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By Josip Antic

TURKISH ENTREPRENEUR HAS SETTLED IN CROATIA AND REVEALED OTTOMAN CULTURE WITH CROATS



How come that there is a Turkish House in Bakar? What does a man with a turban and mustache 'à la Turk' do on the ear of the Rijeka sailors? Why do mothers mention 'three young Turks' in the Croatian lullaby 'Have you seen my son Janko'? These are just some of questions turning up in the past three years, since Croatia became his second home, in front of Oguz Aydemir, the Turkish entrepreneur, cultural enthusiast and philanthropist

'In touch with a new culture the ear and the eye of a stranger first notice what is in shape and sonority the nearest to his home culture. This happened to me as well, and I was taken aback by how many traces of Ottoman culture, tangible and intangible, I have found in Croatia. Initially, these were accidental and fragmentary surprises, then it developed into a kind of spontaneous collecting information and sources, and eventually it has resulted in the book, "says Mr. Aydemir, showing the luxurious monography 'Traces of the Ottoman culture in Croatia", he prepared by the end of 2015, with a co-author Andjelko Vlasic, young Croatian historian and Turkologist, and this year he had the opportunity to publicly present it in

Croatia. He has done it recently during the Days of Turkish Culture in Sibenik and provoked a lot of interest.

When it comes to history, Mr. Aydemir is not new in this discipline: in Turkey, he took part in the fulfillment of the last wish of the founder of modern Turkey, Kemal Pasha Atatürk - he is the President of the Turkish Foundation for Underwater Archaeology. This has brought him to Croatia where he organized the exhibition Piri Reis, the famous Turkish seaman and cartographer, the author of the charts of the Adriatic. He then helped edition of the book 'The Great Osijek Bridge', published by the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts (it's a matter of about eight kilometers long bridge over the Drava and the Osijek swamps, once declared a wonder of the world, which was built by Sultan Suleyman, the Magnificent during the march on Vienna). Aydemir also helped organize the exhibitions dedicated to two Turkish shipwrecks from the 16th century in the Croatian Adriatic coast, near the island of Saint Paul and Gnalić.

What makes Aydemir's and Vlasic's book especially valuable is its step forward from centuries long cemented clichés about invasions, defeats, ethnic and religious controversies. Being structured in such a way, so that the reader cannot fail traumatic historical circumstances (from Krbava and Mohacs to three centuries of carrying out devsirme among male children of Christian population, but also the unscrupulous cleansing of Slavonia from the Muslim population, when the Ottoman army was forced to retreat), the book primarily deals with touches stronger than weapons, those who break over human destiny.



Maskovica han in Vrana

It is a long series of Croats who while serving in the Turkish service were carrying out senior military duties, and the documents counted 24 high officials at the Porte, of which a large number of the grand viziers. One among them was Ahmed Pasha Hercegovic, born as Stephen from the aristocratic Bosnian family Kovac, who as grand vizier and admiral managed the Turkish military force in the first half of the 16th century. After him there was Rustem Pasha, Pius Pasha Croat, Kujudžu Murat Pasha, Dilaver Pasha, Yusuf Mašković ... The authors also quote the stories of their opponents of the same blood: from Nikola Jurisic and Nikola Subic Zrinski, to 'Morlak leader' Stojan Jankovic ... What was the impact, says the record that during the war negotiations in 1553 Rustem Pasha, Antun Vrancic and Francis Zay released translators and continued talks in Croatian. The language of South Slavs was so widespread in Istanbul that it was considered "a second official language'.

But there is a reverse example, at the time of linguistic purism it is good to recall that the contemporary Croatian is using even today many words from the Turkish language. Come on, ring, almond, copper, reveler, tower, color, fool, a hammer, a shop, a pillow, a tower, a cage, box, clock, pan, sugar ... are just some of the Turkish 'borrowings' without which today we could not shape up everyday experience.

It is interesting to notice that it is easier to find the remains of three hundred and two years of the Ottoman Empire in the Croatian territory (from 1493 - 1795) in the so-called intangible rather than in tangible heritage. The Military marches ended up in arson, demolition or conversion of buildings on both sides. The value of Aydemir-Vlasic's work is that, I think, for the first time it systematically gives an insight into the significance, position and role of many Croatian towns while they were under the administration of the Turkish government, which in the period of its greatest power was operating in Slavonia, Lika and Dalmatian hinterland, and its border was some 48 km away from Zagreb.

Turks ruled in Osijek (according to some data, Osijek had as many as 12 mosques), Ilok, Vukovar, Makarska, Skradin, Solin, Drnis, Knin ... Petrinja (new and relocated) is the work of the Turkish architects. By using a combination of cartographic representations of historical dynamics, authentic records of travel writers and the images of the said period, the book manages to convey not only information, but also the atmosphere of that time. In this sense, the contribution of

the designer, graphic editor and author of photographs Karmen Ratkovic is valuable.

Besides the history of towns under Turkish rule, the book brings contemporary photographs of the fragments of the Ottoman building - mosques, bridges, fountains, hamams, schools, water supply, today brought to a level beyond recognition. One building still shows that ruins overgrown with grass and brambles can serve as a valuable link in the world of the 21st century. It is a matter of a recently restored Maškovića han in Vrana, that in his home town, then at the crossroads of the worlds which split up his fate, was built upon the order of a famous vizier and captain, Yusuf Pasha Mašković.

'I am very glad about a great renovation of this building and about the great team of people who were leading and who realized this project. My wish is that the traces of Ottoman heritage, which makes the corps of so rich and complex heritage of the Croatian people, be restored, serving to strengthen our cultural ties, but also as a professional and interesting presented cultural and heritage attractions contribute to the cultural and economic development of local communities throughout Croatia. I will continue providing my full support in this regard, "says Oguz Aydemir.

In this sense, 'Traces of the Ottoman culture' should be understood also as a preface to a new, more systematic project. Bearing in mind the co-authorship of Vlastic, we are happy to see there is no shortage of experts and enthusiasts on the Croatian side also.