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# Cultural Heritage as a Factor of Cooperation between Countries of the Balkan Region

## Balkan Bölgesi Ülkeleri Arasında Bir İşbirliği Faktörü Olarak Kültürel Miras

### Abstract

Cultural heritage as factors of cooperation and interaction is one of the challenges facing Southeast Europe, more specifically the Western Balkans. The historical past and cultural diversity of each country in this region is closely related to its past, with monuments of construction heritage, movable, immovable, sacred and secular monuments, of different faiths, with social, religious character etc. Cultural diversity in heritage is the most complex and challenging area in terms of our past as a region, so regional cooperation is more than necessary to channel the facts and equate historical evidence to mitigate the irritations and territorial claims of neighbors to the detriment of others. Kosovo in particular has a number of problems related to the historical past closely linked to cultural heritage as a result of non-recognition by UNESCO leaving room for others to make claims. Special areas protected by the Ahtisaari Package were erected around some Orthodox cult monuments to usurp the surrounding properties under the pretext of security, while the properties were private (the case is with the Boletin church in Mitrovica district which usurped the lands of Isa's family Bulletin). All this situation would have ended if UNESCO had recognized the cultural heritage of Kosovo as the heritage of Kosovo regardless of which ethnicity or cult it belongs to, aiming at regional cooperation in the cultural diversity that surrounds us.

**Keywords:** Diversity, heritage, culture, monument, history.

### Öz

İşbirliği ve etkileşim faktörleri olarak kültürel miras, Güneydoğu Avrupa'nın, özellikle de Batı Balkanlar'ın karşı karşıya olduğu zorluklardan biridir. Bu bölgedeki her ülkenin tarihi geçmişi ve kültürel çeşitliliği, inşaat mirası anıtları, taşınır, taşınmaz, kutsal ve laik anıtlar, farklı inançlara ait, sosyal ve dini karaktere sahip vb. İle geçmişiyle yakından ilişkilidir. Kültürel çeşitlilik miras, bir bölge olarak geçmişimiz

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açısından en karmaşık ve zorlu alandır, bu nedenle komşuların tahrişlerini ve toprak iddialarını zarara karşı hafifletmek için gerçekleri yönlendirmek ve tarihsel kanıtları eşitlemek için bölgesel işbirliği gereğinden fazla gereklidir. Diğerleri. Özellikle Kosova'nın, UNESCO tarafından tanınmaması ve diğerlerinin iddiada bulunmasına yer bırakmasının bir sonucu olarak, kültürel mirasla yakından bağlantılı tarihi geçmişle ilgili bir takım sorunları vardır. Ahtisaari Paketi ile korunan özel alanlar, bazı Ortodoks kült anıtlarının çevresine, güvenlik bahanesiyle çevredeki mülkleri gasp etmek için dikildi, mülkler özeldi (örnek, İsa'nın ailesinin topraklarını gasp eden Mitrovica ilçesindeki Boletin kilisesinde. Bülten). . UNESCO, bizi çevreleyen kültürel çeşitlilikte bölgesel işbirliğini amaçlayan, hangi etnik kökene veya mezhebe ait olduğuna bakılmaksızın Kosova'nın kültürel mirasını Kosova'nın mirası olarak tanısaydı, tüm bu durum sona erecekti.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çeşitlilik, miras, kültür, anıt, tarih.

### Introduction

The paper “Cultural heritage as a factor of cooperation between the countries of the region and beyond”, aims to reveal the cultural diversity of the Balkan region and the difficulties of the population to accept this fact as an asset and not as an imposition of the international factor.

“Cultural heritage is everyone’s heritage,” regardless of where it is located, but not to be used as a political card by falsifying it and claiming that it belongs to one party and not the other.

Cultural heritage is a broad notion and regardless of which country is spoken of, different cultures have left traces through it, no matter how small they should be respected, but, every cultural monument belongs to the land and the place where it is first located, while, then kanp also others their part of the culture they have left or had in it.

Therefore, cultural heritage can be seen as one of the main factors in the cooperation of the countries of the Balkan region, not using these assets of the past to increase tensions and disputes between these countries.

### Inheritance and the notion of acceptance

“Heritage” is a term that has always been difficult to define. Inheritance can be tangible and physical, but it can also be intangible, spiritual or metaphysical. Heritage is closely intertwined in cultural and natural environments that help define a sense of place, purpose and identity. Taken as a whole, heritage forms a vast cognitive landscape that gives meaning and identity to the place and the people who inhabit it. In whatever form it may take, heritage is one of the defining foundations of a given community.

Although clearly understood by the term itself, inheritance is in fact inherited. Inheritance encompasses a wide range of meanings based on what has been passed down from generation to generation. Inheritance helps validate, secure, and understand the roots of the community, and connect people with their ancestors and descendants. In fact, the legacy is a messenger<sup>1</sup>.

Cultural heritage throughout Europe is recognized as an instrument of cultural identity. Protecting our common heritage and promoting cultural diversity are as well very important

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1 Course module Heritage and Diversity, Prishtina, 2012, p.

instruments for bringing different communities closer together and for improving dialogue between different cultures.

How much people know about cultural heritage depends on what is done to promote it and on the capacity of Europeans to become familiar with and value their culture, as well as to become familiar with and value the culture of communities. others.

This is why one of the main objectives of the “European Union / Council of Europe Joint Action - is to support the promotion of Cultural Diversity in Kosovo (PDKK)” is to raise the awareness of pupils, students and the general population about the importance of cultural heritage as a common good, regardless of any ethnic or religious considerations. Preserving and promoting cultural diversity are among the basic principles of the European Union, and are a guiding principle for our cooperation with Kosovo<sup>2</sup>.

Cultural diversity and cultural heritage are tempting issues and most communities in Kosovo find themselves in the middle of this debate and sometimes even quite easily. These sessions aim to bring to the surface different perspectives and create a platform where the general public is inspired to continue the public debate on these issues.

In Kosovo the idea of diversity has suffered while degenerating over the past decade, since it was brought to public attention as a condition for peaceful coexistence and reconciliation. Although this concept was essential for post-war Kosovo, it felt invented and imposed by foreigners, causing internal resistance and deviating from the true meaning of the concept. The meanings that were lost in the translation did not give the general public time to analyze and understand the word in the local languages of Kosovo<sup>3</sup>.

The term “diversity” in the Albanian language is perceived as “difference.” It is perceived as a variety of cultural representations that identify collective / historical memory. However, many people in Kosovo today, from children to the elderly, try to understand the pieces of the puzzle. There is a great need for discourse and public opinion. However, the presence of diversity has in many cases been explained as a political imposition and such representation has created a number of prejudices and stereotypes<sup>4</sup>.

In order to avoid damaging the values of cultural heritage for the above reasons, there should be the concept of preliminary protection, with a fixed term, which legally has all the attributes of legal protection of the monument<sup>5</sup>.

Many military campaigns have aimed, among other things, to plunder cultural heritage values. Even today in many museums of the modern world we have exhibited (unfairly) cultural values which do not belong to the people or the territory in which the exhibiting museum is located, which have been taken from other countries and peoples, not always by negligence. of those who

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2 Samuel Zhbogar, Head of the EU Office, EU Special Representative, Course Module Heritage and Diversity, Prishtina, 2012, p. 11.

3 <https://www.coe.int>

4 Emin Riza, Monuments of Kosovo, Monuments of architecture and their identification, Prishtina, 2005, p.12.

5 Ibid. pp. 19, 20.

actually met them. This has also resulted in the need to adopt legal acts that sanction this area<sup>6</sup>.

The protection of monuments in a state space presupposes the consolidation of the works of each ethnicity, which for historical reasons has created in the lands of another ethnicity. Any violation of this principle would have extremely negative consequences for the historical truth. In our historical and current lands, ancient buildings are preserved, erected by the Greek colony in the Illyrian areas, which are protected and treated as all monuments<sup>7</sup>.

Kosovo, as well as many other parts of the Balkan region, has found itself between the necessary development processes and the long-term importance of heritage protection and rehabilitation. The social and political upheavals of the twentieth century have forced the rapid transformation of existing urban centers, and sometimes the gradual and sometimes violent destruction of historic structures<sup>8</sup>. Other areas, of rural and agricultural origin, are being transformed into administrative centers of various character. Peripheral layout, chaotic development within the city, incoherent architectural expression and overloaded infrastructure are other symptoms, all with a devastating effect on the historical essence and monuments as in terms contextual as well as physical. The result is a continuing disregard, loss of destruction piece by piece of important artifacts, buildings and historic urban landscape<sup>9</sup>.

Historical objects are a physical manifestation of cultural heritage, but it must be seen where it comes from and how it responds to the natural topography of its structure, climate, ritual, tradition, events, ideological and technological abilities of the people who created them, of those who exploit them and, more importantly, in their significance to those who inherited it. Therefore, the cultural heritage of urban artifacts, objects and settlements is given meaning and significance by natural heritage and human heritage in a broader context in which they are located. The physical preservation and maintenance of tangible structures “bricks and mortar” - is now accompanied by the acceptance of its intangible qualities and an increasing sensitivity to the psycho-social aspects of cultural heritage as indicators of personal and collective identity, of the societies they have created and those they have inherited<sup>10</sup>.

While UNESCO as the most important organization in the world which deals with the protection of architectural-historical monuments, in a word cultural heritage, is reluctant to recognize Kosovo as an independent country and the cultural heritage monuments found there as its own, this is just a incitement to conflict over inheritance disputes, and to the falsification of monuments, as is the case with Boletin’s church.

To justify the occupation of Kosovo, since the century. XIX, Serbian historiography, together with the Serbian anthropological school of Jovan Cvijic, made a lot of speculation about the issue

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6 Pajazit Hajzeri, Institutional Documentation and protection of historical and cultural heritage monuments, The 1st International Conference on Research and Education – Challenges Toward the Future (ICRAE2013), 24-25 May 2013, University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”, Shkodra, Albania;

7 Ibid.

8 Pajazit Hajzeri, Conservation and restoration of cultural monuments, manuscript material, Tirana, 2012, p. 4.

9 Portraits of historic areas in Kosovo and the Balkan region, Office of the European Union Special Representative in Kosovo (EUSR), Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB), Prishtina, 2011, p. 1.

10 Ibid.

of appropriation of Christian cult monuments. The state circles of the Kingdom of Communist Yugoslavia were also involved in this aspect. Speculation and manipulation about the appropriation of cult monuments intensified especially after 1981 until today<sup>11</sup>.

The 1986 ASHAS Memorandum was taken as a model for political speculation of the day. Falsehood and speculation with historical arguments are noticed in all custom writings of this nature. As a typical example of manipulation and speculation with cult monuments we are highlighting the work of Branislav Krstić, *Kosovo izmjeđu istorijskog i etničkog prava*, Belgrade, 1994<sup>12</sup>.

If we look carefully at the historical sources of the time, as well as the archeological findings, it is clear that here we are dealing with the Serbian appropriation of Illyrian-Albanian cult monuments of the Roman and Byzantine periods, a phenomenon that has become a practice since the time of Nemanjid rule. In other words, the main monuments of the Christian cult in Kosovo, which today are considered Serbian Orthodox churches or monasteries, such as the Church of the Monastery of Dečan, Gračanica, Saints Michael and Gabriel in the districts of Prizren, the Church of Our Lady of Prizren in Prizren, complex of the Patriarchate of Peja, the Church of St. Stephen in the districts of Mitrovica, are ancient, both for the autochthonous Albanians and the invading Serbs in Kosovo, since to date, no serious scholar denies the fact that the churches and monasteries in question were built, rebuilt or repaired on the foundations of ancient monuments of the Roman and Byzantine periods<sup>13</sup>.

The same fate befell the church of Boletin. Boletin Church is in the continuation of the falsification of Christian cult monuments in Kosovo by the Serbo-Slavic occupier and the conversion to the Orthodox Church and later to the monastery which has already been made official by the MCYS of Kosovo calling it a monastery of the century XIV.

Isa Boletini's family had a company that worked in the processing of stones for mills, on this occasion the prominent activist of the Albanian cause Isa Boletini had brought to his property several Jewish families to help run his company, to who are said to be known throughout the Mediterranean<sup>14</sup>. A Jewish family who run the company's management is located right next to Isa Boletini's house at a place called Guri i Tupanit. While, other families are located not far from this family who are mainly engaged in cultivating the land and preserving the livestock of Isa Boletini's family.

This family is enabled to use a small cult object neglected by the Jewish community<sup>15</sup>. Other scholars think that this cult object used to be a small Catholic church owned by the Boletini family before the Muslimization of these families, or a small cult object built to meet the conditions of the Jewish community brought to this village, and of course some Serbian church built in the 14th century. XIV as propagated by Serbian politics and perfidious science<sup>16</sup>.

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11 Jahja Drançolli, *Monuments of the Catholic cult during the Middle Ages in Kosovo, Christianity among Albanians*, Symposium International, Tirana, 16-19 November 1999, Shodër, 2000, p. 145.

12 Ibid. 146

13 Qazim Namani, *Jews in Kosovo*, Annual, Kosovo Archive, XXXVII - XXXVIII, Prishtina, 2007, pp. 98, 111.

14 Ibid.

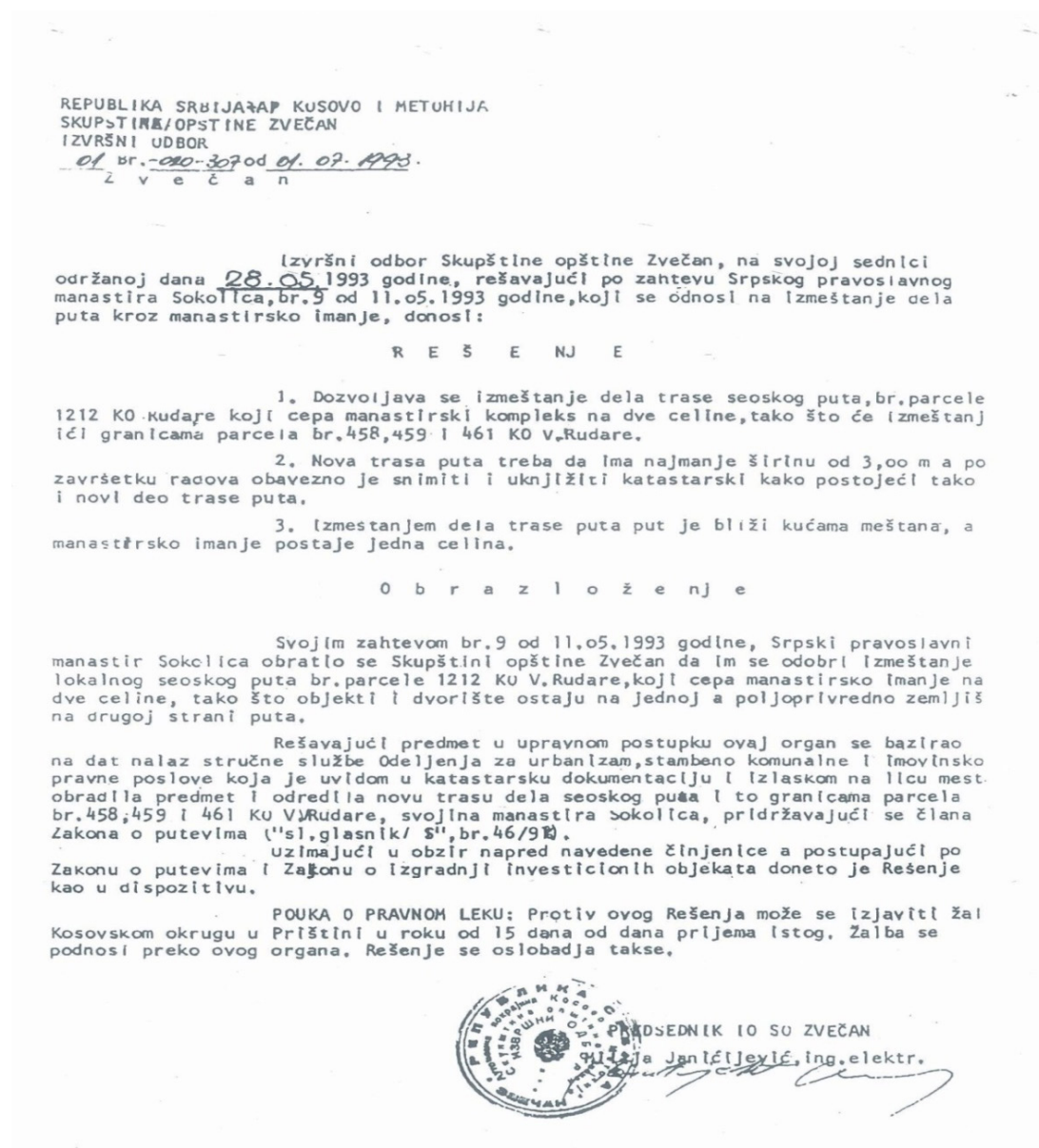
15 Ibid.

16 Qazim Namani, *The first Jewish migrations to the Balkan Peninsula*, manuscript material, p. 8.



After the occupation of Kosovo, after the proclamation of the Independence of Albania, this Jewish community is assimilated and Serbized at the same time, the same fate was experienced by the family of Avram who had his house on the stone of the drum. The object of their cult was transformed into a small Orthodox chapel, which expanded its properties, with the confiscation of Isa Boletin's properties in 1953<sup>17</sup>, Isa Boletini's property was also confiscated in 1993, by a court decision in Zvečan.

Boletin Church was proclaimed in 1956 a Women's Monastery. Today, the area around the Sokolica monastery is inhabited only by ethnic Albanians and ethnic groups<sup>18</sup>.



**Figure 1.** The decision of the court of Zvečan for the confiscation of the properties of boletini

17 Ibid

18 <https://manastiriusrbiji.com/manastir-sokolica/>



**Figure 2.** The church was forged and turned into a monastery

While the forgery interventions are visible in the upper part of the door inside the church, as well as the statue of the Blessed Virgin with Christ in her lap kidnapped by the Catholic church of St. Peter in Trepça, which they present as having been taken from the monastery of Banjska enough to lose track.



**Figure 3.** The Blessed Virgin with Christ,





**Figure 4.** The door where counterfeiting interventions are noticed.

sculpture taken from the church of St. Peter in Trepça

### Conclusion

Mutual cooperation between the language of the region in the field of cultural culture for the purposes of the glorious past of monuments. It is in the interest of all the peoples who are in our region, to preserve and cultivate cultural diversity and not to try with everything they alienate and falsify, which are low values at the expense of truth, in favor of daily politics.

All of the Balkan region, preserve something of the culture of other peoples, and this should seem like the best way to start the inter-regional shift by respecting and cultivating the values of construction as they are and where. are.

This paper calls on all countries in the region to see the cultural heritage and its diversity as part of the future and cooperation, because we have a very large number of monuments and traditions that are gradually disappearing as a result of misuse and exploitation of cultural heritage assets only for quarrels and conflicts and not for mutual cooperation.

It also calls on UNESCO to recognize Kosovo as a member state, because that would close many graves and pending conflicts, because the claims of “others” that everything belongs to them because they have a cultural asset. on the other hand, it has meant that conflicts and irritating language never cease in the Balkans.

I think that UNESCO can put an end to these conflicts and this language of hatred between these peoples by telling everyone where it belongs, so Kosovo will urgently need to be recognized by this organization and help restore the values of heritage. cultural throughout its territory.

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**Figure 4.** The door where counterfeiting interventions are noticed

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