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THE ROLE OF THE MUSEUMS IN PRESERVING AND PRESENTATION OF THE TURKISH FOLKLORE IN MACEDONIA

The first museum collections in Macedonia were founded between the two world wars. The ethnological collection of the, so called, Museum of Southern Serbia, was destroyed by the Germans during the Second World War, except the collection of textiles from Kosovo.¹ After the war, in the 1940' and the early 1950' several museums in Skopje and the other cities were founded. The Ethnological Museum in Skopje and the ethnological departments of the local museums started collecting objects from the traditional life of the population in Macedonia. Significant collections of objects pertaining to the Turks from Macedonia, or bearing all the characteristics of the traditional Turkish art and folklore, were acquired.

The five centuries long rule of the Ottoman Turks had a crucial influence upon all the aspects of life in Macedonia - the urban structure, architecture, house interiors and furniture, garments crafts, language, customs, music, nutrition. The local urban population was the first to adopt the Turkish way of life.² During the first centuries of the Turkish rule the majority of the craftsmen in Macedonia were Turks, especially those practicing fine crafts for satisfying the needs of the Turkish army and aristocracy,³ but during the centuries this has changed and in the 19th and the early 20th centuries the presence of the Christian Macedonians in the crafts, commerce and the social life was rather important. The Turkish authorities imposed restriction on the costumes of the non-Muslim citizens, from the 16th to the early 19th centuries.⁴ But, from the 19th century on, the wealthy urban Macedonians, thanks to the liberal Turkish reforms, started publicly and freely to expose their wealth through their houses and garments, which in large extent copied the Turkish ones. In the cities the Macedonians and the other Christians started wearing parts, or entire Turkish costumes tending to become equal to the ruling Turks.(Fig. 1) Even the villagers who moved into towns accepted the urban Turkish garments.⁵ This tendency brought to the creation of a new civil culture when, for the first time, people were grouped according their social and not religious status.⁶ In this period the traditional culture of the urban population, both the Turks and the other Muslims, and the Macedonians and the other Christians was so similar, that it is very difficult to distinguish to what national or religious group belonged the producers and users of the traditional handicrafts. The

¹Kli-kova, V., Razvojniot pat na Etnolo{kiot muzej vo Skopje, Glasnik na Etnolo{kiot muzej, Skopje, 1960, 6-7

² Petrovi}, \., Pro{i}-Dvorni}, M., Narodna umetnost, Umetnost na tlu Jugoslavije, Beograd, Zagreb, Ljubljana, 1983, 36

³ Stojanovski, A., Zanaet~iskata dejnost vo makedonskite gradovi pod turska vlast, (XV-XVIII vek), Glasnik na INI, 39, 1-2, Skopje, 1995, 117-118

⁴ Filipovi}, M., Uticaj vlasti na narodnu no{nju, RVM 10, Novi Sad, 1961,62

⁵ Zdravev, \., Macedonian Folk Costumes I, Matica makedonska, Skopje, 1996, 226

⁶ Mazover, M., Balkan, Kratka istorija, Beograd, 2003, 105-106

major difference between the Turks and the Christians was that generally the Turks possessed objects made of more luxurious materials, or they had them in larger quantities.⁷

The Turkish influences reached the Macedonian villages in lesser extent, due to their isolation, poverty and self-sufficiency. They are most obvious in the villages where the Macedonians and the Turks lived together. Macedonian Christians who had converted into Muslims adopted all the other aspects of the Turkish life, including their clothing and customs. The tendency to accept the elements of the Turkish culture was also followed by the reaya, especially by the men, who communicated with the world outside their villages.⁸ The abundance of Turkish words in the Macedonian language, denoting numerous elements of the material culture, is essential, not only formal. The materials they are made of, the techniques of production and the applied ornaments and colors reflect the profound influence of the Turkish art and tradition among the Macedonians. (Fig. 2)

The collection of the Ethnological Department of the Museum of Macedonia illustrates very accurately this situation. In the collection of folk costumes the traditional costumes of the Christian Macedonian villagers are most numerous. Particular elements from the Turkish folklore, such as weaves, cuts or ornaments, are applied to predominantly Slavo-Balkan type of costumes. On the other hand, the costumes of the Macedonian Muslims (Fig. 3) and the Youruks entirely follow the Turkish tradition.

The collection of the urban Turkish and Macedonian *Ala-Turka* costumes has about 400 items, while the collection from Kosovo has about 700 textile items. There are various clothing pieces richly embroidered with silver and gold threads, (Fig. 4) embroidered towels and Turkish laces - *oyas*. The Museum has also a beautiful collection of kilims, mostly made by Macedonians, woodcarvings, copperware, jewelry, weapons, and other products of the local craftsmen. (Fig. 5) The influence of the Turkish crafts upon all these handicrafts is very strong, but we must point out that the local variations of the forms and ornaments are distinctive, and interwoven with the elements of the Byzantine, Slavic and European traditions.

As all the other objects in the collections of the Museum, those are also taken care, preserved and documented, but also permanently presented to the public and the scientific community by the museum curators. At the permanent exhibition of the Museum of Macedonia numerous objects reflecting the influence of the Ottoman Turks in Macedonia are displayed, as well as the costumes of the Turkish ethnic group in Macedonia. (Fig. 6) Objects belonging to the Macedonian Turks, as well as those where the Turkish influence is dominating, are continuously presented on many exhibitions in the Museum and abroad, such as *Copperware and Kilims*, Istanbul, 1995, Skopje 1996, *Ala Turka -Ala Franga*, Skopje, 1999, *Old Weapons*, Skopje, 1998, *Radovish Youruks*, Skopje, 2002, Istanbul, 2004, *From the Ottoman Traditions in Macedonia*, Istanbul, 2004.⁹ Small exhibitions with Turkish objects were also organized on particular occasions, such as the visit of the Turkish minister of Culture to Skopje, 2005, and the presentation of the reconstruction plan of the Havzi Pasha

⁷ Nazim, Y., Makedoya'da Osmanli Geleneklerinden, Exhibition catalogue, Istanbul, 2004

⁸ Zdravev, \., op.cit., 226

⁹ Dimovska, S., Pregled na rabotata na Etnolo{kiot oddel na Muzejot na Makedonija, 1992-2001, Zbornik, Etnologija 2, Muzej na Makedonija, Skopje, 2002, 184-186; Nami~ev, P., Pregled na rabotata na Etnolo{kiot oddel na Muzejot na Makedonija vo periodot 2001-2005, Zbornik, Etnologija 3, Muzej na Makedonija, Skopje, 2005, 181-182

Konaks in Skopje, 2006. Almost at each exhibition in the Museum or abroad objects with obvious Turkish influences such as kilims, garments, jewelry, copperware, woodcarvings, are presented.

The curators from the Museum of Macedonia permanently research, write, publish or present on the international scientific meetings topics treating the Turkish folklore in Macedonia. Many articles have been published on the costumes, embroidery, kilims, copperware, weapons, amulets, mother of pearl inlay, customs and food. Two monographic editions by the author Elizabeta Koneska has also been published: *Copper Vessels in Macedonia from the Ottoman Period* and *The Youruks*. Koneska is also the author of three documentary ethnographic films *The Day of Ashure*, *Adak*, and *Bektashi*, also in the production of the Museum of Macedonia.

Not only the National Museum of Macedonia in Skopje, but also the local museums in Skopje, Bitola, Prilep, Ohrid, Strumica, Tetovo have collections of Turkish items, especially those pertaining to the urban culture of the Turks in Macedonia. They also present them at exhibitions, the last of them being the *Ethnic Diversity of Skopje*, in the Museum of the City of Skopje.

We may conclude that the professional interest of the Macedonian ethnologists for profound and comparative studies of the Turkish traditional culture in Macedonia and its influence upon the folklore of the Macedonians, as well as the permanent care for the collections of Turkish items, are constant. The continuous contacts with our colleagues from Turkey, the participation of our ethnologist on the experts' meetings in Turkey and other countries, including the International Turkish Folklore Congress, as well as the presence of the Turkish researchers on the international meetings in Macedonia, as in Ohrid and Chalkli, has also contributed to the positive and constant engagement of the Macedonian museums in promoting the Turkish folklore. The knowledge of Turkish language and the professional training in Turkey of the Macedonian ethnologists, art historians, linguists, have a very important role in intensifying the comparative studies of Turkish and Macedonian traditions. Hence, I believe that the more intensive contacts with the museums and scientific institutions in Turkey, supported by our governments, will enable our experts to improve their knowledge for further, more profound studies of the culture of the Turks in Macedonia. Naturally, mutual Macedonian-Turkish projects would be very useful in the comparative analysis of the material both in Turkey and Macedonia.

A lot is to be done in the future, as to intensify the field researches among the Turks in Macedonia and to collect as much as possible data on their traditional culture, creating also a fund of visual documents. The museums should also enrich their collection of textiles and jewelry of the Youruk group, who still wear their traditional costume, which inevitably has transformed during the time. (Fig. 7)

Lately, the museums in Macedonia make efforts to follow the contemporary tendencies in the world, primarily to open and adapt to the public, especially the children. The educational departments of the museums cooperate with the educational institutions in Macedonia, including the Turkish schools and children. They also plan projects for teaching the children the traditions and folklore of the ethnic groups living in Macedonia, including the Turks.

The museums are open for cooperation with the numerous non-governmental organizations, foreign foundations and embassies. The activities of the cultural associations of the Turks in Macedonia, folklore groups and other societies are mainly directed towards the Turkish population in Macedonia. The Museum of Macedonia may have a role of an intermediary for their presentation to the wider public. It is situated in the milieu of the Old Turkish Bazaar in Skopje, surrounded by many baths,

inns and mosques from the Ottoman period. In the Kurshumli han, within the Museum complex, many concerts, performances and receptions are organized. The Museum of Macedonia is a very convenient place for presenting the work of the non-governmental organizations and foundations that support the projects for preserving and promoting the culture and folklore of the Turks in Macedonia.

The Museum of Macedonia has developed a production and sale of museum replicas, publishing's and handicrafts in its shops in the Museum and in the old Turkish feudal tower in the center of Skopje. A sale of handicrafts made by the Macedonian Turks may be organized here. The Association of Turks from Eastern Macedonia has already organized a sale exhibition, in cooperation with a foreign foundation and museum experts.

Besides the active role of the Turks from Macedonia in the public, political and cultural life, based on their contemporary contributions to the life and culture in Macedonia, the major influences of the Turks to the tradition and folklore of Macedonia should not be forgotten. The material evidence for the presence of the Turks, preserved in the Macedonian museums, adequately presented to the public, should contribute for understanding the universal values of tradition, folklore and art and for breaking the negative stereotypes from the past.