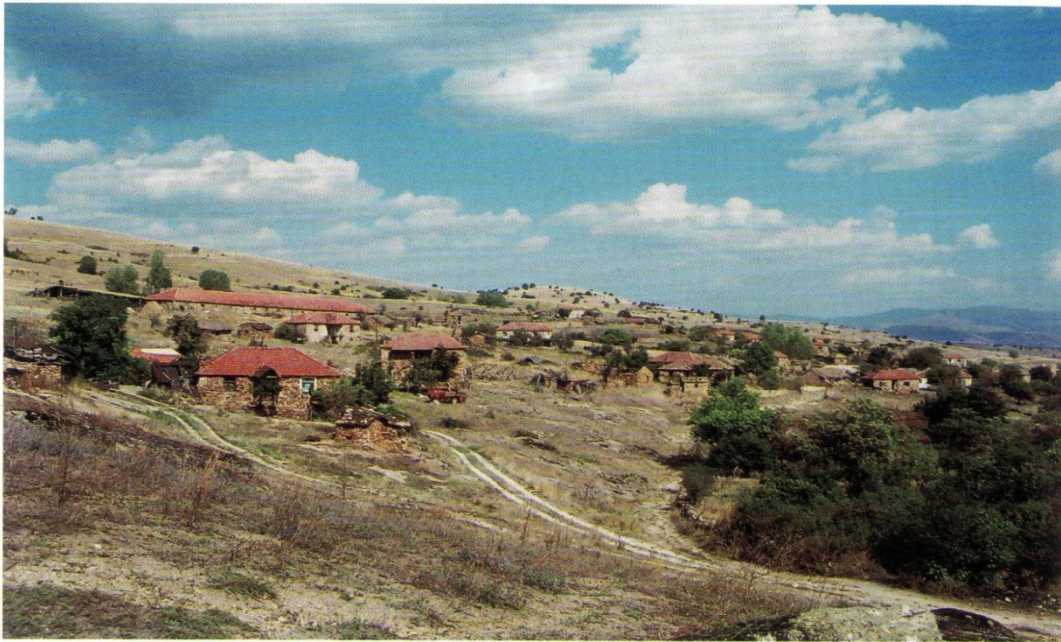
Towards Mariovo lead several roads, our adventure began from Bitola towards the village Graesnica. Driving on a good asphalt road we left the villages Logovardi and Novaci behind us, then the thermal power plant REK and gradually we climbed towards the Preslap. The passing in fact represent the gate of south Mariovo. The view was picturesque. We had the pics. We had the peaks of Nidze and Seleska Mountain on our palms. On the right, at the elevation of 1050 meters above sea level are found the rocks called "Topovite" where during the First World War, two cannons of the allied forces were placed which destroyed the last units of the Bulgarian enemy army. We continued the road through the hazel woods and before us appeared the village Makovo. It is located in the Mariovo valley at 850 meters above sea level. When you look at the center of the village you will see a shop, infirmary, a school building, and you will get an impression that here everything functions as it should. But in this village which is one of the bigger villages in this region where are only 5 pupils of different grades and they all have classes together. Misfortunate, but true.



*The rocks "Topovite"*

According to the sayings of Stojce Petkovski born in 1919 in Makovo, the village was previously located on a high location so called Old Mariovo. But their cattle constantly ran away towards the river Makovka in the lower parts, so the people realized that in this place there are better living conditions and gradually they started to move. In the period of the Turkish reign, in Makovo there was a Turkish serfdom where the best white wheat was cultivated because of the red soil. The people worked for feudal lord, they only left for themselves wheat enough to survive and because of the great sufferings they had from the turks, they called the village Makovo from the Macedonian word ("maka" which means suffering, pain). We heard another legend from Dragi Petrovski, a younger person from Makovo: there were three brothers Marko, Brne and Rape. Marko settled in this place as the first resident and according to his name from Markovo it assimilated into Makovo.





*Village Makovo*

In this village there are two churches. One is the church " St.Petka ", which by initiative of the village elder Stojce and with the assistance of the village association " Makovo " from Melbourne in 1997 it has been resurrected and consecrated by the bishop Prespansko-Pelagoniski Mr.Petar. The other church is St.Arhangel – ( on November 21<sup>st</sup> ) – winter time. But one year so much snow fell that the guests could not leave for a few days. And since then the village feasted Easter, a nice holiday spring when the weather is much nicer. Another feast of the village is St.Petka.

Before the beginning of the migration, with the census of the population in 1953 in Makovo there were 455 inhabitants and today there are only about 85, which deal with cattle breeding, agriculture, beekeeping, and most of the families plant tobacco.



*A national costume from Makovo*





*Stojce Petkovski with his wife*



*Mira Trajkovska from Mariovo*





*Selo Makovo*



*Sheep pen*





*Flock of sheep*

## **ORLE**

From the left side of the center of the village Makovo, there is a narrow asphalt road which leads to the beautiful village Orle. Once this village was located at the foothill " Mal Gavran" , on the plane which was called " Planishte". The cattle searching for water draw the villagers to the present location, where a big spring with beautiful cold drinking water is found. Here we found gorgi Joshevski born in 1933 and his wife Paraskeva. They live a very modest and peaceful life, with small pension which receives every month from his work as an employee in the quarry. A great help is the small garden they have and also plant tobacco. Georgi says that Orle was a small village but quite rich. From the once 224 inhabitants live here, and of once 700 cattle, 7000 sheep, now there is only 50 cattle and 250 sheep. These numbers say a lot. In the village there is a church "St. Nedela " which is built in 1936 on a new location, above the old church which is a witness of the past of this village. The village's feast is Easter.

The characteristic name of the village " Orle" ("Little Eagle") comes from the legend which says : A small boy climbed on the high popular trees in the village up to the eagle's nests. There he found two small eagles took them one in each hand. The little eagles flew and lifted the boy high in the air. He got afraid, but by advice of the villagers, who shouted at him, he dropped one of the eagles and the other one not being able to carry him alone flew low and the boy was rescued. According to this event the village got its name.



*Village Orle*



*Village Orle*



*Gorgi i Paraskeva Josevski*



*The Church "St. Nedela"*



## RAPESH

Leaving the villages Orle and Makovo, our road led us to the village Rapesh which is located at 800 meters above sea level at one of the hills of the mountain Selechka, it has a wonderful view towards Old Mariovo and the Mountain Nidge. In the far 1953 Rapesh had 425 inhabitants but today it has barely 80. Our hosts were Maria and Todor Trajkovski. Maria was very with our visit and with and with great joy told us the legends about this village. According to one of the legends Rapesh received its name because the people who lived here were relieved from the worries caused by the Turks, who had no interest for this village because their land only yielded rye and barely and very little wheat. Another legend talks about three brothers who had three sheep. One of them took the sheep Brnusa and settled in present Brnik, the second took Kalesha and settled in present Brnik, the second took Kalesha and he didn't have any problems with his sheep, and the third brother remained with Belka and he didn't have any problems with his sheep. It gave milk, he produced cheese, and then he sold the cheese and bought other sheep. That is why this village received the name Rapesh. Maria told us about some unpleasant incidents from the Ottoman period. At the place so called "Dunkata" a young girl Stojanka was working in the corn field. Along came three Turkish soldiers. They saw her and started directly towards her. When she saw them she dropped the mattock and she started to run, to save her innocence. Near by there was a cave and Stojanka jumped in it. That is how she lost her life, and they named the cave Stojanka's cave.



*Village Rapesh*

Another young girl Mitana was reaping at the place called Chukje and when she saw two Turkish thieves are coming towards her she ran through the wheat downwards and she threw herself in the whirl at the place Trnkata. She drowned herself saving her innocence. Stojan Jagadin from Makovo had three beautiful sisters, all three for marrying. The Turks set their eyes on them and waited for them to grow into mature women. Stojan knowing what will happen to them, one day in the dark night together with his cattle ran away with his sisters to the village Rapesh. Here the people from Rapesh built them a house and took them in shelter. When the Turks found out what happened, they went to Rapesh to seek for them, but in Rapesh lived two Turkish families they did not allow them to cause any trouble because they lived in peace and harmony with the people of Rapesh. That is how Stojan saved and happily married his sisters.

In the village there is a church that is with two saints St. Petka and St. Dimitria. Before World War I, the dining room of the church was used by the Bulgarian soldiers as a hospital. When the French came, the Bulgarians demolished the church to the ground, as well as the whole village. After the war in 1919 the refugees

returned to their destroyed homes and started to reconstruct their homes and resurrected the church. The village's feast in honor of its patron saint was St. Petka, at that time they harvested and stored wheat, so they took "Spasovden" (Ascension Day) to be the feast of the village because at that time they had less work to do. Other family feasts which are celebrated even today are "Mitrovden" and "St. Nikola". I have to mention a typical thing about this village, in every yard grows a self-sown fig tree. This is enabled by the Mediterranean climate which penetrates through the course of the River Crna.



*Village Yard*

*Village church*



*The last water mill*





*Village Rapeshe*



*Sheep-pen*

## **BRNIK**

On the right side of the village Rapeshe about a hundred meters above the village at 1050 meters above sea level, as in a nest, above a river Brnicka is found the village Brnik. Does the name come from the first resident who was called Brnik, or by the sheep Brnusha, or by the goats which had "brnki" under their dewlap, it doesn't matter. It is important to mention that in Brnik at one-time lived 228 inhabitants, with the census from 1953, but today only one man called Bino Stojanovski who is born in 1922 lives in this village. Since not long time ago he bred about a hundred sheep, but as he got older he sold his sheep and today not wanting to leave his home he breeds about thirty goats to fulfill his time. From the milk he produces the healthiest goat cheese which is very grand-father Bino to return from the spring, which is near house, where he gets his drinking water. He was very kind and happy to see us and he offered us fresh goat cheese and fresh water from the spring.



In Brnik there is a church St.Dimitria built in 1830.Above the village there is a village spring with water which is considered as holy water of St.Nedela.We lit a candle for health and we washed our face with the holy water.Such beauty surrounded but permeated with sorrow.The ruined house in front of us upset the pleasant feeling we had in this clean and healthy environment.

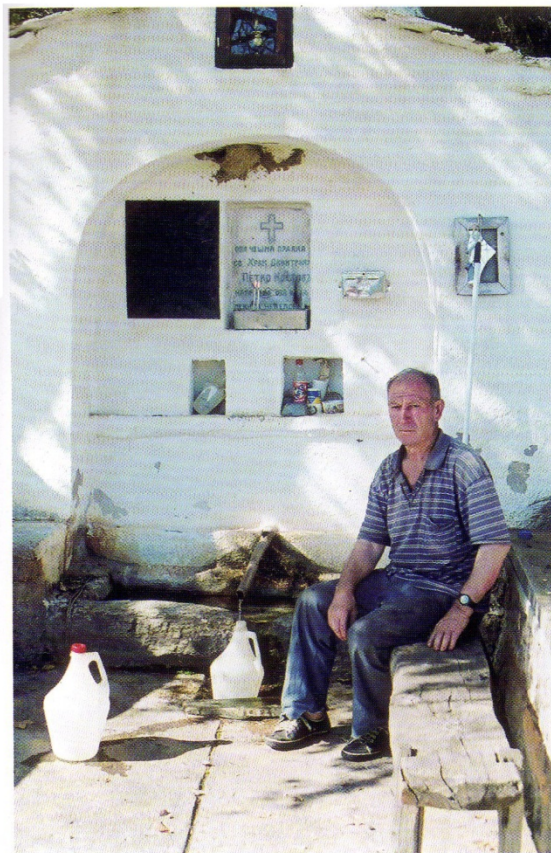


*Village Brnik*



*Bino Stojanovski*

At our great pleasure another man appeared, his name was Petre Trajkovski, a pensioner, born in Brnik. He told us that now he is more present here in Brnik where he has a house, and in his yard he proudly showed us 20 chests with bees that produce several kilograms of pure mountain honey. We noticed what besides his bees in a few other yards there are chests with bees, which means that there is hope that Brnik will not be forgotten. But it was time for us to depart, and carefully along the road which was not even macedam, we returned to the asphalt road of the village and continued our journey towards old Mariovo. At the place called "Jasikite" before us appeared the canyon of the River Crna, the biggest and the most beautiful canyon in Macedonia. The snaky road did not cause any difficulties for us. We were very excited and intoxicated of the beauty which spread before us. We passed the bridge of the River Crna in silence and we came to a small rising where the chapel of St. Arhangel Mihail is located. We lit a candle and continued with the exiting invasion of the curves towards "Cerikata". At this spot the local bus stops so the passengers can rest and drink cold water from the spring, which today unfortunately is nearly dried.



*Petre Trajkovski*





*Village Brnik*

## ZOVIK

At the place called Kochinye, a road sign has been placed, which shows the direction to the village Zovik at 710 meters above sea level. At the entrance of the village we were met by a few residents who were waiting for the Bread to arrive from Bitola. Here we met Kosta Atanasovski born in 1935, from whom we received short information about the village Zovik. Before, the village was five to six hundred meters away from the present location and it was called Lenishte. During the Ottoman reign, there is a tap which the residents of Lenishte called Bzovik. Around the tap there was a lot of elder, told in ancient Slovenian language B'z, which means that from here comes the basis of the name of the village Zovik.

Whereas Lenishte had a spring form where they filled water and that was the basis of the name of the village. There is a tale which is connected to this village it is about a woman who lived in Istanbul and told that she originated from Lenishte. When the turks set the village on fire, and then a turk saw the little girl put her on a horse and took her to Turkey. That woman from Lenishte is assumed to be the little girl that was taken away from the village.



*Village Zovik*

In Zovik there are two churches. One is St. Nicola built 1862, and the other is St. Atanas on the hill above the village with undefined date of construction. The church St. Nicola celebrates the day St. Nicola, and the village's feast in honor of its patron saint is Mitrovdan.

In the far 1953 there were 356 inhabitants, and today there are about 40. Today in Zovik is held "Zovicka sredba – gathering in Zovik". It's when all emigrants from this village gather to return the life one day in a year. Several have returned and repaired their old house and turned them into summer – houses. That gives hope that the village is reviving.

At 100 meters below the village passes the river Gradeshka, on which a stone bridge is built in 1955. Today this bridge is an attraction for the visitors because of its semicircular arch and colourful ravine of the river Gradeshka. On an enormous rock before the bridge the St. Gorgi is immortalized. When the villagers went to work on their fields they would not pass the bridge without making the sign of the cross in front of the saint.





*Village Zovik*

At 3 km from the village at 560 meters above sea level along the river Crna are remaining of the Chebren Monastery St. Dimitria. Every year on Mitrovdan, the people from Zovik and from the surrounding villages used to come to celebrate this Christian holiday. But because of the distance and the inaccessibility to the monastery in bad weather conditions on this day, the people from Zovik decided to celebrate the holiday Grugovden at the Chebren Monastery, and since then Mitrovdan became the village's feast in honor of his patron saint. According to a legend it is considered that the Chebren monastery was built by Sultan Mara in the fifteenth century. It was built by men and women so it could be built faster, and a grandmother took care of seventy babies in cradles all the cradles were tied one to another so she could rock them easier when they cried.

According to some archaeological data it is considered that the Monastery is a remaining of the old city Chebren ( Chemren ). On the high along the river and in the part south of the hill which is a great flat area along the river, there are remnants of the fortress i.e. wide walls built of stone and mortar. Several cultural remnants can be found among one of them is the monastery. In part of the Monastery church there is a painting from the fifteenth century. In the complex of the Monastery. In part of the Monastery church there is a painting from the fifteenth century. In the complex of the monastery there was a school of cells which was kept by the priests. On the hill there was a small church which was visited by the people of Zovik on " Spasovden ". The quantities of these regions can not be described with words.





*Everyday village work*



*Tipicno selska kujka*





*Village house – weekend cottage*



*The magnificent stone bridge on the river “Gradeshka”*





*The Church " St. Nikola "*



*The Chebren monastery " St.Dimitrija "*



## GRUNISHTA

The village Grunishta has very impressive geographical location. It is located in a small valley – Grunichki dol, at 900 meters above sea level, which from the north side is enclosed with the mountain Grunishki with height of 1200 meters above sea level. From the eastern side straddles a lower rocky hill, known as the Stenata (Rock).

Mitre Mishevski from Bitola, with origin from Grunishta, informed us that among the older residents a legend is passed of how the village got its name from the first resident named Gruyo. He was a cooper and attracted by the old forest with family at the locality Zidanici on the mountain Gruyo went down to return the cows, but he discovered a spring with the best drinking water in these area, so he moved together with his brothers and they are the founders of the Village grunista. In the Turkish registers, the village is mentioned somewhere in the sixteenth century, which means it is one of the younger villages in Mariovo. With the census from 1953, Grunishta counted 264 inhabitants, around 1000 sheep and goat and 500 – 600 cattle. This data tells us that the main occupation of the people from this village was cattle breeding because people from this village was cattle breeding because the geographical and climate conditions were very suitable.



*Village Grunihsta*

The people from Grunishta also dealt with agriculture, hunting and fishing, gardening, bee keeping and trade. They took their products to the markets in Bitola, Prilep, Florina, Edessa and Thessaloniki. From there they would bring cotton for weaving of the white canvas, of which the young girls tailored their white shirts and embroidered them. Several of them kept bees in knitted baskets, but they also collected honey from beehives in tree trunks of rocks called “brtvi” at the river Crna and river Bela. This honey was the dearest and most wanted on the market.

The village’s feast in honor of this patron saint was Mitrovdan, but today with its few inhabitants does not have anybody with whom to celebrate this feast. But thanks Riste Stojanovski – Benjo, who is born in Grunishta, since 1991 on May 26<sup>th</sup> until today in Grunishta are held

gatherings of people who originate from Grunishta on that day to give a little life to the village, to talk and remind themselves about the good days when the girls on Gurgovden climbed on the rock " Stenata " in the early morning hours, with flours in their bosoms and sang the song of Gurgovden waking the village to decorate their doors with willow branches. On this day the people from Grunishta dance and sing, and Risto Benjo makes the most delicious veal broth so the guests can all sit together have lunch and plan the future of the village so it won't be forgotten. In the village there is a church St. Dimitria which is built in 1848 and the bell tower in 1908. Among the older residents it is told that the church was built with great difficulties because of the Turks. They built it at night at day time the Turks demolished it, but the Christianity won. At 100 meters above the village there is a monastery St. Petka built in 1925. The interior of the monastery has a spring considered that it has healing properties.



The Church "St. Dimitrija"

With sadness in our hearts, sympathizing with the former residents of this wonderful village, we left and continued further on, to discover the other forgotten and nearly abandoned villages in this region of Macedonia. As much as we felt happy surrounded by the beautiful areas and landscapes that is how much we felt sorry and grieved that today nobody lives in this part of Macedonia, and it smolders as the last ember in the cinder.

Leaving the crossing of Grunishta, we continued our voyage towards Budimirci. Before us appeared a plain, which once was a productive field rich with wheat, but today they are meadows with some traces of threshing floors, where the wheat was trashed, and some walls of the huts, which were used for living during the harvest period. Today in these areas you can not hear the harvesting songs or the whistling of the wind and the rustling of the tree leaves which surely sing doleful songs.

A tree with golden red leaves drew our attention. We stopped to rest. That tree was a pear tree - "gornichka". We were lucky to be able to taste the ripe little pears and we were lucky to be able to taste the ripe little pears and we were convinced that is no sweeter pear than the pear from Mariovo, but today there is nobody to bring them to the market.





"The spring in Grunista"



"kotelot" on the river "Bela"

## BUDIMIRCI

We continued with our voyage and following the guidepost to the right, we found ourselves on the road to Budimirci. Deep at the foothill of the proud mountain Kaymakchalan on the opposite side turned towards south-east at around 900 meters above sea level, high above the river Bela, spreads the village existed since a few centuries ago, even before the arrival of the Turkish Empire. First of all it was located at the location called "Stragata" as Gorno (Upper) Budimirci and at the beginning of "Gladni Rid" left from "Snegovoblato", in the direction towards Staravina as Dolno (Lower) Budimirci. Both Settlements had a few houses and the resident's main occupation was cattle breeding and Agriculture. According to a legend, very often the cattle remained on the sunny side of today's Budimirci, where the spring and the favorable weather were an ideal environment for haven on the cattle especially Gorno and Dolno Budimirci and founded today's Budimirci. About the origin of the name, there are no exact facts, but according to a legend that is told by the older residents, the people from Budimirci were very peaceful people and they always comforted each other with the words "Let there be peace". Most probably the basis of the name is taken from this saying.



*Village Budimirci*

Today Budimirci counts 49 inhabitants, according to the census in 1953 there used to be 520 inhabitants. The village's feast in honor of its patron saint is Petkovden, but there is no trace of songs and music of this holiday. The holiday is celebrated quietly with an incident guest, whereas for the holiday "Vodici", the holy cross remained in the church St. Nicola to wait for the return of the tradition with nostalgia as in the old times. Already a few years now in Budimirci are held gatherings, this is a great joy for the village, and several people who originate from this village besides cattle breeding and agriculture also kept a few bee hives, bred pigs and poetry, which means they produced everything for their necessities for life. They supplied all the other products from the market in Bitola and Sobotsko in Greece. Every person from will tell you with great pride that below the village runs the river Bela which is rich the well known river trout.

Opposite of Budimirci, at the foothill of Kaymakchalan, from the once existing settlement Trnovo, the only thing which has remained here is the church St. Dimitria which has been renovated 30 years ago, by the initiative of Stojanka Kimoska Ajderovska. She dreamt several times to renovate this holy temple and today every year for the Nativity of the Virgin and for Mitrovdan, the villagers from Budimirci and to celebrate these holidays in memory of the displaced people from Trnovo.





*Village Budimirci*

Today in the scenic valley of Leshnica, from both sides of the river Leshnica, piles of stones bring back the memories of the coincidental passer-by about the existence of the one-time village Leshnica, full of life, joy and noise. Around the village and on hills could be heard bleating of the sheep and goats, the sound of the shepherd's pipe and flute, the song of the harvesters and haymakers... The village lived around two centuries ago, the people immigrated to the surrounding villages and to Meglenia which today is in Greece. In the maelstrom of World War I on the market in Sobotsko, Jovan Sivevski, from the village Budimirci met an eighty years old woman she told him that she was from Leshnica. As a child together with her parents they fled to Sobotsko. In the village there were two churches, narrates Kosta Grujovski from the village Budimirci, St. Petka and St. Nicola their foundations can be seen even today.

On the left bank of the river, on a rock, many centuries ago, before the coming of the Turks, a fresco of Saint Nicola was painted, which is well preserved even today from the weather and atmospheric damages. The same rock through the millenniums made an eave, under which the painter found a place for this Christian saint. A hundred years ago someone fired at the fresco with a gun and damaged it, but when passing later by this road this malicious person took his own life by slaughtering himself, says Kosta Grujovski. St. Nicola punished him for damaging the fresco. According to other legends, thieves searched for gold and damaged the fresco. 20 years ago, every May, the schools from the neighboring villages came here on excursions and picnics. Today there are no picnics and no babblings of children's voices and Leshnica with its piles of rocks at the foundations of the houses and churches and the saint St. Nicola are proof of the existence of a civilization in this area.





*The monastery in Trnovo*



*The saint of Leshnica*



*Milca and Grozdan Popadicevski*



*Brandy still*



## STARAVINA

The village Staravina is located at 900 meters above sea level at the foothill of the mountain Nidze, on the right side above the ravine of the river Gradeshka. The village received its characteristic name, according to Jovan Andonovski born in 1924, of the words " Stari Vina" ( which means old wines ). Once in these areas there were a lot of vineyards that were very old, but with the wars they were all destroyed. Today there are no old vineyards, or old wines, there is only Staravina. At first glance the village leaves the impression of abandonment. Hardly anything to wonder, when today in Staravina only twenty people lived there, whereas in the far 1953 before the massive immigration there were 741 inhabitants. After the war until 1955, Staravina was the seat of Mariovo that was part of the municipality Bitola, and then the municipality Moriovo was formed with the seat in the village Manastir. The municipality existed until 1964, belonged to municipality Bitola were annexed to the municipality Bitola. In 1997 with the new territorial organization, the municipality Staravina was formed again, which in 2005 was annexed to municipality Bitola because of the very small number of inhabitants and the minimum possibilities for self-financing.



*Village Staravina*

Staravina is at 20 km from the south neighbor – Greece, which means it is an adjacent village. As seat of the municipality, Staravina has an infirmary. In all the villages there were schools till fourth grade, whereas in Staravina in 1950 a central primary school ( eight grades ) was built where all the children from the surrounding villages attended school. Today this magnificent building is without windows, without doors there are only a few blackboards in the classrooms and a vaulting horse, which are mute witnesses of a period when these rooms were filled with life, joy and laughter.

Our attention was drawn by a house on which was written Sirmievi. This is the house from where Kalesh Angja origins, she was one of the reasons why the first Mariovo rebellion was organized.



### *Neighborhood " Sirmevo "*

In Staravina there is only one church St. Virgin Mary, which was destroyed in World War I, but rebuilt in 1936. The village's feast in honor of its patron saint is the Assumption and then the village revived again. On the hillock called " Staravinski Vis " with 1035 meters above sea level, the monastery St. Atanas is founded, where the people from Staravina celebrate the summer St. Atanas and Transfiguration of Jesus Christ. The monastery was built in 1961 on the old foundations.

The residents of Staravina were mostly cattle breeders and farmers, but there were several forest workers or they worked in the saw mill, gang saw of the forest workers or they worked in the saw mill, Gang saw of the forest company Kaymakchalan. Today the last residents of Staravina exist with a minimal farmer's pension and with cultivation of the small gardens which give them the basic food products. Also small herds of sheep, goats and droves of cattle can be seen. The village taps are used by the coincidental passer-by, whereas the residents of the village besides the residents of the village besides electricity have water-main in their homes. They don't have only one thing – neighbors.



We left the village, hoping to be here next year as guests for The Day next year as guests for The Day – The Assumption. We rejoined on a narrow asphalt road that lead to one of the most beautiful villages in Mariovo and that is Gradesnica.



*The celebration of the Assumption*



*The Church "Mother of god"*



*The monastery “ St.Atanas “*

## **GRADESNICA**

On the left side of the road, above the ravine of the River Gradeshka at 1.100 meters above sea level is the fortress Peshta which dates since roman time. Today there are only remains of the fortress walls, and a trench can be seen along which the water was brought to the fortress from the spring, for the rebellions of the first Mariovo Rebellion who were sheltered in the fortress. According to a legend it is believed that the people from the city Peshta settled down in the Valley of Gradeshka River and from here originates the name Gradeshnica. According to another legend, the inhabitants of the village originate from the villages Grmareto and Leshnica and the basis of the name Gradeshnica is taken from these two villages.

The village is located at 850 meters above sea level in the Valley of the river Gradeshka which gives its beauty and colorfulness. Gradeshnica has rich vegetation for what it differs from the other villages. Maybe that is why this village has always had the biggest number of inhabitants. With the census in 1953 it had 1085 inhabitants, but today it counts only 120 inhabitants. Today, besides the several ruins in the village, new construction and renovated houses can be seen. We also noticed that all the gardens along the river are cultivated, which means that Gradeshnica still lives.



*The fortress “ Peshta “*





*Village Gradeshnica*



*The upper neighborhood in the village gradeshnica*

The church St.Dimitria is located at the entrance of the village, which is considered as the oldest church in this region since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This church has a stone altar which is very rare in this area. During World War I the village was destroyed to the grounds, only the church remained sound. The grenade which fell in the church did not explode, it only damaged the roof. In the center of the Village is the bigger church in the village St.Nicola. The church is resurrected in 1863, but during World War it was demolished to the ground and in 1923 it was rebuilt. Other churches in the village are St.Gorgi, St.Andonia and St.Spas, which according to the archeological excavations are all built on the old foundations.

In the area of the village there are a lot of remnants from other churches and monasteries. One is the monastery St.Elia which is located in the locality Bren. Under the monastery is found the famous spring of Bren. Every year on August 1<sup>st</sup> several families come to this monastery for the feast in honor of its patron



saint to give oblation – lambs, and then lunch is prepared for all the guests who will come to this feast. In the evening and the next day August 02<sup>nd</sup> the feast continues in the village. In fact that is the biggest gathering of this village, when guests from everywhere come to the village, when guests from abroad gather of this village, and many of them are from abroad to attend this biggest feast of the village. At that day in the center of the village are danced Macedonian folk dances, in the houses on the formal feast are sung old authentic Macedonian songs. You can not imagine the feast on “Ilinden” without cooked wheat with sheep milk.



*The monastery “St. Eliah” at Bren*



*The stone altar of the church “ St. Dimitrija”*





*The church "St. Nikola"*

As in all the villages in Mariovo and in Gradeshnica the feast Vodici is also celebrated with quite interesting customs. On the day, in the early morning hours, the men go to the church St. Nikola, take the icons and the cross and walk through the village with a song, and go to the river to throw the cross inside. The song which is sung for Vodici sounds like this :

*Saints I carry ,I pray to the Heavenly Father  
 Amen,amen,let the Heavenly Father hear your master  
 Lesu  
 Of two ears,sack of wheat  
 Amen,amen,let the Heavenly Father hear you master  
 Lesu  
 Of two bunches of grape,pail of wine  
 Amen,amen,let the Heavenly Father hear you master  
 Lesu  
 Of one hole,two socks  
 Amen,amen,let the Heavenly hear you master  
 Lesu  
 Of one juniper,two rabbits  
 Amen,amen,let the Heavenly Father hear you master  
 Lesu*

The one that will find the cross in the river, it is believed that St. Jovan will reward him with good health and lot of luck in his life. At that time the women bring out low round wooden dining tables with warm brandy, cheese and cookies placed on the road where the passing crowd will return and everyone must help oneself to something from every dining table in the honor of the housewife. The women, whose dining tables are emptied, gather their things and continue together with the crowd towards the church, the host or the godfather that serves that year will cut a round loaf of bread which has a cross inside, on several places and then it is divided among the guests. The one that will find the cross in his piece of bread will be the godfather –

host for the next year. It is a custom for the new godfather to take a bath in the river. Then lunch is served, by tradition it is a lamb broth, which the host prepares since the early morning hours in a big caldron for the whole village.



*Throwing the cross in the river*



*Serving warm brandy for Epiphany*

Since always the main occupation of residents of this village has been cattle breeding and farming. In the beginning of the twentieth century in Gradeshnica there were about 10.000 sheep and goats and about 100 cattle. Most of the people from Gradeshnica were employed as forest workers or they worked in the mines for perlite which are found in the locality Cerova Polyana. Every household is engaged in gardening



beekeeping. In certain periods of the year there is purchase of mushrooms and medical herbs and that is how a large number of the population comes to the basic means for living. In Gradeshnica lived the family Nalevci who had two mills, a trade shop from where the villagers could buy different industrial merchandise, and in the locality Urup in the mountain they had several mills and caldrons for making brandy, but today only bare walls have remained and a few mill stones. Gradeshnica thanks to its location and the river is a very attractive and scenic village and in recent years it is visited more and more often by people who are admirers of healthy and clean environments. That is why the river should be put in protection of the environmental associations to prevent its pollution.



*Sheep Flock*



Balconies characteristic for the houses in Gradeshnica



*Evening milking of the sheep*





*Warm bread and fresh cheese*

# IVENI



*National costume from Iveni*



*Church "St. Spasa"*



At the foothill of the mountain "Selechka" under the canyon of the river Crna, the little village Iveni built a nest. The journey to this village was quite exhausting and as we climbed higher and higher, we noticed that the bare hills are decorated by rocks, fused to the ground as meteors. At first instance you get an impression that you are at another planet. The rocks are in different forms such as castles, animals they look like sculptures made by an experienced sculptor, but on the contrary these figures of stone are bit made by men only by time. And somewhere here, when we lost hope that the end of our journey will end, at 1.070 meters above sea level before us appeared a little settlement Iveni. Today in this village live only 5 inhabitants, but in the late 1953 here lived 321 people.

We asked our selves why this village was inhabited at this height, far away from the river, far from the local roads and we received the answer from Alekso Velkovski from Bitola who originates from Iveni. Purportedly the people who lived in the settlement Chegel, near the river Crna were robbed by the Turks and their village was set on fire, so the villagers fled away in the higher places Trnkata, Kolev Kamen, Polog etc. The cattle from the villages Trnkata and Kolev Kamen always came down to the place of today's Iveni, so the villagers gradually started to inhabit this place. First came the cattle of someone called Ivan and according to his name the village received its name Iveni. In these areas because of the big pastures, they produced the well known cheese of Mariovo. But today as in the other villages in Iveni there are only 100 sheep and goats and 20 cattle, but there is no trace of sheepfolds.

In the village there is a church St. Spas built in 1916. The village's feast in honor of its patron saint is Spasovden ( Ascension Day ) and this is the only day when the people from Iveni return to the village to visit their old hearth and homes and the graves of these ancestors.



*Celebration of Ascension day at Kalina and Stojche Velkovski's place*





*Village Iveni*



*Marko Georgievski*





*One of the last cattle herdson the pastures*



*Barn ( Tor )*



## **KAYMAKCHALAN – THE PRIDE OF NIDZE**

Kaymakchalan – the pride of Nidze, Nidze Mountain – the pride of Mariovo and the people of Mariovo, rich with flora and fauna with centuries endured the people of Mariovo with all its natural sources. I can not find the words that express its beauty and wonderful landscapes. That will be done by my photograph. I can only speak of the legends which are connected with the mountain, passed to me by Cvetan Mariovski in origin from Gradeshnica.

Kaymakchalan as the highest peak of the mountain Nidze with 2.520 meters above sea level received its name from a rebel Kaymakam. With his gang he climbed at the top of the mountain. Here they dug a big hole to hide the gold that they collected from the people, with this gold they bought weapons to fight against the turks. The leader of the rebels asked the rebels who wants to be a guard of the gold, let him volunteer freely. When Kaymakan volunteered, the leader fired at him and killed him saying that he will be an eternal guard of the gold.



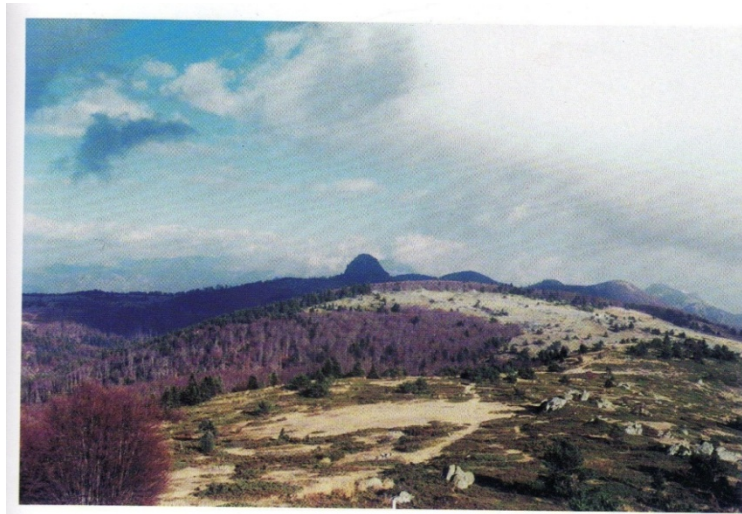
*Kaymakchalan*



*The cave of "Zmeica"*



The other legend is about two dragons which lived in the bosoms of the mountain Nidze. Once lived in Zmeica at 1.453 meters above sea level in the dragon cave, and in the other in the lake of Dobro Pole at 1.813 meters above sea level. One of the dragons said to the other replied you live as “a frog in a pond”. The dragon from Dobro Pole wanted Jana the sister of the dragon from Zmeica for a wife, but the dragon from Zmeica did not want to give his sister to him. The dragon from Dobro Pole challenged the dragon from Zmeica on a duel, and Jana wanting to help the loved one, cut the waistband of her brother’s trousers, so he wouldn’t be able to fight. But besides all, the dragon was very strong he picked up his opponent and threw him in the lake of Dobro Pole. Since then the lake seeped out in Pozarevsko and now it is only a dry swamp. When Jana saw this she started to run. The dragon of Zmeica got angry, took the plough handle and threw it at Jana, but he missed. The place where it fell is called Rachovec. Then he threw “chakulcite” of the saddle and again he missed. The place where it fell is called “Krlbashka” and again he missed. At last he threw a stone plate and stroke her. The place where he killed Jana with the stone plate today is called Janina Plate.



*Dobro Pole*



“Lakite”





“Blaci”



“Five taps”





Mountain house



A rock figure



Nidze in autumn



The river " Gradeshka "

The beauty and the colorfulness of the mountain are complemented by the clear mountain rivers which are abundance. Along the whole course of these rivers the water is so pure that the water can be used for drinking. One of these rivers is Gradeshka, which in the upper reaches is called River Urupuska. One of the sources is under Kravica, and the other is under Dobro Pole, both of them join under the place Bojcova Tumba. Other sources which flow into the river gradeshka are the sources at Macharova Paprat, the river Gradeshka, and in the lower reaches under the village Zovik flows into the river Satoka. Because of its stony riverbed with quite a lot of falls and rapids, the river Gradeska is called Stony River.



One of the most beautiful rivers in the Republic of Macedonia is the River Bela, its riverbed from its source under Stavrina Vis until the flow into the River Crna is of white stone, and because of this the people also call it Belica. Its tributaries are Small and Big River, Trnovchica, Leshnica and several gullies. These rivers were rich with river fish, of which the most known of all is the river trout, today is nearly extinct.



*Water source of the river "Gradeshka"*



*"Temnickiot vir of the river Gradeshka"*





*“The pool of Naume on the river “Bela “*



*Skokalata – river “Bela “*

Gradeshka and Bela River are tributaries of the river Crna. Mariovo can not be imagined without the cult River Crna, known in the antique period as Erigon. It is the source of the people of these settlements since the prehistoric and subject to celestial worship, because of the turbulent watercourse which cuts through

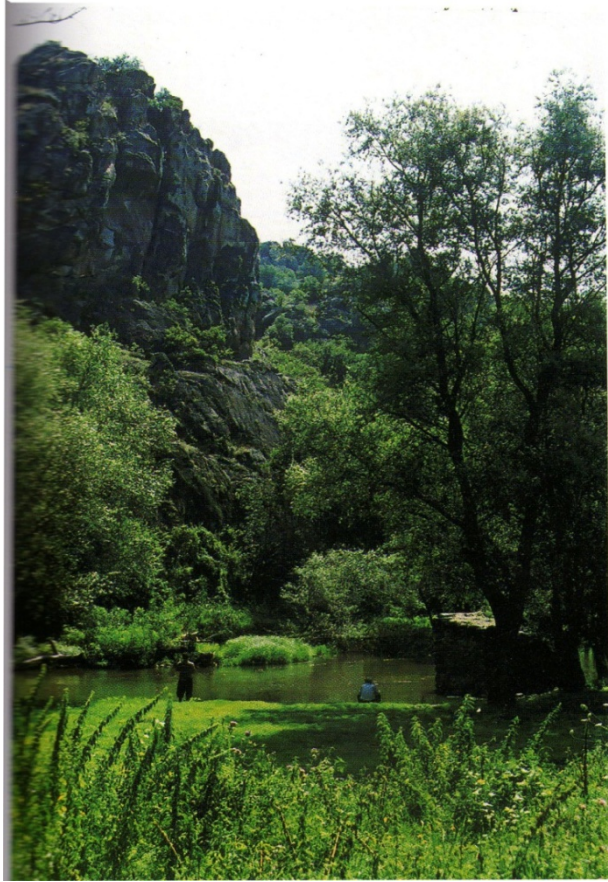


the mountains and causes birth of a dense floral and animal life. The river Crna, ancient Erigon, deserves more attention and endeavor to discover the endless legends and true events which happened along its banks. One legend is about how the river "crna" got its name, allegedly it got its name because "everyday it took one child and brought misfortune to one mother". But according to Georgi Trajchev, the river got its name, not because of its devilment, but from the black flower on the water, which was black as coal in the upper reaches, at the very source in area Demir Hisar, above the river Zeleznec. Here is the big quantity of water, which gushes out from the foothill of a rock, had a black flower of the black iron ore which is in abundance in that area.



*The bridge of Rasimbeg of "Rasimbeg" on the river "Crna"*





*The bridge of "Rasimbeg" – on the river "Crna"*



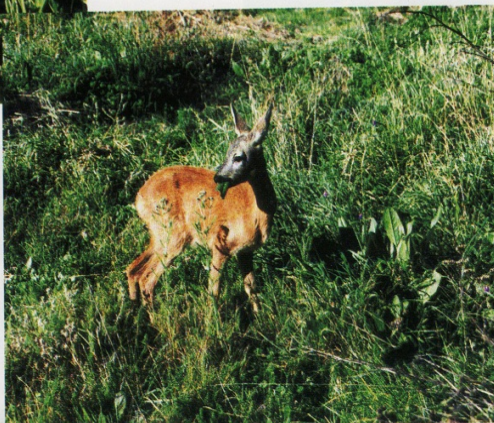
*Waterfall "Brnicki"*



*The confluence of the river " Brnicka " into the river " Crna "*



# THE FLORA AND FAUNA OF MARIOVO





МАРИОВО - Бисер македонски





## MARIOVO AND MEGLEI THROUGH THE HISTORY

Proceedings 2000

Kiril Penushlinski :

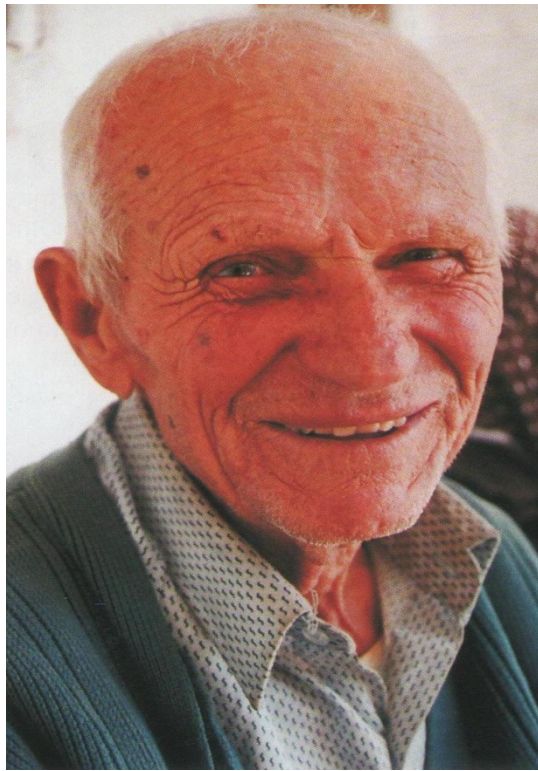
Ninety years ago the great Serbian scientist Jovan Cvijich wrote the following evaluation about Mariovo and its residents : “Mariovo is the most pure Slav region in Macedonia – a region of patriarchy life with very little noticeable Turkish,Greek – Vlach cultural impact.Also the mountain population of this region with its psychological characteristics is a particular oasis in Macedonia is a particular oasis in Macedonia : Straightforward,quick wits,resourceful.

Voyislav S.Radovanovich :adds to this picture about the people of Mariovo: “That they are open minded people,very indoustrious and joyful,always ready for a song,story and jokes.

In 1975 -1977 a team from the Faculty of Philology in Skopje,consisted of five professors from the Department of literature,a few assistants and two collaborators from the institute of folklore under the leadership of Kiril Penushiski,made researches of the popular art of Mariovo.Their conclushion from the contacts from the contacts they had with the people of Mariovo was entirely identical with the evaluation of Cvijich and Radovanovich,but they added that the people from Mariovo are natural intelligent people,very warmhearted and hospitable.



*Mitra and Riste Belejкови from Gradeshnica*



*Stojce Petkovski from Mariovo*



*Maria Trajkovska from Rapes*





*Boka Nedanovska from Zovik*



*Petkana Najdovska from Budimirci*



*Family Kopackovi*

My voyages do not stop here. Mariovo is rich with history, rich with natural beauties and represents a challenge for every photographer, historian, ecologist and tourist and for every person who loves his homeland and wants to get to know it to the last span. The publication is intended for the broader public i.e. for the ordinary man, to get acquainted with minimum data about the history of Mariovo, with the natural beauties, and more about the present situation in which are found, which gradually but surely are dieting. Should we allow this? If the competent authorities have forgotten Mariovo, then the people shouldn't.

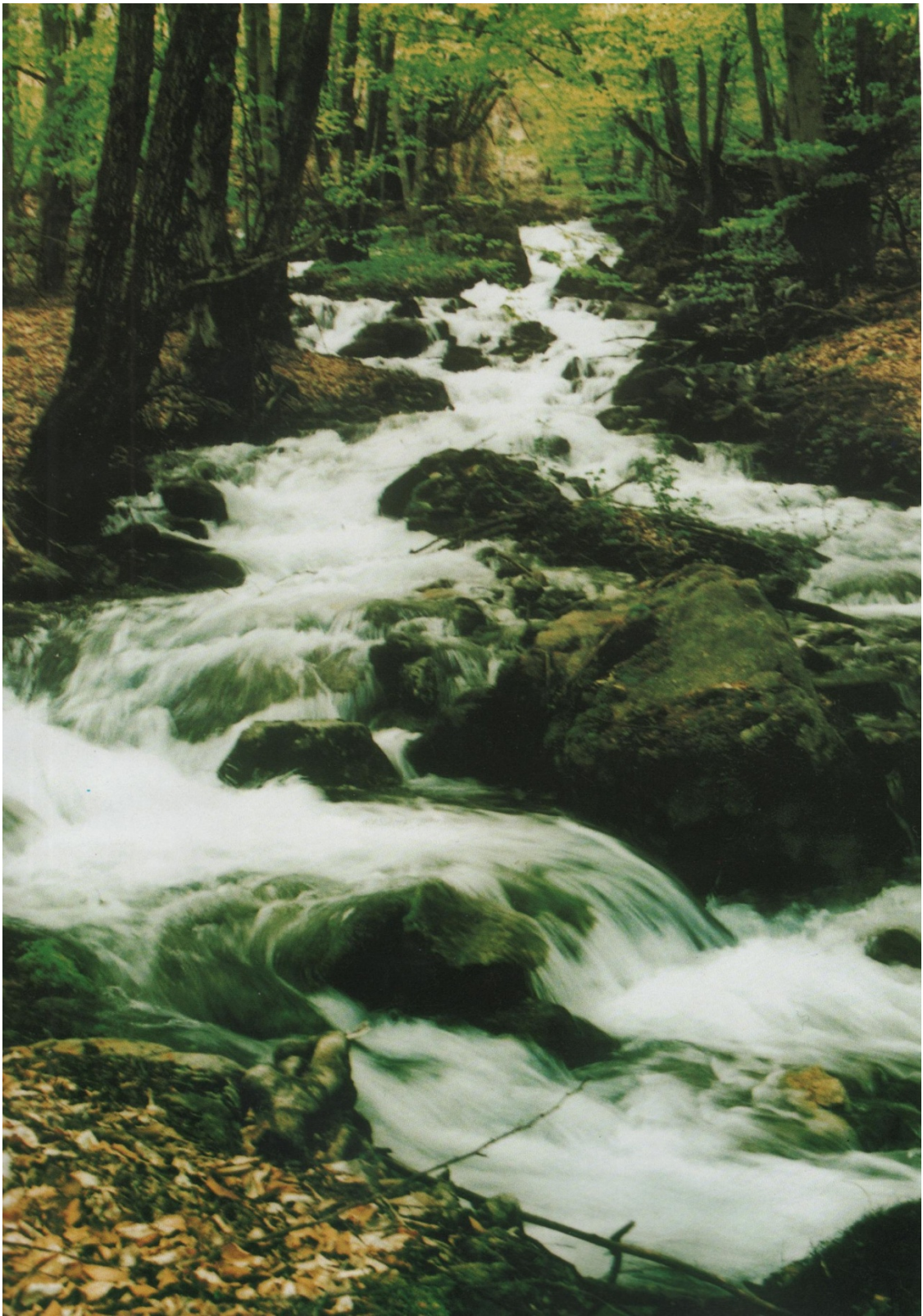


*Landscape*



**POSTCARDS FROM MARIOVO**

































## PHOTO-BOOK ABOUT THE AUTHENTIC AND ARCHAIC SPIRIT OF MARIOVO

The spirit is our leader. It leads us through the vast stretches of the time and space. It takes us back in time to the roots of the entire existence or it takes us through the space between the two earth poles and even further, in the endless and unreachable cosmic space. Our physical possibilities are not at the level of the spirit possibilities. That is why we must “ bridle “ it. Limit it in a space we can reign.

Katerina Mavrovska with her inquisitive spirit has concentrated on a wonderful area Mariovo, which is only part of the universal totality. Material and spiritual. Today its appearance is different from the one from millenniums ago, but its esthetics are not reduced. In some segments maybe even more developed. Those segments, often true pearls of nature's creation, or of the imaginative and creative works of the man, connected with his existence, are the fascinations which challenged Katerina Mavrovska's spirit. Indefinitely Katerina has been catching unrepeatable esthetic forms of Mariovo for decades with her photo camera, and transferring them into photos, which she shows to the viewers in the exhibition halls throughout Macedonia. In her photograph works you can find numerous motifs, especially from the part of Mariovo which covers the municipality Staravina, but also from the whole area. Her photographs with motifs from the natural beauties around the area of the peak Kaymakchalan on the mountain Nidze, the rivers Gradeshka, Bela and other smaller rivers with their clear waters, wonderful forests and fascinating formed rocks, remnants of the historical events are especially highlighted.

The photograph with the remnants of villages from Mariovo ( Gradeshnica, Staravina, Budimirci, Rapeshe, Makovo and other ) attract with their realism, archaism and authenticity. Also the complete photography creation of Katerina Mavrovska is supplemented with pictures with folklore values and esthetics, such as the photos of people in authentic Mariovo costumes, which represent true documents of the rich folk creation of this area.

Katerina Mavrovska's final project is a true photo – book, of Mariovo, supported with a text, which supplements the picture of Mariovo, in its distant and nearer past and in the folk tradition. Hundred's of photographs in this book are supported with long texts, which are written by the author ( Katerina Mavrovska ), who reread historical literature and collected folk legends about a great number of villages in Mariovo, and showed them through the photographs. In that way this book will represent a complex piece which will recapture Mariovo to the reader, not only with the photographs but also with the well written text, about the historic, ethnographic and geographic characteristic of this area. With its content and conception, this book means a true enrichment of the publications which supplement the facts about Mariovo, and also recapture its hidden beauties and unending values.

\*Presenter and the mecena of Mariovo, Palenzo Petko Dimce Mon grandfather Risto from Polchishta give a great presentation of the history of the village Mariovo- Polchishta anthropological genesis and history of indigenous Mariovo people remaining until today although Balkan Peninsula was the main pillar for all the wars and tromejja clearing accounts of world powers and occupiers of the territory of the ancient Macedonians until today

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