

The treatment aspects of cultural heritage in Kosovo

First initiatives in the field of heritage in Kosovo

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Cultural heritage of Kosovo can undoubtedly be ranked among the richest heritages of the old continent. Even though it is a small territory by geographical space, possesses a great wealth of cultural heritage. Immovable and movable property of cultural heritage from the earliest periods of our history, that is discovered until today, is just one part of identified treasure, whereas the rest is expected to be recognized in the following years.

The history of architecture, as well as the history of mankind, cannot be proved only by their major achievements. The last ones appear naturally, as links to the historical process, only when are preceded by different solutions, moving gradually from the simple towards the developed ones¹. Therefore, the Kosovar heritage artefacts do not have a period of formation. They were created, preserved and advanced through the historical stages, while delays in this process are known and dated.

Our orientation in this field is contained to international documents and thoughts of great visionary minds who not rare claim: "Everything that is human is not foreign ..." Tacitus, or meaningful thought of Rubens, "All the world I consider my homeland". Cultural relics are forwarding this message to all the countries and people of the world, while using the international language of art².

Cultural heritage is the witness of mankind continuity, while the essential meaning of documenting the monuments is resistance against destructon, because the evaluation of monuments enables the preservation of civilization continuity, derived from ethnic communities, in different periods of time. Therefore, in the primary tasks of the heritage are included also elaboration of scientific principles, practical work, completion, enrichment, registry, preservation, restoration of buildings, exhibits, funds, research work, categorization, exposure, scientific activity, cultural, educational, etj. Therefore, not casually say that visits and meetings with monuments, enrich human spirit.³

The collection of cultural-material value is a widespread activity during the entire history of world civilization. Kosovo, as well as many parts of the Balkan region, has found itself in the middle of the necessary processes of the development and long-term importance for the protection and rehabilitation of heritage, which is also treated as an indicator of individual and collective identity of communities that have created it and those who inherited it⁴.

Even in our region, throughout history, were collected and created collections of works, artistic and other genres of historical value. However, this collection was conditioned by historical, economic, political and religious circumstances. Therefore Albanian ethnic territories

¹ Emin Riza, Monumentet e arkitekturës dhe identifikimi i tyre, in Monumentet e Kosovës, Prishtinë 2004, p. 16.

² Grup Autorësh, Muzetë e Botës – Muzeo Britanik – Londër, Prishtinë 1980, p. 3.

³ Grup Autoresh, Muzete e Botes - Luvri – Paris, Prishtinë 1980, p. 9.

⁴ Grup Autorësh, Portrete të zonave historike në Kosovë dhe rajonin Ballkanik, CHWB, Prishtinë 2011, p. 1.

had a heavy historical destiny to be a prey of greedy people and invaders, especially those from the Balkans. Kosovo, unlike from other albanian areas, hasn't manage yet to consolidate in terms of the collection of funds, and in expanding the protection centers network for the monuments, in all country buildings.

From the Illyrian period, through the fortified constructions there were also constructions with public character; temples, body crafts, sanctuary, and also dedicated buildings for the preservation of the monuments, that were characterized with styles of constructions as well as with architectural, constructive, functional and aesthetic values.

Popular collectors of monument heritage

Albanian cultural heritage in general, can not be understood without the contribution of passionate people, from those simplest up to the historians, writers, archaeologists, teachers etc, who were committed to preserve such values. Without their contribution and extraordinary passion, to Albanians institutions would lack genuine institutions⁵. But these precious treasures, for our people constitute spiritual message and are live documents of secular history of our country and at the same time the source of inspiration for building a new life⁶.

It is difficult to determine the exact time when people began to collect objects with different dedications to which they had respect and appreciated it in a particular way. Also, it should be noted that during the collection of movable and immovable objects with artistic values, important role played also aesthetic taste of the individuals who conducted the activities of collecting objects, in different historical periods⁷.

The tendency today is that cultural heritage to be more conceived into its entirety, as something that contains all the signs documenting the activities and achievements of human beings in the course of time⁸. This heritage was presented in a continuity, from prehistory onwards, although ravaged and destroyed in a considerable measure provides an abundant subject with genuine values, that would be studied in a meaningful way and in wide aspects⁹.

Heritage is the foundation of the Albanian culture. Along with the language it presents precisely the ethnicity and national identity¹⁰.

In Kosovo are preserved since ancient times valid materials among the families and religious institutions. Therefore, if the culture presents sober statement, in order to see the spirit and character of one nation in different periods, itself it involves facts that reflects the desire and willingness to accumulate, preserve and select important national characteristics.

Cultural monuments, material evidence of our Illyrian-Arber and albanian ethnos, come from the depth of centuries, since from the state of ruins, often coming to light from archaeological excavations up to in a good condition regarding durability¹¹.

⁵ Enver Kushi, Muzeologjia shqiptare mes të shkuarës, të sotmes dhe të ardhmes, in Studime Muzeologjike, Tiranë 2002, p. 67.

⁶ Stilian Adhami, Muzeologjia shqiptare, Tiranë 2001, p. 13.

⁷ Fejaz Drancolli, Muzeologjia (maket në dorëshkrim) Prishtinë 2006, p. 10.

⁸ Bernard M. Feilden dhe Jukka Jokilehto, Udhëzues për menaxhimin e trashëgimisë kulturore botërore, CHWB, Prishtinë 2010, p. 13.

⁹ Flamur Doli, Arkitektura tradicionale- popullore e Kosovës, Katalog i ekspozitës shkencore Kosova 2001, p. 5.

¹⁰ Fejaz Drancolli, Rrënimi i kullës shqiptare, Prishtinë 2004, p. 112.

¹¹ Emin Riza, Mbrojtja dhe restaurimi i monumenteve në Shqipëri, Tiranë 1997, p 54.

Best Guardians of these values of cultural heritage were Albanian residents throughout their homes, while later as storage places of valuable relics served: churches, monasteries, not leaving aside mosques, tekkes, shrines, and generous families. In this context we mention the Church of Prizren, Monastery of Decan, Patriarchate of Peja, Church of Gracanica, etc¹². Hereditary material of Kosovo churches can be considered as an embryo collections of museums, that over centuries have remained alive until now and have preserved until today cultural heritage, that was born mainly in this place and was preserved with care by the residents of these areas (Albanians of Kosovo)¹³.

As collectors of heritage values is mentioned ancient tower¹⁴, respectively private “Muzeum” of a bey family Gjinolli, who were turkish leaders with albanian origin¹⁵. Members of this family: Maliq Pasha, Jashar Pasha, Fuad Beu and others, in the parlors of their homes, they exposed a rich collection of weapons that belonged to their ancestrals, and also their own weapons. Through the chambers of the tower, which is large enough and with a large yard and garden, on the walls were placed a collection series of monuments¹⁶.

According to the notifications of Todor Stanković and Branislav Nušić, who visited this museum in 1897, there were exposed weapons as pistol drew, yataghans, rifles, swords, two proof vests and other objects¹⁷.

Father Shtjefën Gjeqovi, was also one of the well-known archaeological collectors, not only in Kosovo but also wide. He was born in Janjevë on July 12th, 1874. He was a known promoter in some of the scientific fields and offered a valuable contribution in the teaching of Albanian archaeology and in the awakening of interest for the cultural heritage materials.

Gjeqovi’s interest for heritage and his approach to it, should be seen in close relation with his birthplace, Janjevë. Janjeva with the suburb, along with Veletin, were the initial inspiration for Gjeqovi. Existence of archaeological treasures and traces of numerous churches in Janjeva and the suburb was concluded by Marin Bici, in the year 1610, for which he said that were “glorious and expensive”¹⁸.

Gjeqovi was not only a vicar and a teacher, but also a prominent researcher in the field of heritage, even though he was not an archaeologist. Gjeqovi’s attitudes for cultural attitudes are summarized in Shkodra’s magazine, which is preserved in the Franciscan library with the name “Zani i Shën Ndout” or (Voice of Saint Ndou) of the year 1920. In that magazine Gjeqovi writes: “Arkaeology is a nice entertainmen, so pleasant you can not explain by words. Life of an archaeologist is always pleasant, more deeper you go, it becomes part of you”¹⁹. Since 1900 Gjeqovi dealt intensively with research and discoveries of Illyrian and medieval graves, collecting coins, epigraphy and different archaeological objects.

Gjeqovi constantly calls and invites people to search for themselves, “Our treasure , our history is covered under the soil, who knows how deep or meters, and we don’t care for that”.

¹² Deroko Aleksander, Monumentalna i dekorativno arhitektura u Srednjevekovnoj Srbiji, Beograd 1953, pp 59, 60.

¹³ Tefik Morina, Rruga e zhvillimit dhe perspektiva e Muzeut të Kosovës, Prishtinë 1974, p. 228.

¹⁴ Milan Filipovi , Prilog istoriji naših muzeja, Muzeji 8, Zagreb, 1953, pp. 126,127.

¹⁵ Vasilije Kozarac, Muzej Kosova i Metohije - rad od osnivanja do danas, Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije I, Priština, 1956, p. 9.

¹⁶ T. Morina, op cit p. 237.

¹⁷ Tatomir Vukanović, Muzeumi i Xhinollit në Prishtinë, Përparimi 5-10, Prishtinë 1947, pp 34-41.

¹⁸ Edi Shukriu, At Shtjefën Gjeqovi- arkeolog dhe mbrojtës i trashëgimisë kulturore, In Vjetari XXXI – XXXII, Prishtinë 2004, pp. 295, 296.

¹⁹ Shtjefën Gjeqovi, Një argëtim arkeologjik, Zani i Shna Ndout VIII, nr 4, Shkodër 1920, p. 112.

For us old objects have great price that are found in the soil of our land, regardless of whether are of iron, gold or silver²⁰.

He started with archaeological excavations since 1902 up to 1920, in Laç, Milot, Mat, Koman, in the Fortress of Dalmac, Dushman, Troshan and elsewhere²¹.

With collected materials, Gjeçovi formed besides the first library and first museum, also the first archaeological muzeum in the Franciscan congregation of Gjuhadol in Shkodra.

Realistically national culture was in serious political, social and economic circumstances, time after time destroyed completely from frequent wars for national liberation against the Ottoman invaders, but even under a constant pressure and the permanent threat from Balkan neighbors, with the overall prevalence of Russia. Briefly, Albanian nation was born in war circumstances, continued to grow in the wars that did not cease²², while culture survived thanks to a strong consolidation, that was created with centuries. So from that what was said above, we can conclude that the material is abundant and included all development periods of the society. This material culture discovered in the areas of Kosovo, constitutes a treasure which is infinite, as the life of nations itself²³.

Condition of the heritage after the Second World War

With all the efforts, that in such forms were done, not only by families, but also the organizational center, as it was Albanian League of Prizren and Peja, we can conclude that as in Kosovo and Albania, genuine organization of museums occurred after the end of Second World War. Cultural heritage (preserved by the above-mentioned collectors), not only that is denied, but, in terms of Serbian occupation in Kosovo (1912 and especially after the creation of Yugoslavia in Versailles in 1919), after the beginning of the agrarian-colonial reforms and after Second World War, it is transformed and it becomes an open war for its assimilation.

Even though Kosovo Museum was founded in 1949, had no activity for which it was dedicated, so we can say that it was specific into its activity. After constitutional changes in 1974, for a short time, muzeum managed to be divided in sectors as: Archaeology, Epigraphy, Numismatics, Ethnology, History and nature sector.

However as in politics, legislative and institutional organization of cultural heritage, had the same destiny with the handling of political fate of Kosovo. After the split of Albanian territories, it was impossible to apply the criteria, rules and laws of world heritage in Kosovo. It is known that from 1912 until 1945, entire research of the monuments was done only by the Serbian experts, which according to experience, they implemented obligations arising from the various elaborations for colonisation of Kosovo, and with this the alienation of monumental cultural heritage. For this are existing proves for the work conduct mainly in church facilities and, to be more correct, to those objects according to their history of ethnic use, were highly controversial, as they are even today.

²⁰ Sh. Gjeçovi, op cit p. 158.

²¹ Gjon Berisha, Disa shënime për kontributin arkeologjik të Atë Shtjefën Gjeçovit (1874-1929), in Kosova Arkeologjike 1, Prishtinë 2006, p. 210.

²² Muhamet Pirraku, Kultura Kombëtare Shqiptare deri në Lidhjen e Prizrenit, Prishtinë 1989, p. 258.

²³ Aleks Buda, Etnografia shqiptare dhe disa probleme të saj, in Konferenca Kombëtare e Studimeve Etnografike, 28-30, VI, 1976, Tiranë 1977 p. 17.

Thus, in 1927 was conducted work in the area of Saint Archangel in Prizren, during 1932-1934, in the restoration of the frescoes (murals) of Patriarchy of Peja, in Monastery of Banja near Mitrovica and in Monastery of Deçan. After the Second World War, precisely, from the year 1946 until 1951, “guardian” for cultural monuments in Kosovo was Serbian Agency for the protection of monuments. So until 1951, with the decision of the serbian agency were put under protection 33 monuments, all of them considered as serbian monuments, that were primarily religious. However, there were cases where this institution achieved to do some important researches, always hesitating to claim the truth.

One of the first prehistoric settlements, that were explored in Kosovo, is the location near Prishtina – Textile mills, during the years 1949-1951. In this case were discovered dishes, tools, plastic etj. Among others, were found two heads of monumental idols and one seated divinity statue²⁴.

It is worth mentioning that personnel policy was in full correlation with overall care policies for monuments. Since the beginning, mentioned was isolated by the legislation and the goal was extermination, elimination, or, if they cannot reach to appropriate, than they have to destroy what was not part of their heritage.

Journey of these excavations began with the excavations of the year 1951 in Artana, very important center a rich with various monuments and artifacts, continuing with the ancient city of Ulpiana in 1953 and later (1960-69 by Emilj Qershkov and in 1987-88). In the first phase, research was focused in the Neolithic area of Textile mills in Prishtina in 1955, in Vallç (1955, 1958), in Zhitkoc of Mitrovica (1955), in Glladnica of Graçanica (1956, 1959, 1974), in Fafos of Mitrovica (1956, 1959, 1960, 1961), in Samadrexha, in Reshtan of Suhareka and in Runik in the years (1966, 1968, 1984). In a meantime were dug parts of ancient city Municipium DD of Soçanica (1956-1965) etc.

Period from the year 1970-1980 was the most productive decade of Kosovo archaeology, while phase that preceded the occupation of Kosovo and war that followed was the most unfavorable period for Kosovo archaeology²⁵.

Kosovo cultural heritage has initiatives in stratifications of first agricultural cultures of the years 6000 B.C (culture of Starçeva, culture of Vinç), or even earlier. The amount of idols with specific values of the neolithic period and early Enolithic, disclose a world of spiritual bliss of the prehistoric inhabitants of Kosovo. Figures made of roasted clay of idols, which brings the spirit of early agricultural economy, are found in different parts of Kosovo.

Castles, Christian monuments and sporadic findings of many coins, ornaments and other objects are evidence of intense life and the development of material and spiritual culture during the following periods.

“Serbian” Orthodox religious sites, were built on previous sacral objects, were rebuilt on the old foundations, they were suited or adapted with supplements of any false mural, just as happened in the Patriarchate of Peja, Church of Saint Friday in Prizren, in Deçan, Graçanica, Bajška, etc.

As known from scientific evidence, Deçani church was built by an Albanian franciscan catholic from Kotorr, Vito Kuqi, therefore we mention that, not only this church, but all the old

²⁴ Radoslav Galovi , Neolitsko naselje kod Prištine, Priština 1959, p. 37.

²⁵ Edi Shukriu, Kosova Antike, Prishtinë 2004 pp. 11,12,13.

orthodox churches in Kosovo, at the time of Turkish rule were under guardianship of Albanians . They exist undamaged only due to Albanian tolerance²⁶.

Impact of political circumstances in cultural activities

With the issue of Albanian cultural heritage (in Kosovo) especially in the field of architectural constructions, as cult, as well as profane, of utilitarian character, public, social, complexive, architectural urban, many researchers of different professions were involved. There are also kind of “studies”, that can go that far, that is denied the existence of Albanian heritage in certain regions of ethnic land of the mentioned people, especially in the territory of today’s Kosovo, in certain historical phases.

When it comes to heritage values during the Roman conquests, Byzantine, Bulgarian, Nemanjide, Ottoman, etc, the owners of the monuments were never mentioned, or in frequent cases they show as non Illyrian monuments, so (they falsify the facts). Purpose is known; denial of existence, continuity of Illyrian ethnicity, history and Albanian material and spiritual culture²⁷. Such a thing goes on all historical stages, but also the destructions were almost serial, since the establishment of the Roman and Byzantine rule, to continue especially in avaro-slavic invasion. Destructions, burning of Albanian cities, were also present during the fall of our territories under the ottoman rule. Nevertheless one thing is clear, activity continued, as well as the collection of artifacts even in the weakening stages of the Ottoman rule, to continue even in the most critical stages of permanent denial of our lands up today.

Now, it is clear and has been well accepted even by Serbian scientists, as in the case of Pero Slijepčević, who writes: “It is confirmed that from a large number of the old monasteries, only a small number of them was established by Serbs... Serbian had no tradition of his own, nor in the construction, or in painting”²⁸.

Serbian church and state have occupied the old churches, making some repairs in them, then declaring them as monuments of their culture. Moreover, Serbian pan-slavic historiography, in order to benefit international opinion for the serbian rights over Kosovo, made falsification of three historical facts:

- Serbian churches and monasteries in Kosovo,
- Battle of Kosovo between serbs and turks (1389), and
- Large influx of serbs, headed with Arsenien III Crnojeviq (1690)²⁹.

So, indoctrination of serbian nation during centuries on the “historical right of Serbia in Kosovo”, is based on fabrication and falsification of historical facts, repeated hundreds of times in the historiography, ethnography and in several other scientific disciplines, as well as in folk songs as in “Kosovo Cycles”, so even today in serbian ethno-psychology these frauds are sadly present³⁰.

Of course, objective reality is something else. Sensational historical events, five centuries of Ottoman slavery and various anti-human regimes and vandalism, toughen residents of these

²⁶ Mark Krasniqi, Gjurme e Gjurmime, Prishtinë 1979, p. 129.

²⁷ F. Drancolli, op cit p. 118.

²⁸ Mark Krasniqi, Rrënjët tona etnike, Prishtinë 2002, p. 104. Pero Slijepčević, Stara srpske zadužbine, Ogledi, Beograd 1934 pp. 97,115.

²⁹ Skender Rizaj, Falsifikimet e historiografisë serbe, Prishtinë 2006, p. 31.

³⁰ M. Krasniqi, Rrënjët tona..., op cit, p. 55.

areas that besides the struggle for freedom, to start another war; war of value preservation of cultural heritage. In the struggle for cultural and political identity, rural residents of Kosovo continue to give their contribution, with accumulation and preservation of human values.

Kosovo's past is overloaded with the use of heritage for political needs, respectively for creation of false historical right of serbs over Kosovo. It is known how was the historical truth for Kosovo, so besides the efforts of value denial, its appropriation, it is done a serial robbery of cultural monuments. Theft of the material began when the first archaeological excavations started. If we start from the oldest monuments discovered, there are a number of monuments from the Neolithic period that were sent in the museum of Serbia.

For example. In the museum of Vranje are a considerable number of such exhibits. From anthropomorphic figures belonging to the neolithic era, respectively Vinca culture, at the Muzeum of Vranje are 59 of such items, whereas the complete collections of artefacts that were robbed from Kosovo reaches 130 exhibits. Among these exhibits, which are known to come from Kosovo, there are cult dishes, working tools such as: axes, chisels, knives, stone scales and epigraphic monuments. Within time they are inventoried and majority of them were taken from Mitrovica region³¹. A considerable number of monuments inventoried in the muzeum of Vranje, represents antropomorphic figures of the head, that also belong to the neolithic era.³². from these figures through the museums of Serbia there is a considerable number of them. Because we are mentioning the muzeum of Vranje, we can emphasize that only in this museum there are 12 such figures³³.

One of these blackmails that needs to be mentioned on this occasion, is non-returning back of 1247 exhibits (676 archaeological exhibits and 571 ethnological, known exhibits and were inventoried at the museum of Kosovo), which Serbia, in 1998 took from Muzeum of Kosovo, on behalf of organizing an exhibition in Beograde. The mentioned collection is consisted of the most selected exhibits of archaeological and ethnological treasure of Kosovo: exhibits from the neolithic period, bronze, iron, then from the period of Dardan's Kingdom, Illyrian-arber periodas well as exhibits of folk costumes, jewelery, handicrafts etc, which continuously are taken, without any specific address. The value of these exhibits is undoubtedly big. Archaeological, ethnological and epigraph treasure is the essence of movable heritage of Kosovo and the result of systematic excavations of the Muzeum of Kosovo, from the '50 of the last century until the late of 20th century.

Conclusion

The earliest traces left by humanity, expressed with the first scratches that made through the walls of the caves, were not without any significance, just as there are not monuments to which we tried to give an overview on different historical stages.

Creation and preservation of these monuments positively affects in enrichment, advancement, promotion, development and prosperity of our society together with all these values, there is a need of its preservation and protection, which necessarily is an inseparable part

³¹ Aleksandar Bulatovi, Nalazi Vinanske kulture sa Fafosa i Vala a, Narodni muzej u Vranje 2003, pp. 15-44.

³² Figures no. inventory at Museum in Vranja: 1842/T, 1839/T, 1844/T, 1847/T, 1843/T, 1846/T, 1850/T, 1855/T, 1870/T, 1849/T, 1853/T, 1848/T, 1859/T, 1862/T, 1854/T, 1845/T, 1838/T, 1835/T, etc.

³³ A. Bulatovi, Nalazi Vinanske kulture sa Fafosa i Vala a, op cit, pp. 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53.

of this civilized population. This would be enforced more if we consider the words of Goethe, there is no present time, there is only development³⁴.

From all this what was said above, very simply, without claiming that it was told everything, at least it was given a brief overview of our heritage, that presents the foundation of one civilization that fulfills and gives evidence with great values from the past and guarantees for cultivation of values in the future, with the hope that international organisations to protect documents and international conventions in relation to Kosovo, ratified by member states of the international organisations, as it is International Law regarding on Returning of Cultural Heritage in case of an armed conflict, then International Convention for Cultural Heritage (UNESCO), etc.

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