DOCUMENTATION AND INVENTORY AN IMPORTANT PROCESS IN THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE. EXPERIENCE IN ALBANIA.

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Abstract

This study describes the important process of inventory and documentation of cultural heritage in Albania, as a key concept in the preservation, protection and its promotion in future generations. Cultural Heritage protection starts with the inventory and documentation.

As an innovation in the field of cultural heritage, digital heritage has begun to transform the process of recreating and understanding of the past. This new field, which combines traditional cultural heritage management expertise, Museology, history and archeology with the new powerful digital computer technology, has tremendous potential in meeting the challenges encountered by cultural heritage sectors[1]. The combination of cultural heritage digital technology has already shown potential growth in many aspects of research, management and public involvement in the ruins of old material. Digital documentation of cultural heritage is an opportunity to obtain information on heritage in Albania.

The problem of management and use of documentation that constitutes the cultural heritage of our country, in itself encompasses a range of issues dealing primarily with the identification, conservation, protection, study, use and movement of this heritage. In the field of cultural heritage documentation and cataloging, the experience and achievements is well reflected in the activity of the National Inventory Centre of Cultural Properties whose mission is cataloging information of cultural heritage of the Albanian people and the supervision and monitoring of the respect of property rights and movement. Its function, based on three relevant catalogs is an important element in the documentation, inventory and protection of cultural assets in Albania.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, inventory, documentation, National Inventory Centre of Cultural Properties

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[1] Tamara Brizard; Willem Derde; Neil Siberman, KnowHow Books heritage sites. *Basic Guidelines for Cultural Heritage Profesionals in the use of Information Technologies.* How can ICT support cultural heritage. Editor. Halina Gottlieb, The Interactive Institute, pg.3

The early documentation for Albania came from the antic authors. Even though these were not many, their value is considerable in discovering and reporting a country that has existed between two large civilizations Greco-Roman. Many Albanian scholars in their early research have raised questions like "Who were Illyrians? Who were Pelasgians? However history rests in silence rather than speaking up. We are aware of Greco-Roman civilization not because they were simply a civilization but the history uttered their culture. On the other hand, we do not recognize well our ancestors, just because the history did not reveal itself; thus they were closed and not known in both physical and exterior artistic manifestations perspective in the midst of the tribes due to historical matters[2]".

An influential scholar in preserving and protecting our cultural heritage was Shtjefën Gjeçov Kryeziu. He was among the first ones who alerted and raised the issue of cultural heritage theft. His scientific activity was based on the principle of "*a nation that has no history of its own can be considered as dead….and the real national treasure is located deeper in the land or in people's memory*[3]", therefore, he developed an intense activity to systematically documented these treasures.

According to a detailed description of objects, Ugolini would emphasize that, "*Although Father Shtjefën collection, was not very large, it is quite significant, presenting unique pieces coming from the Albanian land.*[4]" He was against the values of our culture become spoil material market, as well as against foreign archaeological missions calling them a duty to Albanians, because foreigners cannot handle the truth and full of history and culture of our ancestors. Undertook a series of archaeological expeditions and dug up in many parts of our country thus creating the first archaeological collection in Albania, for which created an inventory and a complete documentation according to scientific discipline.

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[2]Arkivi i Institutit të Historisë, Lelçaj Frano *Shpirti shqiptar ose Gjurmët e kulturës së vjetër shqiptare,* Maj 1944, Fondi i Arkivit të Institutit të Historisë,Dosja E-I-16, fq. 7.

[3]ASHSH, Buda Aleks, *Studime historike, nr. 4/1979*, fq. 113. ASHSH, Buddha Alex, *Historical Studies,* no. 4/1979, p. 113

[4] Luigi M.Ugolini, *Shqipëria e Lashtë Gjurmime arkeologjike*, Migjeni, Tiranë, 2009, fq. 32.

Gjeçovi safeguarded the integrity of our monuments via raising the relevant issues. He noted that: "*The more appealing archeology is, the more at risk it is.... even a little purse full of old objects found in our land from a foreigner would leave in darkness our history.*[5]"

Also, he raised the issue of protection of cultural heritage from great robbery by foreigners, by drawing attention to the compatriots and become aware of the great wealth of historical monuments of our country, not just in some provinces but in the entire country.

As the basis for the establishment of the Franciscan Museum around 1890 served the archaeological collection of around 500 objects discovered from excavations undertaken by Gjeçovi, as a contribution to the ancient history of the nation.

The Central Archive of Albania in Tirana maintains the complete inventory of the collection and results that all objects were sketched by scientific discipline requirements. Sketches and full description was the only way of documentation after the photographing of the artifacts was an unaffordable luxury by the priest. Sketches of archaeological objects constituted a rich catalog store fanatically by the author, but today in Albanian archives stored only three sketches (cards findings) as a result of negligence after the death of Gjecovi.

Some objects that constitute the golden fund of our national heritage and are still an integral part of this fund due to efforts made by him. It is worth noting that if today we preserve in Skanderbeg Museum in Kruja the original bell from 1462 to Kruja Castle, this is thanks to the efforts of Gjecovi. Made famous by descriptions of A. Degrand and left adrift becomes prey to traffickers. After the acquisition by Gjeçovi, a contract was signed by Austrian consul and Gjeçovi, and it was decided that the bell will be kept by the consul and will return to the Kruja Castle after the reconstruction of the Church. At first, the bell was moved to Durres and later in Vienna and after the establishment of the Albanian National Museum in 1923 he makes a request to the Government of Vienna for the bell repatriation to become part of the museum fund. As a true scholar, he draws the bell in both appearance and makes notes on the history and movements of this object of particular importance. Today, the bell preserved in the National Skanderbeg Museum in Kruja and under the Law No.9048, dated 07.04.2003, "On Cultural Heritage" and the Law 7726, dt.29.06.1993 "On National Archival Fund and Archives", is recorded according to scientific standards on the database of the National Inventory Centre of Cultural Properties (Fig.1).

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[5] Stilian Adhami, *Shtjefën Gjeçovi një ndër pionerët e mbrojtjes dhe gjurmimit të monumenteve*, Monumentet, 2. Fq. 93.
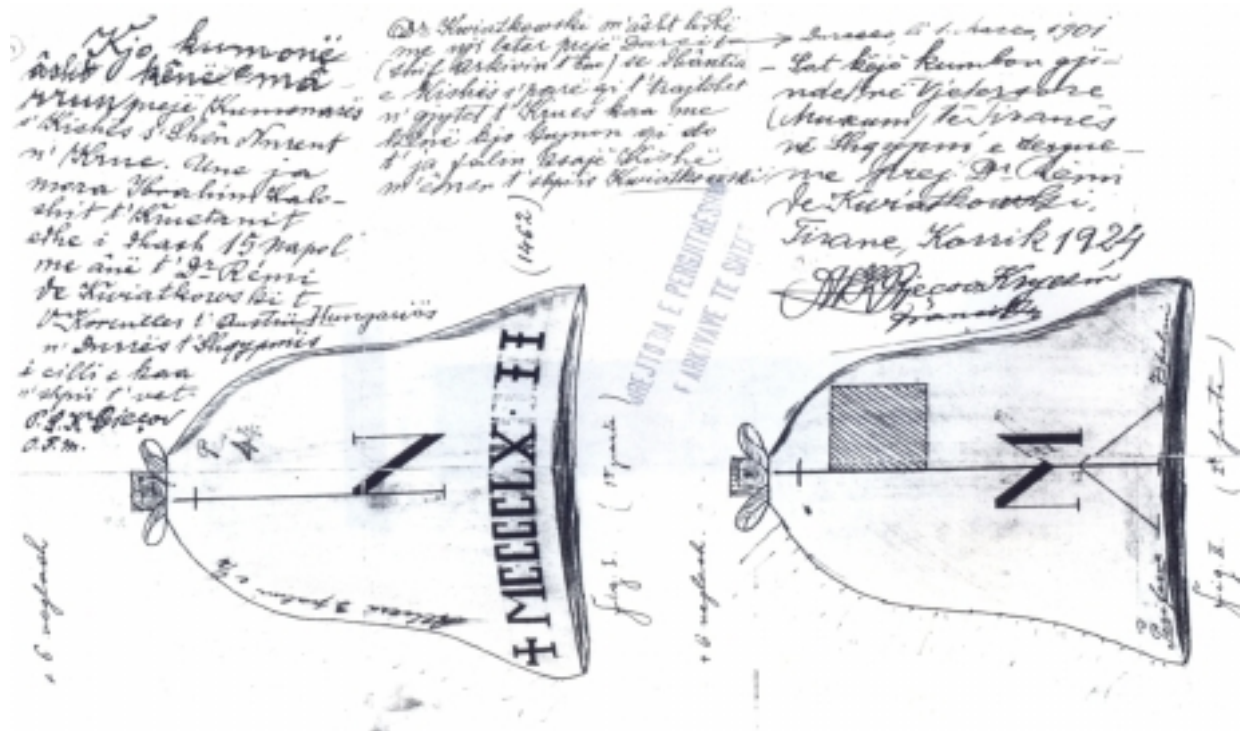
Fig. 1 Sketch of the bell made from Gjeçovi in 1924, after its return to the homeland (J. Brahaj, Scripture about Gjeçov Kryesziu, Tirana, 2009, p. 34)

Gjeçovi efforts to preserve and protect the Albanian cultural heritage and intellectual capacity for scientific documentation of this property was turned into echo to the intellectual and patriotic circles of the country, who also considered it a real cultural treasure of the nation and should not allowed to be destroyed, be robbed or be left behind.

According to a letter addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of that time from Mr. M. Frashëri note that: "*The French Archaeological Mission in Pojan is conducting excavations and found objects are disappearing so mysteriously but also easily accessible. Residents in Pojan take home rocks which disrupts structures and ruins. These things discredits Albanian state in the presence of foreigners, who are convinced that Albanians do not care to the cultural values.The Ministry of Education should pay attention, not to allow the removal of any ancient object abroad, as well as the disappearance of any small object that comes from Pojan. For this reason, near the French archaeologist Leon Rey, is indispensable a person capable of learning and knowing, as this will be an opportunity to form an archaeologist in Albania. I recommend you Shtjefën Gjeçovi, Franciscan in Shkodra, a man with a great passion to the culture and archeology.*"[6]

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[6] Arkivi i Ministrisë së Punëve të Jashtme (AMPJ – më tej S.B), *Letër e Mithat Frashërit drejtuar Ministrit të Punëve të Jashtme mbi antikitetet në Apolloni*. Dosja 239, fq.15-16

If we do a review to the paper written many years ago, when the Albanian state was in its first steps, we see that bad management and theft are two phenomena that have threatened and continue to threaten our country's cultural heritage. The only consolation for Gjeçovi "*was that these excavations and looting were carried out when the Albanians were not the owners of their country.*"[7] But today...?

Law No.9048, dated 07.04.2003 "On Cultural Heritage" drafted according to international standards, attaches great importance not only material culture as well as intangible heritage in Albania. The law aims declaration and protection of cultural heritage in the territory of the Republic of Albania, considering as object of cultural heritage values prediction rules for its protection, and the duties and responsibilities of authorities operating in this field. The law determines the specialized state institutions to define the values of cultural heritage objects declared as such, property of every physical or legal person, as well as their documentation.[8] Objects of cultural heritage of national particular and unique values are not gifted or exchanged in any case. In special cases, movable cultural heritage objects can be donated or exchanged between similar institutions in other countries, where they serve national interests and are equivalent. Donation or exchanges are made by the Council of Ministers Decision[9]. Artifacts found during Archaeological discoveries excavations, are property of the Albanian state[10].

Digital documentation of cultural heritage is an opportunity to obtain information on heritage in the country. It also provides a better knowledge and better understanding of the heritage and facilitates its establishment in space and time. Such considerations are applicable to all types of cultural heritage, mainly archaeological heritage as it is a tangible evidence of past civilizations, provides meaning and its particular value when included in the territorial and historical context from which is inherited and exists. Albanian archaeological heritage is part of common European heritage. Handling of cultural heritage from the standpoint of international acts intended to make known to the responsible authorities and persons who are owners of heritage objects that its protection must be made in accordance with international standards. For this reason, our country must respect and enforce international laws on the

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[7] Stilian Adhami, Shtjefën Gjeçovi një ndër pionerët e mbrojtjes dhe gjurmimit të monumenteve, *Monumentet*, 2. Fq. 92.

[8] Neni 7, Ligji Nr.9048, date 07.04.2003"Për Trashëgiminë kulturore"i azhornuar me: Ligjinnr.9592, datë 27.07.2006 dhe Ligjin nr.9882, datë 28.02.2008

[9]Neni 20, po aty

[10]Neni 44, po aty

protection and promotion of heritage, approved by the European Convention of London and the Treaty of Valetta. European Convention of London 1969, and the Valetta Treaty 1992, states as primary for each European country the inventory of common archaeological heritage. In the wider area of cultural heritage documentation, principles and standards of inventory and documentation have a common basis. Documentation of the various components of cultural heritage has its specifics, but the principles and standards of documentation have a common basis. Standards, rules and norms should be the key words of this final process to ensure the organization and management of information on the national and international cultural heritage.

In 1993, ICOM[11] invites 19 European countries to draft the project on Standards Documentation for Archaeological Assets[12]. In the recommendation of the Council of Europe is noted that: *"The process of inventory will be considered as a public benefit, with access not only for specialists but also for general public"*.

Cultural Heritage in the Albania, tangible and intangible, movable and immovable, now is owned by three owners:

1. State. Network of Institutions in the center and base, consisting of museums, art galleries, etc.. under the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, Centre of Albanological Studies (CAS) and Local Government Bodies.

2. Religious institutions. Objects that are in the possession of these institutions are of particular importance and often of unique value.

3. Private persons. This property was never documented and inventoried, even less cataloged.

Albanian State Strategy has given priority to inventorying and cataloging computing of network museum and art galleries in the country, due to the fact that they are scattered all over the country and most exposed by damages. In the the field of documentation and cataloging of cultural heritage the experience and achievements in Albania are quite well reflected in the the National Inventory Centre of Cultural Property (NICCP), whose mission

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[11]The International Council of Museums (ICOM) is the only international organization representing museums and museum professionals. Since 1946, ICOM has assisted members of the museum community in their mission to preserve, conserve and share cultural heritage. ICOM also takes advice from institutional partners to achieve its objectives.

ICOM Mission, http://icom.museum, consulted on 05/04/2013.

[12] Iris Pojani, Les Standards de la Documentation et L'inventaire du Patrimoine Culturel Albanais, *Progetto Durrës,* fq. 447.

is computing cataloging of cultural heritage of the Albanian people and the supervision and the monitoring of compliance property rights and the movement. Its function on the basis of three relevant catalogs is an important element in the documentation and the inventory of cultural property. Documentation of objects in the National Inventory Centre of Cultural Property is based on international standards. This institution has experience in scientific methodology and criteria of registration and cataloging of cultural heritage assets.

In developing its activity, National Inventory Centre of Cultural Property cooperates with the central state administration bodies and local governments, as well as with scientific, cultural, or religious institutions, with physical and judicial persons, for the identification and cataloguing of Albanian cultural heritage assets. This database mainly follows the principles of Council of Europe Core Data Index, to establish of a national computing network and a unique database of movable and immovable cultural heritage, for all categories of holders, with the aim of identifying, cataloguing, preservation and its use, by:

- the State Administration for management (data collection and images of national cultural assets in a central database, connected to the network with regional centers to enable the completion of remote of data, movements and changes on objects. Connection with regional centers and the Customs performed by world-wide web[13]
- Police authorities for protection (control of movement of cultural property giving access to the institutions concerned)
- State institutions for studies
- The general public for acquiring knowledge (online presentation of cultural assets and cultural heritage sites)[14]

State institutions, specialized according to scientific criteria, determine the values of cultural heritage, announced as such, owned by natural or legal persons, as well as their documentation. These items must necessarily be recorded in the National Inventory Center of Cultural Properties, which issued the passport of the object based on such data. Any changes of ownership of the object must be registered in the National Inventory Center of Cultural Properties. Multiplication and reproduction of certified cultural heritage objects is done in

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[13] Koço Gjipali, *Administrimi dhe shfrytëzimi informatik i pasurive kulturore*, Seminari ndërkombëtar 'Nga dorëshkrimi tek dokumenti elektronik', Arkivi QKIPK.

[14] Eduart Nurka, *Intangible Heritage of Albania and its Safeguarding*, http://folklor.bas.bg, consulted on 02.05.2010

accordance with the law of copyright, after taking permission of the National Inventory Center of Cultural Properties [15].

Cultural Heritage Database consists of three catalogs:

- *"Onufri"* **Catalog -** Contains movable and immovable cultural properties of the state (national and local institutions). Objects listed in this catalog have the status "cultural heritage". Includes over 67,000 objects and over 70,000 photos.

- *"Maro Kondi"* **Catalog -** Private collections, do not have the status "cultural heritage", but in the future can get, and according to the law is freedom of movement within the country. Includes approximately 11000 objects to 10,000 photos.

- **Lost objects catalog -** Contains records of lost objects in our museums from 1991 to 2013. Objects of this catalog are available in the network for the needs of Interpol and Europol. Includes 2186 objects and only 243 of them with photos (Fig.2).

Fig. 2 - Card type of cultural heritage objects, NICCP database.

The removal outside the territory of the Republic of Albania for the purposes of preservation, restoration, study and exhibition of state owned tangible cultural heritage objects with common values is done with the permission of the Minister in charge for cultural heritage. The removal outside the territory of the Republic of Albania for the purposes of

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[15] Neni 11, po aty

preservation, restoration, study and exhibition of state-owned tangible cultural heritage objects with particular national and unique values, is done by a Decision of the Council of Ministers (Fig.3). Procedures for the removal are defined by the Council of Ministers, under the international conventions ratified by the Republic of Albania. In any case, the permit issued is registered in the National Inventory Centre of Cultural Properties[16].
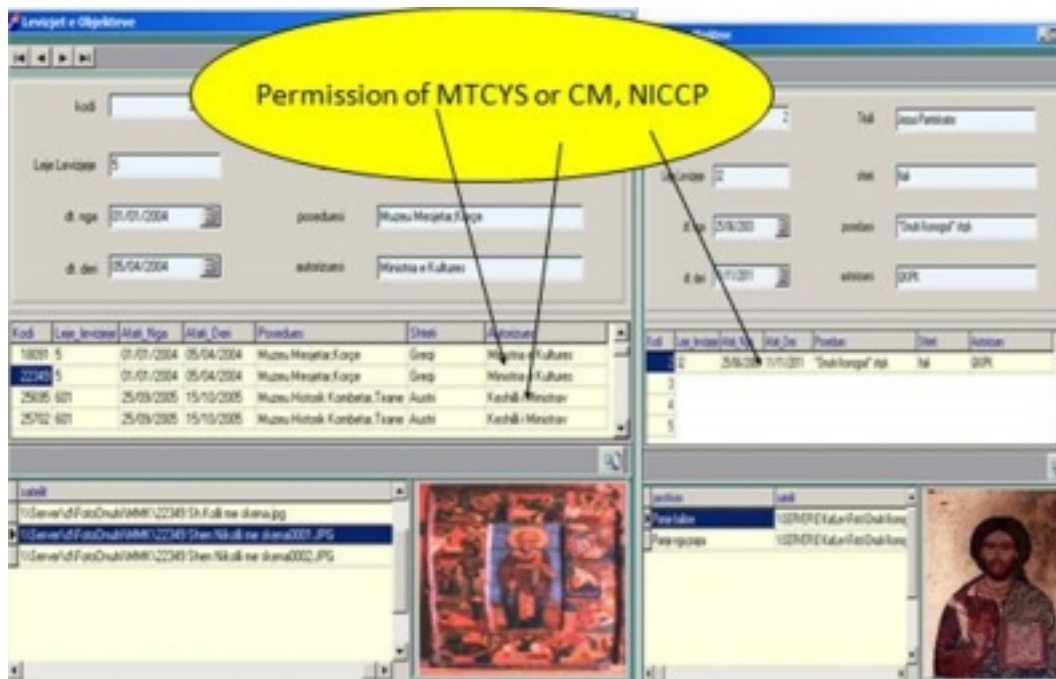

Fig. 3 Transactions on the movement of the object[17]

The rapid growth of digital applications development on historical research and public presentation of heritage, integration of digital technologies in the field of cultural heritage should be understood by all potential effects of their use. Making cultural heritage more accessible and understandable for researchers and the general public is conditioned by collecting all the data, the type of information collected (through studies architectural, archaeological excavations, archival research, and materials analysis) and the way the data are structured. Cataloging and documentation systems to support computer technology, provides a substantial contribution to the management, protection and development of cultural heritage.

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[16] Neni 19,Ligji për Trashëgimminë Kulturore, Ligji Nr.9048, date 07.04.2003*"Për Trashëgiminë kulturore"*i azhornuar me: Ligjinnr.9592, datë 27.07.2006 dhe Ligjin nr.9882, datë 28.02.2008 http://www.mtkrs.gov.al,

[17] Photos used to demonstrate the transactions over movable objects of cultural heritage, which hold or not the status of cultural heritage are taken from the database of National Inventory Centre of Cultural Properties.

The preservation of standards and the introduction of new technologies cataloging are an important step that should be treated with priority. Regional approaches to improving standards in documentation and inventory of the cultural assets and their implementation in the field of the cultural heritage is an important step to be taken. The realization of a national network cataloging is a priority that requires the cultural heritage, and the collaboration and harmonization of labor between the cultural heritage institutions brings protection, preservation and handling of the national asset in contemporary parameters.

Conclusion

Improvement of management of cultural heritage and its involvement in the processes of planning and sustainable development requires a precise documentation and inventory. In all international conventions, where our state is a member, inventory and documentation play a strategic role. The complexity of the cultural heritage that should be documented and inventoried and their interaction with our daily environment requires a clear definition and harmonization of practices at European level.

The only way to keep alive the culture and heritage is through documentation. Consequently, the establishment of a national information network and a database unique heritage of movable and immovable, for all categories of holders, with the aim of identifying, cataloging, storage and its use, is conducted according to international standards and recommendations. Documentation and registration of cultural and natural heritage are the most important steps in the field of protection and conservation of them anywhere in the world. The preservation of the cultural heritage is considered as important and contemporary phenomenon in many countries because they are collective memory of past civilizations.

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4. Fotot e përdorura për të demostruar transaksionet mbi objektet e luajtëshmetë pasurive kulturore, të cilat mbajnë ose jo statusin e trashëgimisë kulturore janë marrë nga *database* i QKIPK.

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