

UNESCO'S WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTIES IN NORTH EAST BULGARIA – A PROJECT PROPOSAL FOR THEIR POPULARIZATION

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***Abstract:** The authors of the present paper make an attempt at presenting UNESCO's Convention for protection of the world cultural and natural heritage. A special attention is paid to the properties under the auspices of the organization situated in the north eastern part of Bulgaria – the Madara Rider, the Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo and the Thracian tomb of Sveshtari. Project key activities are proposed for popularization of the sites as a joint tourist itinerary and a product, as well as resources for development and valorization of the cultural and historical diversity. They include holding a mobile conference workshop, publications, and educational tour and game. Detailed information about the parties, participants, location, objectives, expected results, time frame and target audiences is also delivered.*

***Keywords:** UNESCO, Convention, World Heritage List properties in the north east of Bulgaria, project activities, tourism, popularization*

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972.

The idea of creating an international movement for protecting heritage emerged after World War I and the Convention developed from the merging of two separate movements: the first focusing on the preservation of cultural sites, and the other dealing with the conservation of nature. Consequently, UNESCO initiated, with the help of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the preparation of a draft convention on the protection of cultural heritage which will define the kind of natural or cultural sites which can be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List.

Amongst UNESCO's World Heritage missions is to encourage countries to sign the World Heritage Convention and to ensure the protection of their natural and cultural heritage; to encourage participation of the local population in the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage; and to encourage States Parties to the Convention to nominate sites within their national territory for inclusion on the World Heritage List.

The Convention sets out the duties of States Parties in identifying potential sites and their role in protecting and preserving them. By signing the Convention, each country pledges to conserve not only the World Heritage sites situated on its territory, but also to protect its national heritage. The States Parties are encouraged to integrate the protection of the cultural and natural heritage into regional planning programmes, set up staff and services at their sites, undertake scientific and technical conservation research and adopt measures which give this heritage a function in the day-to-day life of the community.

Today, the World Heritage concept is well understood and sites on the List are a magnet for international cooperation. The prestige that comes from being a State Party to the Convention and having sites inscribed on the World Heritage List often serves as a catalyst to raising awareness for heritage preservation. The inscription of a site on the World Heritage List brings an increase in public awareness of the site and of its outstanding values, thus also increasing the tourist activities at the site. When these are well planned for and organized respecting sustainable tourism principles, they can bring important funds to the site and to the local economy. (<http://whc.unesco.org>)

Nowadays there are 1031 properties inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List (802 cultural, 197 natural and 32 mixed) in 163 States Parties which have signed the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. More than half of the sites are situated in Europe. Of all fifty European states there are only two, which are not States Parties – Monaco and Lichtenstein. (Vladev 2015)

Bulgaria accepted the Convention on March, 7th 1974 and has, by now, nine properties on the World Heritage List and 14 more submitted on UNESCO's Tentative List.



Fig. 1. Bulgaria – a satellite map

Of the nine properties on the World Heritage List two are natural and seven – cultural, inscribed in the period 1979–1985. Three of them are situated in North-eastern Bulgaria – the Madara Rider (Shumen Province, situated in Madara National Historical and Archaeological Reserve and administered by the Regional Museum of History – Shumen), the Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo (Ruse Province, situated in a National Archaeological Reserve and administered by the Regional Museum of History – Ruse) and the Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari (Razgrad Province, situated in Sboryanovo Historical and Archaeological Reserve and administered by the Museum of History – Isperih).

The Madara Rider

It is inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979 and is a unique relief, an exceptional work of art, created during the first years of the formation of the Bulgarian State, at the beginning of the 8th century. It is the only relief of its kind, having no parallel in Europe. It has survived in its authentic state, with no alternation in the past or the present. It is outstanding not only as a work of Bulgarian sculpture, but also as a piece of historical source material dating from the earliest years of the establishment of the Bulgarian state. (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/43>)



Fig. 2. The Madara Rider rock relief

The triumphant scene is carved into the rock massif – a symbolic depiction in which the hunter is a triumphing ruler. The lion lies stabbed by the ruler's spear right above the neck and a dog runs behind him. The powerful enemy is defeated and the horseman is confidently marching forward. According to historians this is the symbol of the victory of the Bulgarian khan and of the might of the winning recognition Bulgarian state. The inscriptions in Greek language around the relief are, in fact, a chronicle of important events concerning the reigns of three of the Bulgarian khans – Tervel, Kormisos and Omurtag (8th–9th centuries). (Lechev 2004: 34). They mark the beginning of the written Bulgarian history and reveal victories, treaties, debts in gold, unobserved conditions leading to wars and crucial interstate relations. The Madara relief, more than any other monument in Bulgaria, symbolizes the formation of the Bulgarian State.

The rock relief of the Madara Horseman encompasses within its boundaries sufficient elements for its presentation. It lies within an archaeological reserve that includes other archaeological monuments, up to 2000 years old. Traces of cultures of different tribes and peoples that dwelled here from the 5th millennium BC to the 15th century are discovered. Life began in caves near a water source. The archaeological researches of burial mounds and sanctuaries and the large number of archaeological finds connect the antique period of Madara with the Thracian people that inhabited these lands from 5th millennium BC to 4th century AD. In Roman times the large farm (villa Rustica 2nd–3rd centuries) and the fortress on the Madara plateau (it functioned as late as 15th century) provided for the subsistence and security. (Haralanova, Antonova, eds. 1999: 71–77)

In the course of its existence Madara had always been a cult center. The remains of the Thracian sanctuary of the three nymphs, the temples in the foot of the rocks for heathen ceremonies, the remains of Christian churches built after the conversion to Christianity in 9th century prove this. In the 14th century the largest rock hewn monastery in Bulgaria with more than 150 cells and churches was formed here. (Lechev 2004: 4)

The reserve is impressive with its magnificent natural environment too – majestic rock massif and caves, springs, a number of flora and fauna rare species. There is also a museum in the reserve and archaeological finds from all historical periods researched in the course of more than a century can be seen there.

The Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo

Many churches, chapels, monasteries and cells were cut into the natural rock along the Rusenski Lom River, during the 13 and 14th centuries. Five of them, part of *St. Archangel Michael* Rock Monastery were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979.

The frescos of the Ivanovo churches reveal an exceptional artistry and a remarkable artistic sensitivity for 14th century painting and Bulgarian medieval art. Posterior to the Khora monastery mosaics (Karia Djami) of 1303–10, these frescoes, by their very expressiveness surpass any other historical monuments discovered, characteristic of the Palaeologues style. Neo-classical in spirit and in elements of their subjects, the frescoes represent a departure from the canons of Byzantine iconography. They show close ties with expressive Hellenistic art. (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/45>)

The murals are unique examples of the Tarnovo School of painting and monumental art of the Second Bulgarian State. Significant elements of the frescoes are the architectural details well combined with the events presented. They are an important achievement in the Christian painting art of South-Eastern Europe from the 13th and 14th centuries (Dremsizova-Nelchinova 1983: 14)

Most of the scenes are archangels' miracles. Researchers explain this fact with the cult to archangels as celestial warriors related to the heroic deeds of the ruler (tsar Yoan Asen II). (Kanev 2015: 206–215)

The *St. Archangel Michael* Rock Monastery was founded in the 1220s by Yoakim the monk, who later became a Bulgarian patriarch. The Bulgarian tsars Yoan Asen II (1218–1241), Yoan Alexander (1331–1371) and other representatives of the royal court were among the monastery donators, and their donor's portrait are preserved to the present day.

During the Second Bulgarian Empire (12th–14th centuries) the monastery was established as a great spiritual and educational center. Wall inscriptions in the cells provide information about important historical events.



Fig. 3. One of the Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo

In the 14th century the monastery became a center of hesychasm – a mystical movement in the Orthodox Christianity. The Ivanovo Rock Complex had also existed during the early ages of the Ottoman Dominion, but it had gradually declined.

In 1978 it was declared a National Archaeological Reserve. (http://www.museumruse.com/expositions/ivanovo_bg.htm)

The Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari

The tomb was discovered in 1982 and three years later, in 1985, it was inscribed on the World Heritage List. It dates from the 3rd-century BC and reflects the fundamental structural principles of Thracian cult buildings.

The Thracian Tomb near Sveshtari is a unique artistic achievement with its polychrome half-human and half vegetable caryatids (sculpted female figures serving as an architectural support taking the place of a column or a supporting pillar), enclosed in a chiton in the shape of an upside down palmette, and painted murals. The ten female figures carved in high relief on the walls of the central chamber and the decoration of the lunette – the half-moon shaped space in its vault are the only examples of this type found so far in the Thracian lands. The fact that the original polychromy has been preserved with its ochre, brown, blue, red and lilac shades adds to the bewitching charm of an expressive composition where the anthropomorphic supports conjure up the image of a choir of mourners frozen in the abstract positions of a ritual dance.

The tomb is exceptional testimony to the culture of the Getes, a Thracian people living in the north of Hemus (the ancient name of the Balkan Mountains) who, according to ancient geographers, were in contact with the Hellenistic and Hyperborean worlds.



Fig. 4. The Thracian Tomb near Sveshtari – the half-human and half vegetable caryatids and the mural decoration of the lunette

The Thracian Tomb near Sveshtari is an extremely rare and very well preserved monument of the sepulchral architecture containing remarkable elements in terms of their quality and style sculpture and painting. The Tomb is also remarkable for the fact that it represents local art, inspired by Hellenism, a rare case of an interrupted creative process which possesses specific characteristics. This monument is unique in its architectural décor and in the specific character of the funeral rites revealed by the excavation. (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/359>)

The monument is located within Sbornyanovo Historical and Archaeological Reserve. There, by now, more than 140 archaeological sites from various historical periods are registered. Amongst them are forty Thracian burial mounds, various sanctuaries, ancient and medieval villages, buildings, a fortress (the Getes capital Helis), a mausoleum and a minaret from the ottoman period (Demir Baba Teke). (<http://www.museumisperih.com/>)

In the present paper the authors are to propose a project for popularization of these three properties with these features:

Parties

The parties that are going to participate and benefit from this project are the Regional Museum of History – Shumen representing Madara Rider in Madara National Historical and Archaeological Reserve, Shumen Province; the Regional Museum of History – Ruse representing the Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo in the national archaeological reserve, Ruse Province and the Museum of History – Ispirih representing the Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari in Sbornyanovo Historical and Archaeological Reserve, Razgrad Province.

Key Activities

The project aims at popularizing the World Heritage properties in this part of Bulgaria, to present them as a joint tourist itinerary and thus to enhance their popularity and the tourist flows, respectively – domestic and international. The key activities of the proposal are related to:

- **the organization of a scientific forum** on “World Heritage Properties in North East Bulgaria”, **presenting a joint tourist itinerary** and product of the three leading culture institutions in North East Bulgaria. The suggested mobile conference-workshop would aim at promotion and recognition of UNESCO at national and international level, sharing the World Heritage presented by the Madara Rider, the Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo and the Thracian Tomb near Sveshtari as resources for development and valorization of the cultural and historical diversity as a combination of environment and nature. The reports presented during the conference will be **published in Proceedings**;
- the program of the conference will include reports and presentations of researchers in the fields of history, university lecturers, media and marketing experts, as well as representatives of the tourism industry. Notice will be taken on students studying in specialities relative to the subject;
- **the preparation of a multilanguage brochure** targeting at young people, mass media (broadcast, internet, print media) and of course at the natural partners of museums in promoting cultural and historical heritage – schools, universities, tour agencies. The brochure will be issued in 5 languages – Bulgarian, English, German, French and Russian and will cover UNESCO’s sites in this part of Bulgaria
- **an educational tour** along the sites on the suggested joint itinerary will be organized for students. The tour will be accompanied by singled out TV and radio crews for a wider promotion of the joint product;
- **an educational game** is also going to be developed – a series of jigsaw magnet plates puzzles introducing the World Heritage properties and the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The magnet puzzles will be adapted to the educational programs of the three museums, managing the sites – the Regional Museum of History – Shumen, the Regional Museum of History – Ruse and the Museum of History – Ispirih.

The Conference, as well as the information material (multilanguage brochure and proceedings) and the educational game that are proposed will be an element of the general promotion of UNESCO’s World Heritage List, as well as of the World Heritage Convention.

Participants

In the key activities proposed with this project will take part a large number of international and national experts in communication and information services, history, archaeology, tourism, pedagogics, museum specialists, university lecturers, tourist industry and mass media representatives, teachers and students.

Location

The activities of the project are going to be implemented at the three World Heritage properties – Madara Rider Rock relief in Madara National Historical and Archaeological Reserve, Shumen Province, the Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo National Archaeological Reserve, Ruse Province and the Thracian Tomb near Sveshtari in Sboryanovo Historical and Archaeological Reserve, Razgrad Province. They will be presented as a joint tourist itinerary and as a joint product of the three institutions, managing the cultural and historical sites respectively – the museums in Shumen, Ruse and Ispirih. In relation to this it is expected that the implementation of the project will benefit all the World Heritage properties.

Objectives

The objectives of the project are presenting the Madara Rider, the Rock-Hewn Churches of Ivanovo and the Thracian tomb of Sveshtari as a joint tourist itinerary and a product, respectively, within the territory of North East Bulgaria and highlighting their significance in the history of mankind which could be used as a resource for modernity and development.

With the enhanced awareness of the audiences wider recognition of the Convention and the World Heritage properties will be achieved – by researchers interested in this sphere and by wider range of audiences. The distribution of the proposed brochure in several languages and of the Conference Proceedings promoting the cultural sites of the three regions will give additional information not only about the particular properties, but about the organization under whose auspices are they, as well.

In relation to that, models will be worked out – puzzles with the images of the three properties as part of the preparation of an educational program, promoting the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage amongst young people.

Another objective of the implementation of the proposed project is, on the basis of the joint product, developed by the Regional Museums of History in Shumen and Ruse and the Museum of History in Ispirih, to enhance the general interest not only of Bulgarian, but of foreign visitors, too.

Expected Results

Expected results of the proposed activities are enhanced interest in UNESCO’s properties in general and by various audience categories, as well as promotion of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the World Heritage List respectively. Thus, an attempt will be made at gaining larger knowledge amongst wide range of audiences, especially young people – students and members of groups of interest. Another expected result is the implementation of a new culture product in tourism and education, comprising the three World Heritage properties in North East Bulgaria. Indicators of achieving the results will be the number of tourists and the recognition of the World Heritage properties in North East Bulgaria through their common presentation. The means of verification of achieving the expected results will be increased numbers of visits accounting and receiving feedback of the key target audiences based on specific questionnaires.

Table 1. Expected results, indicators and means of verification of the proposed activities

<i>Expected Results</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of verification</i>
Enhanced interest in the properties by different audiences	Number of tourists	Number of visits accounting
Promoting the Convention and The World Heritage List and making them better known amongst wide range of audiences, especially young people – students and members of groups of interest	Recognition of the World Heritage properties in north east Bulgaria through their common presentation	Feedback of the key target audiences based on specific questionnaires
Implementation of a new culture product comprising both World Heritage properties in north east Bulgaria in tourism and education	Number of tourists and recognition of the World Heritage properties in north east Bulgaria through their common presentation	Number of visits accounting and receiving feedback of the key target audiences based on specific questionnaires

Timeframe

The specific key activities we propose for the popularization of UNESCO'S World Heritage properties in North East Bulgaria can be implemented in a period of five months as is planned in the following table:

Table 2. A model of scheduling key activities in five months

Activities	Timeframe (in months)				
	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5
Activity	Preparation of the multilanguage brochure	Print of the brochure	Conference -workshop	Preparation of the Conference Proceedings – editing, lay-out, translation	Print of Conference Proceedings
Activity	Preparation of the educational game	Preparation of the conference	Demonstration of the educational game	Educational tour	

Key Target Audiences

Key target audiences of the conference will be experts in the field of Cultural Heritage and the sites under UNESCO’s auspices, as well as students in specialities relative to the subject – History, Archaeology, Ethnology, European studies, Tourism, to *Angel Kanchev* University of Ruse, *Konstantin Preslavsky* University of Shumen and University of Economics – Varna, museum friends, members of societies interested in the cultural heritage, as well as representatives of the local authorities in Ruse, Shumen and Isperih.

The expected results are bound to magnifying the informational impact and increase in the visibility of the organization of the World Heritage.

The implementation of the project will cooperate for establishing contacts between researchers of different generations, local authorities, people tempted by heritage and arts, students, young, people and various societies, tour agencies and tour operators and other organizations of culture and tourism branch.

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