

Review of The Village of Leshhok Tetovo

There is a wonderful Canadian folk song about a group of old sailors who raise a sunken ship named the Mary Ellen Carter and sail it again, and the chorus goes:

Though your heart it be broken
and life about to end,
no matter what you've lost
be it a boat, a love, a friend,
like the Mary Ellen Carter
rise again!

That is the spirit I find in the newly revised and updated book *Seloto Leshok Tetovsko, The Village of Leshhok Tetovo*, by author and scholar Ilija Petrushevski. In addition to providing a detailed history of the village of Leshok and its people, the author gives us a remarkable story of the spirit of a community and people who rise again after every disaster. This begins with the destruction of the ancient town in 169 BC by Macedonian King Persei and its rebuilding. The town/village persisted through Serbian, Byzantine and Ottoman centuries of rule, despite its total destruction once again by Serbian Zhupan Stefan Nemanja in 1189 AD, and its destruction and the dispersal of its people again during the Karposh Uprising in 1690 AD.

The village was a battleground for Serbian and Bulgarian armies in 1915, endured Bulgarian occupation from 1915-1918, Serbian occupation from 1918-1941, Bulgarian occupation again from 1941-1944, and Albanian Balista looting, destruction and occupation in 1944. Once again the village suffered ethnic cleansing, destruction and looting, including the shocking demolition of the main monastery church of St. Atanasij by Albanian separatist paramilitary units in 2001. And once again the people returned, rebuilt their homes and the church of St. Atanasij in the years that have followed, 2001-2004.

Life has been disrupted many times, but the people have persisted. They have even taken in refugees, such as the 26 families from the Aegean village of Rantsi who came to Leshok in 1949, after the tragic conclusion of the Greek Civil War. The village remembers the young men who have perished in the many wars that have swept through their land, including the most recent, reserve army soldier Gjoko Lazarevski, who was killed by Albanian attackers on 23 July, 2001.

Such books as Ilija Petrushevski's *Seloto Leshok Tetovsko*, join others, such as Chris Stefou's 2003 book about the Aegean village of Oshchima, in keeping the memory and the spirit of Macedonia's communities and people alive, despite all that they have suffered and endured through the ages.