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DAMAGE TO ARCHIVES AND ARCHIVAL MATERIALS DURING THE HOMELAND WAR IN CROATIA: THE CASE OF DUBROVNIK AREA



Introduction

- During the Homeland War in Croatia from 1991 to 1995 serious damage was inflicted on Croatian cultural heritage. A total of about 35 % of the cultural heritage has been damaged and about 6 % has been destroyed. Many movable cultural monuments, such as museums and archival materials have been destroyed or lost.
- Overall 37 203, 65 linear meters of records were destroyed, including 3181, 82 linear meters of archival holding that was considered as cultural heritage and monument.
- Since war destruction and damage of monuments posed significant challenges to cultural heritage preservation, even during the war, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia began listing the war damage caused to cultural monuments including archival materials.

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- **Special and expert commissions were in charge of this work. The Directorate for the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage established an Expert Commission to inventory and assess war damage to movable cultural monuments, including archival materials. On the example of Dubrovnik and the Dubrovnik area the study presented in this paper examines and describes types and causes of war damages inflicted on archival materials as well as the methodology and valuation criteria proscribed by the Commission.**
 - **Based on the original documentation produced by the Commission's work, we have listed and briefly described the damage to archival materials kept in archives in Dubrovnik and the surrounding area.**

The aggression on Dubrovnik and the south of Croatia 1991.

- In the summer of 1991, the Serbian political leadership, with the support of the leadership of Montenegro, the Yugoslav People's Army and rebel Serbs in Croatia, launched an aggression aimed at annexing a large part of Croatian territory to Serbia.
- Stronger attacks on the Dubrovnik area began in late September 1991. When the attack on the city, which was completely encircled by the enemy, started, the enemy cut off water and electricity supplies and with its naval blockade prevented the delivery of food and drugs. Alongside all that, it shelled the city and its historic center, protected by the UNESCO Charter since 1979.
- During the aggression in 1991, YPA forces occupied the area from the Bistrina Bay to the Prevlaka Peninsula, while the city of Dubrovnik was surrounded from the land. The Dubrovnik surrounding was under the occupation until October 1992, when Croatian forces liberated the entire occupied area of southern Croatia, broke the siege of Dubrovnik and secured its hinterland through a series of military operations.

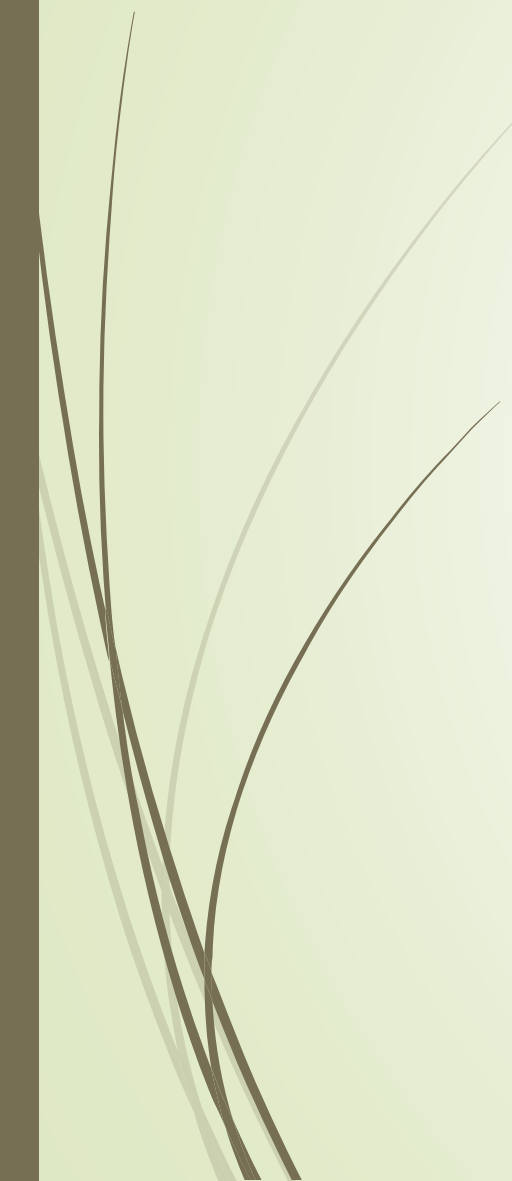


Registering war damage to the archival materials as cultural monuments in Croatia

Recording of war damages to cultural monuments in Croatia

- Preparations for a systematic inventory and assessment of war damage to cultural monuments began in the summer and autumn of 1991 with the establishment of a specialized commission at the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Ministry of Culture and Education.
- The expert commission carried out professional preparations for conducting the inventory and assessment of war damage and drafted guidelines for the implementation of the Law on the Determination of War Damage to Cultural Monuments in the territory of the Republic of Croatia.

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- **The Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of the Ministry of Culture and Education divided the territory of Croatia into seven areas for the inventory of war damage, with headquarters in Osijek, Daruvar, Zagreb, Senj, Zadar, Split, and Dubrovnik.**
 - **In each of these seats, a regional commission for the inventory and assessment of war damage was appointed and the task of these expert commissions was to collect data on destroyed, damaged, and looted property, primarily focusing on the type of property, the degree of damage, the potential value of salvaged materials, the feasibility of repairs, and the reassessed value of the destroyed or damaged property.**

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- The final report on the inventory and assessment of war damage to immovable cultural monuments was published by the Ministry of Culture in 1999.
 - It should also be mentioned that the aforementioned Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, as early as July 1991, at the beginning of the Homeland War, took measures in response to the increasing destruction of cultural heritage. These measures were in accordance with the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and included enhanced and extraordinary protective measures as well as preventive actions aimed at safeguarding endangered buildings, primarily sacred structures.

Recording of war damages to archival materials

- In 1996 the Directorate for the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage appointed an Expert Commission for the inventory and assessment of war damage to movable cultural monuments – archival materials.
- Regional archives were responsible for listing the damages in their area of jurisdiction according to the Commission's instructions. After reviewing the submitted lists, the Commission stipulated that, when assessing value, a distinction should be made between the value of materials that were to be permanently preserved under the then-current 1997 Law on Archival Materials and Archives and the value of registry materials.
- The Commission has emphasized that registry materials have their own value but within the prescribed retention period and although registry materials stored in archives are important for the ongoing operations of businesses and institutions, they do not have the status of cultural heritage. Therefore, when assessing the damage, the Commission did not take their material value into account.

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- The Commission decided that the materials would be assessed using the linear meter unit, but only for archival materials, which constitute a certain percentage of the total materials (around 5% in the case of business and institutional records, 40% in schools, 20% in local government units and 80% in parish offices, cadasters and registry offices).
 - Archival materials, as emphasized by the Commission, have significant scientific and cultural-historical importance, but it always also holds state-legal significance because it "represents a testimony to the identity of a people, a state, a culture, religious affiliation, and personal documentation."
 - According to these criteria, the average value of archival materials preserved in record offices has been determined, as well as that of archival materials in the state archives and other institutions - museums, scientific libraries, church institutions, parish offices, dioceses and archdioceses... as well as in business, personal and family archives.

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- The Commission has determined the following categorization for the value of archival material:
 - **Category A:** Material of vital importance for the functioning of the state as a whole and for relations with other states, as well as archival material that represents cultural monuments of international significance.
 - **Category B:** Material of internal importance for the Republic of Croatia, that is, material essential for the normal functioning of administration, judiciary, economy, production, culture, transportation, and similar areas.
 - **Category C:** Material of local significance important at the county, city, and municipal levels.
 - The Commission determined the average value of a single page of destroyed archival material is 10 former German marks.



Damage to Archival Materials in the Dubrovnik and the Dubrovnik area

- The Historic Archives of Dubrovnik (now the State Archive in Dubrovnik) was responsible not only for its own archival materials kept on its premises but also for the records and collections of other public or private holders in the area if these were designated as archival materials, i.e., cultural monuments. In accordance with the instructions of the Special Commission of the Ministry of Culture, the Expert Commission from the Dubrovnik State Archives examined, listed, and described war damages to the archival materials within its jurisdiction.

Examples

Archives of Inter University Centre Dubrovnik - category A monument

- Archives of the Centre consisted of books, newspapers and magazines, master's thesis and other documentation. According to the Commission in total 500 linear meters of archives was destroyed, in the great fire caused by the shelling of the building, including 200 linear meters of archival materials (HMDCDR, Baza HDD 297-2, 03). However, on the Centre's web page it is stated that in brutal attacks on Dubrovnik on 6th of December 1991 one of the targets was the building of IUC and "after several direct hits by incendiary shells, the whole building burned down, including the library with 30 000 volumes" but that "luckily" most of the archive was saved from flames (<https://iuc.hr/about/history>). Obviously the Commission regarded and treated library's materials as archival materials.

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Archives of the Dubrovnik Festival - category B monument

- In the fire caused by the impact of incendiary mortar projectiles on 6th of December 1991, the baroque palace, which was the residence of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival, was completely destroyed. Only a small part of the inventory was salvaged from the burning building. A vast portion of the rich artistic archive of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival and most of the collection of approximately 30,000 photographs were lost in the fire.
 - In total 120 linear meters of records, including 60 linear meters of archival materials were destroyed.
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Archives of St. Nicolas' Parish office - category B monument

- Dubravka – a village in the Konavle municipality was occupied by Serbian and Montenegrin army from October 1991 until October 1992. During the occupation the rectory of the church served as housing for the occupation forces. They destroyed around 4 linear meters of records, including 3, 2 linear meters of archival materials. Besides, the parish register from 1836 was slightly damaged.

Archives of the Konavle County Museum

- During the occupation of Konavle the building of the County Museum was burned and so were the archives. In total 5 linear meters of records, including 4 linear meters or archival materials were destroyed.



➤ Damage to the Dubrovnik State Archive's building

- State Archives in Dubrovnik is located in one of the most representative objects in the Dubrovnik Old Town – the Sponza Palace (built in 1520).
 - Today, more than 490 fonds and collections, spanning eight and a half kilometers of archival materials, include manuscripts and printed books by Dubrovnik's scientists and writers.
 - The fonds of the Dubrovnik Republic preserve over 100,000 individual documents, more than 7,000 manuscript codices, and 15,000 Ottoman documents
 - The Sponza Palace was damaged on December 10, 1991, and on June 19, 1992. It was designated as a Category A monument. The building sustained seven direct hits and two indirect hits as a result of shelling. The building suffered minor damage to its load-bearing structure. The roof of the palace was damaged and also the stone plastic. There were no reports of damage to archival materials kept in the building.
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Damage to Archival Materials in the Dubrovnik area

The archives of the Parish office of the Holy Trinity

- in Gruda near Dubrovnik – category B monument. The archives were destroyed during the occupation of Konavle. In total, 5 linear meters of archives were destroyed, including 4 linear meters of archival materials.

The archives of the Orašac Elementary School „Antun Masle“

- Category C monument.
- The archives consisted of registry books and other school documentation. In total, 7 linear meters of archives were destroyed (HMDCDR, Baza HDD 297- 2, 10).

The archives of the company „Hrvatska elektroprivreda (Croatian Electric Power Company) in Plat

- category C monument
- The archives consisted of technical documentation and operating logs. The archives were destroyed during the Serbian aggression. In total, 4,5 linear meters of archives were destroyed, including 0,2 linear meters of archival materials.

The archives of the company „HTP Dubrovačko primorje”,
Slano

- category C monument
- The archives were destroyed during the occupation. The archives of the Admiral Hotel and of the Tourist Resort “Vrtovi sunca” were completely destroyed. In total, 70 linear meters of archives were destroyed, including 3,5 linear meters of archival materials.

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ŠTETA NA POKRETNOM SPOMENIKU KULTURE			
Redni broj u cjelini: 019 • 02	Inventarski broj:		
SPOMENIK: PISMOTHRANA HOTELIJSKO - TURISTIČKOG PODUZETCA "H.T.P. DOUBROVAČKI PRILIMORJE"			
AUTOR, SKOLA ILI KRUG: SLAVO			
VELIČINA: (V x Š x D, mjere zaokružiti na pune cm): x x x			
STANJE PRIJE OŠTEĆIVANJA: 2	RAZDOBLJE: 20	VRSTA SPOMENIKA: 7370	
MOGUĆNOSTI ZAHVATA: 4	HITNE INTERVENCIJE: 4	SPOMENIČKA KATEGORIJA: C	
		STUPANJ OŠTEĆENJA: U	
OPIS SPOMENIKA	PRILOG		
PISMOHRANA HOTELIJSKO - TURISTIČKOG PODUZETCA "DOBROVAČKO PRILIMORJE"			
OPIS OŠTEĆENJA	PRILOG		
U CIJELOSTI SU UNIŠTENE PISMOHRANE HOTELA "ADMIRAL" U SLANOJE. 30 mld GRADIVA, TE TURISTIČKO - APARTMANSKOG NASELJA "VRTLOVI SUNCA" U ORAŽJU, 40 mld GRADIVA. SVEUKUPNO JE UNIŠTENO 40 mld GRADIVA. (35 mld arh. gradiva)			
PRIEDLOG ZAŠTITNIH RADOVA	PRILOG		
PROCJENA: 1 225 000 HRD-a			
PROCJENA TROŠKOVA	(vrste rada)	(radni sati)	(troškovi)
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3. Istaživanja i elaborati:	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
4. Konzerviranje i restauriranje:	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
5. Troškovi materijala i usluga:	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐	☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
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Conclusion

- The Homeland War inflicted significant damage on Croatia's cultural heritage, with 35 % of cultural assets damaged and 6 % destroyed. Both movable and immovable cultural monuments, including archival and museum materials, suffered losses due to military actions.
- To systematically document and assess these damages, Croatia implemented a legal framework on the basis of which the Special Central Commission for the Inventory and Assessment of War Damage to Cultural Monuments was established in 1993. This Commission developed a specialized methodology for documenting war damages to cultural monuments.

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- Likewise, recording of war damages to archival materials was also very important, primarily in order to document the destruction of registry and archival materials belonging to public institutions as well as companies and local government units. Regional archives, like State Archives in Dubrovnik, played a key role in compiling damage reports within their jurisdictions, following the Commission's guidelines.
 - The Commission established a methodology for assessing archival materials using the linear meter unit, applying it specifically to archival materials due to their significant scientific, cultural-historical, and state-legal importance. The Commission determined the average value of archival materials based on their categorization.

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- Dubrovnik suffered fierce attacks in the fall of 1991 when all the monuments within the city walls suffered more or less extensive damage as well as buildings, especially hotels near the Old Town.
 - Most of the archival materials were damaged or destroyed due to the shelling of the buildings where they were kept. However, some materials in the occupied areas were deliberately damaged, most often by burning.
 - This systematic approach of the war damages assessors as well as detailed instruction of the Commission ensured that the most valuable archival materials received the necessary attention for protection and restoration and that information on the damages of the archival materials are preserved and available for researches.