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PIETRO MARUBI – FOUNDER OF THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO IN ALBANIA

Abstract

The article aims to highlight the art of photography in Albania, which began at the end of the 1850s and is associated with the name Pietro Marubi (1834-1903), an Italian from Piacenza who, for political reasons, left Italy and sought refuge in Albania, where he finally settled in the city of Shkodra. The scope is on his extraordinary work, including the founding of the first photography studio in Albania around 1855, which was a bold step at that time. Among his earliest photographs are those of Hamzë Kazazi (1858) and Leonardo de Martino (1859). He became a popular figure in Shkodër, photographing important events with the latest technique, immortalizing historical events such as the connection of Prizren (1878-1881) and the uprising of Mirdita that were published in the international press as in the pages of the well-known magazines such as “La Guerra d’Oriente” and “The illustrated London news”. Pietro Marubi also took the first photograph in Montenegro. In the collection of Sultan Abdul Hamit II, there are photographs with a view of Shkodra or people in folk clothes, as photographed by Pietro Marubi. This proves the great fame that Marubi’s photography studio gained in the Ottoman Empire. Pietro Marubi, therefore, brought Shkodra on the level with the first European cities representing the art of photography. The results give an original picture of the role and importance of the photography studio. Marubi and his vision are shown in passing on the profession to his sons. With the act of inheritance of his studio to Kel Kodheli, Marubi would lay the foundations for the continuation of the activity. With Kel Kodheli, the “Marubi Dynasty” was consolidated, where the next generations

of photographers were formed, who today make up the collection of the Photo Gallery of the “Marubi” National Museum of Photography. The opening of the national museum “Marubi” in Shkodër, in addition to its extraordinary cultural and historical values, is also at the service of cultural tourism, which is visited by many local and foreign tourists. The article is based on research of the literature and sources published by the Marubi National Museum of Photography and the Library of the Academy of Sciences, as well as international publications and meetings with historians and other researchers. The conclusions provide another important aspect of this work, especially for the generation of young artists educated today who look up to Marubi as a model of inspiration, but also for the general public.

■ **Keywords:** Pietro Marubi, photography, studio Marubi, Shkodra, Albania

Pietro Marubi (Piacenza, Italy 1834-1903, Shkoder)

The years 1863-1864 were the years of Garibaldi and the political wars that led to the unification and independence of Italy in 1869. Pietro Marubi was a freedom fighter, one of the Carbonari who was involved in the murder of an Italian nobleman (Ulqini, 1982).

Pursued by the Austrian occupation troops, Marubi was forced to leave his country. With a friend, he crossed the Strait of Otranto to the island of Corfu. A little later, as he had nothing to live off of, the two Carbonari decided to separate. Pietro went to Vlora in Albania, while his friend went to Athens.

During Pietri’s stay in Vlora, the Italian consul put him in contact with the business community in the city where, with a false identity, he could continue his profession as an architect, painter, and decorator. About a year later, Marabi left for Shkodra in the north with letters of recommendation from the Consul. There, he found work and settled. At this time, Shkodra had a bazaar, perhaps the most important in the Balkan region.

The city was a true warehouse of goods. The city was connected to the neighbouring coastal ports of the Adriatic, Tivar, and Ragusa. At this time, Shkodra was the economic and commercial centre of the Albanian Region (Ulqini, 1982).

Marubi rented a house and asked someone to work his garden. He quickly met a farmer named Rrok from the village of Kodheli (Rrok Kodheli) on the edge of the Zadrima field, not far from Shkodra (Ulqini, 1982).

Rroku began to take care of Marubi's garden; he was very useful for many jobs, and the two men soon became friends. Marubi at this time worked as a professional, architect, painter, and sculptor and at first practiced photography privately for his own pleasure.

Pietro visited Kodheli's house, met Rrok's family and friends, and thus got to know the region. Realising that photography had not yet arrived in Albania, he began to direct his professional work towards this new opportunity. While it cannot be confirmed, Albanian sources claim that the period of Marubi's photographic activity extended from 1864 to 1890 (Bekteshi, 2013).

Pietro Marubi died in 1904. He left his studio and business to Keli, who later passed it on to his son Gegë. It spanned three generations, all in the first half of the 20th century (Bekteshi, 2012).

The birth and development of the first photography studio in Albania

For an Italian from Piacenza like Pietro Marubi, his arrival in Albania was likely a coincidence. He settled in the city of Shkodra, which was developing and expanding in all areas. His choice proved beneficial not only for himself but also for Albania, which was evident over time. (Fishta, 2012).

Pietro Marubi occupied himself with painting, architecture, sculpture, and occasionally photography while in Italy. However, upon settling in the Shkodra, he dedicated himself solely to photography. This was a bold move considering that photography, at the time, was still in the early stages of development and its techniques were just beginning to be put into practice.

Around 1855 he opened the first photography studio in Albania and a photo from 1858 (Lorenzo de Martino and that of Hamza Kazazi) marked not only the first photo in Albania but also in the Balkans (Gerard, 2011).

Marubi started working with the most advanced technology of the time, photographing unknown and known as freedom fighters, folk clothing. Later, when he put the camera tripod and left the "Kapi" studio, he also photographed landscapes as well as important historical events. and politics. The negatives of his camera (the film had not been invented yet) were filled with terrifying images of poor people, but never with cynicism (Hyacinthe, 2000).

Pietro Marubi was a well-known photographer in Shkodër, but he was also a good painter, sculptor, and architect. It is known that the mural paintings of the Orthodox Church in Shkodër were his work. As the days, months, and years passed, his mindset gradually changed which made him absorb a lot of the locals and feel increasingly Albanian (Ferid, 2000).

The first period of Pietro Marubi's photography is about his commitment to photographing people he took from the street and used as models, turning them into postcards that he later sold. These photographs of Marubi would spread to the masses by Viennese lithographers who printed them, turning them into postcards or the memory with the inscription "Souvenir de Skutari d'Albanie" (Kadare, 1996).

In the art, the stamped photographs sold by the studio are known as Cabinet Card or Formato Gabinetto, which were prints on paper, fixed on thick cardboard that was offered to customers. Their cardboard generally had different colours: white, yellow, and black. For example, the white cards had red writing on the back; the yellow ones were waxy, some pale and some brighter, and only the design was different (Hyacinthe, 2008).

The photos were placed in the cabinet, the bright yellow cards were decorated with a red line surrounding the photo, and in the lower part, the photographer's name was written in brown. On the other hand, the pale-yellow cards in the cabinet did not have any decoration, except on the bottom left, the photograph bore the photographer's name, and on the right, that of the city. The other model offered by the studio had black cardboard and silver writing. These card cabinet models had the photographer's name written on the back, the location and ratings of the studio, and information written in two languages, Ottoman and Italian. (Hyacinthe, 2008)

Photographic studios in 19th-century Europe had card cabinet designs similar to each other. It is a fact that Pietro leaves nothing behind in the dignified presentation of his studio, offering clients photographs curated to the last detail (Ulqini, 1982).

Benhard Wacht-Wien, the Viennese lithographer whose printing press designed and printed the photographic studio brands on the cardboard supporting the photographs, is referenced on the back of the card cabinet designs offered by Marubi. Through contracts with photo studios, Benhard Wacht's typeface was one of the most widespread in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire. The card designs that photo studios used in this territory have great similarities (Gerard, 2011).

Benhard Wacht's books, which we have seen used as accessories for clients photographed in Marubi's studio, are manuals of use and techniques and cameras, as well as other complementary parts of what a photography studio of the time should have. Backgrounds, carpets laid on the ground, chairs, and tables are all accessories that make up Marubi's photography (Gerard, 2011).

The development of Marubi's photographs in the Sultan Abdul Hamit II collection stored in the Istanbul University Library proves the influence Marubi had on the development of visual art in Albania.

In this collection, there are photographs depicting individuals dressed in traditional clothing. Additionally, there are images capturing the sights of Shkodra and other cities in Montenegro, influential figures from the country's life, and individuals featured in newspapers and magazines across Europe. Marubi's photographs and information about him can be found in publications such as the British newspaper "The Illustrated London News", the French "L'illustration Journal Universel" as well as the Italian newspapers and magazines "La guerra d'oriente" and "La gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d'Italia" (L'illustrazione Italiana, 1877).

"The Illustrated London News" was the first newspaper in the world to publish illustrated news with images, which also inevitably used Marubi's photographs. The photograph of the "Heads of Mirdita on the border with Montenegro", published in "The Illustrated London News", as well as the photo of the delegates from Shkodra to the League of Prizren, are two shots that complete the series of 'photographs of the yard'. The negatives of these images can be found in the archive of the National Photography Museum "Marubi" (L'illustrazione Italiana, 1877).

Going back to the press publications of the time, in 1878, the French newspaper "Illustration Journal Universel" would echo the political developments of 'the connection of Prizren' by illustrating it with the photograph that Pietro Marubi had taken of the delegates of Shkodra, Podgorica, and the leaders of the Catholic tribes of Northern Albania.

Marubi is the key figure who made it possible for the images of Shkodra and the people dressed in traditional clothing to reach the wider European public. The fact that these images were in important newspapers in the 1870s shows that Marubi brought Shkodra's stories back to the attention of foreigners.

Conclusion

The art of photography in Albania dates back to the late 1850s and is associated with the name Pietro Marubi (1834-1903). Pietro Marubi's over 40 years of work as a photographer has left a mark on Albanian history and culture. Numerous publications in various prestigious magazines recognised Shkodra and Albania in Europe at that time.

Beyond the importance of establishing the first photography studio in Albania, which was a bold step at the time, Marubi's visionary role will be shown in passing on the profession of photography to his sons. By transferring his studio to Kel Kodheli, Marubi would lay the foundations for the continuation of the studio's activity, which had become a "known brand" for the region. Marubi's studio would bear the master's surname even after his death.

Under the direction of Kel Kodheli, the Marubi photography studio for young people would return to the school for its teaching. Pietro Marubi, "the father of the world", as the people called him, was escorted to his last residence with special honours by the residents of Shkodra, which Marubi ranked among the first cities in the art of photography.

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PIETRO MARUDI – OSNIVAČ PRVOGA FOTOGRAFSKOG STUDIJA U ALBANIJI

Sažetak

Cilj je ovoga rada osvijetliti umjetnost fotografije u Albaniji koja je počela krajem 1850-ih i povezana je s imenom Pietra Marubija (1834. – 1903.), Talijana iz Piacenze koji je iz političkih razloga napustio Italiju i potražio utočište u Albaniji, gdje se konačno nastanio u gradu Skadru. Naglasak je na njegovom izvanrednom radu, uključujući osnivanje prvoga fotografskog studija u Albaniji oko 1855. godine, a što je u to vrijeme bio hrabar korak. Među njegovim najranijim fotografijama one su Hamze Kazazija (1858.) i Leonarda de Martina (1859.). Postao je istaknuta osoba u Skadru fotografirajući važne događaje najnovijom tehnikom, ovjekovječujući povijesne događaje poput povezivanja Prizrena (1878. – 1881.) i Mirditinog ustanka koji su objavljeni u međunarodnom tisku kao i na stranicama dobro poznatih časopisa “La Guerra d’Oriente” i “The illustrated London news”. Pietro Marubi napravio je i prvu fotografiju u Crnoj Gori. U kolekciji sultana Abdul Hamita II nalaze se fotografije s pogledom na Skadar ili ljude u narodnoj odjeći, kako ih je snimio Pietro Marubi. To dokazuje veliku slavu koju je Marubijev fotografski studio stekao u Osmanskom Carstvu. Pietro Marubi je, dakle, uveo Skadar među prve europske gradove koji predstavljaju umjetnost fotografije. Rezultati daju originalnu sliku uloge i važnosti fotografskoga studija. Marubi i njegova vizija posebno su iskazani u prenošenju profesije i zanata na svoje sinove. Činom ostavljanja svoga studija Kelu Kodheliju, Marubi je postavio temelje za nastavak djelatnosti. S Kelom Kodhelijem konsolidirana je “dinastija Marubi” u kojoj su se oblikovale sljedeće generacije fotografa čiji rad danas čini zbirku Galerije fotografija Nacionalnog muzeja fotografije “Marubi”. Otvaranje Nacionalnog muzeja “Marubi” u Skadru,

osim izuzetnih kulturnih i povijesnih vrijednosti, u službi je i kulturnog turizma koji posjećuju brojni domaći i strani turisti. Članak se temelji na istraživanju literature i izvora koje su objavili Nacionalni muzej fotografije Marubi i Knjižnica Akademije znanosti, kao i međunarodnim publikacijama i susretima s povjesničarima i drugim istraživačima. Zaključci daju još jedan važan aspekt ovoga rada, posebice za generaciju mladih umjetnika koji se danas obrazuju i koji u Marubiju pronalaze uzor i nadahnuće, ali i za širu zainteresiranu javnost.

■ **Ključne riječi:** Pietro Marubi, fotografija, studio Marubi, Skadar, Albanija