

The Submerged Church at Zhrebchev Reservoir: Sacral Site, Center, Scene

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Abstract: A number of settlements are evicted and erased along with their public, religious and cultural and historical sites during the construction of many reservoirs. However, some of them are not completely forgotten and often their remains attract an interest from tourists, artists, and media.

The main focus of the paper will be the church of the nowadays non-existent village Zapalnya “St. John of Rila”, submerged during the building of Zhrebchevo Reservoir in Southern Bulgaria, and its construction as a cultural heritage with typical religious, cultural and natural features. Zapalnya’ church is extremely interesting in terms of its unusual development and reinstatement, which are actually depending on the waters level of the reservoir during seasons changing. Being an almost deleted cult site until recently, due various events, activities, projects (which include feasts, media reports, movies, etc.) and actors (settlers, municipal officials, church representatives, tourists, etc.), today we are witnesses of resumption and revitalization of the church. Its uses at present are divergent – from meeting place of displaced former settlers of the two submerged villages Zapalnya and Zhrebchevo, through a reviving religious center, music videos favorite décor to individual and collective tourist route.

Keywords: Bulgaria, Church, Cultural Heritage, Memory, Reservoir, Re-settlement, Sacral Site, Tourism

Introduction

The construction of a large number of reservoirs in Bulgaria from the middle to the second half of the 20th century was marked by a number of concomitant processes, among which the displacement of the population of numerous towns and villages which altogether ceased to exist along with the public, religious and cultural-historical sites within them. Among them were Christian churches, ruins of which oftentimes remained above or close by the reservoir waters due to the height of the buildings, on the one hand, and on the other, because the structures were intact at the time of flooding. There are several such examples in Bulgaria: the church in the former village of Zhivovtsi which was submerged to make way for the Ogosta reservoir; the church and the chapel of the former village of Pchelintsi by the Pchelina reservoir; the church in the village of Popovo (former Vitoshko) affected during the construction of the Studena reservoir, the church of St. John the Baptist in the former village of Kochash near Ivaylovgrad reservoir, “St. Athanasius” church near the Koprinka reservoir, and others. Information about most of the submerged villages, their former inhabitants, their way of life, everyday lives and festivities, as well as about the public buildings in the villages, which today are already under the reservoir waters, can be extracted mainly from archive documents and the local studies published at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century (see e.g. Tserovski 2012, Popov 1984, Erulski 1999, Tropolova 2017). Until now, there are relatively few scientific publications about the settlers from the obliterated villages, about the material remains or emphasizing on individual elements of the preserved local cultural heritage and its use.¹

In the last ten years, it seems that the interest in these remains, and especially the submerged churches, has risen enormously. The reason for this most probably lies both in the increased media and tourist interest that some of them arouse, as well as in the interest of the Bulgarian church. Perhaps one of the most emblematic examples in this regard is the church of the nowadays nonexistent village Zapalnya “St. John of Rila” submerged during the building of Zhrebchevo Reservoir in Southern Bulgaria. The main focus of my paper will be namely its construction as a cultural heritage with typical religious, cultural and natural features.

Zapalnya' church is extremely interesting in terms of its unusual development and reinstatement. Being an almost deleted cult site until recently, due various events, activities, projects (which include feasts, media reports, movies, etc.) and actors (settlers, municipal officials, church representatives, tourists, etc.), today we are witnesses of resumption and revitalization of the church. Its uses at present are divergent – from meeting place of displaced former settlers of the two submerged villages Zapalnya and Zhrebchevo, through a reviving religious center, music videos favorite décor and wedding photo sessions, to individual and collective tourist route.²

The history of the church “St. John of Rila”

Known mostly as the Submerged church at Zhrebchevo reservoir, it was the main religious site of the village of Zapalnya up until the middle of last century. Following the decision to build a reservoir on the Tundzha River between 1959 and 1966, by Decree No. 57 of 28.01.1965³, the village was removed from the administrative-territorial register and submerged in the early spring of 1965, along with two other villages – Atlare (later renamed to Zhrebchevo by analogy with the namesake reservoir)⁴ and Dolno Panicherevo. The inhabitants of the Zapalnya village were resettled mainly into Tvarditsa, a nearby town where they built an entire new district, as well as to Kazanlak and Nova Zagora.

The son of the last priest in the village, Stoyko PopDraganov Stoykov, provided detailed information about the village and, accordingly, the church, in his local-history study, based on memories, personal and church archive documents, and local research (Stoykov 2002). His book contains detailed information about the life in Zapalnya before the construction of the reservoir – history of the origin, families, customs, agriculture, crafts, educational work, etc.

“As a true Bulgarian village, writes St. Stoykov, it had a large square, which was surrounded by the more important public buildings. To the north of the square was the new municipality building, to the east rose the church, whose nearly two-decade yard was surrounded by a high wall covered with European tiles. The wall to the side of the square was 45 metres long. (...) The yard was protected from all sides and surrounded by buildings and walls. It once served as an inn. The pub was under the same roof as the gate. (...) The only public building that was not located

in the square was the school. It was also centrally located but not on the square” (Stoykov 2002: 8).

Again, according to local historian Stoykov, the church itself in the centre of the village was built at the site of an existing object of worship, most probably a Byzantine basilica – single nave and single apse, with impressive dimensions (Stoykov 2002: 103). No precise evidence on the exact start of the construction can be found, but it is presumed it began around the year 1890. The construction works were funded entirely by donations from the local population:

“Angel Boychev (Fransaza) also donated 1 decare of yard space and so Petko Velev donated 0620 decares and Fransaza 1 – the church yard of the Zapala church became 1620 square metres. For this reason, both of them are buried in the churchyard. The preparation for the construction of the church was started by 28 Zapala houses and completed by 80” (Stoykov 2002: 105).

The masters of the church were Nenko and Ruyu Ruevi, and their brother Ivan Ruev painted it in 1891. A year later, on the feast of St. John of Rila on October 19, it was officially consecrated by Sliven Metropolitan Bishop Gervasius. In 1923, it was renovated and completely painted by the artists Kiril Kanchev, Prof. Mandov and Minkov, which, however, suffered significant damage after the Chirpan earthquake in 1928. Then, Dragan Stoykov was appointed parish priest, who took the initiative to collect new donations from the inhabitants of Zapalnya for the restoration of the church. A wall was also built with these donations, as well as two residential buildings⁵.

Church sermons were delivered regularly – every Sunday as well as on major Christian holidays. A solemn celebration marked 19 October (1 November)⁶, the holiday of the patron saint of the church – according to Stoyko Stoykov the service was offered by several priests and a big common celebratory lunch took place. It was prepared in the yard, provided by the church board. The last sermon delivered in the church was on 28 April 1963, when he himself got married⁷.

Following the start of the construction of the reservoir facility, the other buildings in the village, including the church, were valuated, and the amount of ninety-three thousand leva was paid to the Stara Zagora Metropolitanate to whose diocese the church belongs. In an effort to preserve the church, its Board of Trustees put forward several proposals: 1) to accommodate the church into

a property at a greater distance; 2) to invest the compensation pay-out into building a recreational facility with a chapel “St. John of Rila” in Kortenski bani where the entire church plate and all the icons from the ruined church would be stored; and 3) to take at least the murals off the walls and preserve them. However, none of these ideas was approved or implemented. In the last protocol of the church board of June 12, 1962, it is recorded that:

“...the church has not yet been paid up and the deadline of December 31, 1962 does not apply to it, which means that the temple will remain intact as a monument, monastery or church. The belongings will be moved out according to the instructions of the leadership of the Stara Zagora Metropolis, and the large table, one goat-fur rug and three blankets will remain in the church to serve as a bed for all the inhabitants of Zapalnya. The chandeliers should not be taken down, so that after the removal of the rest of the furniture, the temple should not be completely bare and inspire respect and reverence...” (Stoykov 2002: 110-111).

Even prior to the submergence of the church, the iconostasis, the bell from the bell tower, the liturgy plate, and the books were moved to various other churches in neighbouring towns⁸. During the first years after the reservoir was put into operation, the church building remained intact but later it was plundered barbarically, the roof tiles and metal supports were stolen, and it was frequently used as shelter for the herds during unfavourable weather.



Figure 1. The Submerged Church “St. John of Rila” at the Zhrebchevo Reservoir. Photographer: Yana Gergova, 2.05.2019

The Submerged church nowadays and its existence as a sacral site, center, scene

The Submerged Church “St. John of Rila” is one of the few remnants of the village today. When water levels are at a low point, the foundations of some of the houses, wells, and gravestones can also be seen; a reminder of the existence of the village there is a memorial plaque on a small hill by the cemetery, which reads “Village of Zapalnya, settled in the 15th century, displaced in 1962”. The church building is the only structure that has remained relatively unaffected. Access to it depends on the season and the level of the Zhrebchevo reservoir waters: normally it is semi-submerged in early spring, and completely out of the water towards the end of summer and in autumn. Due to the low level of the reservoir waters over several consecutive years, during this period the church building was on dry land all year round, only to be flooded again last year.

The ruins protruding out of the water or rising in the field are gradually garnering interest from tourists, photographers, and journalists, which has been increasing steadily over the past few years. Various initiatives, campaigns, blog publications, travel notes, and TV programmes on the history and fate of the church have contributed to a large extent to this increase in popularity.

The one of the most popular events organized near the church ruins was the project *July Morning at The Submerged Church*. Taking advantage of the tradition of greeting the sunrise by the sea, which already enjoys popularity in Bulgaria⁹, an initiative is introduced to hold this event by the reservoir waters. The festive programme on the eve of 1st July comprises a rock concert of Bulgarian rock bands and art illumination of the church. Additionally, kayaking clubs have a voluntary contribution to the initiative. The first edition was in 2017, when beside the concert, the main attraction is the campaign of the 14-years old student from the Sport High School in Stara Zagora. With fundraising goals for the restoration of the church “St. John of Rila”, he swam 3 km distance in the reservoir. The event has been held for several consecutive years and in 2019 it was included in the cultural calendar of the Municipality. In 2022, it took place again with a concert under the motto “Evening of the legends 2022: The day after July Morning – Tvarditsa and the Church”. Part of the organisers’ invitation reads: „To our joy, not the ruins are history, but the fate of the symbol of faith and stoicism – the Submerged Church, which has withstood time and water.

A history “created” not by human but by itself, refusing flatly to perish by the waters of the reservoir. The same way we have rejected “dying” as a nation...”¹⁰ Hundreds of people joined the event. It aims to popularize the church as an attractive place and a scene for cultural activities. From there – the fundraising for the building restoration¹¹.



Figure 2. Poster for July Morning event at the church – 2019. Source: www.flagman.bg / Tvarditsa Municipality

The Submerged Church has also been featured in art projects such as films and video clips, which must be acknowledged as an important step towards enhancing its popularity. The most famous project is the movie named *Slanchevo* (“Sunny”) from 2013¹². The story was built on the real story of Zapalnya village, named in the movie Sunny. The main focus was the church that emerges and is submerged in the water along with the stories of the world-scattered descendants of the former village which take different directions. The movie

was screened in Bulgaria and at some international festivals in Vienna, Prague, Bratislava, New York and others¹³.

The remains of the church and the space around them are frequently used as a background during filming of music videos. Examples can be given with the videos of the Bulgarian pop-folk singer Raina for the song *Po drum odam* (literally “I walk on the road”) from 2017, which was filmed against the background of the reservoir and the church; the music video for the song “Shapes in Grey” by the metal band Odd Crew in 2016¹⁴; the music video of 2021 to the song “Thank God” of the Nigerian artist Hans Millie in collaboration with Tsvetan Nikolaev from the Bulgarian hip-hop group “Respect”¹⁵. One of the latest projects, also from 2021, includes more than 40 Bulgarian musicians and actors and is in memory of the frontman of the Bulgarian pop group P.I.F. Dimo Stoyanov, who died of coronavirus months earlier. The song is titled “OPUS 4”, and the final shot is with him, filmed in the Submerged Church¹⁶.

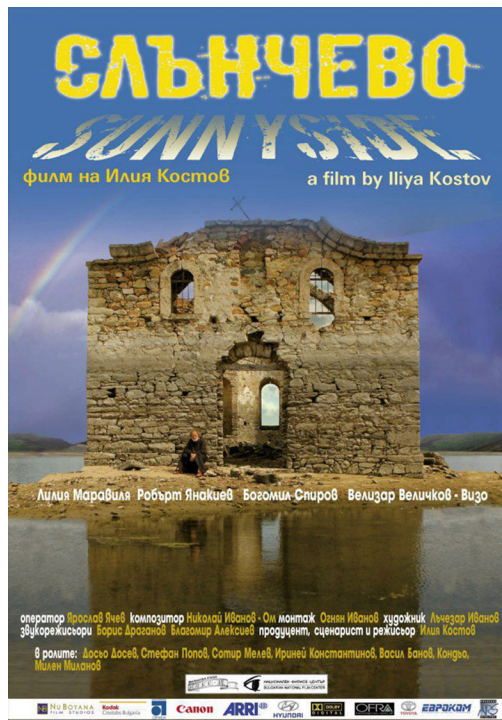


Figure 3. Poster for the movie “Slanchevo”. Source: www.facebook.com/slunchevo

Beyond the organized events, such as *July Morning*, at which hundreds of people flock to the Submerged Church, the site has recently become a venue for special organized excursions – several tourist agencies have listed it in their sightseeing itineraries which usually comprise one-day tours of religious and cultural-historical sites in the region¹⁷. Visits of water sports enthusiasts who go particularly to the ruins by kayak or boat are not rare – of course, only when the waters are at high level and the church is not on the land. The building is the mandatory stop on the route of organized kayaking or Standup paddleboarding tours in the reservoir and a favorite photo spot for the participants¹⁸.

It should be noted that the media played a distinctive role in promoting the church of the village of Zapalnya as a cultural landmark. The image that is built through various articles, reports and interviews with former residents of the village is diverse and multi-layered. On the one hand, it emphasizes the dark past, trauma and nostalgia, which is symbolized by the sacred object abandoned in the middle of the reservoir¹⁹, on the other hand – of its revival and rethinking as a spiritual centre.

A similar divide is seen in the dozens of travelogues that can be found on personal blogs and travel sites²⁰. The perception of the Submerged Church as a “symbol of broken faith”²¹ or the construction of a sad lonely image (“standing sole against the background of the transparent reservoir waters”²²), borders the descriptive accounts of magnetic energy and mystical sensations²³ and definitions for it as a “symbol of eternity and the power of faith”²⁴. The inclusion of this atypical temple in self-organized tourist routes is also included in some publications for travellers²⁵, and some travel books also give specific instructions for the time and method of visiting it:

Summer is certainly not the best time to visit the Submerged Church of the Zhrebechevo Reservoir, because the waters of the reservoir have dried up and you will not see this centuries-old building actually submerged. Nevertheless, the place is impressive because, as if against all odds, this church rises colossally in the middle of the wasteland. It was as if something has protected its walls for so many years. Perhaps to remind of the erased past and the pain of the people whose homes were destroyed and obliterated. If you look closely at the building itself, you can see how high the water level was. (...) If you want to see the church submerged under water, you have to go in the spring when the snow melts²⁶.

The church of the former village of Zapalnya is gradually reconfirmed as a sacral site although it is half-ruined and without a settlement to serve. Materializing the memory of the submerged village, in this case the cult site plays the role of a kind of means to overcome the lost home. Therefore, one of the main features of the only building left of the village remains the religious one.

As early as the year following the flooding of the village, a colossal reunion of the population was held in 1965, and the tradition lives even today. Around 9th September every year, the former residents of the village of Zapalnya and their descendants reunite in the yard of the village museum²⁷, with recent years seeing the introduction of a festive celebration including a traditional folk concert²⁸. All visitors necessarily enter to light a candle in the church, which, albeit semi-dilapidated, continues to fulfil its role as a sacred space.

A meeting of the former residents was held again this year in the beginning of September but this time under the sign of commemorating the 60 years since resettlement and 130 years since the consecration of the church.

Perhaps the most important event as far as reaffirming the church is concerned is the first sermon held in 56 years which was delivered on 4th August 2019. The date deliberately coincided with the seventh Sunday after Pentecost, and in his festive address to the laity, the Priest Metropolitan vowed to institutionalise the solemn liturgy as a tradition taking place on the same day every year – and he honoured his promise²⁹.





Figure 4 and 5. Moments of the liturgy on 4th August 2019. Photographer: Yana Gergova, 4.08.2019

Likely owing precisely to the popularity the church had gained and to all of the initiatives mentioned, in 2016 an initiative committee for saving the church building was established and a campaign to fund-raising for its urgent strengthening and buying a bell was launched. The main reinforcement and rehabilitation of the church began at the end of 2019.³⁰ The facade of the church was completely strengthened, a concrete floor lined with stone was laid, a cross and window frames were installed. The initiative aims to ensure safety during visits to the place. This became possible due to the increasingly low level of the reservoir waters in the recent years, which rarely reach the building. It is on the land almost year round (there are even the years during the waters did not reach it at all) and there is no reason not to fulfil its original functions.

The re-actualization of the sacred use of the Submerged Church is also evident in the desire of more and more couples to get married there. Several wedding ceremonies have already been held at the site. The ruins are turned into an interesting background for wedding photo shoots, even the ceremony itself did not take place in the church.

It has to be noted that although there are other material evidences of the existence of the village – such as an old cemetery or memorial plate, the church remains the main point around which various events take place.

In July 2022 by the reservoir, Tvarditsa municipality starts also the construction of a recreation area, named “Submerged church”. The placement of an information board about the history of the place, which will be coordinated with the former residents of Zapalnya and with the director of the Historical Museum in Tvarditsa was planned. At several points, signs with GPS coordinates of the sights and guest houses in the municipality will be placed. „By the Submerged church which is the most recognizable and attractive place for tourists in Tvarditsa region, the aim is to draw attention to other tourist sites, accommodation and dining places in the area as well”³¹.

Some conclusions

As it was mentioned at the beginning, „St. John of Rila” is not the exceptional case of submerged church – there are various examples not only in Bulgaria but all over the world. In the process of eviction and abandonment of the village the religious sites often lose their holiness and no longer contain the marks of a sacred place, but of an ordinary building. Desacralization often led to their use as farm buildings – the only surviving within the radius of the submerged village. This can be noted in many of the cases.

The neglecting of the submerged church building for many years led to its complete abandonment and temporary oblivion. However, this was gradually changed in the last three decades – perceived as a place of memory, the church “St. John of Rila” marks symbolically the abandoned village space of Zapalnya and plays an important role of the recovery of the lost past. Its construction as a realm of memory defines it as a significant for the local community topoi, marking the abandoned space, and as a consolidating heritage that pull back the displaced residents and their descendants. During the process of reconfirmation of the church as a religious site exactly the community of origin has a serious impact.

At the same time, favourable features of the nature and the accessibility of the place during low waters transform the remains of the religious site into attraction for casual or organized visitors and various celebrations scene. However, although there is no specific settlement to serve to, with rare submergence and the strengthening of the remains in the last two or three years the main role as a cult site fulfilled with active religious life comes to the fore again.

However, it should be noted that the increased interest in the place also partly leads to its commercialization and its transformation into a cultural product. Proof of this is all the organized tourist tours, the built observation and resting places, photo shoots, and advertising materials. The image of the Submerged Church can be seen on cards, brochures, book covers, even puzzles³².

Not by chance, in many blog and social media public posts, the Submerged church is “a skeleton in which the faith still trembles”³³ or “a ship of faith which will never sink”³⁴. Maybe exactly that combination between a place of memory, a religious site, an operating church, a tourist landmark, part of a cultural and natural landscape, scene, etc. makes the Submerged church such a different and attractive place, full with individual meaning for every single visitor.

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Notes

¹ See for example, Hristov, Manova 2007; Gergova 2021a; Gergova 2021b; Gergova, Borisova 2022.

²The paper is based of conducted in 2019-2022 fieldwork (observation, photo and videodocumentation, interviews) during some of the most significant events held at the site with participants of some of the former residents of the village and their heirs as well an individual random visits outside the scheduled events calendar. The important role in analysis took also the archive and bibliography research.

³ Promulgated in State Gazette, issue No. 10 of 05.02.1965. See <https://www.nsi.bg/nrnrm/show2.php?sid=23910&ezik=bul> (visited on 5.01.2023).

⁴ For more details about the history of Zhrebchevo village, see Kuzmanov 1998, as well as <http://www.atlare.com> (visited on 5.01.2023). The site is dedicated to the former village of Atlare and on its pages can be found a wealth of information about the past of the village, its inhabitants, families, public buildings, historical references and docu-

ments, as well as about the organization and holding periodically since 1976 of village meetings around the date May 1.

⁵ For details on the construction and history of the church, see Stoykov 2002: 103-109.

⁶ After the change of the calendar in Bulgaria in 1916.

⁷ This fact St. Stoykov shared in an interview conducted on August 4, 2019, recorded by Y. Gergova, Zapalnya. Personal archive. The narrative also appears in a number of other interviews published in various articles about the church. See for example Stoilov 2015 and <http://mitropolia-starazagora.bg/митрополит-киприан-служи-в-потопенат> (visited on 5.01.2023).

⁸ The bell is currently located in the church “St. Petka” in the town of Tvarditsa and the locals say that it tolls every time a former resident of the village of Zapalnya dies. The cauldrons for sacrifice were given in the monastery “St. Athanasius” in the village of Zlatna livada, and icons are kept in the church “St. Athanasius” in Tulovo.

⁹ July Morning or Julaya is the annual celebration in Bulgaria of July 1st. It is associated with the hippie movement and takes its name from the song of the same name by the British rock band Uriah Heep. It originated in the 80s of the 20th century, and traditionally includes welcoming the sunrise on the Bulgarian Black Sea on the first day of July. In recent years, however, its variants have also been noticed in other parts of Bulgaria – in mountains, urban areas, near rivers, dams, etc. See more in Stefanova 2017: 307-318.

¹⁰ https://infotourism.sliven.bg/news_2022/2022_2614.html; <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/sliven/s-rok-fest-posreshtnat-denia-sled-july-morning-kraj-potopenata-cyrkva-v-iazovir-zhrebchevo-2314954> (last visited 21.12.2022).

¹¹ See <https://nabludatel.bg/news/potopena-cherkva-v-yazovir-zhrebchevo-sabira-4-rok-grupi-za>; <https://faktor.bg/bg/articles/tvarditsa-posreshta-july-morning> (last visited 21.12.2022).

¹² The screenwriter and director of the film is Iliya Kostov, with the participation of Lilia Maravilya, Robert Yanakiev, Bogomil Spirov, Dosyo Dosev, Vasil Banov and others.

¹³ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2DrSM60YgM> (last visited 5.1.2023).

¹⁴ In the music video, in addition to the church, the old cemetery of the village of Zapalnya was used as a setting. The director Ognyan Kostovski himself commented that the video was shot at the Zhrebchevo dam and “represents an emotional symbiosis between sound, text and picture. The song itself, the idea of the video, the acting, the locations – everything is woven into a shocking end result that makes us think about who we really are.” (<https://metahangar18.com/site/odd-crew-s-ofitsialen-videoklip-kam-shapes-in-grey.mh18>). See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nN5T7A0qXk> (last visited 5.1.2023).

¹⁵ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFrhkFh9SJs> (last visited 5.1.2023).

¹⁶ See Bezovska 2021.

¹⁷ See for example the Journey to the submerged church on the Zhrebchevo dam with overnight stay in a houseboat: <https://www.emag.bg/pyteshestvie-kym-potopenata-cyrkva-po-jazovir-zhrebchevo-1-noshtuvka-v-plavashta-kyshta-validnost-do-15-06-00g-za-trima-2/pd/D5703GBBM/> (last visited 3.1.2023).

¹⁸ See http://adventuresbg.com/index.php?option=com_content&id=41&Itemid=26&lang=bg; <https://grabo.bg/chas-kaiaking-074wmw;> <http://kayakmonkey.com/каяк-клуб-тетидя> (last visited 3.1.2023).

¹⁹ See for example Nikolova 2015, Vasilkovski 2021, and many others (last visited 6.1.2023).

²⁰ See for example <https://profit.bg/klasatsii/5-unikalni-mesta-v-balgariya-za-koito-neste-chuvali>; <https://www.highviewart.com/patuvay/potopenata-tsarkva-kray-yazovir-zhrebchevo.html>; <http://patepis.com/?p=90673%2F&replytocom=529759>; <https://offroad-bulgaria.com/forum/основни-форуми/пътешествия-и-разходки-пътеписи/българия-пътешествия-и-разходки/178251-няколко-часа-магия-на-яз-жребчево> (last visited 6.1.2023).

²¹ Yakimova 2022.

²² <https://pateshestvia.net/потопената-църква-на-язовир-жребчево> (last visited 6.1.2023).

²³ “The feeling was very mystical, like in the remains of a shipwrecked ship accidentally washed ashore. I found out later that many people come here because of the magnetic energy that this temple emits...” – <https://danielatravel.blog/2021/11/15/потопената-църква-свети-иван-рилски> (last visited 6.1.2023).

²⁴ Uzunova 2020.

²⁵ See Mihalev, Tsankova. 2015.

²⁶ <https://sunrisinglife.com/potopenata-tzarkva-na-qzovir-jrebchevo> (last visited 6.1.2023).

²⁷ The museum of the village of Zapalnya was opened on 10.09.1979 in a house on the hill that survived the construction of the dam. The collection mainly consists of a panel with photographs of the village and its inhabitants before the emigration, as well as folk customs and costumes, traditional meetings after the emigration, school work, etc.

²⁸ See for example <https://www.tvarditsa.org/currentNews-2645-newitem.html>; <https://www.bta.bg/bg/news/bulgaria/317257-zemlyacheska-sreshta-shte-saberezhiteli-i-potomtsi-na-potopenoto-v-yazovir-zhr>; <http://damsbg.com/?p=671> (last visited 3.1.2023).

²⁹ See for example Stoilov 2019, Kracholova 2022, also <https://www.mitropolia-starazagora.bg/митрополит-киприан-служи-в-потопенат>; <http://mitropolia-starazagora.bg/митрополит-киприан-служи-в-потопенат-2/> (last visited 22.12.2022).

³⁰ More about the repair works, see <https://impressio.dir.bg/dusha/remontirat-i-ukrepvat-t-nar-potopena-tsarkva-kray-yazovir-zhrebchevo> (last visited 20.12.2022).

³¹ For more information see https://www.bta.bg/bg/news/bulgaria/regional-news/oblast-sliven/314993-obshtina-tvarditsa-izgrazhda-pogledno-myasto-potopenata-tsarkva-kray-yazovir-?fbclid=IwAR00pG_3zafo_EiIDF54NKrMlfo38F2jz5xhS0T7-Ku_8YiVCLPmV1qva2GE (last visited 22.12.2022).

³² See for example <https://ciela.bg/knigi/nehudozhestvena-literatura/pateshestviya/101-otbivki/>; <https://roden-puzzle.bg/product/yazovir-zhrebchevo-potopenata-tsarkva-pazel> (last visited 22.12.2022).

³³ <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10226595983058376&set=pcb.10226596030099552> (last visited 22.12.2022).

³⁴ Yakimova 2022.

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Yana Gergova

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