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Book Review

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**The Importance of Rare Collections
Inter-municipality Library Prizren**
Prizren, 2009
178 pages
ISBN 9789951862288

"It is pointless to talk about a civilization without making its connection and the culture of the book. And, if observed closely at all stages of birth and fall of civilizations, it depends on the fate of the treatment of the books "

Every nation begins its own identity with its first writings, and in this way, also the library as a place of writings, manuscripts, old and new books continues with the recognition of these writings which are found in various forms .

Societies that have managed to preserve and use their written values, are known as societies of rich cultural heritage and tradition. A concrete example is the city of Prizren - a city of tradition, the city where for the first time were established the libraries of various types as religious ones in 1513 (the Library of Suzi Qelebiu) as well as the public ones in 1812 followed by school libraries. The ancient tradition of Prizren was and continues to be preserved in various books. Every nation who knows how to preserve and write its own story, shall also know how to transmit it to younger generations. If all nations would have written from the beginning their history, then many things would have been presented in one another form, in a more appropriate form. In this case, the memory that would be borne among generations would be much brighter. How important is the book and history for a nation, we will use the saying of a philosopher.

"The first step in liquidating a people is to erase its memory. Destroy its books, its culture, its history. Then have somebody write new books, manufacture a new culture, invent a new history. Before long that nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was".

Edward R. Murrow

Based on above given facts, we, as a library staff considers that it as our duty and obligation that besides enriching the library with new books, also to explore the existence of old books, rare collections; such as - Manuscripts, valuable documents, periodicals, music collections, map collections, museum collections, archives, photographic document collections, microfilms, etc. In this case, we will mainly dwell on old publications, rare manuscripts and books.

Since the beginning of the publishing activity, we have started with the research of various sources in Prizren and surroundings, starting from mosques as institutions of great religious importance, continuing with the churches, private libraries which preserved a great culture and tradition with jealousy. I am using the word "jealousy" considering their love for these books. From the beginning of this project, we found different books, manuscripts, even books published in different languages, such: Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Serbo-croatian etc.

These books were in different condition, some of them were good preserved, but there were also cases in which was needed the conservation. Also the content of these books was various, there were religious books, medicine, geography, biology, mathematics books or different stories.

At the beginning, we encountered problems, since the citizens were not sure about the purpose of the project, thinking that the books will not be turned back, in some cases they even demanded material compensation. However, there were also cases when they express the willingness to donate their books to the library of Prizren. Most of the manuscripts were found in the library of Gazi Mehmet Pasha, also known as "Madrasah of Bayrakli Mosque" established in 1563-4. Even today, in this library could be found over 50 books in manuscript, of

religious, scientific, philological content. Some of the manuscripts of this library are masterpieces of Arabic calligraphy and oriental decorative art. Also included in this group is the copy of the Quran, from the year 1312, which represents the oldest copy of manuscripts in Kosovo.

In 2006, our library started an action of identifying the materials which were in possession of the citizens. As a result, we published the first summary of "Rare Books", in which were included 88 rare books and manuscripts, magazines, newspapers, correspondence of different personalities. In this compilation are presented: scanned cover, short content, publication, author, and the person who owns it.

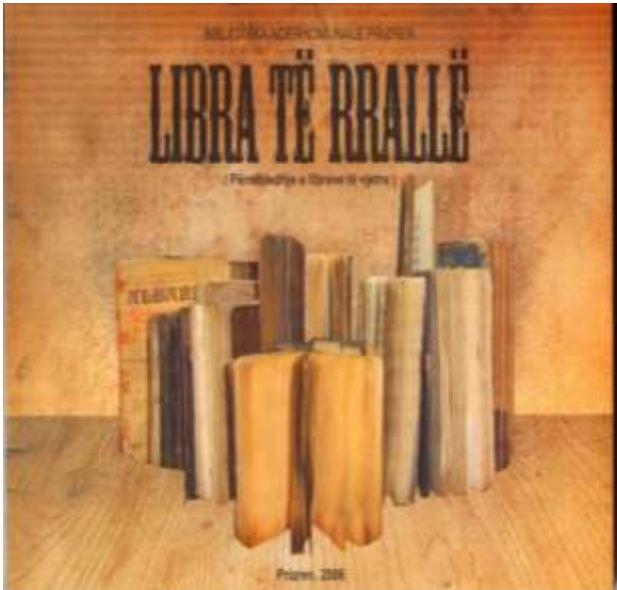


Image. The view of first book „Libra të rrallë“ (Rare Books)

from them to donate these books to the library.)



Image. A sample of a book, presented in the summary of our publications



Image. View of the second book „Libra të rrallë II“ (Rare Books

In 2009, we have published the second edition, with the same theme, with over 100 different books and manuscripts, whereas now, we are in the preparation of third edition of the "Rare books" compilation. It will be prepared in the same way as the previous ones, while in talks with the owners of these writings, we shall demand

Of particular importance is the state of the rare collections, if an intervention is needed, immediate restoration and conservation, knowing that they were in various places. Also the old books and the manuscripts had the same fate time as the society. At certain times, these libraries or even their owners have been a target of multiple attacks, whether against an individual or a culture in general. Libraries were also in past times damaged, because of misconceptions, ideological labels, different beliefs, political issues, party affiliations, classification of materials as allowed or prohibited, etc.

It is worth mentioning that a large number of these libraries were burned along with the houses in the period of 90s. While the damage of libraries before the 90s were individual, during the 90s they were collective damages, since in that period were even people, houses, property, locations damaged. A society is valued as much as it knows to value the library and the book, as the book is the culture itself. A society is valued as much as it knows to value the library and the book, as the book is the culture itself. From this point I would demand from every library and librarian that besides the research of new books to do the research of old books and manuscripts.