

Document: Cultural Heritage in South-East Europe: KOSOVO - Protection and Conservation of a Multi-Ethnic Heritage in Danger, Mission Report, 26-30 April 2004

Church of The Holy Virgin of Ljeviska, 14th century (page 12)

“The massive destruction that has taken place at the church of Bogorodica Ljeviska is more than the consequence of an uncivilized riot; it is an unpardonable attack on the one of the most important mediaeval monuments in the Balkans.

The huge church has been heavily damaged by the various fires that burned within it. These seem to have been started by different methods, including incendiary bombs and Molotov cocktails. The outside of the building shows traces of fire around the windows, which are broken and framed with soot left by the outgoing smoke. Doors and wooden architraves were burned. The open exonarthex did not suffer very greatly in the course of the devastation.

The interior of the church is full of soot and the frescoes appear almost black on every section, wall, pillar and vault of the church's inner surface. The high central dome is likewise polluted with soot. Moreover, the paint surface of the frescoes as a whole - and not simply the worst affected areas - is pitted and marked by innumerable fine cracks, which do not augur well for the future of the decorations.

The most grievous damage is found in the middle of the narthex, where the walls, the wooden ceiling to the level of the upper floor gallery, and the facade of the belfry have been destroyed. The biforium of the nave was also damaged and shows deep cracks and fractures.

The whole belfry and narthex construction would seem to be in grave danger of collapsing, and it is obvious that the roof of the tower and the floor divisions are threatened. The collapse of the ceilings/floors of the narthex gallery and of the belfry located above them has caused extensive damage to the wall paintings on the ground floor of the narthex, especially at the top end beneath the now destroyed wooden ceiling. Parts of the frescoes have become detached and this, together with water seepage, has caused serious loss and damage. The dynastic portraits of the Nemanjics, including the outstanding images of their ancestor St Symeon and the endower of the decorations, King Milutin, have unfortunately been badly affected.

Several fires were started in other areas of the church, in the nave and the sanctuary as well as in the aisles. In the southern aisle at the middle pillar, the famous image of the "Virgin Eleousa with the Christ child nourishing the people with honey", dating from the third decade of the 13th century, has been partially destroyed, with the result that the lower part of the icon surface has been lost and the ground below is littered with small fragments.”

Church of St Nicholas-Tutic's Church, 14th century (page 21)

“The church, which had emerged unscathed from the 1999 war, was damaged during the riots of March 2004. The outside walls, especially around the apse and the lower part of the dome drum, were attacked and smashed by rioters with hammers or similar objects, as well as probably being bombed. The lead cover of the roof was partially removed. The inside, which remained closed during the mission's visit, was set on fire, as evidenced by the demolished windows and the soot surrounding them. According to the report of the Department of Conservation and World Heritage Without Borders, the inner walls have been partly destroyed and the wall paintings are severely fire-damaged. The church pavement was also destroyed. We have no information about treasury items, icons and the iconostasis.

Since it has not been possible to enter the building, the condition of the wall paintings has not been verified.”

Church of St George - Runovic's Church, 15th century (page 24)

“The small church was burned during the March events. The doors and windows have been destroyed. The tomb located on the right side of the entrance door has been desecrated. The interior of the church was damaged by fires and explosions. It is completely devastated. The sarcophagus at the south-eastern corner is desecrated and destroyed. The walls of the church are damaged and have visible cracks; doors and windows are gone. The interior wall paintings do not seem to be smoke-blackened, as one might have expected. On the contrary, they would seem to be completely faded.”

Holy Archangels Monastery, 14th century (page 27)

“The residential buildings of the Monastery, built in the 1990s, are burned down. The chapel where services were held has also been gutted. The brotherhood earned its living by woodcarving, and the woodcarving workshop of the St Nicolas church has similarly been destroyed. The lightweight bell tower has been demolished and the bell is lying alongside the main church. The tomb of emperor Stefan Dušan has been destroyed and desecrated.

The original Byzantine archaeological site (the remains of the walls and pillars) was not damaged. The living quarters of the monastic complex have been substantially destroyed and burned. Only the basic structure, together with some cells and common rooms, have survived. Nearly every floor is damaged or has collapsed”.

Serb vernacular heritage, Prizren, 19th-20th centuries (page 30)

“The whole Serbian quarter of the Old Town of Prizren was devastated by the mob during the riots of March 2004. The houses were destroyed by fire, bomb and other forms of assault, causing particularly heavy damage to wood and brick constructions, the collapse of roofs, and the destruction of all interiors. The walls that remain are in an instable condition”.

Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, 19th century (page 38)

“The Cathedral Church was largely destroyed in the summer of 1999 and only ruins and dome-vaults remained. They were finally razed and removed on March 18th 2004.”

Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, 16th-19th centuries (page 40)

“The church of the Assumption of the Mother of God was completely destroyed during the vandalism of 17-18 March 2004, together with the parish house alongside it, and the terrain was subsequently razed. The only surviving parts are the remnants of the new parish home, which was dynamited”.

Monastery of Devič, 15th -20th centuries (page 56)

“The nunnery of Devič was comprehensively destroyed during the riots of March 2004. Following the evacuation of the nuns, which took place at the last moment, the mob remained in the monastery and cruelly ravaged the whole site. The monastery was completely devastated, all the buildings, including the cells, refectory, storerooms, stables and garages were totally destroyed by fire. The surviving perimeter walls appear most unstable and pose a further danger. The complete rebuilding of these edifices seems more practicable than any attempt to repair them. The main church was badly burned, the interiors gutted and desecrated, the walls damaged and the roofs collapsed. The interior wall paintings of the church were heavily damaged by the heat and soot from the fires. The vandals subsequently daubed disgusting graffiti on the already darkened walls. The damaged wall paintings unfortunately include those in the small annex room in the north-eastern part of the church, where the oldest frescoes were to be found. The pavement

was demolished, tombstones and marble plaques were destroyed, the altar desecrated, the iconostasis demolished, and other treasury items (such as icons) removed.”

Church of St Nicholas, 19th century (page 58)

“The building was not damaged during the war. Most of the church structure was destroyed as a result of the vandalistic acts of 18 March. Only the outer walls, the narthexes and the belfry with its dome are still standing but are heavily damaged. The church was completely burnt out, its interior devastated, the roof collapsed. The cemetery was desecrated as two tombstones were destroyed. The adjoining three-storey priest's house was also heavily fire-damaged. The church was the only functioning one in Priština.

The two layers of wall paintings were also damaged. The first, in tempera, dated from the first half of the 19th century; the second, more recent, was said to be painted in oil (or acrylic).”

Document: “Protection and Preservation of Cultural Heritage in Kosovo - Consolidated Summary”, International Donors Conference organized by UNESCO in cooperation with United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Council of Europe and European Commission, Paris, 13 May 2005

CHURCH OF THE VIRGIN



History:

Built by donation of Jovan Dragoslav in 1315, it was well constructed and decorated with wall paintings. The building was linked with similar works in Macedonia and Greece. A careful intervention was carried out in 1996-97. Systematically destroyed in June July 1999.

Significance:

It was the oldest preserved private founded mediaeval church, and an important place of worship. The fine work and paintings had great artistic value, which unfortunately are now almost completely lost. The remains have historic and archeological value.

Condition:

The church was blown up and the trees cut down. The only parts standing are half of the south apse and the bell tower. The remains are mostly on site and the significant building and fresco fragments are easily recognizable among them.

MONASTERY OF THE HOLY HEALERS



History:

Founded in the XIV century, the monastic church was built around that time but underwent several later alterations. Wall painting fragments from the XVI. Other buildings were added more recently. The school was founded in 1871. Conservation treatment in 1996-97. Gutted and destroyed in June 1999.

Significance:

The monastery was renowned for its school and its collection of icons, books and vessels. The artistic items of the church, the wall paintings, have been destroyed. Historic and archeological value is still present. Important for the local Serbian community.

Condition:

Gutted and destroyed. Trees cut down. Only remains and debris can be found in the site of the church. Monastic buildings are partially damaged.

MONASTERY OF ST. UROS



History:

Originally built in the XIV century over the tomb of Stephan Uros it was abandoned in the XVI century. After renewal it was abandoned and ruined again in 1705. In the XIX century it was rebuilt up to the vaults. It was covered by a concrete roof around 1990.

Significance:

The significance is mainly historical. The building has disappeared. The site can be treated as an archaeological site or as a monument of culture.

Condition:

The church was completely blown up in June 1999. The only standing part of the building is the northern wall. There are remains still on site, which do not seem to have been cleared.

CHURCH OF ST. GEORGE AND CEMETERY



History:

Built as a private endowment of an unknown Serbian nobleman, buried in the Church in 1370. Frescoes were added in the XIV century. Extensive reconstruction in the XIX century. Further interventions during the XX century. Completely destroyed in 1999.

Significance:

The main artistic value was lost. The site is important from a historic and archeological point of view. Religious and symbolic value of the site for the Serbian community, expelled from the area.

Condition:

The church is completely destroyed and the rubble has been unprofessionally removed. The cemetery has been systematically vandalized.

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. GEORGE



History: Built in the 2nd half of the XIX c. on the site of an older church foundation. Richly painted and decorated by Macedonian artists. The iconostasis dated 1720 was brought from San Andrea, Hungary. Not damaged in 1999; set on fire in March 2004.

Significance:

Orthodox cathedral of Prizren, the Chair of the Diocese it is the most important church of the episcopate, and sheltered rich treasures. Despite the damage the site is still recognizable and has important historic, artistic, religious and symbolic value.

Condition:

The church was burned down. Only the outer walls and the columns remain standing. The roof, dome, vaults and belfry collapsed and the interior was gutted. Wall paintings, furniture, icons and other treasures are lost.