

## Cultural and heritage values as a potential for the development of the tourism in Peja -Republic of Kosovo

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### Abstract

Peja's greatest asset are its values inherited from the past centuries. These values are manifested through perfect architecture and attractive urban structure on the one hand, as well as a popular tradition that is very special as value on the other. Peja's cultural and historical heritage is a rare and colorful attraction which the whole of Kosovo is identified and proud with.

Peja is a place where different cultures and peoples meet, various civilizations that have contributed today to this city being of great value to the whole of Europe in terms of cultural and historical past and heritage. In this work we are focused on analyzing cultural and historical factors as a significant potential for tourism development and promoting the country's values as a tourist destination.

Archaeological sites, mosques and masjid (small mosque), hammam and towers, as well as churches are distinguished as material assets, while festivals, costumes, kitchen and similar ones as intangible heritage which all those are some of the main features that contributed to the development of tourism as an economic activity in this part of Kosovo.

The research aim of this work is to identify all positive and negative factors that can affect and have the potential to develop cultural tourism of the Municipality of Peja, and on this basis to determine the further course of action so that all natural and anthropogenic values in this place can be utilized and to improve the situation with the tourist activity of that part of Kosovo.

This research should help improve performance in the tourism and development sector of destinations in the Peja region known for their cultural heritage in order to first provide guidance on creating and implementing successful and effective strategies, to present and exploit cultural heritage for tourism development.

**Keywords:** Culture, heritage, values, tourism, Peja.

### Introduction

A feature of the modern world is mass tourism, involving a huge number of subjects (organizers, travelers, institutionalized providers of tourism services, receptive population and more) which now has already become one of the main elements of modern times. Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing sectors in the global economy and has significant economic, development and social effects, whether they are positive or negative.

The importance of tourism as a source of profit and employment and as a major factor in the balance of payments of many countries attracts great attention. Governments, private sectors, regional and local authorities and other subjects involved in international trade and economic development recognise the role attached to tourism. If barriers to travel world are eliminated or significantly reduced, international trade in tourist services would increase dramatically.

Tourism is defined as a wide service sector with a wide range of simple and complex goods and services that support it. Tourism is transformed into a major sector of the economy by generating financial incomes and creating new jobs. Tourism is also expected to develop the country's economy, it contributes to increasing national income, employment, reducing the trade deficit, strengthening the economic development of the country's peripheral regions, intensifying the operation of companies to produce products and offer services that should meet tourism needs in a direct or indirect way.

Tourism development not only achieves economic goals, but also other social objectives, therefore, new jobs created by tourism development in one country's regions, where other economic sectors have little or no chance of development affect the restriction of internal and external emigration, and narrow the effort that exists in population income, especially in urban centres and in areas where tourism is developing.

Tourism offers an opportunity to protect and preserve cultural heritage as well, as the income generated can be reused for initiatives to further operate and survive in the economy for a longer period of time. Such cultural heritage must be managed with special care because the main goal is constant growth and development in a world that is continually becoming more global. Only the right partnership between the communities, the tourism sector and the cultural-historical heritage created on the basis of the aspirations and values of all participants can ensure survival in many respects.

The assets of cultural resources and traditions that exist in the world, is one of the main motives for tourists to travel who want to engage and get acquainted with undiscovered places and new cultures and experience new things in the field of culture, arts, crafts, everyday rituals and traditional cuisine.

Encouraging a conscious way of experiencing cultural heritage for tourism purposes means creating new jobs, reducing unemployment, preventing the migration of the rural population, as well as expressing a sense of pride among the local population and the tourists themselves. Based on the data available to the Municipality of Peja, we can conclude that tourism in this municipality has great potential for development and is also an attractive place for both domestic and foreign guests. In addition, we will try to show the most important tourist values of this municipality.

### **Cultural and heritage values as a potential for the development of the tourism**

Peja is an important historical center and as a settlement date back to the time of the ancient Illyrians as a very important center and city of Ancient Dardania of that time. A number of archeological sites and objects have been found at this location, indicating the fact that Peja was an important administrative unit of the Dukagjini Valley.

From ancient times until the middle of the XV century, Peja extended to the place called Gradina where you can see the remains or rubbles of ancient Peja, from the place called the "Sari Saltek" turbine where today is the battery factory to the train station, west to the Kale.

Throughout history, Peja had several names, for example, in the time of the Illyrians, Peja was called Siparantum, and in the Middle Ages it was called Peja (Peka, Penza, Forno). It is interesting to mention the ethno-cultural changes and influences of Peja throughout history, starting from the old buildings of the Illyrians, Romans, Byzantines, Slavs and Ottomans and the like.

Peja has not yet made sufficient use of these potentials and comparative advantages, as well as resources such as pedological soil composition, climatic conditions with Mediterranean climate influences, hydrological conditions for agricultural development and natural conditions for the development of tourism activities and tourism.

Kosovo's cultural tourist attractions are a significant tourist product for potential tourists to meet their spiritual needs and desires. The main sources and resources of cultural tourism in Kosovo are:<sup>1</sup>

archeological sites and places,

- architecture (remains popular buildings),
- museums and galleries,
- art,
- festivals,
- songs and dances,
- religious rites and pilgrimage,
- handicrafts,

From a tourism perspective, there may be other cultural resources such as:<sup>2</sup>

- tangible cultural values,
- daily cultural activities,
- special events with special historical character,

The uniqueness of the culture is based on the unique history, architecture and tradition of the country. These factors are unique, so they make the country or region special and interesting for attracting tourists, as an element in the formation of sustainable tourism.

Intangible and tangible cultural heritage is contained not only in the names of streets, language and expressions, folklore and stories, tools, objects, crafts and cultural space, but also in communities or groups of people and individuals known throughout the country. That cultural heritage has been passed down from generation to generation through the centuries, and today a new history of the country is being written.

The protection, preservation and display of Kosovo's cultural heritage is part of the strategic and political directions of the Republic of Kosovo, especially the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports within the Government of Kosovo. Institutions from the central and local level consider the cultural heritage as an integral part of special importance for the state.

To co-ordinate cultural heritage protection activities, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and

<sup>1</sup>Richards, G. (2005). Cultural Tourism in Europe, Atlas, p.23.

<sup>2</sup>Cook, J.Yale, J.J. Marque (2005). Tourism-The Business of Travel, Prentice-Hall, London, p.374.

Sports, in co-operation with the European Commission Liaison Office in Pristina and the Office of the EU Special Representative, has established a system for exchanging information on Kosovo's cultural heritage.

Kosovo is a rich country in terms of cultural heritage, there are countless places that reflect the historical heritage which can be found in the southern and western parts of Kosovo, such as Peja, Gjakova, Prizren. In this section we can mention: The Small Fortress, Two Towers, the mills, the bridges, the mosques and churches of the Orthodox and Catholic faith, the castles and many archeological sites that show the most important aspects of the historical assets of Kosovo.

The city of Peja is known in history as an important economic, cultural and diplomatic center, with its 10 archeological zones, 12 monuments of the Christian faith, 23 buildings of Islam, 102 towers, 1 Bektashi turbe and 9 mills. Peja is an important tourist center not only in Kosovo, but also in the region.

The Patriarchate Complex of Peja, the Old Bazaar, the Bazaar Mosque, the Fountain with many craft shops, the Old Town Mill, the Yashar Pasha Dormitory Complex, the Hadji Beg Bath and the Tower Complex are just some of the cultural potentials you can see in the city of Peja<sup>3</sup>.

Peja is also known for the cultivation of fine art, because it organizes many types of cultural events with a traditional character, such as the Children's Song Festival "Hareja" and the dance festival that brings together every year all young singers and dancers. The literary meetings "Azem Shkreli", the Craft Fair that is held every September, the exhibition "January Flames" and others are some of the many cultural activities that are known throughout Kosovo.

If you add to all this the rare natural beauties of "Bjeshket e Nemuna" with the famous ski center in Rugova, the river "Drini i Bardhë", the cave near Radavci, the National Park and other places in the region, it can be said that the Municipality of Peja has real potentials and resources for becoming an attractive tourist destination in the country and beyond.

## Monuments of culture

Peja is a city of culture and art, and today certain crafts such as blacksmiths, saddlers and similar ones still function in parallel with other traditional handicrafts such as making filigree according to the requirements and tastes of the citizens, where the main feature of Peja is the combination of different historical buildings and monuments of different times.

The cultural assets of Peja is "woven" with history, one of the most important cultural monuments of the city of Peja are: Old Bazaar, Bazaar Mosque, Peja Patriarchate Complex, Fountain with many craft shops, the old town mill, the Haxhi Beu Hamam and the tower complex are just one part of the potential of the cultural and material heritage that can be seen in the city of Peja. In this city you can still find shops that process silver, copper and iron, tailors, blacksmiths.

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<sup>3</sup>Kolë Staka (2003). *Analiza e shkaqeve dhe tendencave të pavolitshme në zhvillimin e turizmit në Kosovë në periudhën e pasluftës*".

The old city market is a zone of special cultural significance and it is known for its impact on the economic development of the city, hence this cultural monument and the identity of the city of Peja come from. The whole bazaar was built during the Ottoman Empire in the 14th century, built in four parts: the Grand Bazaar, the Long Bazaar, the District and the Fountain Bazaar. At that time 960 shops were built where many types of crafts operated, and today there are still such shops that continue to operate traditional handicrafts such as filigree, processing of copper products, carpentry and similar crafts.

Bayrakli Mosque in Peja, as a cultural monument belongs to the category of "architectural monument" by Decision No. 1441/55 of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo. This mosque was built in 1471 in the name of Sultan Fatih Mehmet Khan, and in 1943 this mosque was burnt down by the Italian fascist forces, but managed to survive in the war of 1998-1999. The Bajrakli mosque was built in the core of the Old Bazaar where in the past this place was an open market as a feature of Albanian cities. The donor of the construction of the mosque is Mehmet Fatih, who also financed the construction of the Great Mosque in Pristina.

The Bayrakli Mosque in Peja consists of a prayer hall, a hallway and a minaret. The prayer hall is covered with a dome (qubba) above the obligatory system as a symbolic representation of the vault of heaven. The hallway is also covered with three proportional cubes. Inside the prayer hall, mirob, mimber and makfil stand out. The interior is highlighted with mural images of the plant world with geometric figures and quotes from the Qur'an.

This mosque is also characterized by its plasticity, small sculpture and profiling of the main entrance and windows. The mosque also includes the Muslim cemetery of the city's celebrities such as Haxhi Zeka and Ali Pasha Gucia. These tombs also have their own decorative signs (sights). The mosque was burned by Serbian military forces in the 1998-1999 war, and was immediately restored with architectural elements, paintings and sculptures.

The exact date of the founding of Peja's Patriarchate is not known, but it is assumed that it is 1235 in memory of St. Sava, when he was still alive and when the place had its own "metoh" (property managed by the monastery) of the monastery Zica, then capital of the Serbian Orthodox Church-SOC.

The head of the church, Arsenie I (1266) built the church of the Holy Apostles, and at the same time wished the throne of the SOC to be in a safer place and closer to the capital of the country and shortly afterwards in 1250 the head decided to create the Patriarchate of Peja.

The head of the SOC, Nicodemus I, built the church of St. Demetrius in 1320, north of the first church. Ten years later, in 1330, his successor, the Head Danilo II, built a third church south of the first one called the Holy Mother of God Hodegetria and next to it there is another small church for Saint Nicholas.

In front of the three main churches is a monumental narthex with a tower. In the time of the Head of the SOC, Joanakie II, around 1345, the church of St. Demetrius was designed and decorated with frescoes, so in the time of Stefan Dusan (1331-1355) the Pec Patriarchate with patriarchal status was erected.

During the 14th century, small modifications were made in the church of St. Apostles,

and a century before and after the 17th century, all the patriarchs and the heads of Peja were buried in the courtyards of the churches of Peja. From 1459-1463, after the death of Arsenius II, the patriarchate was closed until 1555 when it was restored by Suleiman the Magnificent under the council of Sokol Mehmed Pasha, while the Bulgarian dioceses were placed under the jurisdiction of Peja.

At the beginning of the 18th century, and especially during the Austro-Turkish War of 1735- 1739, the patriarchate became part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople so that the Pec Patriarchate and its dioceses could fall under the main patriarchate.

In 1737, a Greek priest was placed in the leadership of the Peja Patriarchate at the initiative and intervention of Alexandros Mavrokordatos. In the years that followed, political initiatives emerged that resulted in the pursuit of Serbian priests from the Patriarchate of Peja, and immediately after that the Patriarchate of Peja was abrogated in 1766.

Haxhi Zeka's mill is an industrial heritage complex belonging to the second half of the 19th century and was built with the help of the Austro-Hungarians of the time. The building consists of a mill and granery. At the time it was built, it was the highest three-storey building, with a facade of stone, bricks, semicircles and frames.

Haxhi Zeka's mill is the first mill of Kosovo and in the region and beyond because it has more advanced technology than other mills. First, the mill worked on water, then by electricity. This is the first industrial facility in Peja and thus, the industrial production and development of the economy of the entire region began at the time, where the flour was produced.

After Hazhi Zeka's death, the inheritor of the mill became his grandson Yashar Pasha and in 1997 the facility was under the state protection. During the 1998-99 war, the mill was burned twice and restored many times: once in 2004, the part of the mill and in 2016 part of the granery. The Old Hammam, The Great Hammam or Kurshumli Hammam as known by the inhabitants of Peja, i.e. today as Hammam of Haxhi Bey, is an old cultural monument that is built by Hazhi Bey as a donation to the citizens and is one of the most important objects preserved to this day, with elements of Albanian ethnicity and of original form and authentic for time, and as such an object, this hammam is a real rarity for nowadays.

Hamam (turkish bath) as public buildings took a significant place in albanian architectural buildings, but climatic and atmospheric conditions, man as a factor and transformations of the lifestyle of the citizens of this city influenced this building and many others today to be counted on one hand. The hamam as buildings were spread throughout many cities during the Ottoman Empire. Hamama as public buildings, although changed over time, still occupy a significant place in the cultural and historical heritage of the Albanian people today.

Haxhi Bey hamam in Peja is a monumental building of public and social character built when the city of Peja was under the Ottoman Empire, namely, when the city was under the rule of the Sanxhak of Dukagjini (1462-1485), but in the second half of the 15th century it was also built under the rule of Haxhi Bey.

It should be noted that Hazhi Bey was the first Albanian who accepted the Islamic faith. This monumental building has its own architectural-functional aspect according to a

particular scheme and owns all the envisaged spaces for this type of public building. This building has several parts: an entrance space, a dressing room (a prespace of shower), intermediate room, bath, a main steam bath, a massage room and rinse, a space for water tanks and a stove, as well as canals under the floor for warming the spaces with the help of the stove. From a general point of view, Haxhi Bey hamam is distinguished by three features: a place to prepare for bathing, main space and warehouses, i.e. water tanks. The tower of Zenel Bey was built in 1870 and is considered the oldest tower in Peja. It is the tower of Zenel Begoli (Zenel Bey), known as Peja's Bey, by Mahmut Begolli's family (founder of Peja).

Although in Kosovo's last war twenty years ago, when this tower was completely destroyed, Zenel Bey's heirs financed the restoration of the facility of cultural importance with their own financial means. The tower consists of three floors, where each floor has its own characteristics, and the entire building is made by masters from Dibra who were woodworkers (carpenters).

Tahir Bey's tower is a house of the most beautiful type of architecture in Peja. This building is a cultural monument built by Albanian masters in 1800, where this building was built for the first time in the city centre (between the municipality's building and the post office), while in 1960 it has been moved to another location, in today's square known as Haxhi Bey Square.

This old house has its own architecture and function in the structure of space and composition and looks a lot like the medieval houses of the city of Peja. This type of building is characterized by a roof of processed wood, harmonious windows and an upper floor-terrace. The most beautiful costumes or traditional clothing are those of Peja's women, especially shirts, scarves, belts and socks, while men have belts and socks. Besides to such clothing, the textiles from which they are made are interesting, especially the part that refers to the weaving technique, composed of multiple phases, many colors, motifs and the way costumes are presented, especially from women who are artistic in drawing and painting.

In the villages of Rugova region you can still meet people who proudly wear the traditional costume, while in the National Museum and in other galleries they are exhibited as national costumes of Peja made in a traditional way. All other features and characteristics of Peja's traditional costumes can be viewed closely in the Ethnographic Museum in Haxhi Zeka Square.

### **Art and culture**

Peja is a cultural centre of many festivals, museums and galleries. The most popular objects include the Archaeological Museum, the Ethnographic Museum, and as the city's most famous festivals are: a festival of songs for children "Hareja", the International Festival of Monodrama, the Guitar Festival, the Ski Races in Bogë, literary meetings "Azem Skrelli" etc.

The archaeological museum houses archaeological inventions of the region and the city from different historical periods and this museum is located near Haxhi Zeka Square.

The ethnographic museum is set in the premises of Tahir Bey's guest house, as one of

the most beautiful buildings of the city of Peja. In this museum are found more than 120 exhibits of national costumes, tools for work, various weapons depicting the rich history of this zone. There is also jewelry and decorations of various kinds, craft, as well as the traditional costume of Rugova and Dukagjini.

The International Guitar Festival is held every year from 22 to 26 June, showing various activities, concerts, workshops, master classes and international competitions for all ages by category. The festival is organised by the Kosovo Guitarists' Association.

The international film festival for mountaineering "Reel Rock Tour" of American origin is very important for the development of cultural tourism in Peja municipality. The festival is organised by Peja's Spider Club where are shown films with different content for the development of winter sports, adventure, hiking and others.

The traditional "Azem Skrelli" literary meetings event is held every year from 23–24 May, where literary vigils are gathered from all places where Albanians live. This festival or event aims, among other things, to attract young writers and poets.

Rugova's Folk Games are very old folk games held in mid-August every year and are characteristic of the Rugova area where the games show the folk traditional cultural assets, laws and customs of this mountainous place. It also highlights physical skills, men's fighting games, humorous games, parties, songs, dances and folk ethnocultural rituals and customs.

Rugova's traditional folk games have a cultural and sporting character, and above all the national character and purpose of organizing these games is to create the future and not to forget the past.

The children's song festival "Hareja" is organised by the Peja Municipality's Department of Culture, Youth and Sport and is held every year on June 1st, on Children's Day. Ski competitions in Bogë are held at the ski centre in the village of Boga, from early December to March. There are ski trails where Kosovo-level matches are held, because there are excellent skiing conditions.

The International monodrama festival "MonoAkt" has the character of an international drama competition and is held every year from 16 to 22 April, and the aim of this festival is to conceive love for the monodrama and prepare new young actors.

## **Strategic planning of the development of tourism in Peja**

Peja Municipality is aimed at improving the lives of its citizens, economic and social well-being, quality education, tourism development, support for cultural and sports activities and efficient administration. In this regard, a Strategy for Local Economic Development 2013-2017 was developed in Peja municipality and within those projects an SVOT analysis was carried out to detect all relevant factors that affect the development of tourism in this municipality<sup>4</sup>. The SVO analysis aims to show the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and risks that arise in the tourism development phase in a particular place or destination:

Strengths:

- There is a developed tourist infrastructure (hotels, restaurants), as well as several facilities that are being built at this time,
- It has a special cultural heritage that can be seen from old buildings, houses,

religious objects of different religions,

- Tradition and culture are preserved with great "jealousy",
- There is great co-operation and respect among communities,
- Biodiversity and management with the country is at a high level,
- Albanians, Bosnians and Montenegrins have a strong preserved cultural

heritage,

- There are several tourist information centers, Weaknesses:
- Non-marking of paths,
- Poor regional road infrastructure,
- Lack of funding for sustainable development projects for cultural monuments and historical

<sup>4</sup>Strategjia për zhvillimin ekonomik për Komunën e Pejës, 2013 – 2017.

facilities for which there is a risk of destruction,

- Destruction of old townhouses in Peja's historic centre, Opportunities:
- Opportunities for tourism development in several zones of Peja,
- Infrastructure regulation, especially private, for sustainable development of settlements,
- Preservation of the identity of villages and technical infrastructure,
- Improvement and management of areas of public and historical buildings, greenery of villages and the like,

Risks:

- No infrastructure development planned, destruction of natural resources as a base for tourism development,
- Irresponsible behaviour of institutions for the protection of cultural and historical monuments,

## Recommendations

The integration of cultural heritage into Peja's socio-economic development is a good opportunity for sustainable development of the zone and therefore special attention must be shown from both the institutions and the public and private sectors, as well as scientists and researchers. At the end of the work we will try to show several recommendations such as:

- One of the main things in this part is to define this region as a priority in development, i.e. the preparation of strategies and plans from the relevant institutions for the development of cultural tourism. In this regard, a full inventory of the potential of cultural heritage from a material and intangible aspect is needed. This will not only sensitize the local community to show values, but will serve as a guide for decision-makers on issues in the fields of social, economy and culture,
- The co-operation and active participation of stakeholders, users and profiteers in the preparation and implementation of projects and strategies for the development of cultural tourism would increase efficiency for the entire zone and communities,
- In addition to investing in new modern tourist facilities (hotels, restaurants, bars and more), training of employees who are part of the services offered by tourist units is also needed,

- Houses for tourists, especially cultural centers, should be encouraged to advertise their traditional products so that all tourists can look at what is on offer, especially for traditional cuisine that is characteristic of all areas
- Promoting cultural heritage with the help of organising parties, events, festivals and fairs by local businesses will mean longer stays for tourists, and as a result increased costs for tourists,
- The local community should be more actively involved in organising cultural events in the region and beyond by displaying its traditional products.

From mentioning above, Peja Municipality can be considered a tourist destination in development, and as a result of the promotion of tourist products, the image of the destination is relatively positive, but this image should be strengthened even more through the preservation of cultural heritage, coordination of the public and private sectors and the promotion of real tourist products. Therefore, it is very important that any local unit that manages the cultural potential of its region to draw up plans for good governance in the function of tourism.

### Conclusions

Tourism is a significant factor in the country's economic development and growth over a long period of time. Since the importance of the effects and impacts of tourism brings with it, economic impacts have had the utmost importance for the general development of the state, and therefore can be very easily determined from the volume and quantity aspect, as well as the interdependence that exists in other effects and influences.

Based on the evidence made for cultural heritage, it can be concluded that the Municipality of Peja has significant potentials from material and intangible cultural heritage that can be integrated into the socio-economic development of the municipality and thus the state.

The most important monuments of material culture are prehistoric settlements, religious objects of Islam and Christianity, along with intangible culture such as folklore, crafts, tradition, laws and customs, holidays, lifestyles and the like, which, in addition to the values of national, regional and local identity, represent a significant potential for the development of cultural tourism. Through various attractions, festivals and gastronomy, this area can benefit from an economic, social and cultural aspect, the attraction of tourists and their stay.

However, tourism development is in the initial phase, and the integration of cultural and historical heritage into the development of the economy and society can be considered a good opportunity for sustainable development of the entire area.

It is the cultural and historical heritage that causes the number of tourists and visitors to increase each year in a row, which also means improving the infrastructure of tourist products and services in accommodation, nutrition and other services.

This work is a step forward in the field of the study of cultural and historical heritage from the point of view of their involvement in the socio-economic development of the municipality and the state. It would be good for future research to address the broader analysis of the economic, social and cultural effects arising from cultural heritage, and

in the function of tourism development in general and cultural tourism in particular.

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