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CULTURE OF MEMORY AND HERITAGE AS A STRONG CONNECTION – A CASE OF MONASTERY OF THE HOLY ARCHANGELS IN PRIZREN

Abstract

The paper researches monasteries as special “places” that are culture bearers from the Middle Ages – when this type of religious community was established – to the present day. They are strongly embedded in the identity of a nation in a way that they have all characteristics of tangible and intangible heritage. The paper researches a relationship that monasteries have as a point of gathering, culture preservation, customs and tradition, which contributes to building knowledge about the manner of living in past centuries. A case study, which was used to explore the role of monasteries in a collective memory and fostering of Serbian cultural heritage, relates to the Monastery of the Holy Archangels in Prizren which was an important pillar of Serbian medieval culture.

Keywords: Cultural heritage; cultural memory; (in)tangible values; monasteries, Prizren

КУЛТУРА ПАМЋЕЊА И НАСЛЕЂЕ КАО ЧВРСТА ВЕЗА – ПРИМЕР МАНАСТИРА СВЕТИ АРХАНЂЕЛИ КОД ПРИЗРЕНА

Сажетак

Рад се бави истраживањем манастира као посебних “места” који су носиоци културе од средњег века – од када је овај вид верске заједнице установљен - до данашњег дана. Снажно су уграђени у идентитет једног народа тако да имају све атрибуте материјалног и нематеријалног наслеђа. Овај рад истражује однос који манастири имају као тачке окупљања, очување културе, обичаја и традиције што доприноси да се унапреди знање о начину живота у прошлим вековима. Студија случаја, којом се истражује улога манастира у колективној меморији и у његовању српског културног наслеђа, односи се на Манастир Светих Арханђела код Призрена који је био важан стуб српске средњовековне културе.

Кључне ријечи: културно наслеђе, култура памћења, (не)материјалне вредности, манастири, Призрен

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding of biological nature of remembrance and research of mental processes started in the second half of 20th century with a revolutionary achievements of a psychiatrist Eric R. Kandel, which brought new insights into the understanding of human mind and a long-term memory. The past decade has witnessed a development of research of “culture of memory” as a tool for reviving history and its roots can be found in philosophy and psychology. Other disciplines such as history, anthropology and geography accept and build this phrase. Culture of memory is a phrase and it implies a collective memory of hard, dark periods of wars and traumatic experiences, victories or political turmoil. This phrase is more and more used in terms of tangible and intangible heritage as a connection with special past events and experiences. The phrase collective memory was introduced by a sociologist Maurice Halbwachs [1] who recognizes the phenomenon as a collective experience. Identity and remembrance were an object of research of a French historian Pierre Nora [2] who marks the concept of place of memory through those artifacts in which the collective memory is generated and consumed. Both theoreticians believe that certain activities can be found in the same place in spite of contemporary development since they can be understood only through collective memory. Tangible remains, street names, inscriptions, small islands from the past remain for a long time because losing them would be losing tradition, which gives them uniqueness and reason for existence [1]. Halbwachs concludes that there is not only personal but also collective memory that every group experiences in their own manner. The author believes that holy places affirm collectivity, ensure safety, they do not change over time and do not lose their character. The author Dacia Viejo-Rose [3] considers this phrase and improvement of understanding of remembrance and cultural heritage. The approach towards cultural heritage has evolved in the last decades. Remembrance can be defined as a retelling of an experienced event, something intangible, but it is done in space and time [4]. In broader meaning, remembrance as a social construction includes heritage and identity. Phrases that explore a relationship between remembrance and heritage include new words borrowed from other disciplines. In human sciences a manifestation of remembrance caused new phrases that relate to heritage [3]. The author Viejo-Rose states metaphors used for the relationship heritage-remembrance: memory trigger, memory container/storage, memory communicator, spatial marker of memory, anchor for memory, collection, or cache of memories, site of memory. Contemporary researches point out that the collective memory is an essential tool for continuity and heritage preservation [1][5]. Collective memory is a set of historical narratives, beliefs and customs shared by a social group, such as a community, culture or nation, over generations.

The paper explores the importance that the Monastery of the Holy Archangels has today as a social and cultural phenomenon, which serves as a spiritual and tourist center. The paper particularly examines the concept of the “collective memory” as a tool for analyzing the cultural heritage of this Monastery and its significance for a community and local identity. The aim of the paper is to examine the monastery as heritage through tangible and intangible dimension.

1.1. A NOTION OF MEMORY AND HERITAGE

For cultural and historical places it can be said that they are transformed from physical into social place combining topographical characteristics with the collective memory. The sole definition of “collective memory” includes tangible and intangible values as a tool of social and political culture to remember or forget the past and to construct future [6]. Medieval monasteries represent one of the most important elements in connecting a contemporary Serbian identity with the famous medieval past. One can conclude that monasteries are treasuries of experience and tangible traces of remembrance. International declarations on authenticity of heritage emphasize the need for its preservation in all its forms and historical periods. The Nara Document points out that responsibility for heritage and its management, first of all, belongs to a cultural community that created it [7]. The Warsaw Declaration states that documenting heritage through remembrance as an irreplaceable manner of transmitting tradition and historical awareness is an important component in the identity processes [8]. Medieval monasteries were isolated self-sustainable communities surrounded by natural resources that they used for living and production. These communities were very wealthy and powerful since they had large areas of land that they received as a gift. In addition to their religious role, they were very important for medical treatment, education and nurturing culture.

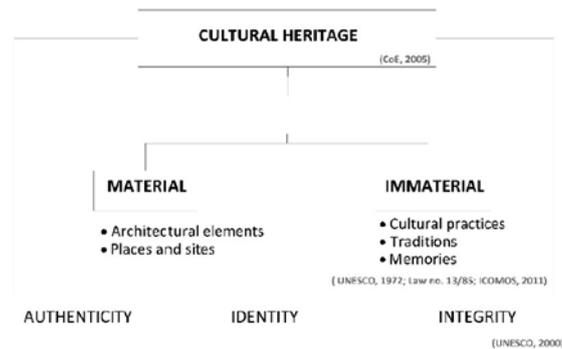


Figure 1. Conceptual diagram on the relationship between authenticity identity and integrity of the Cultural Heritage [9]

It is significant to state that for intangible heritage participation of community that for generations transfers and ensures its continuity is of a great importance. Function also contributes to authenticity and continuity. In order to ensure preservation of tangible and intangible, one must approach cultural heritage from a contemporary angle. All historical places, besides their practical function, possess a social content as well, which is not tangible and can be presented through symbols. Many medieval monasteries received a status of world heritage sites by UNESCO due to valuable architecture and manner of life as a civilization model (Monnet explains that “a symbol is a concrete reality (building, statue, etc.) that transmits something intangible (idea, value, emotion, etc.), in line with that a place of power is by a definition a symbolic place [10]. The author emphasizes that a significant part of power of public authorities and institutions was used for the development of symbolic spaces and they represent a relationship between space, power and identity. Nowadays monasteries represent a strong symbolic places that trigger cultural memory. Many authors believe that places of memory as intangible values should represent a symbol of universality through inclusive approach. Otherwise, some values will be highlighted while others could be excluded or ignored by other group. The author Yadin Dudai, who dealt with culture of remembrance of Jews, believed that “Collective memory“ is a set of historical narratives, beliefs and customs shared by a social group, such as a community, culture or nation, over generations [11]. It can be concluded that many generations preserved their culture through oral tradition long before written record was introduced. Collective memory, as the past that cannot be personally experienced anymore while contemporary individuals remember it, is considered as “historical memory” [12].

2. METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, the paper can be divided into two phases. The first phase includes collection and processing of data, while in the second phase those data were analyzed and valorized based on which conclusions were brought. This phase also includes a list of literature relevant to cultural memory as intangible heritage and identity. A case study is the Monastery of the Holy Archangels in Prizren. Data on tangible heritage as well as a process of reconstruction of the Monastery were received from the sources and publications on archeological research. The process of reconstruction was obtained from the publications issued by the Serbian Orthodox Church and initiatives to restore a monk’s life in the Monastery. Field data as well as testimonies of locals, monks and visitors about damage and reconstruction were very important for the research.

3. THE IMPORTANCE OF INTANGIBLE HERITAGE IN CONTEXT OF RECONSTRUCTION OF TANGIBLE HERITAGE

In a globalized world, usage of “cultural memory” as a tool to protect cultural heritage is a challenge. A concept and understanding of heritage has evolved, which brought changes in the approach to tangible remains from the past. Forms of intangible heritage result from all cultural groups [13]. This heritage is important since it is a part of life and culture of a community and it transfers from one person to another during generations and it can strengthen a feeling of identity and nurturing culture. The Burra Charter states that a place and intangible heritage can include symbolic or spiritual connection with the place even if they are far away from the place. Oral tradition shares collective memory while in practice one often neglects intangible heritage in comparison to tangible. This type of culture can reveal characteristics that are specific and important for the place and

specific community. Montgomery's theory (John Montgomery) is used for connecting the collective memory and feelings for the place, which can be crucial for the place revival. He combines three essential elements: physical space, sensory perception and activities [14]. The place can obtain its meaning by an individual, it can be created from a manner in which it is used, but it can be a reason due to unique characteristics that the place possesses. The best example of nurturing the culture of memory is found in Jews who has passed oral tradition for over three thousand years. It is continuity and ability to keep and reconstruct events from recent or distant past that is manifested in Jews [11]. The practice showed that when a community abides by its customs and traditions, memory can remain even without geographical and socio-political conditions. Memory helps with defining short-term and medium-term tasks for certain activities. A positive example is a reconstruction of the Đurđevi Stupovi Monastery near Novi Pazar, which was built by župan (clan leader) Stefan Nemanja, a father of an important Nemanjić dynasty. The importance of the Monastery and its intangible value as well as respect payed to the Nemanjić dynasty in the collective memory led to involvement of the whole nation in the Monastery's reconstruction. There is an excellent example of the collective memory during rehabilitation of industrial suburbs in Lisbon [5]. Many conventions and charters give recommendations how to adjust the place to the contemporary needs without losing its identity. A function should be a part of its authenticity and it should ensure its continuity and preservation of tangible and intangible heritage. One of those examples is the Spanish royal monastery and palace El Escorial (Spanish: El Real Monasterio de El Escorial). The function of this site is a residence of Spanish kings that includes a monastery, church, royal palace, museum and school. It has been a monastery and a royal palace at the same time, and up to now it has not changed its secular and religious role.

4. THE MONASTERY OF THE HOLY ARCHANGELS IN PRIZREN

In medieval Serbia, a Church was one of the most important carrier of a public function, and monasteries were centers of religious and social life that reflected power of patrons, tangible and spiritual values of that time. This shows the meaning and importance of monasteries as symbols with expressive forms based on systems of values and which express some higher goals. The Monastery of the Holy Archangels in Prizren was established as a legacy of Stefan Uroš IV Dušan (known as Dušan Silni) from the Nemanjić dynasty. It is placed at the left bank of the river Bistrica and it is 3 km away from Prizren, which was a developed medieval city at that time. It was built in the Danube gorge of Prizren's Bistrica that connects Sredska District and Prizren ravine. It is placed at the bottom of the mountain Šar – in the Middle Ages it was called Gora Krsna or Krštena-Krstac where hermit caves existed [15]. The Monastery complex, in the area of 6.5 ha, was built at the left bank of the river Bistrica where the river makes a bend in a small triangle island under the fortification of Višegrad.



Figure 2. Position of the monastery

4.1. TANGIBLE HERITAGE OF THE MONASTERY OF THE HOLY ARCHANGELS

Višegrad or Up Town (Prizrenac) was a medieval Byzantine and Serbian castle, a fortification that kept Prizren ravine from enemies' attack [16]. Within the fortification of Višegrad there was a church dedicated to St. Nikolaj. At the bottom of the Monastery complex there was an early Christian church dedicated to the Holy Archangels Mihailo and Gavriilo, which was written in the Dušan's charter whose remains were found in the floor of the main church [16]. According to assumptions of an archeologist Grujić, the early Christian church was the oldest and the most respected one in the area, which was a reason why the emperor Dušan decided to build its legacy and crypt. It is possible that the original church was important for the people, which was crucial in order to make a decision to build an emperor Lavra because the site occupied small area in the ravine. Definition in the dictionary English "In Orthodox Christianity and certain other Eastern Christian communities, Lavra or Laura is type of monastery consisting of a cluster of cells or caves for hermits, with a church and sometimes a refectory at the center; the term in Greek initially meant a narrow lane or an alley in a city." (definitions.net). The landscape of the ravine with the strong mountain river Prizren's Bistrica contributes to greater recognition of the Monastery and sensory perception of the place. Hence, it can be concluded that the site was not chosen accidentally. Preparation for construction started in 1343 and the construction was done from 1348 to 1352 when rich ornaments, decorations, iconography and mosaic floors were finished. The Monastery was divided into "Down Town" where the Monastery complex was places, and "Up Town", castle Višegrad, and this wholeness was called "Dušan's Town" by the people. These parts were connected by walls in unique defense "pillar" or "tower" [15].

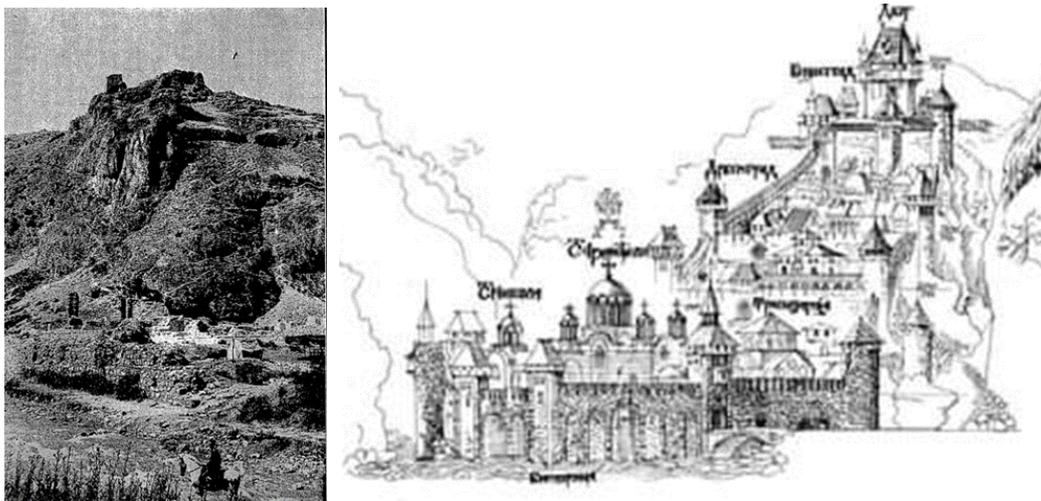


Figure 3. a) Višegrad, at the bottom there are remains of the Monastery of the Holy Archangels after archeological excavation in 1927 – a photograph by prof. Radoslav Grujić;

b) Reconstruction project Monastery of the Holy Archangels prof. Predrag Ristić

According to the research done by Radoslav Grujić, the Monastery complex "Down Town" consisted of: the main church dedicated to the Holy Archangels, smaller church of St. Nikola (parecclesion, Greek: Παρεκκλήσις), dining room, hospital, monks' cells, lodge for rulers, clerk office and other accompanying rooms. Παρεκκλήσις Parecclesion is a smaller church (gr. παρα next to and ἐκκλησία church). In orthodox monasteries there were smaller churches where ceremonies were held like in the main churches but based on the needs when the winter was cold. In the West, these churches are called chapels [17]. Around the Monastery there were walls by the river Bistrica. The entrance to the Monastery led over the stone bridge over the river Bistrica from the North-West side where the main gate was placed.



Figure 4. a) *The Monastery complex after excavation in 1927 [16]*

b) *The Monastery in the middle of the last century [19]*

In the middle of the complex there is the main church dedicated to the Holy Archangels, which is a five-domed building with a basis in the shape of an inscribed cross, with narrowed side naves and a three-part altar apse. According to the reconstruction by Slobodan Nenadović, a twelve-part dome is placed on four arches that held four pillars, and there were also four smaller side domes [15].

In the North nave, there was an emperor's crypt. The façade was made of white and red marble divided by cornice into three zones. This object was well-known for its floor made of white and blue stone tiles, and the church nave was made of stone reliefs where in the fluting there were mosaic tiles which depicted animals (lions, fish, birds) [15]. The smaller church dedicated to St. Nikola was built in the Southern part as a one-nave building with a dome. In the South-West part, there was a dining room with the apse on the Southern side. With its shape of an inscribed cross and new elements, it represents a novelty in medieval monasteries in the Balkans (<https://www.zaduzbine-nemanjica.rs/Sveti-Arhandjeli/index.htm>). Inside the walls, there were lodges, hospital, library and other rooms. The Monastery was very wealthy since it had 93 villages (some of them were in Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia), forests and pastures. Construction of the Monastery happened at the height of economic and political power of the Serbian medieval country, which contributed to creating a rich architectural building. In support of that, there are written scripts about the Monastery's beauty, its rich floors, stone, stone plastic and sculptures as a valuable architectural and artistic work.

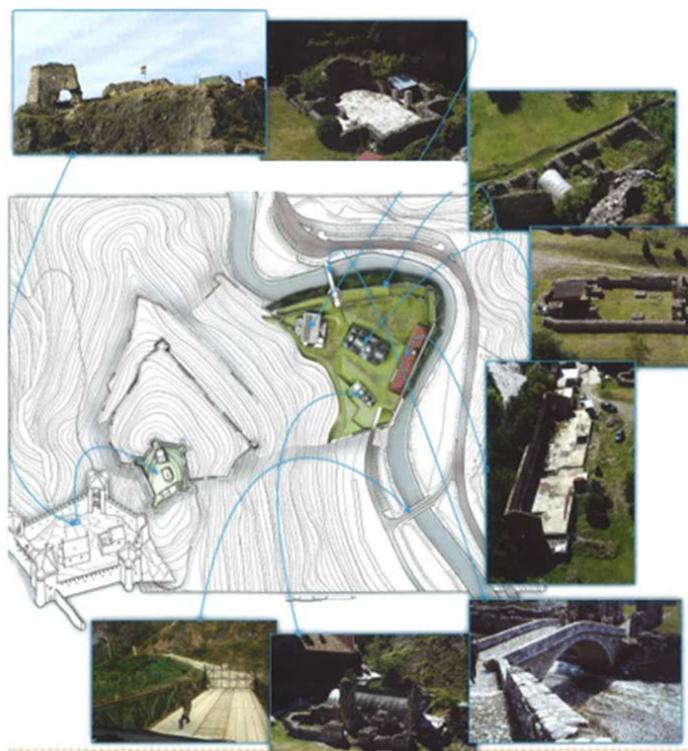


Figure 5. *Monastery complex “Up town” and “Down town” map drawn by mr Nebojsa Gadžić (mr Hebojua Γαγυή, [15])*

At Easter 1346 Stefan Uroš IV Dušan became the first crowned emperor of the Serbian country which raised the Monastery's status, which became the emperor's lavra, and it is one of the most significant and beautiful legacies of the medieval Serbia.

In the original form, the Monastery was preserved for something more than one century because on 9th June 1455 Prizren came under the rule of Turkish authority. The Monastery was robbed and damaged on multiple occasions, however, the monk's life was not interrupted until 17th century when the Monastery was destroyed and its stone and elements were used for building the Sinan Pasha Mosque at the centre of Prizren [18].

Due to the Monastery's location at the bank of the river Bistrica, the place that was abandoned for centuries was covered by river sediment. Famous history and the importance of medieval Prizren as well as the legacy of the emperor Dušan caused interest and pride of Prizren's Serbs. Jovanović writes about the first visit of pupils from Prizren's Gymnasium to an archeological location of the Monastery of the Holy Archangels during 1923. [18]. The pupils and professors of Prizren's Gymnasium started amateur excavation in the Monastery's complex. An official excavation of the Monastery started in 1927 led by prof. Radoslav Grujić when the Monastery's remains were discovered after a few centuries. The research was continued in 1970s of 20th century and 1990s when a decision on the Monastery's reconstruction was made. The reconstruction of the Monastery's lodge started in 1995 with a construction of a lodge and a chapel dedicated to St Nikolaj Žički. Life in the Monastery started in 1998 but due to the war in 1999 Serbs left from Prizren and surrounding places. The Monastery continued its life until 17th March 2004 when the lodge was completely burnt during the March riot. The reconstruction of a smaller lodge was finished on 26th July 2005 when the Monastery celebrated its "slava" and the monk's life was restored. The reconstruction of a smaller church of St. Nikola started, which was temporarily suspended by the authorities from Priština. The Monastery is under the protection of the Republic of Serbia as the cultural heritage of great importance. A new big lodge was reconstructed in 2014 when many believers started visiting the Monastery and cultural events were organized.

4.2. THE MONASTERY OF THE HOLY ARCHANGELS AS A PLACE OF GATHERING – CULTURE OF REMEMBRANCE – INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

In addition to its main function, the Monastery of the Holy Archangels has a complex social content which is used in certain historic circumstances. As a symbolic place it carries something more than tangible value since, at the same time, it is a symbol of culture, gathering and remembering which increases people's emotions and feelings of belonging. Symbolic places are often used for a point of gathering and social interaction. "Analysis of a place's symbolism is semiology of spatial forms towards interpretation network of culturally grounded categories (authority, identity, centrality, legitimacy, monument, public, private, etc.) [10]. The location of the Monastery of the Holy Archangels was visited by the Christians because they knew that an early Christian church had been there. The archeologist R. Grujić had proofs for this. The Monastery had a hospital where people from the surrounding places and villages that belonged to the Monastery came for treatment. From the day of establishment, its role was more than a closed monastery life and it was always a part of public life. According to the church's scripts, after the emperor Dušan's death, there were three important events in the Monastery. The great state's parliament was held in 1356 which discussed further destiny of the Serbian country after the death of the last Nemanjić. The second important event was the state's parliament when the duke Lazar was proclaimed the Serbian ruler. The third important event took place in 1375 when solemn reconciliation happened between the Serbian and Constantinople's church [15]. The plan of the reconstruction of the Monastery in 1998 was for it to become a headquarter of Eparchy of Raška and Prizren and to develop as a centre of publishing [19]. These plans were not fulfilled due to the war in 1999 which resulted in exodus of the Serbian people and due to the March riot in 2004. After the reconstruction in 2005, and especially after the reconstruction of the lodge in 2014, a cultural life was brought back into the Monastery and it became a centre of certain important events. During the recent years certain cultural manifestations have been held (children's folklore festival "Towards Vidovdan", calligraphy summer school, Prizren's spiritual summer school, art colony, etc.). The aim of all these manifestations is to preserve intangible heritage, traditions and customs.



Figure 6. *The Monastery today*

5. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MONASTERY'S RECONSTRUCTION

The Monastery complex was destroyed and reconstructed; however, the characteristics of a place identity, such as its surrounding, remained intact. The architectural identity of the Monastery is present in its tangible parts in the original constructive elements which remained preserved in the parts of floor and remains of decorations. The reconstructed parts of the Monastery are a part of identity as well as the original parts since they coexist in a historic place. The richest symbolism for the Serbian people is found in monasteries as historic and cultural centres where one can find continuous investments from the Middle Ages through construction and later reconstruction. The Monastery's reconstruction is the process of revitalizing memory because that way tangible objects, preserved in stories and written scripts, become visible [20]. Demolition of the Monastery represents tangible deletion of history but it has not been deleted from memory.

For the Serbian community in Prizren, the archeological location always triggered memories of past and famous history through sensory perception. Besides other towns in Kosovo and Metohija, people were especially proud of the status "the emperor's town". The official capital of the emperor Dušan was Skopje, but Prizren was occasionally a capital of the Serbian kings (Stefan, Dragutin, Milutin) and emperors (Dušan Silni and Uroš V Nežak) from the Nemanjić dynasty. The period of the emperor Dušan was especially significant for the Serbian community in Prizren because they consider it as his capital when the Serbian country was the strongest in terms of economy and military. Prizren, placed at the crossroads of important trade roads, ensured good connections with Dubrovnik and Constantinople. Due to its importance, it was called "little Constantinople" in folk's poems and stories. The local people kept stories that Prizren had as many Orthodox churches as there are days in a year. Those stories were backed up by the facts that Prizren eparchy was mentioned in 11th century in the Byzantine period under the competences of the Archbishopric of Ohrid. Negative effect on the Serbian cultural heritage and collective memory was created by forced migration of the Serbian people as well as fights and destruction on their heritage at the end of 20th and at the beginning of 21st century. Different structure of population and religious differences had a negative impact on collective memory. Intangible values, pride and "collective memory" were initiators for the reconstruction of tangible component in the Monastery known as "Dušan's town". This way, "culture of memory" served as the main pattern for tangible reconstruction.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The paper showed a complexity of mutual relationships between tangible heritage and culture of memory. On the one side, culture of memory contributes to collective need to reconstruct and revive tangible heritage. In case of destorying tangible heritage, memory helps a community to intervene and reconstruct its significant objects. Not all objects are preserved in the memory since they do not have the same importance for people. The architectural heritage that is preserved in memory can be rebuilt based on the remains and available data. Intangible heritage, through historic collective memory, reverts a society to referent points in history.

From the other side, reconstruction contributes to reviving the content, activities that create identity which in its roots has culture, tradition, and customs.

The role of the Monastery of the Holy Archangels is not the same as it used to be when it was established, but it is an important point of intertwining of history, culture and important events. It was established at the height of power of the Serbian medieval country, by the Serbian crowned emperor who enacted the most important law for the country's arrangement with the regulations.

All of these historic data helped in preserving its legacy and crypt in the collective memory of people because they triggered pride. The thing that was left of the Monastery's complex were the ruins covered by the land hidden for over three centuries; however the memory of "Dušan's town" placed at the location has never been erased. The collective memory helped in finding the ruins because the great will of the Prizren people contributed to organized research of the location. Finding the ruins helped in reconstructing the visual aspect of the former complex. Nowadays, the Monastery and the cells that were rebuilt are much more modest than the previous design but they are still of a great importance for the referent point for the Serbian community in Prizren. A number of visitors and many cultural events show that the Monastery is a place of gathering, education and the tradition and customs guardian. All places of cultural heritage have a potential to become a place of memory, but only specific cultural heritage has a potential for continuous revival. Sometimes, collective memory as intangible heritage has a greater importance than physical proof at the location. In order to contribute to a wider engagement it is necessary to ensure activities of the Serbian autochthonous local community, which is placed around the Monastery, regarding preserving and managing the location since it ensures its perspective as a referent point in future.

The final reconstruction of the Monastery's life and cooperation with other institutions of culture will enable all preconditions for preservation of tradition in terms of calligraphy, folk dance, knight games, music, making of Prizren's traditional clothes, filigree, etc. Cultural creation entails unity of tangible and intangible heritage, using memory and heritage in order to imagine something new and achievable.

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