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THE GRAVE OF THE SON OF THE LEADER OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE IN CHISINAU: THE HISTORY OF A MODEST MONUMENT OF THE FIRST HALF OF THE XIX CENTURY AND THE PARTICIPATION OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF SERBIA IN ITS PRESERVATION

Every year, the Central Orthodox Cemetery, or, as it is popularly called, by the name of the street of its location, the Armenian cemetery loses its old graves. These monuments are demolished to build new crypts and to establish tombstones for modern officials and many inglorious rich people. So far, thematic tours are being conducted on this cemetery – tourists are shown the historical burial places of famous people of the past and present. But soon, it seems, there it will be nothing to look at this cemetery. And unlike the European ones, our central cemetery will be of interest only to relatives of the unknown rich who had enough money to demolish the graves of famous personalities.

This also applies to the grave of Alexey Chorny in Chisinau. Every year the monument is destroyed more and more. And modern burial places are getting closer to the grave of the son of the leader of the Serbian people. We found this monument in the Armenian cemetery and looked after it from 2005 (Fig. 1).

There were only several publications about this monument.

Though this theme is of particular interest, since Alexey Chorny was a famous person. It turns out that there were problems with this burial 110 years ago, but the monument survived the rare architecture. Here is what the “Kishinev Diocesan Bulletin” said about it, №27, on July4, 1910: “The grave of Alexey Chorny in Kishinev. Among the forgotten graves of the local Christian Orthodox cemetery, not far from the cemetery church, there is a modest little-known grave of the son of the ancestor of the Serbian royal dynasty and uncle of Alexey Chorny, the former Serbian king Peter I Black Karageorgievich, whose name the history has not preserved” [3]. As the historical sources describe [2]: the Serbs “emigrated to Bessarabia from Austria, and in 1814 the brave leader George Petrovich Chorny and 72 Serbian families initially settled in the village Tabak until they received the highest order for the resettlement of” [2]

and all the other Serbs that were in Bessarabia to New Russia with the rights of the Bug colonists and Cossacks.” Alexey Chorny (Black) left Serbia and settled in Kishinev in the beginning of the 20s of XIX century. In 1831 Alexey Chorny suddenly fell ill and died at the age of 33 years old.

The monument on the grave of the deceased is depicted as a quadrangular obelisk made up of a local shell rock. The obelisk has its origin from the Greek word “obeliskos”, usually is stone, faceted, monolithic square section, tapering up the monument with a pyramidal pointed apex. It was originated in the Ancient Egypt, being an important element of architecture and symbolizing the sun. During the Renaissance, the obelisks began to be used by some architects to solve urban planning problems, as a compositional emphasis in the architectural ensembles of squares. So, in Rome, Paris, the obelisks were built in the compositional centers of urban ensembles. In the Russian Empire, from the time of Catherine II (1762–1796), obelisks were erected, competing with column monuments. But the interest in the last ones was lost, the obelisks continued to be installed throughout the XIXth and XXth centuries, as a rule, glorifying some kind of military victory and their heroes. On one side of the monument there is an inscription: “The lieutenant of the Life Guard Alexey Chorny was buried here, the son of the leader of the Serbian people died, when he was 33 years old”. To understand, who Alexey Chorny was, let us turn to the famous Serbian family of Karageorgievichs’.

There were Karageorgievich (Karadzhorjevichi), Serbian princely (1808–1859) and royal (1903–1945, actually until 1941) dynas-

ties. The initial one was founded by the leader of the first Serbian rebellion against Turkish rule (1804–1813) Karageorgiy; rules from 1808 with long breaks until 1918 in Serbia, in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918–1929) and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929–1945) [5]. Karajorje (whose real name was Jorje Petrovich) was born on November, 14, 1768, in village Vishevac, near Kragujevac and died on July, 25, 1817, in the village Radovane near Smederev. The founder of this dynasty was born in a poor peasant family on the territory of the Ottoman Empire. He was nicknamed Kara Jorje (Black George) because of the dark skin, black hair and eyes, cruel and fiery temper. In 1785, he married Elena Jovanovich (1767–1771 – 02/09/1849, Belgrade) and soon left with his family in Austria. According to the legend, Karageorgievich killed his father (or stepfather), who persuaded him not to leave his homeland and put up with the power of the Turks. This story became the plot of “Songs of George the Black” from the cycle “Songs of the Western Slavs” written by the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin). This was described by the journalist and local historian Yuri Shvets in his article on the genus Karageorgievich. “It is believed that Kara George could get his nickname for two reasons: 1) for extreme dislike of the Ottoman Turks or 2) for the fact that ... he killed his own father”. Pushkin in his song “Song of George Black”, which included the cycle “Songs of the Western Slavs”, based on a book of legends, compiled by Prosper Merime, noted that George’s father, Petro, wanted to give his son to the Turks for his desire to fight against them. Then the son allegedly killed his father. Here are the lines ending this poem:



Fig. 1. The monument to Alexey Chorny, who was the son of the leader of the Serbian people at the Central cemetery in Chisinau, 2019.

“Damn god, you black
If you killed your own father!
Since then, George Petrovich,
People nicknamed him as the Black”.

It is reported that in 1796, after returning to Serbia, Kara George repented of his deeds and asked for forgiveness from the people and priests” [9].

During the Austro-Turkish war of 1788-1791 with the rank of non-commissioned officer, he commanded a Serbian detachment that fought on the side of Austria. After the war Kara George returned to Serbia. He took an active part in the spontaneous protest of the Serbs against the arbitrariness of the rebel Janissaries, who seized Belgrade Pashalyk in 1802 and ignored the instructions of the Sultan. In February 1804, after the Janissaries exterminated the Serbian elders, the Serbs gathered in the town of Orashats elected Kara George as the leader and decided to start an armed struggle against the arbitrariness of the

Janissaries. Thanks to Kara George, the objectives of the struggle soon became the Serbian political autonomy and the creation of the Serbian principality. Under his command, the rebels gained a number of victories and liberated Belgrade on December 12, 1806, which became the center of the Principality of Serbia. In 1808, the Governing Council of the rebels proclaimed him hereditary “supreme Serbian leader”. Thanks to his support, many Orthodox churches were restored and new ones were erected, fraternal buildings were built in the Zhicha monastery.

After the conclusion of the convention with Russia in 1807 Serbian rebels fought on the Russian side during the Russo-Turkish War of 1806–1812. Under the terms of the Bucharest Peace of 1812, Russia emerged from this war, and Porta promised to grant Serbia autonomy, but instead brutally crushed the uprising in the fall of 1813. Kara George fled to Austria and was interned. In 1814 he arrived to Russia, where received land in Bessarabia near Khotin. In 1816, in St. Petersburg, he tried to persuade the Emperor Alexander I to start a war against Turkey. In 1817, he secretly returned to Serbia to prepare for the uprising. But the former comrade-in-arms, who headed the Principality of Serbia during his forced exile, the Prince Milosh Obrenovich, ordered him to be killed and his head was sent to Istanbul as a sign of his humility. And here, again, the researcher Yuri Shvets turns to the poet Pushkin:

”Beware, Black George,
A cloud rises above you
An ardent enemy wants to lime you
The foe is cunning, Milosh Obrenovich.
He sent secretly to Khotin Junior Ianck
with Paul.

On the night of July 13-14, 1817, Kara George was treacherously killed by the people of Obrenovich” [9]. Later, the Turks returned the skull of Kara George to Belgrade to intimidate the Serbs, and only in 1837 he was put in the tomb of his daughter Polexia. This betrayal became the cause of a long rivalry between two dynasties of the Karageorgievich and Obrenovich. The body of Kara George was buried near the scene of the murder. In 1818, a church was built near the place of his murder by the name of the St. George Victorious. According to legend, the church was erected by Prince Milosh Obrenovich or a main killer Vuitsa Vulichevich as a sign of repentance, therefore it was called “Pokaynitsa”. In 1819, the remains of Kara George were transferred to the church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the town of Topola, which he had built in 1811–1813 and where Kara George prepared for himself a tomb near the altar. By order of Prince Milosh in 1820, his tomb was moved to the entrance to the temple, his merits were listed in an epitaph on a marble tombstone, and death was presented as a result of the Turkish intrigue. On September 9, 1930, the remains of the founder of the dynasty were solemnly reburied in the dynastic crypt-tomb in the majestic church in the name of the St. George Victorious on the hill of Oplenats in Topola, erected by his grandson the King Peter I.

Many legends were made about the life of Kara George (Fig. 2). Some of them reported supernatural signs at his birth, predicting to him the fate of the great hero and liberator of Serbia. Balkan Christians considered him the messenger of God and compared with the heavenly patron the George Victorious, whom he greatly esteemed.



Fig. 2. The portrait of Kara George. 1816. Painter V. Borovikovsky (National Museum, Belgrade).

Kara George had 7 children, including 4 daughters and 3 sons (the eldest, Sima, died in his infancy in 1788). The second son was Alexey (1801, Topola – 1831, Chisinau), and the monument to him is the subject of the present article. The third son was named Alexander. This article will review the life of the second son of Kara George in detail. Thanks to the patronage of the Russian emperor Alexander I, Alexey graduated from the Page Corps in St. Petersburg, then served in the Russian army. From the marriage with the daughter of the Russian colonel N. Trohkin, the National Archive of the Republic of Moldova contains the documents making the connection to the nobility of Konstantin Trohkin for 1831–1913 [4]). Maria (“from the side of her mother, Maria Karageorgievich, nee Trohkin (Trofim) comes from an old boyar clan Buzne” [1]. Her grandmother Smaranda was married to an armash Konstantin Buzne) had a son George (1827, Chisinau – August, 14, 1884, Badgastein, Austria), who also graduated from the Page Corps, served in the Preobrazhensky Regiment, then moved to Serbia and was an adjutant to his uncle, Prince Alexander. The eldest son of George and Sarah (daughter of the Serbian major merchant



Fig. 3. The inscription from one side of monument about the death of Alexey Chorny in 1831.



Fig. 4. The all-seeing eye and the attributes of royal dignity at the 4th side of obelisk. Photo of E. Rumyntsev, 2005.

M. Anastasievich), was Alex (1859–1920), obviously named after his grandfather, considered himself a senior representative of the Karageorgievich dynasty all his life and in 1903 laid claim to the Serbian throne.

We return again to the monument to Alexey Chorny at the Central cemetery in Chisinau. The inscription on the other side is: buried in 1831 (Fig. 3). On the third side there are erased initials which are difficult to make out. On the 4th side there is the all-seeing eye and the attributes of royal dignity (Fig. 4). The all-seeing eye [8] means the tremendous power of knowledge, or rather, the ability to know what is hidden behind the veil of everyday life, to rise above it and gain power over itself, over time and all living things. This is the same “third eye” which allows you to see the truth and solve the mysteries of the universe. It means intuition and supernatural abilities. If we consider the interpretation of the all-seeing eye in the Orthodoxy, then we can understand why the figure of the triangle is used and why only one eye is depicted. In some Orthodox texts, this symbol is called the Radiant Delta. The number “three” for many believers has great power and meaning. In these three equal faces of the figure, the three hypostases of God

are hidden as the Holy Spirit, God the Son and God the Father, who endow the triangle with powerful energy. But the very eye of God does not mean so much that all our thoughts and actions are visible to the Almighty, but that particular vision of the world as it really is. Only one eye is depicted because it symbolizes a single and correct vision, which many have lost. Duality only interferes: it gives rise to doubts and uncertainty – the main trump cards of Satan, which divert a person from the goal and prevent one from correctly judging what is happening. That is why the all-seeing eye still symbolizes enlightenment, gaining spiritual wisdom and the disclosure of absolute intelligence. The symbol of the all-seeing eye is often associated with the secret organization of Masons. Studying the symbols on the pedestal and obelisk – in addition, to the Masonic-Gnostic eye in the triangle, we see the image of the “gate of heaven”. The semantics of the gates in ancient times carried the symbolism of the transition from one space to another. Such a transition is difficult, littered with obstacles, and not everyone is able to pass it. Some ancient cities had symbols which were significant in celestial topography. So, for example, Babylon is translated, on the one

hand, as “The Gate of the Gods”, on the other hand, Babylon means “The Gate of the Abyss”. In order to safely pass through the gates, door, hole and get into another metaphysical space, you had to overcome, as many myths and legends tell us about it, huge obstacles, confront monsters and demons striving to destroy the soul, or go through a narrow and dangerous door [6]. The door in ancient architecture also symbolized the transition from an open, unprotected space to a sacred one, protected by various amulets, if this is a dwelling, or by gods, if it is a temple.

We also see the image of the heraldic eagle and other various religious, mystical symbols. For example, a cross with a snake entwined around it, erected on a skull with two bones, perhaps the snake or its image is designed not just to heal, but to return from the dead, thereby contributing to the resurrection of people (Fig. 5). The image of a skull with two bones in Christian culture was called the “Adam’s Head” [10]. There is a tradition that the ashes of Adam were at Calvary, where Christ was crucified. And when Christ was crucified, his blood seeped through the earth and washed the skull of Adam. Thus, all mankind in his face was freed from sins and received the opportunity of salvation. So it was really or not, but such is the legend, and that’s why it acquired the symbolic meaning of liberation from death and salvation among Christians. But the same symbol was also used throughout the world, moreover, mainly in the army.

In 1910, the Bessarabian governor, Count I. V. Kankrin, became interested in the grave, by his order the photographs were taken from the monument and transmitted to the Serbian king Pyotr Karageorgievich. It’s known that

Peter I [Serbean Petar] (June, 29 (July, 11) 1844, Belgrade – August, 16, 1921, Belgrade), the king of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1903–1921; was the 4th son of Prince Alexander. He received his primary education in Belgrade and Geneva. Then he graduated from college in Paris, Saint-Cyr military school in 1864, and with the rank of second lieutenant, he finished a military school in Metz. As part of the foreign legion of the 15th French Army, he participated in the several battles of the German-French war in 1870–1871, was awarded the Order of the Legion of Honor. In the years 1875–1876 under the pseudonym Petar Mrkonich, he participated in the Serbian uprising in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In February 1883, he married the eldest daughter of the Montenegrin prince Nikola I Petrovich-Negosh (later he became the king) Lubitsa-Zorka (1864–1890). Her sisters Militza and Anastasia were the wives of the Russian Grand Dukes of brothers Peter Nikolayevich and Nikolai Nikolaevich Romanov, and Elena was the wife of the Italian king Victor Emanuel III of Savoy. Until his wife’s death, Petar Mrkonich lived in Montenegro, then he moved to Geneva. After the assassination of King Alexander Obrenovich in May 1903, on June 15, 1903 he was elected as the king. At the beginning of World War I, Petar Mrkonich appointed his son Alexander as his co-ruler, and shared the hardships of the retreat of the Serbian army to the Adriatic coast. Petar received the nickname “exiled king”, because most of his life he lived abroad, and the “liberator king” thanks to the successes of Serbia in the Balkan wars. In 1903, he began the construction of the majestic church in the name of the St. George Victorious on the high hill of Oplenats in Topola, in the crypt of



Fig. 5. The images of various religious and mystical symbols at the monument to Alexey Chorny, 2019.

which he arranged a dynastic tomb. Here he transferred the ashes of his grandfather, Kara George, and his father, Prince Alexander. He was buried in the same temple, the construction of which was completed by his son, the King Alexander I. The solemn consecration of the temple took place on September 9, 1930. The temple is 27 meters high, covered with marble and decorated with rich mosaics.

And again, returning to the appeal of the Bessarabian Governor Kankrin, published in the Kishinev Diocesan Bulletin in 1910, which said that “no one had a care about the grave, and this monument came to the destruction ... already needed in the restoration. It would be nice to replace the shell rock with marble. Would the Serbian patriots of Bessarabia have enough attention to this matter? The monument should be supported because its architecture was interesting in itself”.

110 years have passed since then. Recently, the Serbian historian and genealogist Vladimir Filodor has become interested in the monument's restoration. As for his research, he collected archival documents about all ancestors, including those who lived in Bessarabian region. Vladimir Filodor applied to the Serbian Royal Academy of Sciences in order to find funds for the restoration of the unique

burial grave of Alexey Chorny from the Serbian Royal dynasty of Kara George.

Of course, today, after more than 110 years, the monument of the first half of the XIX century must be preserved and remained at the Central cemetery as a sign of respect and memory to all Serbian people. We have published material about this obelisk in one of the most popular newspapers in Moldova as “Komsomolskaya Pravda” [7]: We would like to hope that some businessmen could find the funds for the restoration of a historical monument. Today, as in Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, and in Serbia, relatives live of the son of the Serbian leader Alexey Chorny.

P.S. Fortunately, there are sponsors in the Republic of Moldova. This is the well-known “IM Zernoff SRL” company that has partners, including in Serbia too, whose employees are not only interested in preserving the monument to Alexey Chorny, but have begun the active work to restore it. At present, the necessary documents have already been prepared and the work has begun on the conservation and restoration of this obelisk at the Central cemetery in Chisinau.

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The grave of the son of the leader of the Serbian people in Chisinau: the history of a modest monument of the first half of the XIX century and the participation of the Royal Academy of Sciences of Serbia in its preservation

Abstract. Not far from the cemetery church of the Central Orthodox Cemetery, there is a modest little-known grave of Alexey Chorny Karageorgievich the son of one from ancestors of the Serbian royal dynasty and the uncle of the former Serbian king Peter the First. “Kishinev Diocesan Bulletin” in 1910, referring to the Serbian patriots of Bessarabia, reported that the Bessarabian Governor Count I.V. Kankrin drew attention to the monument, which, by his opinion, should have been maintained and restored, since its architecture, presented in the form of a quadrangular claim from the local limestone, was interesting one. The well-known “IM Zernoff SRL” company that has partners, including in Serbia too, whose employees have begun the active work to restore it and promised to help in the restoration of the monument at the central cemetery of Chisinau and conservation it as a sign of the respect and memory to all Serbian people.

Keywords: the grave of Alexey Chorny, son of the leader of the Serbian people, restoration, the Royal Academy of Sciences of Serbia, monument’s architecture.

Mormântul fiului conducătorului sârbilor în Chişinău: povestea unui modest monument din prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea şi a păstrării lui graţie implicării Academiei Regale de Ştiinţe a Serbiei

Rezumat. Nu departe de biserica cimitirului central din Chişinău, se află modestul şi puţin cunoscutul mormânt al lui Alexei Ciorny Karageorgievici, fiul primului reprezentant al dinastiei monarhice şi unchiul fostului rege al Serbiei, Pentru I. Periodicul Buletinul Eparhial al Chişinăului scria în 1910, adresându-se patrioţilor sârbi care locuiau în Basarabia, că monumentul a atras atenţia guvernatorului Basarabiei I. V. Kankrin, care considera că acesta ar trebui îngrijit şi restaurat, deoarece arhitectura lui în formă de obelisc cu patru unghiuri, executat din piatra locului este foarte interesantă. Firma cunoscută „IM Zernoff SRL”, având parteneri în Serbia, a promis că va oferi ajutor pentru desfăşurarea lucrărilor de restaurare a monumentului din cimitirul central al Chişinăului ca expresie a respectului şi memoriei poporului sârb.

Cuvinte-cheie: mormântul lui Alexei Ciorny, fiul conducătorului poporului sârb, restauraţie, Academia Regală de Ştiinţe a Serbiei, arhitectura monumentului.