

Problems of the Bulgarian Cultural and Historical Heritage (CHH) in the Context of the Regional Development

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1. Summary

In the present report general information about the state institutions and non-governmental organizations engaged with the activities for protection and utilization of CHH is given. The basic financial and institutional problems mainly from the point of view of regional development are outlined. Formulation of the problems and its solution way are given with the view of modern tendencies towards the integration of the CHH with the other spheres of social life and its transformation into a factor of economical activity. From this point of view some regional programs for the protection and utilization of CHH, as well Bulgarian participation in international projects in this sphere are described.

1. Both the investigations in the field of CHH and the practical solving of its individual problems in some regions of Bulgaria clearly show that CHH turns more and more from a subject of study and protection into an active element of the modern life and dynamically integrates with other social spheres. Just that very understanding in the present report is at the basis of the approach to both the formulation of the problems and the way to solve them. Here the integrated approach means that the problems of the investigation, protection est. of the CHH will be formulated with the view of their close co-operation with tourism, environment protection, finances, building of the infrastructure on a regional, national and transnational plan. From local and regional development view point that means the optimal model of development of the different towns, localities and regions to be developed as ensembles of typical cultural and historical face.

In a practical plan the basic chance of survival of some regions in Bulgaria as cultural and historical sites is the connection of historical heritage with economy.

2. Bulgaria is a crossroads and a cradle of ancient civilizations. It is a country of immense CHH accumulated during many epochs and civilizations – pre-historic, ancient Thracian, ancient Greek, Roman Byzantine, ancient Bulgarian Islamic and the Bulgarian national revival. All this warrants our history and its heritage to be considered as one of the most important feature of the image of our country.

Bulgaria has preserved 179 cloisters and 3911 churches; among them Bojana church, Alexander Nevsky Temple–monument, Rila, Batchkovski, Rojenski and others monasteries are of world renown.

Their architecture, icone paintings, oltar wood-carving, old-printed books are invaluable cultural wealth. Many of them are situated in the most beautiful areas of Bulgaria.

Many ancient settlements of all civilizations on Bulgarian soil are also preserved: Stara Zagora (8 000 years), Apolonia (Sozopol), Mesemvria (Neseber), Nikopolis–ad Istrum, the old Bulgarian capitals Pliska, Preslav and Veliko Turnovo.

As successors of the ancient Thracian culture we have preserved many unique Thracian sepulchers, sarcophagi, frescoes, gold and silver treasures. The Kazanlak Sepulchers and sepulchers in Sveshtari, the unique gold treasures of Valtchetran, Panagjurishte, Rogozino and others are of world renown. Some of these historical objects or their duplicates have been shown in many countries all over the world.

Bulgaria has managed to preserve the authenticity of many of its museum-fowns, e.g. Koprivshitzta, old Plovdiv, Trjavna. Our country has available 226 museums and galleries,

ethnographical museums and reservations; among the latter the ethnographical museum Eter in Gabrovo is one of the most renowned.

3. In the process of many years restoration and protection activity over a large number of cultural and historical objects (CHO) on Bulgarian soil a valuable experience and good professional potential have been accumulated. Institutions like the National Archaeological Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS), University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (UACEG) in Sofia, "St. St. Kiril and Mephodi" University in Veliko Turnovo and the Bulgarian National Committee at ICOMOS have at their disposal excellent experts who do in a very active and successful way their research, restoration and preservation work on many objects of CHH.

On the basis of a law (1969) about 40000 objects of CHH are protected having the status of a monument of culture. Some of these monuments – Bojana church, Thracian sepulchers in Kazanlak and Sveshtari and others are put on in the world cultural heritage of UNESCO.

Before the democratic changes in 1989 there was a centralized system of management, financing and control of all activities in the field of CHH. This system, even though changed in some respects, has still had some of its main characteristics. The Ministry of Culture (MC) is the basic institution that exercises the financing and management of CHH. The National Institute of Monuments of Culture, which is at the MC, executes mainly permission and normative control of activities connected with the restoration and conservation of the CHO. Part of the funds of functioning and protection of CHO comes from the municipal budgets subsidized by the state budget and in other cases direct investor is the state. In the last years Bulgarian and foreign non-government organizations, international institutions and some foreign governments more and more actively aid the research and restoration activities on CHH. For example, thanks to the active work of the Bulgarian National Committee of ICOMOS since 1996 up to now some programs have been realized or are in process of realization for the Bulgarian monuments recognized as a part of the world cultural heritage; for example: the foundation "Samuel Crez" has given \$20000 grant through the contribution of the World Monument Funds (USA) for the program about the restoration of the rock churches near the village of Ivanovo; the program "The Thracian sepulchre by the village of Sveshtari – opened for visitors" and financed with \$40000 from the foundation "Headley Trust" (GB); the foundation "A. G. Leventis" through the World Monument Funds financed with \$30000 the project about the conservation of "St. Dimitar" church in the village of Boboshevo; a financial help (\$300000) from Japanese government through the contribution of Japanese National Committee of ICOMOS is expected for the restoration of the ancient Plovdiv, etc.

4. The difficult transition of Bulgaria to functioning market economy and new system of institutions has also an inevitable effect upon the sphere of activities connected with the CHH. The main problem follows from the circumstance that full conceptual, legislative and institutional changes corresponding to the new conditions and tendency to development, have not still accomplished. In the first place it should be noted that for both the grave economical difficulties in our country during the last decade and the restrictions of the currency board, the state financing of the CHH sphere has become considerably lower; according to the assessments of some experts the reduction of the state financing in the mid 1990's is about 100 times in comparison with 1985. From a point of view of the regional development effective mechanisms to stimulate local initiatives in the sphere of the CHH protection and effective usage there still has not been. Many municipalities in Bulgaria are badly lacking in funds, on principle the problem about the finances of the municipal self-government has not been solved yet. There is not the necessary financial connection with the cultural tourism. In the recent years some tax preferences are given every body who invests money in conservation works. However at the present stage the private sector as a whole has not become consolidated enough in order to direct considerable funds to cultural activities including the CHH sphere. Unfortunately, the tradition to accept CHH mainly as a permanent consumer of money instead of a possible considerable source of economical

activity has not still overcome. A strongly centralized system of management is an additional weight on the local and regional initiatives in the sphere of the social and economical potential of the CHH.

At present there are not enough effective instruments for dialogue between the conservation and urban work. The construction activity in some historical centers causes problems with respect to their look and authenticity. But mainly the objects of CHH from ancient historical epochs are exposed to danger, especially some of them are in early stage of restoration and conservation or these works are in prospect. The main problem consists of the following: on one hand, there are plenty of that sort of objects on the territory of Bulgaria, and on the other hand, there are not enough money and the needed co-ordination between the institutions of their protection. In some cases, even if the financial help for the purpose comes from non-government organizations, these help with difficulty comes to the teams engaged with the CHO work because of bureaucratic obstacles.

Criminal groups specialized in illegal traffic of cultural and historical valuables present a great danger. Equipped with most modern technics they are often first at the excavation of the objects and as a result many cultural and historical valuables leave the country forever or are often irreparable damaged.

5. Both considerable changes of the model of management of the CHH and traditional attitude towards it are needed for the successful solving of the problems of the preservation and treatment of the CHH. On principle the necessity of these changes has been realized. Even though with difficulty in practice they become to bring to life and-what is encouragingly, on a local and regional level. For example in Kazanlak a program was worked out (1997) with the active participation of the local historical museum; by way of this program the CHH of the region, cultural tourism and what is more – the traditional for this region production of attar of roses (component in the recipes of the leading world perfumery companies), are in mutual relations.

In this program the interest in the production of attar of roses and its products (liqueur, creams, essences, essential oils) is combined with the existence of more than 10 unique Thracian sepulchres and sarcophagi in the Kazanlak valley with radius of 20 km. On that account the Kazanlak valley – known as the Valley of roses, is called the Valley of Thracian kings. The Kazanlak sepulchres – one of the most world-renowned Thracian sepulchres, is also situated in this valley; it was discovered in 1944 and is under the protection of UNESCO. (The second sepulchre near the village of Maglish was discovered in 1965). Of recent years Dr. Kitov's team (National Archaeological Institute) and archaeologists from Kazanlak museum have discovered 10 more Thracian sepulchres and sarcophagi; as a result of the great interest to these objects a number of archaeologists and historians from Great Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, France and Germany have already visited them. Ruins of Sevtopolis-one of the ancient Thracian capitals, are thereabouts. One of the important projects of the above-mentioned program is about the building of a floating model of this antique town in the dam lake, which is near the ruins. Interesting exhibitions combined with hillock inscriptions have been built into some of the sepulchres. Rich Roman funerals, Byzantine basilicas and the Bulgarian mediaeval centre Eltimir in this area are also included for tourist's visits. These parts of the program are in combination with an examination of a historical and ethnographical complex with traditional Bulgarian trades. To the production of roses – in a primitive and a modern way, and its products a special attention has been given. Other important historical events and objects, connected with them like the Russian-Turkish war of liberation have been also included. This program has been nominated by the American Association of World Monuments as one of the best ten programs in the world (1999) and mainly this association finances its projects.

The program for the development of the economy and culture of the southwestern region of Bulgaria is another interesting attempt of CHH integration into the social and economical regional development. This program is financed by the American-Bulgarian

foundation for cultural and economical development and it was created in 1997 in Boston (USA). Co-founder from Bulgarian side is "Pirin sings" foundation with head office in Blagoevgrad – centre of the southwestern region of Bulgaria. The program contains a number of yearly undertakings like conducting of festivals of culture in Blagoevgrad, regular meetings and conferences in Bulgaria and USA with the aim to popularise the Bulgarian culture and the possibilities for cultural tourism. Construction of an attraction ethnographical tourist's settlement next to Blagoevgrad in combination with the variety of the national traditions in the architectural styles, arts and trades of diverse regions of the country is especially interesting idea which corresponds very well to the yearly folklore festival.

Considerable legislative and institutional changes are necessary to be done; only then the regional initiatives connected with CHH and its integration in the social and economical life could grow successfully. Accordingly to the national plan of development of the country (2000 – 2006) – passed by the Bulgarian government, the new law of the stationary monuments of culture is the first legislative priority. Decentralization and gradually withdrawing the direct state financing of the cultural institutions, development of cultural centres of regional and municipal importance – all these changes are the philosophy of this future and the other laws in the sphere of Bulgarian culture and characterize the change of its institutional structure.

There is still considerable centralization and bureaucracy in respect to normative and restrictive regulations in the sphere of the restoration and conservation works; in the new law of the stationary monuments of culture is also necessary these problems to be overcome.

In practice the application of the regulations in question often leads to a break in the above-mentioned works and as a result – to a delay in their realization, which badly reflects on both the CHO and the local initiatives. On that account the normative control by independent, authoritative, legal authorized representatives of the scientific community and the local cultural institutions is the best successful solution.

To provide enough financial resources for realization of programs for integration of the CHH into the local and regional social and economical development is also a problem of great importance. As a country that has been negotiating for some time to become EU member, Bulgaria has the possibility to obtain financial means of the two pre-accession European funds – for development of agriculture and agricultural regions (SAPARD) and for regional economic development and environment protection (ISPA). In countries like Bulgaria that make use of the ISPA fund, the object of CHH could be financed as an element of the regional social and economical development with a view to cultural tourism increase. In this connection it is suitable to note that every third foreign tourist visits some CHO during of his stay in Bulgaria. In view of the rich CHH of the country and the lack of enough programs for cultural tourism it is evidently that potential possibilities in this respect are much greater. Of course the normative solution of the question for use the above-mentioned fund for direct CHO financing is not an easy problem. But even by means of the present possibilities financial projects on building and improvement the respective infrastructure and environment, connected with increase of CHH importance as a factor for the regional development, are possible to be made. The availability of such good projects will be favourable with a view to attract serious financial resources in the discussed field.

The regional policy with respect to CHH has to be also considered with the increased economical and cultural exchange within the framework of Europe and some of its regions. In this respect the transnational projects connected with cultural tourism are of great importance.

Bulgaria has already taken an active part in this direction. By its national committee of ICOMOS and the support of Ministry of Culture the country plays a leading part in the international project "Cultural routes of Southeastern Europe" (with the participation of experts from all countries of South-eastern Europe). The project has been financially supported by the foundation "Open Society" ("East – east" – program), foundation "King

Boduen”, government institutions and non-government organisations from South-eastern Europe. The project has been selected within the framework of the prize “European days of the heritage” launched on initiative of the European Council and foundation “King Boduen”. The concluding document of the international meeting held in Sofia (16-17 September 2000) within the framework of European days of the heritage in Bulgaria, includes a map of the cultural routes – as a basis of protection and utilization of the cultural heritage, was adopted by the experts; adopted were also directions for future work on the project. In general opinion this document could attach new dimensions to the Pact of Stability directing the attention toward new non-standard sources of stabilization and steady development of Southeastern Europe. Proposed was to the Pact to be worked out a Charter of protection and utilization of the region cultural heritage and a working plan in this field. At his visit to Bulgaria in October 2000 Mr. Bodo Hombach, special coordinator of the Pact, appreciated the project – and the work carried out on it, as a “fantastic idea” which “gives new dimensions to the Pact of stability”.

With a view to Bulgaria situation other European regional projects like: the cultural and natural heritage of the Danube region; castles along the river Danube etc, are also of great interest.

Of positive importance would be the formation of regional centres of CHH protection and development of cultural tourism (for instance about the region of South-eastern Europe) under the aegis of UNESCO and the European Council, formation of standing mixed expert monitorial commissions, and other institutions for regional and European co-operation in the sphere of CHH.

2. References

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