

## Old Çarshia (Bazaar) in Gjakova

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### Abstract

I'll present in this manuscript some data relating to the "Bazaar in Gjakova" or "Çarshia e Madhe" and its importance for the development of trade for Gjakova and its surroundings and also for the Albanian lands in general. "The old bazaar" in Gjakova represents one of the greatest monumental complexes not only for Gjakova but also outside its borders. Bazaar of Gjakova was a great economic-, social- and cultural center for the region of Gjakova and beyond it. Within this complex have been developed all possible crafts of that time. Scientific works show that this complex was once a great economic-commercial, social and cultural center in Kosovo and beyond it. In this sense main objective of this manuscript is the analysis of the development of the old Bazaar of Gjakova.

**Keywords:** Old Bazaar, cultural heritage, crafts and craftsmen.

### Introduction

The city of Gjakova is known in written sources since the fifth decade of the XIV century, more precisely since 1348 when it used to belong to the region of Alltun -ihlis with headquarters in Junik (Rizaj,1982, 206).

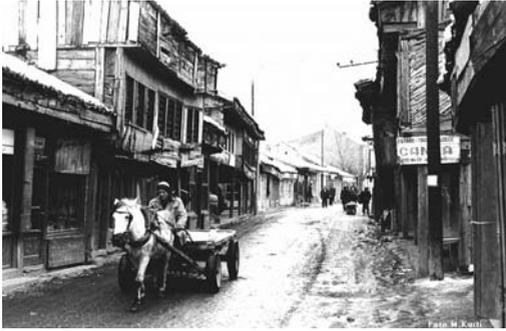
Gjakova as a city has had a favorable geographical position (Hadri, 1974, 13). Its favorable geographical position and strategic importance helped to the fast development as a center of craftsmanship and trade place. Based on the records of 1571, Gjakova was still a village but it had a shopping center (Drançolli, 1984, 27-41). Turkish traveler Evliya Celebi, had written that Gjakova had 2000 houses, two monumental mosques, a Hamam and 300 stores (Çelebi, 1973, 129). Gjakova was transformed into an administrative center emphasizing the development of industry, trade, tourism, education and culture (Komuna e Gjakovës, 2015). Gjakova is known for its large number of cultural and historic monuments.

Old Çarshia (Bazaar) – The complex of "Great Çarshia" is an area consisting of hundreds of shops and other significant cultural, historical and religious objects. Çarshia has been built in the space between the river Krena and Qabrati, dating back to the years 1594-1595 when Bizeban Sulejman Efendi known as Hadim Aga, built a mosque in the last decade of the XVI (sixteenth century). The mosque was built in the area of Jak Vula, so the city at the beginning was named Jakova (Drançolli, 2011, 128). During the late seventeenth century the construction of architectonic and urban buildings in the shape of unique compound began, and this way "Great Çarshia" was established, which took its definitive form in the second half of XIX century. The city developed quickly and the main branches of the economy were: Handicraft, trade, and agriculture. "Old Çarshia" of Gjakova had 1100 stores, which

were filled with various goods, (Rizvanolli, 2009, 5). Documents of the Ottoman Empire from 1887 show that: "The people of Gjakova had affinity to agriculture but their main activity was trade. Main activities were manufactured weapons, silver, Albanian national costumes and some types of silk fabrics. In that time the city had trade connection with many Albanian cities and other Balkans countries. Gjakova exported leather with caravans to Hungary via Belgrade. Regarding the connection of Gjakovar people with artisans of other Albanian cities, writings are found, stating the collaboration in trade of Gjakova with Shkodran houses, such as: Qoba, Suma, Pema, Binaki, Shiroka etc. (Vala, 1972, 172). It should also be stated that Gjakovar's families had close connections with their crafts, a phenomenon that is expressed today in their surnames, such as: Sahatçija, Çarkaxhija, Saraçi, Tabaku, Furra, Baruti, Nallbani, Kamishi etc (Rizvanolli, 2009, 28).

In the location of "Great Çarshia" many objects of great importance for Gjakova and beyond were built. Inside this complex many other premises such as: Teqja e Madhe (Great Tekke), Bektashi Tekke, Tower of Koshi, Tekke of Sheh Ruzhdia, Monument of the League of Prizren, Tower of Sulejman Vokshi, the Tower of Avdullah Pasha Dreni, Clock Tower, Hammam were built (Drançolli, 2001, 28). Some bridges worth mentioning were built, that included the Bridge of Islam Beg with four archway semi-circular stones and discharge arches built in the XVIII century, the bridge of Tabaks with nine archway stones and with discharge arches from XVII century, the bridge of Terzive with eleventh archways stones and the bridge of Taliq from XVIII century. Gjakova's Bazaar is estimated among the most valuable historic and cultural treasures of Kosovo. By the year 1900 1000 different enterprises were situated. Urban entirety of "Old Çarshia" contains 525 important objects and is divided in two parts: "Great Çarshia" and "Small Çarshia". They used to connect between them through an affluent system of bridges, which were illuminated with lanterns creating a unique market. According to Jastrebovi 11 bridges were built on the river Krena, while 3 bridges were built on Llukac river (Stefanovic, 1904, 179). The urban point of Bazaar represents a vivid example of the urban – oriental plan that can inspire every architect, consisting of a museum dressed with a mosaic of different handicrafts, a great school laboratory. The Bazaar (Çarshia) represents an architectural school with beautiful folk and construction skill ranging from fine details up to different environments (Rizvanolli, 2009, 34). Çarshia was burned twice by the Serbs since its construction in the fifteenth century in 1918 and 1999 (Murati, 2012). During its history it has experienced many challenges and its rapid development has been interrupted by the violent destruction of the Bazaar (Çarshia) during the Balkan wars in 1912. During the Kosovo war in 1999, Çarshia was destroyed and many enterprises, NGOs and the Municipality are investing to restore normal life and development of traditional activities, but there are still some parts not yet restored.

The complex of Bazaar (Çarshia) is under the protection of Cultural heritage law since 1955. After the Kosovo war it does not have the power and the economic role it had once. It is worth noting that Bazaar (Çarshia) was transformed lately in a tourist destination full of bars.



Bazaar before the Kosovo war  
1998/1999

Bazaar after the war 1998/1999



Photo: Shkëlzen Rexha '99



Bazaar today

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