



Traces of the

As Macedonia has a rich history with many dramatic events such as wars, conquests, and natural disasters, there are many places which used to be famous and then almost disappeared from the national cultural map. Such are Velika and Demvol in the west, and Morodvis, Malesevo and Pijanec in the east. Zletovo, Lukovica and Valandovo used to be much bigger than they are today. Pijanec is a big area in the north-eastern part of Macedonia, nestled between the Osogovo and Malesevo Mountains and the Rivers Bregalnica and Elesnica near the road to Sofia. The abundance of water and gentle mountain slopes make Pjanec

ideal for stock breeding, agriculture and even hunting and fishing. The mountains used to be rich in ore deposits, which have been largely exhausted by medieval Saxon miners. It is believed that there was a city called Pijanec, which gave the name to the area, but its exact location couldn't be ascertained. However, the area had developed life from Antiquity to the Dark Ages, when it was an important border region with sovereign border dukes, similar to the markgraves who were charged with protecting the borders of the Holy Roman Empire. Although a neglected area today, Pijanec used to be a busy region where important trade routes met. The main road passing through the region connected the



Vanished Town

ancient Stobi, Astibo, and Pautalia and continued to Serdica and beyond. There were also roads leading east to the River Struma in today's Bulgaria and southwards through the Malesevo Mountains to Thessaloniki, which was actually the road that connected the mines to the Mediterranean. Careful travellers can still trace parallel roads, which were used to avoid robbers' traps. There are remains of many watch and defence towers on the strategic junctions as the one on the left side of the Bregalnica, or another one near the village of Ciflik. One plateau near the River Elesnica is called Anovite (the Inns) which marks the place where travellers and caravans stopped for rest.

Axes and hammers found in the area date from the Stone Age. Some researchers derive the name Pijanec from the name of the ancient tribe of Paionians who lived in the area. It is believed that one of the routes of Celtic migration lead through the roads of Pijanec, as a metal Celtic sword was discovered in the village of Lukovica. In the area of Pijanec there are more than 30 settlements known since the Roman times. In the later period Pijanec was a border area between Bulgarian and Byzantine states, so many of the towers, fortified villages and other defensive structures date from that time. There is a legend saying that St. Methodius, who together with his brother Cyril invented

the Cyrillic alphabet, ruled the area. Some of the caves are associated with his later ascetic life as a monk. The third Crusade, led by the legendary Fredrick Barbarossa, passed through Pijanec. According to the chronicles one of the crusade battalions passed by the town of Gradec, which is probably today's Grad

smaller river Pijavica flows by its north and east sides making the location ideal for a fortification. There are prehistoric vessels found on the site dating from around 3000 BC. Grad acquired features of an urban settlement in the Late Antiquity or in the period between the 4th and 6th centuries. At that time, the hill was surrounded with



village six kilometres to the southeast of Delcevo. The chronicle mentions that some of the crusaders climbed the nearby hill while others were sacking the town. A high rocky hill called Grado rises over the northeast side of the village, and the

ramparts and towers which defended the inhabitants. In the 11th century the citadel and the suburbum (medieval downtown area only some fragments of which survive) were rebuilt. Among the metal findings there are weapons, tools and coins. The city safeguarded the roads of the turbulent Middle Ages. In the 13th century merchants frequented the city leaving behind many silver coins minted by the Venetian Republic. In the period from the 12th to the 15th century it often changed rulers as the borders between the Byzantine, Serbian and Bulgarian states shifted. It is believed that the city flourished until 1395 when the last Christian ruler, Konstantin Dragas, died, and the city fell to the Ottomans. Today near Grad there is an ethno-park. Tourists can also visit a huge cave with traces of prehistoric life opposite the site of Grado.

