

# THE MUSEUM OF MITROVICA, AN EXONATE WITH GREAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL VALUE

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## **Abstract**

Archeology is the science that allowed us to know the past of human societies and brought to light many exhibits, whether movable or static. However, random finds are just as valuable as those that are made with purpose and prepared, such as archaeological expeditions.

The Muse statue in Mitrovica was accidentally discovered during the excavation of the foundations for the construction of the city's gymnasium, but its value is extremely high since it is unique in Kosovo, while in other countries it is very rare.

The statue of the Muse is made of lead, which shows us that this region knew the processing of metals very early, it also gives us information that apart from exploitation, the craft of metal processing was also very well known.

The statue of the Muse in Mitrovica is one of the most precious exhibits that is kept in the city museum, this exhibit also has a special security, while its copy is presented to the public in the museum exhibition.

*Keywords:* Museum, exhibits, archeology, culture, civilization, exploitation.

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## **1. Introduction**

Cultural heritage, whether movable or immovable, very often turns out to be preserved from the past and covered with new earth layers. Very often it sinks due to cataclysms or floods, natural collapses or volcanic lava, as in the case of the city of Pompey.

Also, from human activity such as the construction of dams on the lakes caused different material cultures to be flooded and they appeared to us a long time later, once as a chance find, and then after many archaeological expeditions, extraordinary and developed civilizations came to light so much that they make us curious about past.

Therefore, even the random findings like in our case, the statue of the Muse, indicate a civilization that developed a long time ago in this area, which we will talk about in the paper.

## **2. Mitrovica, geographical position and extent**

Mitrovica lies in the northernmost part of the Kosovo Lowlands, and is the largest mining and metallurgical center of Kosovo. Most of the settlement lies on the alluvial plain between the rivers Ibër, Sitnica, Trepça and Lushte, at an average altitude of 508-510 m above sea level, latitude 42° 53' and 13" and longitude 25° 52' and 21". (S. Murati). The area of the narrow territory of Mitrovica is 326 km<sup>2</sup> and represents 3.25% of the territory of Kosovo, (ChWB Kosovo) while Mitrovica with its immediate surroundings is around 794 km<sup>2</sup>. (Mitrovica, 2000). The geographical position of Kosovo, in general, and of Mitrovica, in particular, located at the crossroads of Hellenic, Roman, Oriental and European influences, making it possible for a range of cultures of different peoples and traditions to intertwine here, so, interweaving of the local autochthonous cultural tradition with that income made Mitrovica an attractive and sought-after place for living from ancient times to the present day.

The geographical position of Mitrovica protected from the east, north, northwest by the mountains and open to the south towards the lowlands of Kosovo, the flow of the rivers Ibri, Sitnica, Lushta and the river Trepça, in addition to making it a place with a very good opportunity for housing is also quite attractive to live and work, and this area has been inhabited many times. (P. Hajzeri, 2016).

This enabled the cultural heritage of this region to be very rich and diverse. Kosovo is rightly called the museum under the open sky. (T. Morina, 1974). In the area of today's Mitrovica, life began long before the founding of the city. This beginning of life, as shown by the numerous archaeological researches carried out in Mitrovica and its surroundings, pushes us to something more than seven thousand years ago, when one of the settlements known to this day was founded on the banks of the Ibri near Zhitkovci, more ancient not only in these countries, but also in Kosova. (Mitrovica, 1979). The oldest prehistoric settlement in the territory of Mitrovica is the one discovered in the profile of the Ibri near the railway station of Zhitkovci. (R. Golović, 1956). The research that was done there in 1955, although small in volume, but not favorable for the Serbo-Slavic regime of the time, have provided invaluable data on the way of life and material culture of the first inhabitants known so far in this area. The importance of this settlement goes beyond the narrow scope of the territory where it is located. This is a valuable clue to the Neolithic revolution that also included these countries and whose main character appears to be the transition from the hunter-gatherer economy to a sedentary lifestyle and to primitive agriculture, which, in addition to hunting, fishing and animal husbandry initially, it was the main source of human existence and the society of the early Neolithic period. (Mitrovica, monograph). The settlement on the river Ibër of Zhitkovci is currently the place defined in this area, but not the only one in Kosovo. A considerable number of settlements of this time are mentioned in the literature, which in terms of their material culture are similar and belong to a well-known early Neolithic cultural complex, or rather, the earliest one in the Central Balkans, a complex that is known as the culture of Starçeva, with its own groups and variants, which is also that of Kosovo and the Ibri valley. Among the most popular and researched settlements of this culture in Kosovo, apart from Zhitkovci, there are settlements such as: Gladnica near Pristina, Runik and Rakosh at the foot of Mokna mountain, Zhegovc, Kllokot in the valley of Sitnica at the mouth of Samadrezh, etc. (Kosovo, 1973). Although these are also characterized by housing mainly of the type of underground huts, buildings and the combination of half-buried huts have been known. (J. Osmani, 2003). The main distinguishing quality of the material culture of the oldest inhabitants of the Mitrovica region is ceramics, weapons, tools made of ash, biza and maja. (Mitrovica, 1978).

### **3. Archaeological excavations**

Archeology is one of the most valuable sciences in terms of reflecting the past of human societies in different places, however, even random finds are by no means less important than those that come out during genuine archaeological excavations, therefore many such findings enrich the archaeological treasure of any territory, region or country in general.

In the region of Mitrovica, the archaeological excavations carried out by the Archaeological Institute of Belgrade belong to the last half of the century, so, the years 1950-60. Since that time, there has not been any research expedition to any archaeological site, even though this area is exceptionally rich. from its historical past.

A very large part of the archaeological exhibits found today in the Museum of the city of Mitrovica are accidental finds. Fortunately, these exhibits were handed over to the museum at that time, and a number of them are still there today, since a good part of them were stolen from Serbia and are everywhere in the museums of Serbia, as well as Macedonia.

In the same form, the lead statue of the Muse was discovered, which is found in the Museum of the city of Mitrovica.

Muse (Greek Μοῦσα, Moûsa, Moĩsa, Moĩsa or Mōsa, Mōsa: muse), in Greek mythology, the patron goddess of poets and artistic and scientific disciplines, the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, also appears in the Romans and Illyrians with the same content or presentation.

In a Roman sarcophagus of the 1st century BC, we are presented with the nine muses carved on the decorative outer parts of the sarcophagus which is now preserved in the Capitoline Museum in Rome.



**Figure. 1.** MUSES, depiction of nine muses on a Roman sarcophagus, 1st century. ex. BC, Rome, Capitoline Museum

According to Pausanias (Greek Philosopher) the three oldest muses were the three Boeotian goddesses Meleta, patroness of thought and meditation, Mnema, patroness of memory, and Aeda patroness of song and music. According to the old tradition, they are the daughters of Uranus and Gaia, they are called titanic muses. Plutarch also mentions three muses, he mentions the muses Neta, Mesa and Hypata, which are also the names mentioned with alternative names Kephisos, Apollonida and Boysthenida, it is thought that their father is Apollo, leader of the muses, called "Apollonian Muses ". (M. Krleža, 2021).

According to Cicero there were four Muses, Meleta, Aeda, Aecha and Telxioe. While in the Odyssey, Homer generally mentions a muse, but there are cases where he mentions them in the plural, distinguishing them. The number and names of the nine muses also come from Hesiod who mentions them with the names of the gods in the Hellenistic era. A field of art and science is dedicated to all of them. We find the muses present in the Greek, Roman and Illyrian lands, with the same features and virtues.

#### **4. Muse of Mitrovica**

In the museum of the city of Mitrovica, a playable exhibit is preserved, very small in terms of size but very special in terms of its spread and dedication. The exhibit in the book belongs to the muse of music, as she holds the musical instrument Lira in her hand. This exhibit was found by chance during the excavation of the foundations of a building in Mitrovica, which is also submitted to the museum as a chance find.

This figure is well preserved, while its copy is used for museum exhibition. Its work is done with the technique of casting in a mold (template), which can be seen on both sides of the line of closing the mold. A metal wire about 2 mm passes through the longitudinal axis of this statue, while the material of the statue is lead.



According to what is seen in this statue, it gives the impression that it was a part (handle) of some object that has already disappeared, since the metal thread that runs through this statue from the feet to the top of the head shows that it had another function earlier.

Following the anatomical proportions of a human figure, the statue of the muse appears to have been exceptionally well crafted, as the head, hair, hands and body are in good technical proportion.

This statue represents the muse of music who is wrapped in a cape appropriate for the time. The cape in question is very well presented around the whole body, which is held in one part of the waist by another connection, also with the left hand the muse holds the musical instrument and the cape where very beautiful folds (wrinkles) are created around the part from the waist down. The effect that impresses us the most is the way the body parts, the chest, the hands and especially the legs, penetrate through the fabric of the garment. (P. Hajzeri, 2021).

This statue represents a young, beautiful girl with artistic features who has an appearance that expresses her pride and nobility. Part of the soles of the feet is missing, although it seems that the weight of the body rests on the left leg, while the right leg can be seen to have been slightly bent.

The obvious pronounced narrowing of the lower part of the body and the shape of the curvature (break) of the body allows the assumption that the Figure 2. Muse of Mitrovica artist did not present the lower part of the legs (soles), but instead continues the metal thread of support on it which this muse is presented as part of the decorative detail. (L. Zotoviq, 1960).

The almost straight oval face represents the expression of a completely calm state. The clarity of the almond-shaped eyes with relief lids, with curved arrow-shaped eyebrows, relief-shaped forehead, slightly cast, straight Greek nose and small sensual (cute) mouth testify to the great skill of the artistic quality of the sculptor of this statue. (L. Zotoviq, 1960).

The hair arrangement gives a very beautiful look to this statue featuring a young girl. The part of the forehead remains open, while the hair can be seen to be parted there, passing over the ear and tied at the back of the head. The part of the hair at the back of the head has been twisted, bringing out a hair tie where a part penetrates below this tie arranged in four beautiful curls where two of them fall on the arms that gives a wonderful appearance of the hair arrangement.



From the back, it seems that the cape is released a little below the arms and wrinkled, while the rest is released up to the waist, at the waist this cape is connected with another connection, keeping the lower part of the fabric also appearing wrinkled and busier.

In the outstretched right hand, the muses hold a parchment with three lines of plastic but with unreadable letters, while in the left hand they hold the lyre (musical instrument), resting on the head and on the elbow. The short handle of the lyre is adorned with two spirals placed in opposite directions. It is unclear why in this beautiful model of this statue the right hand is not shown free it is held by the body. (L. Zotoviq).

The neck of the statue has regular anatomical proportions, which is presented in a cylindrical shape almost covered on both sides by her hair.

Erato<sup>2</sup>, the muse of erotic poetry, and Terpsihora, the patroness of dance and choral singing, are almost always depicted with the lyre in her left hand. But, perhaps the parchment presented in the right hand of our statue rather favors the assumption that this is the representation of the muse Erato. (L. Zotoviq).

The lead cast statue is not presented to us very often as other exhibits of small size are presented in much larger numbers. It is interesting the fact of the material used to create this statue, especially when it comes to the figures of the muse, lead is used as a metal material, when it is known that lead does not have any shine even during the work, let alone that it oxidizes very

**Figure 3.** Muse from Croatia quickly and lose even the little aesthetic shine it may have.

With the same attributes, a museum statue in Angoulême, France is presented to us. The same attributes are: the work of wrinkles in the chiton, the shape of the lyre, the position of the hands and the hairstyle, suggest that both statues date from the same time, even made by the hands of the same master - sculptor. (Ibidem).

The statue in question is missing and its whereabouts are unknown. Also, similar to our statue from Mitrovica, there is another statue which is preserved in Croatia and which belongs to the Illyrian tribe of Dalmatians from the place where it was found. This particular statue has its head a little more bent and there is nothing on the head, while the right hand is separated from the body, but in principle the same statue is presented.

With the analysis of the details of the fabric, fringes and hairstyle, it comes to the conclusion that in the 4th century B.C. an example has been born which has inspired young artists, and perhaps even the artist of our statue, even though the shape of the lyre cannot be taken as a sure evidence for this opinion, but it can serve as a sign that goes well of this date. (Ibidem).

the same school and we cannot derive certain evidence for the original or the copy (forgery) of one or the other. Therefore, taking into account the opinion of A. Bauer that the lead statues were mostly made by

<sup>2</sup> Greek - Myth one of the nine muses, patroness of lyric poetry and art, is the muse who is usually represented with musical instruments. (Lexicon of foreign terms and words - Milan Vujaklia, p. 294).

copying the monumental plastic, but they keep the full artistic style like the figures made in any other material. (A. Bauer, 1963).

## 6. Table Figures and Equations

- Figure. 1. MUSES, depiction of nine muses on a Roman sarcophagus, 1st century. ex. BC, Rome, Capitoline Museum.
- Figure 2. Muse of Mitrovica.
- Figure 3. Muse from Croatia

## 5. Conclusions

Random finds have the same value as those found during organized archaeological excavations, they also often lead us to great and hitherto unknown discoveries, and many times they are isolated to us and sometimes even associated with other exhibits but in small numbers.

What is very valuable, that even as a single exhibit it can be very special as if it is the muse in Mitrovica and which should enjoy an increased treatment and care for it, when I know that it is very rare as an exhibit.

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