

Albanian Cultural Heritage and Requirements for the Treatment of its Values as per Contemporary Standards

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Currently in Albania, the entire cultural heritage and revitalization process of its values are facing new requirements which need a somewhat different treatment in line with today standards. For this reason, the focus of this study become many issues which are related not only to the change of the concept and of attitudes towards cultural heritage works in general, with awareness increase for the values and their preservation, dedicating more attention and care to a sustainable conservation and restoration, but also to the requirements for a better management or special requirements for promoting its values and others. The goal of this study is to offer its contribution in the formation of a new concept for the treatment method of cultural heritage which aims at giving it a new breath, enlivening the citizens' spiritual life, and increasing the human and financial resources which are so necessary for its development.

More concretely, our opinions and ideas regarding this issue are summarized as below:

It should be already clear for most of us that the concept of cultural heritage and in particular its treatment method is an ever changing and developing concept. This is related to the fact that knowledge on cultural heritage is expanding and the care or attitude towards it should change. Likewise, the technology and the methods used for its evaluation and treatment have changed. All this knowledge and techniques should be introduced and applied, borrowing treatment models from developed countries.

Any restoration intervention on the cultural monuments should never be considered a purpose on its own, but it should be taken into account as an inseparable part of their scientific and professional treatment to preserve values and to transmit such values to the coming generations as they have indeed been. A somewhat different treatment of the Albanian cultural

heritage implies considering it in the framework of *cultural tourism development*, and in addition to quality restoration projects more funds should be ensured for its maintenance and preservation. In this direction, it should be underlined that, during the recent years, several projects supported by foreign foundations are giving their contributions. Such is for instance Gjirokastra Foundation (GCDO), which in the framework of REVATO project, has more than 10 years of developing activities in Gjirokastra and lastly even in the city of Berat with regards to identification of owners and restoration of residences announced as cultural monuments, support for the registration of such ownerships, preparation of *business plan models*, provision of examples how small businesses may be developed within traditional buildings to serve to *family tourism*, etc. It should be emphasized here that for UNESCO experts one of the most important conditions for the revitalization of Albanian cities was the Management Plan preparation for the preservation of cultural values of each city. According to them, such Plans should include all the possible stakeholders, starting with the Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Institute of Cultural Monuments, but also foundations, business companies, the rich spiritual heritage in city regions, etc.

A somewhat different treatment of the Albanian cultural heritage implies considering it in the framework of cultural tourism development, which is being talked about very much today, by really evaluating the given contribute by restoration and restoration interventions in its successful development. It is already known that cultural tourism is a new issue in Albania, therefore a wider concept for it is needed, and information, knowledge and skills are needed to develop it as per the required standards and in accordance with the time. But we should not forget that development of cultural tourism creates new opportunities and perspectives for the promotion of our cultural heritage values. This means that, it is a precondition to have restored, cleaned and carefully maintained environments, road access, guiding maps and special informative publications for the visitors with regards to the places they choose to visit. Thus, the wealth Albania offers with its cultural monuments creates potential and real opportunities to turn the country into a tourism “industry”. However, to include monuments and parks in the cultural tourism area, it is important to solve the issues related to their preservation, maintenance and protection so that any visitor may naturally gain the respect and safety for the visiting country.



Butrint National Park

Even though we are faced with many problems, it must be pointed that the tourism sector is one of the best possibilities to improve the image of Albania, to economically develop as a country and to increase the chances for higher living standards for its people. For this, clear concepts should be developed with should be implemented by the government and private sector. Among historical and cultural potentials of Albania with regards to the development of tourism, the following can be mentioned:

- Archeological objects and sites such as Butrinti, Apollonia, Dyrrahu, etc.
- Forts and medieval castles such as Rozafa, Kruja, Berati, Tepelena, Gjirokastra, etc.
- Different cult objects such as: churches, mosques, masjids, etc.
- Objects of material and ethnographic culture related to the way of living, garments, cooking and method, etc.
- Different institutions such as museums, theatres, sports institutions, etc., which may very well serve to the tourism sector.

The main directions of tourism movement in such cities are visits to different historical and museum objects such as: parts of the cities with their typical houses, forts and medieval castles, museums, churches, mosques, etc. Tourism in Albania may be used as a very good method not only for the economic development, but also as a means for economic integration in the entire Balkans region.

Thus, Albania has and offers very good potentials in the area of tourism. Such potentials are expressed not only in natural properties, but in its history and in its culture. However, compared to other Mediterranean countries such potentials are not used as they should until

today in favor of tourism, thus making it a very good possibility of development in the near future.

Restoration and any restoration intervention realized with professionalism, among other things, aims to make cultural heritage works attractive to the visitor's eye, awaken their interests in them. Such interventions not only ensure their lifespan, but they also create other opportunities as mentioned above. It is more than fair today to say that work with monuments or work with cultural monuments requires professionals who should be patriots in their spirits. As per the experts of this field, restoration as a process does not only enable the revitalization of the values they carry from the past and their exposure to the communities, but, in addition to that, it needs people or a working force that knows how to take care and maintain them on a regular basis. Furthermore, the restoration of cultural monuments, their operation and use on a regular basis should be accompanied by other measures, which enable protection from damages, degradation or abusive use. In this respect, the citizens themselves should give their contribution to the preservation of our national identity.

Conclusions

- In the current conditions of Albanian society integration, preservation and conservation of cultural heritage values takes a special importance. Care about them is care for the continuous preservation of authentic cultural and historical values of our Albanian people. To integrate does not mean to lose authentic values, the specifics of national identity, but to preserve, manage and present them.
- With respect to cultural monuments there is an issue which still cannot be considered as finally solved as knowledge on monuments is always increasing. Likewise, contemporary technology progresses and all these affect the field of evaluation and treatment of monuments. Any Albanian must bear in mind the concept that protection of monuments is an historical need for our nation.
- Albanian cultural heritage is currently facing an issue which requires a professional solution. Its revitalization, protection, restoration or conservation, implementation of restoration projects requires strict and professional respect of the principles of restoration, the Venice Charter, the Albanian Restoration Charter, as well as the Albanian legislation in force.

- The aim of restoration interventions is to preserve cultural heritage values. This has been and continues to be a requirement strongly asserted and related to the qualified work of the restorator and architect. Currently the work of a restorator or architect cannot be done by other people as this threatens the loss of our cultural heritage values.
- To take care of cultural heritage means to make more money available, to plan more funds for maintenance, restoration and conservation, etc. But to restore does not mean to distort or deviate the role, values and function of any cultural work according to the interests of the moment.
- In the current Albanian reality, one of the key issues Albanian cultural heritage faces is failure of the law to act strongly against its damaging agents. That is why it is more than necessary the need to reform the Law on Heritage in line with the new circumstances and ensure its correct application.
- In the current conditions, the Albanian cultural heritage is taking new measures and breath. In particular the development of cultural tourism is creating new possibilities and perspectives for the promotion of its values, but also other possibilities for ensuring funds and employment. Although it faces many problems, the tourism sector offers good opportunities not only for the improvement of the image of Albania, but also for development, economic recovery, increase of opportunities for higher standards and financial income for the people. This needs the development of clear concepts which should be implemented by the Albanian Government but also by the private sector.

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Butrinti



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