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**MONUMENTS IN THE POST-SOCIALISTIC PERIOD: EXAMPLES  
FROM THE CITY-HERO IN MACEDONIA**

*Abstract:* Monuments contain a story or a message, i.e. they carry certain symbolism that reminds people to a certain glorified historical time, to an important event that people should remember. In short, they hide a certain ideology that interprets symbols, offers codes for their interpretation and establishes a tie with the already created myths. In authoritarian or totalitarian social systems monuments are the center of the public and political life. This article presents a part of the monuments characteristic for the town of Prilep during socialism, but also the newly created monuments after the fall of socialism and in the period of establishing the new social order in the Republic of Macedonia.

*Key words:* monuments, ideology, socialistic period, social order, post-socialistic period, transition, city-hero, Prilep, Macedonia

*"Even if anthropology wants to avoid the world of politics, it cannot. Political life influences upon cultural life"*  
(Rihtman-Auguštin, 2000: 9)

During the last hundred years of troubled past at the Balkans and in Macedonia a few social systems were changed: the Osman Turkish with its rigid feudal relations; the Serbian-monarchist and the Bulgarian-monarchist, in which the existence of Macedonian people was not recognized; the socialistic, that repressed everyone that did not agree with the idea of a Yugoslav Federation, and finally, what we call today Macedonian democracy, a social system that still develops and wanders towards a certain model that would enable its survival and connection to the Euro-Atlantic systems.

One of the important elements that are a feature of the post-socialistic states is its historic past. Namely, during the period of post-socialism historical past is emphasized as a result of nationalism that was not accented in the previous system. Thus, the past (and here we include above all the cultures of others), no matter if it comes to individuals or groups, is called by researchers domestication (Simandiraki, 2006: 43), situation when something that happened in the remote past is appropriated and interpreted as if it has happened in the recent past. Besides time distance, as a result of individual or institutionalized processes, there are conditions that it becomes recent past that surely helps the cohesion of the community.

According to Glenn Jordan and Chris Weedon (Џордан и Вeдoн, 1999–2000: 12), traces of history are everywhere - in the monuments that decorate the cities, names of the streets, museums, education etc. Each monument hides a story or a message, i.e. carries a certain symbolic that reminds people to a certain glorified historical time, an important event that, according to certain political power centers, is worth remembering. In short, they hide a certain ideology that interprets symbols and offers codes for their interpretation and establishes a tie with the already created myths. In authoritarian or totalitarian social systems monuments are the center of the public and political life. Everything that does not correspond to ideology supported by political power is considered evil and could cause certain turbulences in the 'idyllic' society, so due to this reasons it is often forbidden by the government institutions. However, in pluralistic societies, such as Macedonian on today, a consensus should be made, independently of the ideological position of the political authority and the ideology of political opposition, i.e. in this case both sides should be flexible and accept the resulted values as a common good for the whole society. Winfried Speitkamp finds that, contrary to the protection of monuments whose aim is to establish history, vandalism and destruction of monuments means abandoning and forgetting history (Rihtman-Auguštin, 2000: 61–62). This field has not been research in Macedonia by now, while in Europe a number of anthropologists have covered this issue, above all at the territory of Eastern Europe (De Soto and Dudwick, 2000: 3–8), i.e. in the states that have changed their political set-up. Namely, the dramatic events in the period 1989-1991 created new possibilities for the new generations of researchers (Hann, 2002: 2–5).

Even though this article covers monuments, still its goal is not to describe the process of protection of the socialistic and cultural heritage that has been created and that is still created in the post-socialistic period, but to present the priorities in the part of culture that was set by certain political parties and coalitions while they functioned from a position of power in Macedonia. It is exactly through the construction of monuments that their ideological set-up can be traced. Thus, often when one speaks about political options in Macedonia it is said that our parties do not follow general European and global ideological and political polarizations and convictions, such as right, left or center parties. In this context one could say that there is some truth in these opinions, in the part that refers to the set-up of the state and its functioning, but in general I find that this is not true since the positions in relation to ideology are clearly differentiated, surely with specific features that refer only to Macedonia, and are a result of the historic past. In addition there is the fact that during the construction and protection of monuments the leftist parties accent the period of the Liberation fight (against the Germans), since they as a political option stemmed from the ex-governing political system that was based upon only one party, while the newly formed political parties, that base their continuity upon the organizations that existed in Macedonia before socialism emphasize the national elements that

were forbidden in times of socialism, and the persons who supported nationalism were repressed.

In this sense one should take into account what was built in Macedonia when there was no Yugoslav Federation. Namely, after WWII there was a phase of building monuments and memorial plaque that reminded of that war of remembered the victory over fascism and all of this in correlation to the general history of Yugoslav people in the People's liberation fight. Contrary to this, the building of monuments that reminded of national fight for liberation fro the Turkish governance in Macedonia was marginalized. When promoting monuments that were related to the People's Liberation fight there were even illogical attempts to unite the fight of Yugoslav people against the fascists under the leadership of a common center, i.e. center that has successfully managed the partisans' action in whole of Yugoslavia, and that is the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Also, in the frames of the history of that time a number of historians specialized in the partisans movement, PLF and Tito, that had a special and important part in Yugoslav history, while today a big number of these historians work in the Macedonian scientific institutes (Brown, 2006: 36). In fact it was a special privilege and honor to work upon this part of history of Yugoslav people.

After this period, i.e. after the dissolution of Yugoslavia, such a dynamics of events that matched the socialistic system slowly seized. There was a slow process of emphasizing national characteristics. In this context, the moments of nationalistic euphoria that emerged in the ex-Yugoslav republics, and also in Macedonia, when everything that reminded of the socialistic period and the socialistic tradition was attacked, the monuments from PLF were even destroyed, with an explanation that they remind of a 'bad' period that has permanently taken away people's spirit and their true ethnic identity, and that the moment came when finally they should go back to their roots and the road that they abandoned 45 years ago. This is only another proof that the social changes are often not so simple, in fact in the majority of cases they are destructive. In facet something similar happened immediately after 1944 when the new people's government melted the bronze monuments (the cavalry of king Peter and king Alexandar), that were located on both sides of the Stone bridge on Vardar river, at Skopje square, and has created a new monument that symbolized the victory over fascism of the Yugoslav people in the period of PLF. The new monument was put in front of the building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia (today the Government of the Republic of Macedonia) in Skopje, where it is located today. The same happened earlier with some other monuments when the Serbian authorities in Macedonia destroyed the Burmali mosque that was located at Skopje square, and has build on its place the famous Officer's house in Skopje.

Still, in recent history of Macedonia a city that has a special place is Prilep. It had a special status and treatment during Yugoslav socialistic federation. Namely, after WWII Prilep was proclaimed a city-hero in Macedonia, and it is especially interesting that even today this city, together with

its local authorities (no matter their ideological orientation) tries to justify the 'heroic' nature. In fact we can identify this city as a mythical space that successfully proves that also has mythical time, i.e. time of heroes, that has still not ended. Heroes can be followed around the city, mainly through monuments that witness certain heroic acts.

Even though this city got the epithet 'hero' relatively late, as a result of the uprising from the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 1941 against the fascists, in Prilep there are monuments from different heroic periods and heroic territories, no matter if the events or personages originate from the city or not. Simply the city hero should have a monument for each hero concerning which the local authorities or certain members of local organizations find that is deserving, and manage to gather finances for constructing the monuments. Thus, as new monuments that appear in the post-socialistic period is the monument of the first President of the Presidium of the Anti-fascistic Assembly of Macedonia, Metodija Andonov - Chento, who has fallen out of grace with the Communist party and finished his life as a prisoner in Idrizovo. There was no consensus where this monument should be located, in fact there was a conflict of the two polarized political options (SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE). In fact the first ones were silently against locating the monument having in mind that this political party stemmed from the Union of Communists of Macedonia.

In the center of the city there is a monument of Krali Marko. It is in fact located at the previous location of the Metodija Andonov-Chento monument.

In the period after the conflict in Macedonia from 2001, above the premises of the Agency for securing property and individuals "TA Lavovi", that is located in the Business center in Prilep, three big portraits were put. One of them is of Ernesto Che Guevara (however instead of the red five-beam star there is the six-beam star from Vergina), the other portrait is of Alexander of Macedonia and the third one is of Todor Alexandrov (member and leader of the terrorist wing of VMRO at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century).



Photograph n. 1 Portraits at the agency for protection of property and individuals "TA Lavovi"

Also, few years ago, at one of the Prilep's picks a cross was built, that is illuminated during night and could be seen from each point in the city. The cross was built during the euphoria that has swept Macedonia after 2000, when in places where Christian population was a dominant one crosses were built, some bigger some smaller. Surely Prilep as a city-hero could not stay without this symbol of Christianity. In fact at this hill until 1992 the name of TITO was written. Today the letters are wage and could hardly be noticed.

The "Mogila of nepobedeni" (Tomb of the invincible) is a monument built after WWII and is dedicated to everyone that died during the People's liberation fight. The monument takes a relatively big space and consists of three parts. The first part consists of bust sculptures of the most famous heroes from PLF, and then one arrives at the central plateau that consists of eight similar but individual elements that symbolize the six republics and the two autonomous regions in SFRY. Then there is the last closed part in which the names of all Prilep inhabitants that died in the PLF are written. According to informants the monument was protected until 1991 by a keeper and was maintained. After this year it has not been invested in it. Everything that could have been taken away, was taken, above all the busts of the heroes, but also the benches and the lights. Only the communal hygiene sometimes stops by to clean the area. Today it is a space where people from the near-by houses graze their domestic animals, while in the evenings this is a dark spot where love couples meet. During a certain period of time it was also destroyed, when the busts of the heroes were torn down or were covered with graffiti (anonymous informant).

The monument of Alexander of Macedonia at the street with the same name in Prilep was built in 1995, financed by the Assembly of the municipality of Prilep. Namely, it is a plaque with the profile of Alexander of Macedonia, together with the year of birth and the year of death of Alexander of Macedonia, while at the bottom there is the year when the monument was built, as well as the name of the investor. The near-by marble is covered with smoke, showing that candles are often burnt in front of the monument.

The marble monument - fountain that is located in the old bazaar in Prilep is a new one, built around six years ago. Basically the monument is a six-beam star (from the tomb of antic Macedonian kings in Vergina) with a lion seated in its center. The lion is often related to the coat of arms of Macedonia, that can be found in the stematographies together with the symbols of other Balkan countries during the Iliric movement at this territory.



Photograph n. 2 The monument - fountain in the old bazaar in Prilep

The monument of Alexander of Macedonia with a bow in his arms, that is located in the center of Prilep, at the Komercijalna bank square, has been inaugurated in 2006. The monument is real-sized and is located at a high platform on which the territory conquered by Alexander is drawn. It has been financed by the Macedonian emigrant to the USA originating from Prilep, Gjorgija George Atanasovski.



Photograph n. 3 Monument of Alexander of Macedonia. Behind is the Clock Tower.

Still, the dynamics of the care shown by the local authorities concerning the monuments in Prilep in the period of post-socialism is a reflection of the total situation in Macedonia in the last 15 and more years. Prilep is characteristic of the post-socialistic monuments, besides its role of city-hero during socialism. However, at the same time in this city, during the conflict of 2001, as a result of the tragically lost inhabitants of Prilep, a monument of the Islamic culture from the 15<sup>th</sup> century was burned - the mosque in the old bazaar. The act was supported by the police that in fact allowed it (anonymous informant). Even though the Clock tower is just next to the mosque, and it also belongs to Islamic culture, it was not touched. Maybe the reason was the cross located at its top, where until 1992 a red five-beamed star existed.

The ideological war is taking place in other Macedonian cities as well. There are initiatives for building monuments from the period of PLF and Tito. For example, there was an initiative that did not succeed for building a monument of Tito in the center of Skopje. Such an initiative of a group of citizens from Bitola was realized, and now in the center of Bitola, at Shirok sokak, on a private property, there is a bust of Tito. Such a situation of placing monuments from the time of PLF could be interpreted as a revolt and balance with the monuments that are of national character. In any case, it should be related to the political centers of power, that are generators of the two most influential ideologies in Macedonia. Their presence and influence is in fact based on dichotomies: communists and anti-communists. Still, the issue is posed: if the post-socialistic transition is special or just especially problematic. In relation to this issue there is the note of the famous sociology from Cambridge, Ralph Dahrendorf, who describes the transition of the ex-socialistic countries with one sentence that is often quoted (Biro, 2006: 14): "The Eastern European countries have changed the governance in six days, the laws in six months, the institutions in six years, but to change the way of thinking and behavior of their citizens they would need sixty years".

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