

Vladimir Bocev

## EXCHANGE OF ETHNOLOGICAL EXHIBITIONS OF THE MUSEUM OF MACEDONIA AND ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT, CARNIVAL KING OF EUROPE

Connecting cultures and peoples is a major reason and the essence of the existence of a museum as an institution. It has a crucial role in connecting cultures and peoples from the immediate neighbourhood. The exchange of ethnological exhibitions between the Museum of Macedonia and the museums from our neighbouring countries could be summed up to only few exhibitions from Macedonia in Belgrade and also few from Belgrade in the Museum of Macedonia. And that is all about it. Among the documents of the Museum of Macedonia there are no any information for the exchange of exhibitions with the other neighbouring countries as Bulgaria, Albania and Greece, but there are data on the exhibitions prepared by the Museum of Macedonia and displayed in Ukraine, Poland, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Belgium, Canada, USA, Great Britain, Turkey etc. Exhibitions from Ukraine, Poland, Croatia, China, Russia, Australia, Peru were presented in the Museum of Macedonia.

The lack of exhibitions from our closest neighbours is a devastating information and it shows that the Museum of Macedonia, but also the museums of our neighbours did not make any efforts for establishing contacts and collaboration. Until now, we have not succeed to build a single inch of the bridge that is supposed to connect us. On the contrary, the museums contributed to building walls that separated the closest neighbours and made them feel distant and unfamiliar. In the past, maybe, the museums were instruments of the authorities in building those walls, but fortunately, the time of raising walls is a distant past. But, unfortunately, the ethnologists from the Museum of Macedonia and the ethnologists from the museums in the neighbouring countries do not make any actual steps for establishing serious collaboration among our museums. At least, there are no any obvious results, so far. It is possible that this is not only our fault, but still I think that we must push harder to change it. The cooperation among the neighbouring museums of the same branch should be established as soon as possible, because this is a necessity, a necessity that will enable establishing closer contacts among the neighbouring cultures and peoples. This collaboration will make possible breaking down the walls, built for decades, and is a real opportunity for gradual abandoning of the many prejudices and stereotypes for our neighbours and vice versa, which are still actual among us. Examples are not necessary.

I see the starting point for establishing this collaboration in confirming and using the personal contacts among the colleagues from these museums. Those contacts should be used for establishing the preliminary contacts between the museums, and afterwards for particular projects, as exchange of exhibitions and museum specialist, joint field researches, etc. Joint exhibitions, as a result from these projects, could be particularly interesting.

The need and the desire to move the things from the starting point, forced me to make some initiatives in establishing such collaboration in 2005. Namely, I used my personal contacts with the ethnologists from the Ethnographic Institute and the Ethnographic Museum in Sofia. It should be said that the wish for establishing the

collaboration was mutual. Considering this idea, we decided to start with presenting the exhibition "Kurban, vizioned, invoked" from the Museum of Macedonia in the Ethnographic Museum in Sofia. We made this decision together, as the practicing of the ritual of animal sacrifice, kurban, is common for both peoples and cultures. We believed that emphasizing the common elements for both cultures would be better accepted and understood by the audience, which is of vital importance for further successful cooperation. We had one and only goal, to realize the exhibition in such way to give a further impulse for the collaboration between those two big, similar, and what is more important, neighbouring museums.

While working on this exhibition, we were under a strong impression that we had started something new and useful and that this was enough to realize our idea. With a lot of energy and enthusiasm invested by both sides, the first ethnologic exhibition from the Museum of Macedonia was opened, to our mutual satisfaction, on March, 11, 2005 in the Ethnographic Museum in Sofia, Bulgaria. It was an extraordinary experience to be present at the opening of this exhibition. According to the popular tradition on the Balkans, the animal, kurban, is sacrificed on the foundations of the house to be built. In this context, the exhibition could be symbolically understood as a kurban placed in the foundations of the new edifice, i.e. the established collaboration, in order to make it firm and fruitful. The following year, in 2006, the exhibition, "Bulgarian folk embroidery", prepared by the National Ethnographic Museum in Sofia, was presented in the Museum of Macedonia in Skopje. It was the first ethnologic exhibition from Bulgaria ever presented in Macedonia.

The multilateral collaboration, besides the bilateral one, could and must be used for connecting the neighbouring museums. The multilateral collaboration is enabled by the European Union cultural programs, i.e. the Cultural Program for 2007-2013.

The Museum of Macedonia is an active participant in the project, "Carnival King of Europe", supported by the European Program for Culture 2007-2013. On this occasion, through the video recordings from the field researches of the carnival masks in the village Žejane in Croatia, I would like to present the collaboration of the ethnologists from the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, the National Ethnographic Museum in Sofia, Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations in Marseilles and the Museum of Macedonia in Skopje.

The help provided by the host of the researches, Mrs. Zvezdana Antosh, from the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, in organizing the field researches, establishing contacts and relations of confidence with the informers was essential for this kind of collaboration. The overcoming of the language barrier between the researches and the informers was very important, and the help of the host was of utmost importance. She enabled the communication between the both sides, the informers and the ethnologists from the other countries, although some of them could speak the language of the informers.

The video recording during the research was a particular challenge, especially as the camera was used by the ethnologist. While recording the conversation between the informers and my colleagues I had a feeling that I am also in front of the camera, as I was listening to the questions that I myself would have asked to the informers, whether they were from Croatia, France, Bulgaria or Macedonia. The replies of our kind hosts were very interesting, and Mrs. Antosh translated them into English with even greater enthusiasm. Where to direct the camera, was a challenge for me: towards the informers, the masks that they were making, the faces of the ethnologists who sometimes expressed astonishment and confusion, or towards our colleague Antosh, who with great zest was continuously talking, either on Croatian or on English.

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Summary

Connecting cultures and peoples is a major reason and the essence of the existence of a museum as an institution. It is of utmost importance for connecting cultures and peoples of our immediate neighbourhood. In the documents from the Museum of Macedonia, except for the exchange of exhibitions with Serbia, there are no any information about such exchanges with Bulgaria, Albania and Greece. The first actual steps in this field were undertaken in 2005, with the exchange of exhibitions between the Museum of Macedonia in Skopje and the National Ethnographic Museum in Sofia.

The multilateral collaboration could and should be practiced besides the bilateral one for connecting the neighbouring museums. The Museum of Macedonia from Skopje together with the Ethnographic Museum of Trentino, Italy, the Ethnographic Museum from Zagreb, Croatia, the National Ethnographic Museum from Sofia, Bulgaria and the Museum of the European and Mediterranean Civilizations in Marseilles, France, actively participate in the project Carnival King of Europe, financed by the European Program for Culture 2007-2013.

On this occasion, through the field video recordings I would like to present you the collaboration of the ethnologists from the museums participating in this project.