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REACTIONS OF ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AND TRENDS IN THE PRESERVATION AND PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Abstract: *The regions of Serbia and the Balkan Peninsula are home to a rich medieval cultural heritage; however, there is an increasing effort to destroy and erase both the identity of the people and the culture itself. This issue became particularly evident after the NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999. The aim of this paper is to analyze public opinion in scientific circles regarding the safety aspects of cultural heritage preservation. We performed a quantitative and qualitative analysis of ten scientific papers, five from Serbia and five from Europe, focusing on the notion of cultural preservation in relation to the various strategies offered. We presented the findings in both tabular and descriptive formats. The results indicate different views of scientists in relation to the safety factor of the culture itself. The concluding considerations indicate that the preservation of cultural heritage is directly and indirectly related to social events, and that security itself must be harmonized with social changes in the world.*

Keywords: *scientific public opinion, cultural heritage*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, significant geopolitical and cultural shifts have unfolded globally. The expansion of neoliberal politics eastward, particularly to the Middle East, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Russia, as well as southward to the developing countries of Africa, has sparked identity and social

transformations that have influenced cultural values. This dynamic has led to a clash between neoliberal and conservative power discourses, which is now evident in regions such as Ukraine, Palestine, the Balkans (particularly Kosovo and Metohija), Syria, and Afghanistan.

Similar to the concept of the Big Bang theory, conservative politics and identity are

making a resurgence on the global political stage, aiming to preserve the foundational values of humanism. This ideological clash is often manifested in the destruction of cultural heritage, and in some cases, the neglect and abandonment of culturally significant sites with both national and global importance. Numerous regions around the world, where inter-ethnic and religious conflicts are prevalent, have seen culture marginalized, losing its existential meaning over time. In this paper, we focus on the aforementioned geographical areas, categorizing them under media and scientific perspectives. These areas are divided into sectors A, B, C, and D. Sector A is critically analyzed, with particular attention given to the neglect of ancient and Slavic medieval cultural heritage in the Mediterranean region. Sectors B, C, and D are examined through a scientific public review that addresses the impact of war conflicts on cultural preservation.

- A. Firstly, we will single out poor media coverage and the neglect of cultural heritage at the local level, where cities such as: Herceg Novi, Kotor and Dubrovnik take the lead.
- B. Then, we deal with geopolitical conflicts in the Balkans and the partial occupation of certain countries - primarily the suffering of the cultural heritage of Kosovo and Metohija. After the NATO aggression in 1999 and the arrival of KFOR forces, there followed a series of erasures and destructions of the medieval cultural heritage of the Serbian people in those areas. The scientific community of Serbia and Europe is still dealing with this problem.
- C. We also look at the situation in the Middle East and Central Asia through the destruction of cultural heritage, which traces its origins back to the ancient period. We determine primarily a scientific strategy on how to restore Buddhist statues in Afghanistan, as well as how to save the ancient city of Palmyra in Syria from the scourge of the Syrian civil war. We also look back at Israel's aggression against Palestine in October 2023, where the culture of the Palestinian people was systematically destroyed.

D. The Special Military Operation of the Russian Federation as a counterweight to the neoliberal hurricane began with the attack of the Ukrainian pro-Nazi formations in the form of the Azov and Aydar battalions on the Russian people in Ukraine.

2. A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE PRACTICAL WAY OF PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE (SECTOR A: EXAMPLES OF HERCEG NOVI, KOTOR, DUBROVNIK)

The relationship between public opinion and the preservation of inherited cultural heritage can be examined through various perspectives and rhetorical approaches. Pragmatically, this involves an almost essential integration of historical, architectural, and, more recently, media characteristics within the cultural community. Both historical and architectural values lose much of their significance in the modern era if they do not receive support from digital media. Prominent cultural theorists and communicators emphasize that an effective media strategy for promoting culture can influence the perception of individuals as well as social groups [3].

The question arises as to why certain regions, such as the cities of Herceg Novi and Kotor, are underrepresented in the media and in the scientific community when it comes to the interpretation of their cultural values. The answer can be found in the growing prevalence of commercial content filling the media space. In addition to this, the media is often dominated by reality programs, political shows, and various entertainment formats from foreign productions. Herceg Novi, like other Mediterranean cities, possesses cultural values that date back to ancient times, coupled with a highly desirable geolocation at the very entrance to the Bay of Kotor.

Herceg Novi's cultural heritage should be approached from a multidisciplinary perspective. The cultural significance of the city was discussed as early as the 20th century by Tomo Popović in his work *Herceg-Novu - Historical*

Notes, 1382-1797. In this work, he highlights the city's famous architectural values and its role as a trading counterpart to the city of Dubrovnik during the Middle Ages. However, despite these rich cultural assets, there is a noticeable decline in media promotion focused on the city's culture. Instead, the focus has shifted increasingly towards promoting its economy and tourism offerings. This trend is evident in the 2024/2025 season, when 700 cruise ships are expected to enter the bay, passing by Herceg Novi on their way to Kotor. The question arises: does this intense influx of tourism damage the ecological balance of the bay and threaten the integrity of the region's cultural heritage, which is an integral part of the Mediterranean's historical landscape?

The issue stems from the growing trend of cruise (nautical) tourism, where a large influx of tourists enters the heart of coastal cities directly from cruise ships and passenger vessels. Residents of cities like Kotor and Dubrovnik face a similar challenge. During peak summer seasons, the local population is often pushed out by the flood of tourists, all eager to occupy the central squares in the historic districts, which threatens the preservation of the cities' invaluable architectural and cultural heritage. What strategy can be developed to safeguard this cultural heritage? Below, we outline several potential actions.

- a. The first level involves determining all the key points that, according to studies and analyses, would attract a certain number of tourists in the exactly specified order
- b. The second level requires continuous, creative work through a communicative and visual approach in order to enable simultaneous access to city's natural beauty and buildings of spiritual value (churches, monasteries, cathedrals)
- c. The third level involves the creation of a special PR service that would deal exclusively with the values of cultural heritage, and the mapping of places of historical importance.

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS OF SCIENTIFIC PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH (IN RELATION TO SECTORS B, C AND D)

When performing a quantitative and qualitative analysis of scientific public opinion, we singled out ten scientific works that offer strategies for the preservation of cultural heritage in a multidisciplinary approach. The starting point is the analysis of the situation in sector B, in the area of Kosovo and Metohija after 1999. That was the beginning of the collision of two opposing discourses of power, illiberalism vs post-Marxism.

The East, still not fully revitalized, lacked the strength and determination to support the Serbian people, who were heroically resisting the Western military alliance. The NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (an Orthodox Christian country) contributed to the rise of extremist Islamist groups in the region of Kosovo and Metohija, particularly the so-called KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) terrorist organization. This conflict led to the destruction of numerous churches and monasteries dating back to the Middle Ages. During the riots of 2004 and attacks by Albanian extremists, 30 monasteries and churches were destroyed, and 11 were damaged [5]. The cathedral church of the Virgin of Ljeviška, which is under the protection of UNESCO, was also affected. According to Janjić (2013), one of the strategies for the restoration and protection of the medieval cultural heritage in Kosovo is the survival of the Serbian people in those areas, along with the strengthening of the spiritual vertical dimension of each individual (existing since St. Sava time).

The next determinant of strengthening the collective identity of the people in Serbia and the protection of culture is the creation of specific media strategies that will influence the promotion of Serbian history while strengthening the attitudes of social groups towards the preservation of cultural heritage. Research from 2017 indicates that young people are of the opinion that Serbian media does not sufficiently report on the medieval heritage in

Kosovo and Metohija [11]. Young people also believe that there is not enough media coverage of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244. By modernizing the media through its digitalization that started in 2009, it is possible to ensure better preservation of cultural values in a digital format, which has become the practice of many museums throughout Europe. Likewise, the digital promotion of the cultural heritage of the Republic of Kosovo should also seek its promotion in digital media content.

Finally, when discussing Serbia, an important aspect is the preservation of Serbian cultural heritage abroad [4]. There is a need for stronger cultural ties between Serbia and the countries in the region where Serbian cultural heritage is located, such as Hungary, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republic of Srpska), Greece, and Romania. It is also important to examine how countries like Romania, Spain, Greece, Slovakia, and Cyprus—who have not recognized the Republic of Kosovo as a sovereign state—apply media strategies to address similar issues in their own regions, such as the Basque Country in Spain, Erdelj in Romania, and Epirus in Greece. In this section, we also begin the analysis of foreign academic works, with a continued focus on the territory of Kosovo and Metohija. Following the entry of KFOR forces into southern Serbia, numerous acts of desecration and destruction of cultural heritage, affecting all peoples and religions in the region, were committed.

Italian Army KFOR soldiers observed the destruction of cultural heritage in Kosovo, as testified by Fabio Maniscalco, an archaeologist serving in the international forces in Kosovo, in his work *The Loss of the Kosovo Cultural Heritage*. Through his research, Maniscalco alerted the global academic community to the deliberate attempt to erase a significant part of civilization, specifically the Serbian medieval heritage. In his work, the archaeologist also discusses the influence of medieval Italian culture, particularly from the 12th to the 15th century, on the construction of churches and monasteries in the Metohija region, highlighting its historical significance before and during the Renaissance.

Sector C: The cultural heritage was not spared in other geographical areas either.

In examining the direct clash between neoliberalism and conservative ideologies, this article explores various scientific perspectives on cultural preservation strategies in the context of this ongoing conflict, from the year 2000 to the present. A notable historical example is the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha statues in Afghanistan in 2001 by the Taliban. The motivations behind this act were primarily political, as the Taliban sought to strengthen their position in Afghanistan through media coverage. This destruction suppressed and erased the cultural and theological legacies of other nations. Preserving such cultural treasures requires fostering connections between different cultures, emphasizing tolerance, and

Table 1: Scientific public within the framework of cultural heritage preservation - sector B

1.	Katanić, Z	Digitization of cultural heritage	Proceedings-Sremski Karlovnici, 2020	Increasing the content of cultural heritage on the digital platform, strengthening media promotion
2.	Miljojko, B., & Todorovic, V	Media / cultural heritage	<i>Serbian Political Thought</i>	Strategy for better media promotion of Serbia's cultural heritage Greater media commitment to resolution 1244
3.	Jovan Janjić	Notes below the cross	J.Janjić, Beograd	Strengthening the spiritual awareness of the Serbian people
4.	Golubović. V.	International cooperation	<i>International Problems, 2014</i>	The goal is to preserve cultural heritage outside the country
5.	Maniscalco, F.	Destruction of Serbian culture in Kosovo and Metohija	<i>Web journal on cultural patrimony</i>	Preventing Serbian cultural heritage from being declared Albanian

Table 2. Scientific works dealing with the preservation of cultural heritage in the Middle East and Central Asia

1.	Sabrine, Isber, et al	Palmira	<i>Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology and Heritage Studies</i> 2024	Encouraging the local community An inclusive and integrative process of raising awareness of the importance of ancient heritage
2.	Cobbing, Felicity, and Linda Hulin	Cultural heritage-Gaza	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i> 2024	The awakening of the academic community An invitation to the leading countries of the world to strengthen the sites of cultural importance in the territory of Palestine
3.	Atai, J	Buddhist statues Afghanistan	<i>Tourism Culture & Communication</i>	An attempt to connect the cultural values of different nations, ideologies

understanding the historical contexts in which these events occur.

The invasion of Iraq by Western powers and the occupation of Baghdad followed shortly after. After approximately ten years, the Arab Spring and subsequently the bloody civil war in Syria followed, and the war continues to this day. The strengthening of the IS (Islamic State) in Syria caused the expulsion of the population as well as the destruction of the ancient cultural heritage. There is the case of the ancient city of Palmyra in central Syria. The ancient city was severely damaged by extremist groups fighting against the legally elected regime of Bashar al-Assad. How to protect the ancient heritage in the Middle East? Certain authors consider the encouragement of the local community and the economic development of certain regions to be the key to the survival and preservation of the ancient cultural heritage [9]).

The process of social inclusion, embracing diversity, and ultimately integrating multiple cultures into one sustainable system involves changing individuals' awareness of the cultural importance in which they are raised and develop cultural patterns. The ongoing events since October 2023, marked by the war between Israel and Hamas, have deeply concerned both global media and the scientific community. Scholars focused on Middle Eastern culture emphasize that this is a crucial moment for the scientific community worldwide to intervene and urge an end to the hostilities. They argue that the Palestinian people and their culture face potential extinction due to the conflict, and they call for a return to the fundamental principles of humanism.

Sector D: The beginning of the Special Military Operation marked an open conflict between Russia and Ukraine

The goals of this operation meant demilitarization, denazification, and the neutral status of Ukrainian society (without joining the NATO pact). One of the factors of denazification is the preservation of culture and cultural heritage of all free-thinking people on the territory of Ukraine. This is also discussed by a group of Polish authors, who state that after the end of the conflict, it will take at least five to ten years to restore the basic outlines of the culture and cultural values of both peoples in that area [10]. From a scientific point of view, we ask the question of whether it is possible for Ukraine to survive as a state within the internationally recognized 1991 borders and whether it would even exist as a state in the future. Russian cultural heritage permeates Ukrainian territory. President Putin's speech from February 2022 indicates that 25 million Russians died in World War II so that Ukraine would exist as a republic within the USSR.

He also highlights the role of the Russian people in the creation of medieval Orthodox culture in the Ukraine territory. A parallel can be drawn here between the events in sector B - the destruction of Serbian culture in the area of Kosovo and Metohija and sector D. The beginning of the attack on the FRY was meant as a preparation for the attack of the NATO alliance on Russia (the Russian people in Ukraine). However, the Russian Federation pre-empted the West and started a defensive operation on the territory of Ukraine. In the conclusion of this part, we can state that the

Table 3. Scientific works on the preservation of cultural heritage on the territory of Ukraine, as well as concluding considerations

1.	Shubalyi, O., & Gordiichuk, A.	3 to 5 year culture recovery in the UK	<i>Regional Barometer. Analyses & Prognoses</i>	Strengthening the economic potential of Ukraine after the end of the conflict. (the question remains within which borders Ukraine will exist)
2.	Jokić, M.	Man's relationship to culture	<i>Grafoprint</i>	Recognizing the systemic values of culture A multidisciplinary approach to cultural preservation

emergence and strengthening of neoliberal politics on all world meridians affects the suppression and then the destruction of the culture and cultural values [6].

4. CONCLUSION

A critical examination of cultural heritage preservation, alongside the analysis of the scientific community, suggests that we are only at the beginning of significant geopolitical and cultural shifts both in Europe and globally. Power redistribution is underway, with the formation of new empires and alliances. Considering sectors A and B, it is essential for the Serbian state to develop a targeted strategy to safeguard its cultural heritage. This strategy should focus on media and security initiatives. In sector A, cultural promotion, such as hosting festival events (the city of Herceg Novi, for instance, lacks a cultural heritage festival), can integrate media, business, and economic sectors to support such events and preserve medieval and ancient buildings. Media strategies should be designed to strengthen the identity of the Serbian people and emphasize its spiritual and cultural heritage.

It is also necessary to create a stronger political and cultural connection with countries within the EU that do not recognize Kosovo and Metohija as a state (a suggestion would be

a meeting of our foreign affairs minister with the foreign affairs ministers of these countries every three months, where the problem of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija and the state of cultural heritage would be discussed, aided by a strong media support. We should also insist on a UN report on the quality of the implementation of United Nations Resolution 1244. Strategies for the preservation of cultural heritage can also be found in the security policies of neighboring countries [7]. Better cooperation between Serbian state services and the security formations of neighbouring countries gives us the opportunity to take better care of the heritage outside our borders (sector A). Finally, the security situation in sector D (indirectly also in sector C) may be related to the future status of Kosovo and Metohija within the borders of Serbia.

Russia's victory in Ukraine and the completion of a special military operation might imply that the winner of that conflict will dictate future peacetime relations in existing crisis hotspots (the status of Kosovo and Metohija). Russia can be an advantage on the side of Serbia, which it showed by blocking the resolutions in the UN in 2015, where Great Britain, the USA and the EU tried to declare the Serbian people genocidal in relation to the war events in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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REAKCIJE NAUČNOG JAVNOG MNJENJA I TENDENCIJE U OČUVANJU I ZAŠTITI KULTURNOG NASLEĐA

Rezime: Područja Srbije i Balkanskog poluostrva bogata su srednjovekovnom kulturnom baštinom, ali smo svedoci sve većeg pokušaja uništavanja i zatiranja identiteta naroda i same kulture. Ovo je posebno došlo do izražaja nakon agresije NATO-a na Saveznu Republiku Jugoslaviju 1999. godine. Cilj ovog rada je da se izvrši analiza naučnog javnog mnjenja u vezi sa bezbednosnim aspektima očuvanja kulturnog nasleđa. Metodologija: vršimo kvantitativnu i kvalitativnu analizu deset naučnih radova, pet iz Srbije i pet iz Evrope, sa fokusom na pojam očuvanja kulture u odnosu na različite ponuđene strategije. Rezultate prikazujemo tabelarno i deskriptivno. Rezultati ukazuju na različite poglede naučnika u odnosu na faktor sigurnosti same kulture. Zaključna razmatranja ukazuju da je očuvanje kulturnog nasleđa direktno i indirektno povezano sa društvenim dešavanjima, te da sama bezbednost mora biti usklađena sa društvenim promenama u svetu.

Ključne reči: naučno javno mnjenje, kulturno nasleđe