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# Professional and Personal Perspectives on Long Term Research in Serbia [Yugoslavia]

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# SERBIAN STUDIES

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR SERBIAN STUDIES



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CONTENTS VOLUME 6, NUMBER 3 SPRING 1992

John D. Treadway KING ALEXANDER'S COUP OF JANUARY 6, 1929-THE AMERICAN RESPONSE	5
Dimitrije Djordjević THE COUP OF MARCH 1941-DOMESTIC CONSEQUENCES	21
Alex N. Dragnich THE BELGRADE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS OF 1968	29
Dušan Puvačić JOVAN SKERLIĆ AND SERBIAN MODERNISM	41
Barbara Kerewsky Halpern and Joel M. Halpern PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES ON LONG TERM RESEARCH	53
John D. Treadway "VIRTUALLY INVISIBLE": SERBIA'S PORTRAYAL IN AMERICAN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS	73
BOOK REVIEWS	
Radoslav Bratić <i>Strah od zvona</i> Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1991 (Radmila J. Gorup)	81

## PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES ON LONG TERM RESEARCH

## Introduction

On the level of personal relationships, there is, perhaps, no need to pose the question that is the title of this paper. The long and ongoing research experience has been tremendously enriching for the investigators and our now adult children, who first arrived in the village as toddlers and infant. From what our village friends convey, satisfactions with this enduring relationship have been a two-way process. But beyond personal affect, what is the intellectual value of long-term study of a single community?

Over thirty years ago the opportunity to document European village life, in this case a village in Serbia, presented itself as a challenging academic endeavor. From the perspective of Anglo-American scholarship at that time, the only significant works on Balkan peasant society were Sanders' pioneering Balkan Village, and the writings of Moseley on the structure of the zadruga. Their researches were based on pre-war investigations and were important statements for earlier points in time. Apart from our analyses of wide-ranging sociocultural, economic and demographic changes over time, the ongoing nature of our work as it continues to evolve over several decades in the village of Orašac in Šumadija affords simultaneous appreciations for dynamics of transformation discerned on a human scale.

*Glimpses of Change*

The first scholarly publication resulting from the research (*A Serbian Village*, 1958) is a base-line against which to assess subsequent observed changes. Taking as an example a complex of changes related to easier access to material goods and new values, in a later edition (1967) we describe a situation in which villagers traveling by cow-drawn cart face the novelty of choice: to take the familiar pot-holed *drum* (mud and stone highroad from Turkish times) or a just completed, longer asphalt-surfaced connector road. Vans, autos and motorcycles are beginning to appear in the villages. The bucolic vision of plum blossoms is now often sullied by clouds of dust.

By the early 1970s we observe (*A Serbian Village in Historical Perspective*, 1972) that the rural scene retains its aura of "time immemorial"—but this appearance of constancy is deceptive, on the surface only. Up close the village is seething with change. By the late 1970s Šumadija's rolling landscape is laced with all-weather roads, and new drivers careen along them with disregard to the still extant creaking carts piled high with hay. They speed past unaware pedestrians, shepherds, and spinners who amble on the dangerous roads as though on quiet village lanes. Plastic floral memorial wreaths placed along the verges are poignant testimony to the frequency of auto and pedestrian tragedies in a society experiencing the first generation of automobile drivers.

Village houses were usually built *daleko od drum*a, "far from the road", another legacy from Turkish times, but now it is fashionable to build directly along the road. A few householders plan for a windowless side or rear elevation to face the road, thereby eliminating some of the intrusive dust and noise which by now is commonplace. For most households constructing new homes, however, the village ethic of presenting a proud facade to the world is more important. New houses are staked out as soon as the plot is inherited or acquired. The first item erected is a chain-link fence and solid stone portals, announcing symbolically to all passersby, "This is mine!" Sometimes these fences enclose a patch of grass, or simply piles of bricks and sand awaiting construction. Observations during a 1984 visit reinforce this increasing concern with statement of self. This attitude carries over to the village graveyard, formerly fairly egalitarian in terms of community access and types of grave markers. Today we see massive polished slabs, commissioned "works of art" and new manifestations of a need to bound off what is one's own. These slabs with their elaborate ornamentation in the form of photographic likenesses of recently deceased ancestors combined with the engraved names of the kin who erected the monument serve as a symbol manifesting a conscious desire to unite past and present members of a lineage.

Some of these large new investments result from the fact that many households have an able bodied member who is temporarily working "in Europe" (Western Europe), sending home remittances. The absent members themselves return annually, and as labor and funds are available new brick houses go up slowly over a period of

years. Here is the *zadruga* in new form: father, titular head of household, remains on the land; son goes to work abroad; together they construct and own a joint household which is physically two structures: the "old house" on the land and the new home on the road.

Frequently we see a hand-lettered sign, *plac na prodaju*, "plot for sale," nailed to a tree. This land is for sale by older villagers who can farm no more or by those who have moved away or now have jobs in town; all aspects of various forms of migration on a daily or permanent basis. Some are former villagers who have inherited land but who are tired of "tramping the village mud"; they have moved to towns or to overcrowded Belgrade rather than remaining on the land their fathers and grandfathers tilled so assiduously. Some return, not to reside in the village as peasants but to convert the former homestead to a *vikendica*, a vacation house on the land which is their patrimony. When a new vacation house is started on purchased land, a nostalgia for the virtues of village life is seen in the planting of fruit trees and the laying out of a garden even before construction starts. This kind of leisure time agriculture only partially compensates for the displaced wheat field or vineyard. In many cases, the variation in architectural styles between houses of local peasant-worker and vacationing urbanite are indistinguishable. Now new A-frame dwellings arise near old-style sheep hutchies.

A country home in the village, whether owned by a returned village son or an individual with no kin ties in the village, is enhanced by contemporary ease of access to Bukovička Banja, a landscaped spa located in a wooded area on the far side of the market town of Arandjelovac. This spa is also the source of Knjaz Miloš, the highly acclaimed mineral water. The firebrick and insulator factories represent the initial industrialization of this area in the late 1950's and 1960's. Along with the spa and the older marble quarry in the nearby village of Venčac they represent the basic non-agricultural parts of the regional economy. A local official summed up the situation, "We take advantage of all our resources—we sell our mud (clay for firebrick and insulators and local potters), rock (marble, gravestone markers and sculpture), and even our water (mineral water) and even our air for the tourists.

When we first started going to town we walked in with villagers bringing produce to barter or sell at the weekly Friday market. Then, the long, single cobbled street (*duga kao ženski jezik*, "long like a

woman's tongue") was lined with craftsmen's shops and rows of the pruned and whitewashed acacia trees characteristic of every Šumadijan small town. On market day one walked its length while leading sheep to the livestock market. In the afternoon village boys and girls (who had hiked in barefoot, carrying their shoes) strolled up and down in groups looking each other over before joining in *kolo* dancing on the grass near the church. That cobblestone street, and its soft-hued craftsmen's shops, like a tinted etching from another era, has been gone for almost 20 years. It is been replaced by a wide macadam road marked with pedestrian crossings and parking spaces. The old craft shops have given way to specialty stores, department stores, supermarkets, cafes, and a potter's shop which caters to domestic tourists.

Is this the same town where Danica used to trek in *preko brda* ("over the hill") to sell a single basket of eggs? Where grandfather Radovan took up a staff and spent a day walking there and back to transact a few minutes of business at the county office? Today regularly scheduled bus runs operate between Orašac and the town, Arandjelovac also boasts a bypass to accommodate large trailer trucks and keep heavy traffic off the main street. Both new roads are lined with modern apartment buildings. Vestiges of the old town architecture diminish each time we visit. The spa, refurbished, is now regarded as the town cultural center and its formally laid out park surrounded by renovated and new hotels is the scene of an annual international sculpture festival. The local mineral water has become the base for Pepsi Cola, bottled under license, "B.B." as the state enterprise is known, has expanded its line to include carbonated fruit drinks and diet colas. Like the factories, this large enterprise provides continuing employment opportunities for many villagers. Fleets of B.B. trucks move from the bottling plant to distribution points throughout Serbia. Litter seems to come with modern life. Discarded Knjaz Miloš bottles and the yellow plastic shipping cases are testimonies to Šumadija's participation in the larger world.

Despite these links to the town and beyond, Orašac village itself continues to display a characteristic dispersed pattern, not only in settlement but in lack of a crossroads-type center, a direct result of mid-19th century edicts restricting development to towns. Recent years reverse this earlier pattern of town centralization. Some of the shops and services formerly found only in town now appear in the

village. These include a general merchandise store, a medical clinic, a post office. Federal law now permits small-scale private enterprise (owner and total number of employees not to exceed 5), and there are *privatnici* here and there along the road. On the way to Arandjelovac one passes a car repair service, a stone-cutter's workshop and a few cafe-restaurants. One *kafana* features a folk ensemble on weekends. Its name (on a metal sign provided by the Yugoslav Pepsi Cola franchise) is *Složna Braća* ("The Compatible Brothers"), a sentimental ploy on the valued *zadruga* ideal of brothers sharing common roof and hearth. In fact, the establishment is owned and operated by an enterprising couple from Mladenovac, a nearby town. Up the hill on the left is a large new shed housing an auto body shop. Chassis parts are spread about, some overlapping surrealistically into the adjacent plum orchard.

And yet, when you reach the top of the hill and gaze at the village panorama below, there it all is: the sweeping view, the hills, the familiar undulating fields of corn and wheat. There are the patches of acacia woods, the hedgerows along the lanes, the weathered tile roofs, the plum orchards, the vineyards. On the horizon Mt. Kosmaj reaffirms its purple contours, Sentimental? Yes. A better setting could not be contrived for the old folk song, "*Šumadijo, rodni kraju*" ("Šumadija, My Birthplace"). From that height and distance it is the same scene we saw when we jounced up the hill in the back of a cow-cart over thirty years ago and had our first glimpse of Orašac village below.

In sum, our generalized impression of Orašac seems to now represent three chronologically placed themes. These themes reflect what we observed but they also grow out of our own reflection and how we have changed and also how our observational frameworks have shifted affected by our changing perspectives. In our first years in Orašac, 1953-54, we were overwhelmingly impressed by the predictable, repetitive and self-sufficient aspects of village life, this was before we had lived in Asia and this European setting contrasted strongly with the suburban world of New York City in which we had both grown up. At the time of our initial visit agricultural work depended mainly on human and animal power, mechanization was distinctly secondary. The village was a conscious social unit and courtship still focused on village dances held on local festivals and after special market days. The rituals of Christmas and Easter were

shared as family events and women chanted the poetry of mourning at graveyard feasts. When old men played the gusle and recited oral epics they were eagerly listened to and did not have to compete with TV soccer matches. The village, of course, had never been isolated or culturally static but we were understandably overwhelmingly impressed by "timeless tradition" reflecting as much our own experience and the state of socio-cultural anthropology at the time, with its stress on documenting ways of life previously unstudied in the West, as it did the sociocultural reality of Yugoslavia at that time which less than a decade before had gone through the horrors of World War II and a thoroughgoing socialist revolution and a scheme for collectivization of the land that had only recently been withdrawn, in 1948 at the time of Yugoslavia's break with the Cominform.

In the mid-1960s and early 1970s it was the many unique events of change that were highlighted for us. The electrification of the village, improved roads, bus service, post office and medical clinic in the village had exemplified this change. There was also the strongly felt impact of outmigration by the young that was felt by all. Migration to outside jobs was not new but it had never been so massive. Along with this trend was the coming into prominence of the category of peasant-worker which meant more farm work than ever before for the women who remained at home. The construction and expansion of factories in Arandjelovac seemed to go along with the beginning of the appearance of non recyclable plastic garbage along roadside and its persistent accumulation on the scattered homesteads. Also the detritus of auto wrecks became increasingly obvious and made us feel more "at home" and less in an exotic peasant society.

The late 1970's and mid 1980's seems to us to be a time of consolidation and a period of consolidation of achieved change and exploring the limited options which now face all for the future. From the villager's point of view and those of their close kin it is a time of investment to affirm enduring values inherent in family relationships and in ties to the land. This is perhaps a way of explaining the newly elaborate and massive grave markers with their mark of dedication by family members with their explicit kin ties to the deceased. These material monuments to the past are balanced by those monuments to the present and future in terms of the very

substantial year around homes constructed with their built in excess capacity. This spacious and partially used rural housing can be contrasted with cramped urban apartments which are usually obtained with difficulty. It is, of course, also true that Yugoslavia as a socialist state provides only a limited opportunity for the investment of private capital in small scale familistic enterprises.

### *Community Study Approach*

As a research method community studies have been somewhat justly criticized for being myopic in their view, concentrating on local society to the exclusion of national trends or, more precisely, failing to articulate the two levels in a meaningful way. Further such studies have been intellectually eclectic, with differing focii. This makes comparative work difficult. It is not appropriate to pursue that specific discussion here but rather to note that when fieldwork in Orašac was initiated in 1953-54, documentation of a way of life until then not represented in the Western scholarly literature made sense and filled a need. In retrospect, it has also turned out that observations we made then, because our emphases were different from those of local scholars, have proven to be of interest to contemporary Yugoslav ethnographers and social historians.

### *Longitudinal Studies*

Advantages of long-term research have two aspects. One is the matter of longitudinal studies, where the same population is followed over time with specific research interests in mind. Such studies are demonstrably valuable in fields such as psychology, sociology and biology and our research as it has emphasized demographic matters has strong ties to these approaches. From an anthropological perspective, longitudinal studies have been linked to developments in historical demography. In these population studies the results of long-term observation and an analysis of demographic variables are combined to provide and provide, not only perspective on case study materials, but give perspectives on trends in the community as a whole. An important and obvious adjunct is that the statistical data from the local setting can then be compared with regional and national trends. This has been done for the Orašac data (see bibliography).

### Apply Diverse Theoretical Perspective

In applying diverse theoretical perspectives an interdisciplinary team approach embarks on the study of a single community using a variety of social sciences and sometimes biological disciplines. This approach has been applied in the study of several communities in Yugoslavia and the results have been published jointly. Our variation on this approach in Orašac has been smaller in scale involving mainly the two of us but also others as well (see contributions by Foley, Hammel and Wagner in the bibliography). We have returned to the same community, not only with the objective of doing a re-study (frequent in the anthropological literature), but also of approaching the community employing diverse social science interpretations. Three totally different American anthropological dissertations have come out of the research in Orašac: *Social and Cultural Change in a Serbian Village* (Human Relations Area Files, New Haven, 1956); *Speech as Ritual and Process: Aspects of the Ethnography of Communication in Rural Serbia* (Barbara Kerewsky-Halpern, 1979); and more recently a demographic profile, *Children and Change in a Serbian Village, 1870-1975* (R. Wagner, 1984). All three focus on the same site. The approaches and data bases overlap but the approaches differ in each case.

### Integrative Approaches

A jointly edited monograph (1977) brings together diverse perspectives and focuses on understanding the dynamic interrelationships of social structure, oral tradition and demography. For example, by appreciating and analyzing the "epic pulse" by means of which some elders retain the details of their lineage history, we have been able, in turn, to comment on the evolution and transformations in the zadruga-based household. We have dealt with ways in which quantitative measurements of kin ties relate to the means by which individuals perceive these same ties in a diachronic framework. Vital rates and specific social structural frameworks, as in household size and family-household structures, are elucidated on the basis of administrative records (birth, marriage, and death registers, landholding, tax and other population lists including census records preserved by the local administrative offices and the Serbian State Archives).

Depicting the nexus of social relationships as defined by villagers themselves reflects a sense of collective identity. Combining approaches from historical demography and the study of oral tradition has made possible the interpretation of a multi-dimensional model of Serbian village society. This has been implemented by the explicit interrelating of computerized demographic and social structural data bases with sociolinguistic analyses of communicative competences and speech patterns which are the gifted legacy of members of an oral traditional culture. This has enabled us to "map" a community's kin relationships and associated social structures over a period of 200 years. Orally recollected lineages of 8-12 generations have provided points of departure. Within this framework we have looked at the various forms of household structures experienced by an individual over the lifecourse (Halpern and Kerewsky-Halpern: 1972).

### Linear and Cyclical Time

In recent years we have been exploring ways of integrating our data utilizing concepts of linear and cyclical time. With this approach it is possible to posit an understanding of how this Serbian village culture and its social system alters over time and how these alterations have affected the ecological setting. A point of departure is to consider cultural ideologies stressing ideal patterns as based on cycles, as in the case of values associated with the extended family zadruga system. But individual experience must always cope with linear (historical) change as in the unique and non-recurrent experiences encountered by an individual during a lifetime. For men in Orašac this has often involved leaving family and village to serve their country in one of the numerous wars Serbia has experienced over the last century both as an independent state up to World War I and subsequently as part of Yugoslavia including World War II. The two time frames are not systems apart; rather they are in continuous interaction, producing adaptive sequences. In this instance, the cultural ideal is continuity of the South Slav extended family undergoing a series of predictable sequences of household formation. The reality is that cyclical time ideals must adapt to linear time changes, e.g. the death in war of the death in war of the father-husband household head or of the only son, projected inheritor of the atimony.

An initial distinction can be made between recurrent family cycles in process, whose dynamics are tied to individual life cycles and the particular linear time frameworks in which they occur. Some social structural features are recurrent, and others clearly are not replicable. Precise categorizations of those phenomena that are cyclical and repetitive, and those that are discrete and linear are not made easily. All persons are born and die. Most people mature. The exact sequence of intervening events is, however, unique for each individual. This is true for both individuals of the same age cohort as well as those from different generations. The timing of these events is, however, far from certain. Sometimes individuals can be effected similarly by linear time events effecting the life course as with the massive deaths in Orašac as a result of the influenza epidemics during World War I.

Cyclical time perspectives refer both to occurrences in the life course and in the processes of the family-household cycle. The sequence of events in the latter is propelled by changes in individual vital events—birth, marriage, migration, and death and their social consequences. The cyclical concept we apply refers to a typology of predictable, sequential events whose beginning and end points can be defined precisely. Cycles can end as when an old couple dies in the village leaving no descendants. Or the family's experience as part of the village community can close when all migrate. In these cases parental homes are sometimes maintained, at least for a period, as vacation residences.

Pure cyclical time can be envisioned as a closed circle. In graphic form it can be depicted as a helix with a series of circles interlocking around a straight line which represents linear time. This line of linear time extends infinitely but can change direction and thus has a force like that of an electrical field which can influence the amplitude, form and diameter of the circles of cyclical time. It is possible to choose arbitrary beginning and end points on a cycle but they must always exist with reference to a specific process, whether in the physiological aging process or in the annual seasonal progression. A logical point of departure is a new season, a new life with built-in replicability. In linear time each event is unique and fits into an unalterable order. Here process is not reinforcing. The disappearance of the dense oak forests from Šumadija (land of woods) during the 19th century is a case in point. A little more than a

century earlier travelers from Western Europe had reported that the area was so densely wooded that they never emerged from the shade. Today the only woodland evident in much of the region is clumps of fast growing acacia trees which are maintained as woodlots.

It is characteristic of the value distinctions between these time processes that it is much easier to define linear time in negative terms and cyclical time in positive ones. Linear time has no fixed terminus, although for analytical purposes arbitrary beginning and end points are routinely established. It can be projected back into the past but it is not readily predictable from past events. From a cultural perspective, linear time occurs in a secular rather than sacred context. Seen in the context of an arbitrarily defined point of departure, linear time can be viewed as always in the process of bypassing any chronologically fixed cultural setting. This view of linear time may be balanced by an alternative perspective which conceives of change as experiential accumulation, as reflect in the cumulative aspect of culture, especially with respect to the technical order. In this latter sense, linear time is still without a fixed terminus, has no precedent, and is not readily anticipated.

Links between past and future exist, but their relationship is neither implicit nor readily predictable. Modernization, processes of industrialization and urbanization call forth images of specific change which have been exemplified here. To take an example of a linear time event in the local context we can look at the demise of local crafts. In the 1950's the market town of Arandjelovac had a series of trades which were specifically oriented to serving the local rural population. These included potters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, furriers (mainly sheepskins), candlemakers, sandal makers (from pig skins), dyers (of wool), tailors (men's peasant costume), rope and harness makers among others. Today they are almost all gone and those that survive, such as the potter, serve mainly the tourist trade. The ending of these crafts not only lessened the material distinctiveness of peasant culture but it also eliminated what had been a possible life stage for many peasant sons, that of apprentice.

Sacred observances engage cyclical time and are related to the natural world as represented in daily and seasonal activities. Ritual events associated with birth, marriage, and death are sacred time markers in the life course. Since the past is replicated, it is replenished or reaffirmed by such ritual. Cyclical time is sanctioned by

rituals of affirmation of achieved stages. Rituals can be seen as affirming biological processes and annual cycles. Ceremonies for the dead at the graveyard function in this manner. These are of two types. There are the annual, calendric ceremonies participated in by the whole community and then there are the funeral rites and the subsequent prescribed periods of commemoration of an individual's death. To simply visit the graveyard is to identify not only with the deceased but with the patrilineage since placement of burial areas in the graveyard mirrors the distribution of houses in the village by lineage groups. The mourning in epic formulaic pattern by the women reaffirms the kin links with the deceased. This cyclical time value remains as a potent value even as the setting now amidst radically changed styles of tombstones reflects the linear time developments in enhanced technology and a greater amount of disposable income. The oral traditional component has also altered as skills in these modes of expression has declined as part of the growth in mass communication in a linear time frame.

Idealized futures always contain cyclical elements involving replication of the past, as in anticipated stages of an individual's life course. Events in linear time need a cyclical time referent to make them intelligible. It is apparent that historical anniversaries, as in the commemoration of significant events in the founding or development of the nation-state, can be said to be anchored in linear time, i.e., they occurred only once. Yet their reinforcement in an annual calendrical observance does situate them in a cyclical time framework. In this case it is necessary to distinguish between the occurrence of the original event and its process of commemoration. The postwar state holidays of socialist Yugoslavia such as the First of May are examples of this process and have been adapted into the village context.

In the kinds of change observed over the course of an individual lifetime and encapsulated in a biography, cycles can also be seen as measures of linear time. Specific cycles always involve idiosyncratic events in keeping with the constellation of elements in an individual's experience and, as a consequence, bear a degree of unpredictability. An example is the kinds of sociocultural changes in linear time as discussed in the first part of this paper. Such changes help interpret the ways in which individual life courses and household cycles do not fit ideological expectations. The perception of these

events as discontinuities is, in turn, a product of cultural values grounded in cyclical time experience. Autobiography is always composed of a blending of these two distinct time elements. Orašac villagers when asked to define their lives in this type of structured format identify simultaneously with these two separate time dimensions. It is the lineage ideology which defines the beginning of personal time. Thus male villagers will frequently say the equivalent of "this I remember" and recount events of e.g. their grandfather's time. This cyclical time value is still fresh among the present generation as when people now in their 40's speak of the events of World War II in the direct way of personal experience. For women in this agnatically based society cyclical time values are consistently linked to the postmarital residential group of their husbands. It is through the descending generations that the focus of their identity lies and it is for this reason that the birth of a son is so important to both husband and wife but for different reasons, for the former it is a manifestation of the continuing cycle and for the latter it is the creation of a new cycle. Secondly, for women, there is a link to the past through their brothers, a theme often present in the folk poetry.

Value complexes composing kinship ideologies, grounded in cyclical time, tend to be modified at a slower rate than events and even ideas concerning technological and related economic phenomena occurring in linear time, since ideologies concerning social structure derive their credibility from repetition, not innovation. There is a focus on conservatism in cyclical concepts which only slowly assimilates ideas based in linear time. Overall, any ideological system attempts to make sense of both time dimensions in that there are always attempts to deal with unanticipated events.

#### *A Link Between American and Yugoslav Experiences*

America has been defined as a society in which nuclear family values predominate. But we are also a society with ramified kin linkages and one with an historical consciousness both on the national level and on the local and family levels, at least potentially. Orality can function in two linear time dimensions, each intersecting with the cyclical processes of family time. In Yugoslavia, especially in the southern and eastern areas such as Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia the stress has been, up to the present, on recording oral

history and so transposing experience from a cyclical time oral context to a linear written one. But there is reversibility in that process as played out in America and one which may become more the case in Yugoslavia in the future. An American historian concerned with Balkan affairs decided, in the course of his library work on the Balkans in a major U.S. library, to look up his family's published genealogy. He has numerous kin in a Midwestern rural area and they were all aware that they traced descent from early 19th century settlers from New England but their specific links to the past ceased at the grandparental generation of those who are now the elders. In the published generalogy the historian located a remembered kin link. He xeroxed copies for his relatives and this launched local kin on a voyage of discovery to locate the ancestral homestead through court records and to find family photographs in local published sources. These explorations have not transformed values but they have created new heirlooms for the group and the discovered linear time links are becoming part of family lore in a cyclical time context.

#### *Applying These Time Concepts to the Demographic Data*

How do these theoretical notions apply the research data from a Serbian village? For long-term fieldwork they can yield productive results. For example, in looking at population data from Orašac there are expected linear time changes over the period 1784–1984. This period coincides approximately with the existence of Orašac. During these two centuries the population grew from some 300 households at the beginning of the 19th century to about 2,000 by the mid-20th century, with a subsequent decline of about 15% in the ensuing quarter-century, caused largely by immigration to expanding urban areas. The five-fold increase in the population of Orašac in the 19th century coincided with another linear time event, and that is the ecological transformation of the area from that of densely wooded oak forest to one of open farm land. This important change is representative of developments in all of Serbia proper. There are also the expected social structural changes, with the decline in average household size from 8 persons at the beginning of the period to about 4 in recent times. There are also expected transformations in vital rates over the past century (the period for which we have full records). Birth rates have declined by more than half, from a high of 48 per 1,000 in the 1870s while death rates have decreased more

than three-fold (35 per 1,000). The age structure of the population of Orašac has undergone an analogous transformation. This is most evident in the category age 50 and over, where both in absolute and relative terms the numbers were negligible—5% in the 1860s; in the 1960s the category increases dramatically to 25%.

#### *Use of Computerized Data Bases*

Using concepts of linear and cyclical time in consonance with computer-generated data bases we can also discuss changes in internal household structures, in prime kin dyads, and in age structures. Within the extended household structure until the mid-20th century, the key relationship was the father/son dyad. The newer pattern of the husband/wife as the prime dyad reflects the lessening importance of the extended family household structure of two co-existing marital pairs. Along with these linear time changes in the village, which reflect as well socioeconomic transformations going on throughout Yugoslavia in the post-war period, there are other quantitative affirmations of the continuing importance of cyclical time perspectives in kinship structures. For the last century we have evidence that average age at marriage for women remains constant at about age 20 for the past century. For most of the two-century period (here defined as 1760–1949) the age of the father at the birth of his first son (there is no data for females for the 18th and early 19th centuries) also remains constant at about age 25. (This data is based on the father's decade of birth.) Birth intervals between the first and second child are also constant at about 2.5 years for the period 1850–1950 (based on the birth decade of the mother).

In Orašac and in Šumadija generally, despite transformations in the age structure of the population and the halving of the average household size, the percentage of the population living in extended or multiple households interestingly remains stable at 72% in the period 1863–1975. The percentage of nuclear family households also remains almost identical at 36% and 34% for the two end points of the same period, as has the percentage of extended and multiple households (48%). The multiple household category subsumes diverse household types. Units comprised of two married couples including a married father and his married son has doubled between 1863 and 1975, from 19% to 36% of all households. In 1863 18% of all household units contained married brothers (with or without a

parental couple). That type of structure essentially disappeared by 1948. By 1975 only 43% of the people of Orašac lived in households of 6 or more members (as contrasted with 89% in 1863).

These data are significant in revealing that in terms of life experience most Orašac villagers still live in complex households, that is within kinship structures more complex than that of the nuclear family. Today, however, households are smaller because they contain fewer children and lack multiple family units within the same generation. Because of increased longevity contemporary households are now more likely to include an aged parent, and interactions between three and even four generations are a more common experience. The latter type of interaction is important as representing a new category of social experience. There are also the new structural categories of older couples and elderly individuals living alone. Formal structural categories are, however, not sufficient to determine interaction. Thus there are possibilities of multigenerational interaction if the elderly are merely alone in physically separate households but reside near close kin. Periodic visits to their children in town or city does preserve the vitality of the relationship.

The cyclical time values inherent in the one to two century continuity in initial stages of family formation (age at marriage, timing of first child and interval to subsequent birth) correlate well with the persistence of multi-generational household structures. The linkage between the two can be seen as potentially causal and mutually reinforcing. The interaction pattern is not simple since these family formation patterns apply to couples living in both nuclear and extended family households, but both exist within a universe agnatic kin of which older couples or individuals living alone are most frequently a part.

### *Concluding Reflections*

By using materials based on extant oral tradition our investigations pose some orienting concerns! How do individuals structure recall of their collective pasts? Is the transmitted information affected by the form of recall? How do the values of the narrator condition the data being presented? Does oral recall match archival and other written records? To what extent is the research of the field investigator limited by the communicative competence and reference frame of the informant? It is also pertinent to try to assess the

effectiveness of the methods of the investigator. It is feasible to examine these questions when there is a viable oral tradition combined with the existence of significant archival records, as is the case for Orašac. Oral tradition encompasses many domains of culture and has historically provided the basic material for classic ethnographic accounts, but in this discussion, in illustrating the importance of long-term fieldwork, it has been possible to refer to only a few examples specifying the contribution of the study of oral tradition to our other approaches (see Bibliography).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the approaches to research discussed here are from the perspectives of two sociocultural anthropologists married to one another but linked neither by kin ties nor by ethnic heritage to Serbia. We regard the long period of fieldwork there as a privilege. All aspects of a given culture are constantly in flux, of course, with difference features undergoing changes at varying rates. For our work in the course of participant observation it has been satisfying to note how our views have become refined over time and how more recent insights derived from continued fieldwork and the use of new and revised theoretical approaches appears to reflect deeper levels of comprehension of processes of change than those we understood earlier.

Ongoing anthropological research with a given population represents a constant challenge to universalize the particular in innovative ways. But there is also the challenge of preserving context—all this within the coalescing of altering time frames. The finely written product reflects synthesizing consciousness on a multiplicity of levels. Thus there is the data derived from new observations seen by two anthropologists married to each other who constantly interact. Aside from this process there are the differing perspectives within the anthropological discipline which are influential in forming the initial observations. But there are also the factors of gender and the varying reactions to the aging process and the varying ways in which we interact within the village community.

In addition to new data from the field there has consistently been new information from a variety of sources such as archival materials, published census data, new researches by Yugoslav scholars and the further discovery of published sources not previously used e.g. materials on the deforestation of Šumadija. The altering disciplinary environment both in terms of evolving theoretical approaches and

methodological techniques (more sophisticated computer programs) are also essential to the ongoing process of discovery. The objective is not keeping current to some banal eclectic mode and simply inputting more data. Rather the goal is arriving at new levels of understanding. This complex process of doing anthropology is as important to exemplify as the fieldwork itself and thereby increase the meaning of the published record is a reflection of a way of generating ideas about the observers and the observed.

Another dimension is that over the years the people being studied observed changes in the investigators. Villagers have guided our family through village-age and gender stages with the rural-based inventory of knowledges, responsibilities and competences that each stage entails. Thus the work is reciprocal and involves mutual learning within friendships. That feature in itself is rationale enough for ongoing work in Orašac.

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