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Safeguarding and Promoting of Cultural Heritage: Ottoman Manuscript Collections in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Ottoman Manuscripts in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ottoman manuscripts written in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian language form a part of the world cultural and historical heritage. The number of Ottoman manuscripts as monuments of culture is truly amazing. They can be found throughout the world in various collections of manuscripts, museums, archives, and libraries. They are spread far beyond the Islamic world of today, as evidence of centuries of size and glory of Ottoman culture and civilisation that can be described as woven into civilisation postulates of the world history due to their cultural and material value.

Ottoman culture and civilisation have existed for centuries as supranational cultural and civilizational community of different nations. After national awakening and nationalist movements in the 19th century, different nations that once formed a homogenous community of the Ottoman Empire, kept some of the spiritual, material, and cultural values from that community, and adopted them as integral elements of their national identity. During the Ottoman reign in this region, Bosniaks were equal members of that cohesive and particular community of Islamic culture and civilisation for almost five centuries. They significantly contributed to that diverse civilizational collection of works by writing scientific and artistic works in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian language. Various manuscripts written in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian by Bosniaks has been spread and kept in collections all over the world, from Istanbul, Cairo, Medina, to Vienna, Bratislava, etC The endless wealth of written word includes works on scientific topics (mathematics, astronomy, history, geography, etC), different theology disciplines (philosophy, law, logic, etC), and literature (poetry collections, prose, etC). According to scientific research conducted thus far, there are more

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than two hundred Bosniak authors who wrote in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian¹, which is much more than what was created in Bosnian as mother tongue, although such works have also been produced in a significant number as well.²

Once nationality became key issue dividing the population according to their ethnicity, Bosniaks and other heirs of Ottoman culture and civilisation entered a completely new era which meant inclusion in nation states. Over a certain period, due to historical and political turmoil, nationality became a priority, so historical, cultural, intellectual, and spiritual heritage had to “fit” ethnically defined mould. Anything that did not fit the imposed framework was eliminated as undesirable and uninteresting. Such position against national history was particularly influential in smaller national communities that had to declare and prove, at any cost, that they belong to a nation. Centuries of being part of a larger and unique Ottoman cultural and civilizational community were systematically suppressed and depreciated.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and annexing of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1878), studies of culture and history almost completely ignored the period of Bosnian history under the Ottoman Empire. That period was mostly regarded as times of illiteracy and ignorance, and the entire written heritage of Bosniaks that contained centuries of texts written in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian was considered foreign and worthless. After the World War II, when the socialist regimen entered the scene (1945-1990), the destructive relationship towards an important part of history of the Bosniak people intensified. Different educational systems and state organisation – Austro-Hungarian, followed by the socialist state, compared to the Ottoman and Islamic – resulted, among other things, in ever smaller number of scholars and intellectuals who knew Islamic culture.

As a result of such relationship, many valuable items of cultural heritage, including manuscripts, were intentionally destroyed. Their real value and importance could not be properly determined. Even institutions with positive social role during the Ottoman reign were abandoned, left to ruins, or transformed to serve a different purpose. Institutions that provided high quality education for centuries were

- 1 Biographical and bibliographical informations about authors available in: Mehmed Handžić, *Književni rad bosansko-hercegovačkih muslimana*, Sarajevo 1933; Safvet-beg Bašagić, *Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u islamskoj književnosti*, knj. III, Sarajevo 1986; Hazim Šabanović, *Književnost muslimana BiH na orijentalnim jezicima*, Svjetlost, Sarajevo 1973.
- 2 See: *Bošnjačka književnost u književnoj kritici*, Starija književnost, Knjiga I, Editors: Enes and Esad Duraković, Fehim Nametak, „AleF“, Sarajevo 1998, pp. 861-928.

now closed; numerous *waqfs* that provided education to Bosniak people were expropriated or destroyed. Many libraries, and public collections lost, destroyed and neglected their treasure, even some private collections and manuscripts were lost because of their owners' inability to appreciate and value them properly.

However, thanks to commitment and efforts of few enthusiasts such as Mehmed-beg Kapetanović Ljubušak, Ibrahim Bašagić, Safvet-beg Bašagić, Mehmed Handžić and other researchers of heritage written in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian language, this segment of cultural history of Bosnia and Herzegovina had been subject to research and recording for future generations. The above mentioned authors used any available resources to find Islamic manuscripts of Bosniaks, trying to find and record as many of them as possible.³

When it comes to institutionalised safekeeping of manuscript treasure, for a long time, "it was something that needed to be done, but did not deserve any major support or social promotion"⁴. Numerous Ottoman manuscript collections were scattered in different Bosnian archives and museums, unorganised and unprocessed, and quite often stored inadequately. However, during that period, two institutions stood out as important repositories of manuscripts - Gazi Husrev-Bey library and Oriental Institute in Sarajevo.

Nowadays, many institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina holding valuable collections of Ottoman manuscripts work on their restoration and cataloguing⁵,

3 Esad Duraković, "Razvoj književnohistorijske i književnokritičke misli u radovima bošnjačkih orijentalista", *Prolegomena za historiju književnosti orijentalno-islamskoga kruga*, Connectum, Sarajevo 2005, pp. 38-121.

4 Ibid., pp. 38.

5 The following list of catalogues have been published until present:

Bosniak Institute in Sarajevo:

- *Katalog arapskih, perzijskih, turskih i bosanskih rukopisa iz zbirke Bošnjačkog instituta*, Vol 1, prepared by Fehim Nametak and Salih Trako, Bošnjački institut Zürich, Zürich, 1997; *Katalog arapskih, perzijskih, turskih i bosanskih rukopisa iz zbirke Bošnjačkog instituta*, Vol 2, prepared by Fehim Nametak and Salih Trako, Bošnjački institut Zürich-Sarajevo, Sarajevo 2003;

Sarajevo Historical archives

- *Katalog arapskih, turskih, perzijskih i bosanskih rukopisa*, Svezak 1, prepared by Mustafa Jahić, Historijski arhiv Sarajevo and Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, Sarajevo, London, 2010; *Katalog arapskih, turskih, perzijskih i bosanskih rukopisa*, Svezak 2, prepared by Haso Popara, Historijski arhiv Sarajevo and Al-Furqan Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, Sarajevo, London 2011.

National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina

- *Katalog arapskih, turskih, perzijskih i bosanskih rukopisa*, prepared by Osman Lavić, Nacionalna i univerzitetska biblioteka BiH i Al-Furqan Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, Sarajevo, London 2011.

still, the most important institution with regards to safekeeping of manuscripts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and even the Balkans, is the Gazi HusrevBey library, which has released XVIII volumes of catalogue to present manuscripts of its collection that have been processed so far.⁶ Many of the manuscripts are still being processed and catalogued.

Until the aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995), the second in wealth following the Gazi HusrevBey library, was the manuscript collection of Oriental Institute in Sarajevo which was one of the richest collections of the Balkans with its 5,000 manuscript codices. Unfortunately, at the very beginning of the aggression, in May 1992, the entire manuscript and archive collection was burned and destroyed together with the Institute building.

Manuscript Collection of Oriental Institute in Sarajevo

The Oriental Institute in Sarajevo was founded in 1950 by a decree of the People's Republic Bosnia and Herzegovina as an independent scientific research institution dedicated to research and study of general and cultural history of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Ottoman reign. It was the first institution established by the state authorities with a purpose of studying history of Bosnia under the Ottomans, i.e. studying of Islamic civilisation within the general and cultural history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Establishing of the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo marked the beginning of institutionalised, organised, and systematic research and study of general and cultural history of Bosnia under the Ottoman reign. Programme tasks that were devised and laid out at that time, included, among other things, collecting of manuscripts and archive materials, processing and publishing, studying of manuscript materials and literary works in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, as well as training of scientific and expert staff in that particular field; they developed and expanded over time to meet scientific needs and directions that were subsequently taken by the Institute personnel engaged in scientific and research work. Institutional legalisation of cultural heritage studies also meant organised and more extensive collection of various manuscripts and

The Cantonal Archives Travnik

- *Katalog arapskih, turskih i perzijskih rukopisa*, prepared by Mustafa Jahić, Kantonalni arhiv Travnik and Al-Furqān Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, Travnik, London 2015.

Museum of Herzegovina Mostar

- *Catalogue of Arabic, Turkish and Bosnian Manuscript*, prepared by Dželila Babović and Madžida Mašić, Museum of Herzegovina Mostar and Oriental Institute, Sarajevo 2017.

6 <http://www.ghb.ba/katalozi-rukopisa> (last visit 14.05.2018.)

printed material in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian.

The core from which originated the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo is Turkish archives and collection of Oriental books and manuscripts of the National Museum in Sarajevo. All those manuscripts, as decided by the authorities, were transferred from the National Museum to the Oriental Institute. In addition to institutional storage of Islamic manuscripts and archival materials, the establishment of the Oriental Institute was the beginning of an intensive and institutionalised scientific research on the study of heritage in oriental languages based on collected source material (manuscripts and archival documents) and enhanced cultural, historical, scientific and general social interest toward cultural heritage of Bosnia. Permanent storage of Ottoman manuscripts in a scientific institution such as the Oriental Institute has increased their value, for they are safe kept by experts and scientists employed at the Institute, meaning that manuscripts can now be scientifically analysed and evaluated.

On the basis of manuscripts and archival documents stored in the collections of the Oriental Institute factual research of material in the form of expanding the biographical-bibliographical sketch or presentation of previously unknown authors and works also in the form of biographical-bibliographical sketch (detection of works, determining authorship, date of creation, biography of the author, etC) intensified; monographs on individual artists and some literary periods were made; scientific studies on certain aspects of Islamic literary heritage; systematisation, reasoned literary critic and literary-historical valorisation of previously studied materials, and study of Islamic art and civilisation.⁷

The manuscript collection included 5,263 manuscript codices in Arabic, Turkish and Persian, which made one of the richest collections of Ottoman manuscripts in the Balkans. When we talk about the manuscripts, it should be noted that they included all scientific and theological disciplines: from manuscripts of the Quran, the science of the Quran and Hadith, through theological discussions, rights and rites, and prayers, then the works of Sufism and Islamic philosophy, encyclopaedias, all areas of natural sciences, occultism, history, geography, politics, to the transcript of grammatical and lexicographical works for the purpose of training students in junior and high schools. On the other hand, the collection included works of fiction, collection of poetry written by Persian and Ottoman poets, individual songs or just verses, works of prose, proverbs, and other literary

7 Duraković, "Razvoj književnohistorijske misli ...", pp. 82-85.

content, as well as manuscripts concerning epistolography and, finally, majmua as varieties collections.

It is interesting to mention that the Manuscript Collection of the Oriental Institute included the oldest manuscript in Arabic found in former Yugoslavia. It was a manuscript on the Islamic law the transcription of which, according to the note found in the manuscript, was finished on the 9th day of Zul-Hijjah of 413, or 5 March 1023. When it comes to artistic impression, special attention of researchers was drawn to a fragment of astrology manuscript containing miniatures representing Zodiac signs, from the 15th century, as well as several manuscripts on different topics related to law, which were very popular in legal practice, but at the same time, they contain outstanding examples of Islamic calligraphy and miniature art. An interesting illustration of the great variety of the Manuscript Collection of the Oriental Institute can be provided by the fact that it contained a manuscript about chess, one work on the theory of music, as well as an erotic work from the 16th century.⁸

On 17 May 1992, the building of the Oriental Institute was set on fire by a guided missile from Serb aggressor positions surrounding Sarajevo. The building was burned to the ground, and the manuscript fund, the archives and library of the Institute, were completely destroyed.⁹ It was a great loss not only for Bosnia and Herzegovina but for the world. Numerous manuscripts that could serve as a basis for reconstruction of cultural, intellectual, spiritual, and scientific life of the entire lifespan of Ottoman Empire of over five hundred years were destroyed. Calvary suffered by this priceless treasure of European, Islamic, but also of the world cultural heritage becomes even greater since destruction was intentional. Guided missile from aggressor positions speaks of explicit and planned intentions to destroy one of the institutions that worked on preserving and cultural memory

8 See: Lejla Gazic, "Destruction of The Institute for Oriental Studies during the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-1995" , *Orijentalni institut u Sarajevu 1950-2000/The Institute for Oriental Studies in Sarajevo 1950-2000*, editors: Amir Ljubović i Lejla Gazić, Orijentalni institut, Sarajevo 2000, pp. 30-35.

9 About destroying of Oriental institute and of planned and sistematical destroying of other institutions of culture as well during war in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-1995 see: Andrés Riedlmayer, "Convivencia under Fire: Genocide and Book-burning in Bosnia," , *The Holocaust and the Book: Destruction and Preservation*, ed. by Jonathan Rose, University of Massachusetts Press, 2001, 266-291. Andrés J. Riedlmayer, "From the Ashes: the Past and Future of Bosnia's Cultural Heritage", *Islam and Bosnia: Conflict Resolution and Foreign Policy in Multi-Ethnic States*, ed. Maya Shatzmiller, McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal 2002, pp. 98-135.

and history.¹⁰ Although many other important institutions were destroyed during the four-year continuous shelling of Sarajevo, the fact is that the Oriental Institute as the repository of Ottoman manuscripts and archival material from the period of Ottoman rule in the region was a symbol of importance and role of Islamic culture in a significant part of history of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Protection of Manuscripts: Revitalisation of Manuscript Collection of the Oriental Institute

Heritage institutions, as traditional guardians of material that usually forms the research corpus in general studies and cultural history, especially the ones that host collections of old and rare materials, are ever more willing to adapt to modern trends of data storage in order to provide appropriate forms of protection and preservation for their treasure, while adapting to changing customer requirements at the same time. Establishing of digital archives, libraries and manuscript collections results in multiple benefits for these institutions, from permanent protection and preservation of data, protection of the original artefacts, to visualisation of the institution and projects implemented by their associates. Even heritage institutions the funds of which have been, or are still being destroyed, with the help of information technologies, digitisation, setting up databases on the web, can now significantly restore or even improve their resources to be used for new projects.

Mechanisms for protection and preservation of cultural heritage have changed throughout history, and it is modern scientific achievements in the field of IT and popularisation of online communication that enabled their permanent protection and widespread use. If we look at intensive digitisation of cultural heritage in the world, especially in Europe, it can be observed that in many countries the process of digitisation of cultural heritage has been recognised as an important objective in implementing cultural policy and cultural development of the country. In terms of selection, storage, management, cataloguing and processing of data and documents, digital technologies created a whole new perspective for studying of cultural and intellectual history. Digitisation is recognised as a possibility for global distribution of historical documents, a way of additional protection and storage, a

10 See: Berin Bajrić, "Oriental Institute in Sarajevo as a Guardian of Cultural Memory – From Institution of Heritage to Mnemonic Symbol/ Orijentalni institut u Sarajevu kao čuvar kulturnog pamćenja: od ustanove baštine do mnemoničkog simbola", *Prilozi za orijentalnu filologiju*, 64/2014, Sarajevo 2015, pp. 17-32.

challenge for intercultural studies, and encouragement for studying of manuscripts. At the same time, digitisation opens up new possibilities in reconstruction and revitalisation of damaged and destroyed manuscripts and manuscript funds. The increasingly frequent use of IT technologies in the field of archival science and humanities has been recognised in Oriental Institute as a perfect option to renew and revitalise the manuscript collection in digital format.

In the post-war period, the collecting of new manuscripts for this Collection started gradually, although at a time like this, the acquisition of manuscripts is both difficult and expensive. So, present day manuscript collection comprises 53 preserved codices from the former Collection of the Institute for Oriental Studies, 41 codices bought up and 21 codices reaching this Collection as gifts from a few people and institutions in the country and abroad.

It should be also pointed out that currently in Oriental Institute there are a number of photocopies and microfilms of manuscripts by a number of authors from Bosnia and Herzegovina whose originals are kept in the manuscript collections of some Istanbul libraries. These photocopies and microfilms were acquired through the financial assistance from the Government of the Republic of Turkey.

Since the traditional method of renovation of the manuscript collection through obtaining new original manuscripts has been rather slow over the past 25 years, digitisation of manuscripts is recognised as the broadest presentation, and indispensable method of revitalization, protection and promoting of Ottoman manuscript as a cultural heritage. Therefore, modern technology is increasingly taking the lead in preservation, protection and promotion of cultural heritage. Digitisation is recognised as a possibility for global distribution of historical documents, a way of additional protection and storage, a challenge for intercultural studies, and encouragement for studying of manuscripts. At the same time, digitisation opens up new possibilities in reconstruction and revitalisation of damaged and destroyed manuscripts and manuscript funds.

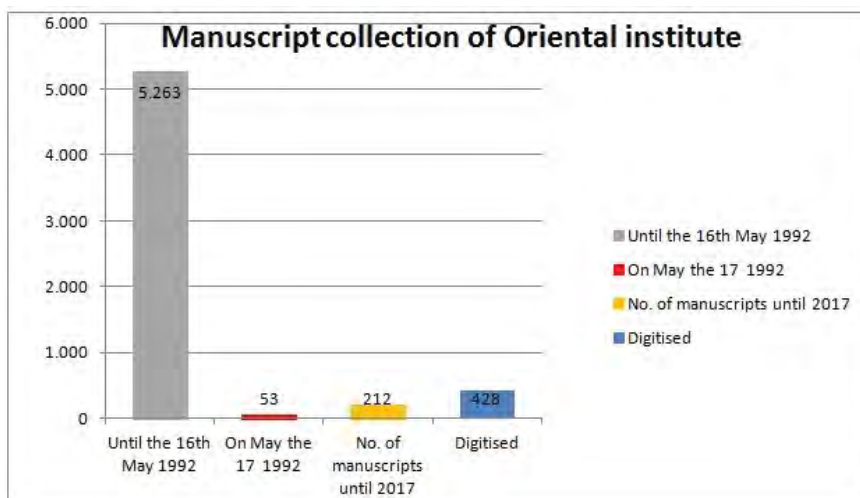
The most of the manuscripts stored in the Oriental Institute have been digitised, both those saved from fire (53 manuscript codices) and the 'new' manuscripts obtained in the post-war period (62 codices). Digitisation of manuscripts was supported by the Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, London, which financed production and publication of the catalogue in 2009.¹¹

11 *Catalogue of Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Bosnian Manuscripts*, prepared by Lejla Gazić, Institute for Oriental Studies and Al-Furqān Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, London-Sarajevo 2009.

The second way of the reconstruction of the Ottoman manuscript collection of Oriental Institute is digitization – procurement and forming of digital collection of manuscripts in cooperation with other heritage institutions that contain Ottoman manuscripts stored. Thus, in cooperation with the Museum of Herzegovina in Mostar, were catalogued and digitized 33 Ottoman manuscripts stored in that Museum. Then, in cooperation with the Franciscan monastery Petrićevac from Banja Luka, we digitized and catalogued the 12 manuscripts what they possess, in cooperation with public library of Tešanj we get 119 digital copies of the Ottoman manuscripts stored in their collection. According to the agreement with institutions, the digital form of all of those manuscripts are stored in the digital platform for ottoman manuscripts in Oriental Institute.

Present-day Manuscript Collection comprises 53 preserved codices from the former Collection of Oriental Institute, 212 works bought up or reached as gifts of few people and institutions in the country and abroad (1995-2017).

The following graph shows development after destruction, and present state of the manuscript collection of Oriental Institute:



It should be mentioned that one manuscript codice may contain two or more different works so the actual number of works is much bigger.

Establishing of digital archives and manuscript collections results in multiple benefits for the collections of ottoman manuscripts, from protection and

preservation of data, protection of the original artefacts. The funds of which have been destroyed, with the help of information technologies, digitisation, setting up databases on the web, can now significantly restore or even improve their resources to be used for new projects. Also, the modern scientific achievements in the field of IT and popularisation of online communication that enabled their permanent protection and widespread use.

Conclusion

Digitisation is the broadest presentation of cultural goods and representations of historical sources, and as such is increasingly seen as very important, or we can even say, indispensable method of protection of cultural heritage that is often exposed to damage - from wars to inadequate storage and poor protection. This particularly applies to written documents and materials that are exposed not only to the aforementioned external influences, but also, by their nature, tend to deteriorate faster. Therefore, modern technology is increasingly taking the lead in preservation, protection and promotion of cultural heritage.

The digitisation of various artefacts of cultural and historical heritage and practical work on historical documents is much more than a mere transfer of data from one medium to another. The digitisation of historical documents and manuscripts involves digital processing of manuscripts and is very important for manuscript studies, codicology, or bibliography, but also for different branches of the humanities.¹² This is by no means a job reserved for computer professionals (IT experts) or for trained librarians, but also a great challenge and an important tool for scientists and researchers of social sciences, especially philologists and researchers. Digital cultural heritage (texts, databases, images, sound, graphics, web pages) can exist in any language, in any part of the world, in any field of human knowledge and expression, and as such it is becoming increasingly important and its use in science spread considerably.

12 See: Zdeněk Uhlíř, „Digitization is not only making images: Manuscript studies and digital processing of manuscripts“, *Book Science*, vol. 51, 2015, pp. 148-162. Available on: <http://www.journals.vu.lt/knygotyra/article/view/7895/0> (last visit 08.05.2018.)

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J. Riedlmayer, András, "From the Ashes: the Past and Future of Bosnia's Cultural Heritage", *Islam and Bosnia: Conflict Resolution and Foreign Policy in Multi-Ethnic States*, Editor: Maya Shatzmiller, McGill-Queens University Press, Montreal 2002, pp. 98-135.

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