

REGIONAL TOURIST SITES IN THE “BULGARIAN ROSE VALLEY”

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RESUMO

De acordo com a definição de turismo cultural e a sua importância na Bulgária, pretendemos neste trabalho expor algumas expectativas relacionadas com a aplicabilidade prática da informação geo-turística. O espaço geográfico popularmente conhecido como o “Vale das Rosas” está enquadrado entre a Cordilheira de Stara Planina e a Cordilheira de Sredna Gora e representa um dos mais importantes "ex-libris" dos espaços turísticos da Bulgária. A especificidade deste território traduziu-se, através dos tempos, num conjunto de atividades económicas relacionadas com as rosas, flor emblemática para os búlgaros, que transformaram este vale num cenário cultural e histórico.

O início da mediatização e consequente mudança do “Vale das Rosas” está associada a uma das primeiras exposições comerciais nos Estados Unidos da América e à publicação do folhetim mais famoso búlgaro. Neste trabalho destacamos as principais localidades que constituem um marco na evolução da sociedade búlgara nos últimos dois séculos. O desenvolvimento tecnológico e produtivo no processo de transformação das rosas, embora adaptado às exigências de mercado, é um testemunho do dinamismo local em termos económicos e urbanos. Este processo será abordado através da caracterização de várias localidades inscritas neste espaço territorial - o Vale das Rosas.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Vale das Rosas, turismo, atividade económica

ABSTRACT

According to the definition of cultural tourism and its importance in Bulgaria, we intend to expose in this work some expectations concerning the practical applicability of geo-tourist information. The geographical area popularly known as the "Rose Valley" is framed between the Stara Planina and Sredna Gora mountain range and is one of the most important "ex-libris" of the tourist areas in Bulgaria. The specificity of this territory is reflected in a set of economic activities related to roses, flower emblematic for Bulgarian, who turned this valley into a cultural and historical setting.

The early media coverage and consequent change "Rose Valley" is associated with one of the first exhibitions in the United States and the publication of the most famous Bulgarian serial. In this paper we highlight the main locations that constitute a milestone in the evolution of Bulgarian society in the last two centuries. The technological and productive development in the transformation process of roses, although adapted to market requirements, is a picture of the local dynamics in economic and urban terms. This will be addressed through the characterization of various localities included in this territorial space - the Rose Valley.

KEYWORDS: Rose Valley, tourism, economic activity.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the common concept of cultural tourism, we intend to present and discuss arguments for practical applicability of the geo-tourist information. Our case study is the "Rose Valley" as a socio-geographical concept, framed in between the mountains of Stara Planina and Sredna Gora.

This obsessed territory, natural and social, presumes introversion, consolidation and opportunity and is inherent in the Bulgarian spirit, fed by the natural landscape.

The Bulgarian "visiting card" expresses this landscape and its specificities concerning the natural conditions that promote economic activities, which became common and turn the respective territory a cultural-historical framework.

The "Rose Valley", whose display in the media, is linked to one of the first exhibitions in America, puts the beginning of differences.

Here we mark the main settlements, representing a collective element of the Bulgarian social and demographical hardships. Although changed in time, they are basic historical and

geographical benchmark of the cultural-historical and socio-geographical events in the last two centuries.

The technological and production side of the process, although adapted to the relevant economic requirements, only gives evidence for the pace of interrelations and the existential fate.

It shows itself most clearly in the dynamics and structure of the economic and urban change of activity which can be outlined by means of portraying the settlements, included in the range of this research.

TOURIST ACTIVITY IN THE “BULGARIAN ROSE VALLEY”

The peculiarity of tourist activity requires an orientation accordingly to the national priorities of the country.

The division of districts in Bulgaria for tourism is a reality. This configures the need for further action in regard to tourism, as well as to achieve predefined goals – a proper tourist product and an adjusted touristic product.

The regional division of the tourist activities in Bulgaria is a process, including the multifactoral influence and display of a number of circumstances – natural, social, economic, cultural, historical, political and others.

The taxonomic stratifications of activities in the contemporary territory are argumentatively defensible, but to a high extent not comparable because the quantitative parameters do not match.

The socio-economic and tourist district division of Bulgaria is an activity, that was carried out. The question about the theoretical and methodological argumentation has been brought to the defense of the present historical and geographical values.

In order to outline the profile of the tourist activity in the “Rose Valley”, we need to take a look at the genesis of the tourist diversity of Bulgaria and the attempts to divide these economic activities into different areas.

It all started after the World War II, when Bulgaria itself was considered to be “The Riviera of the Socialist East”. The construction of the first tourist complexes was determined by the Decree of the Council of Ministers from 1948 and realized during the following years.

By the end of the 1970s the taxonomy structure of Bulgarian tourism was formed. Definitions emerged, as well as location argumentations of the tourism units, tourism site, tourism core, tourism micro regions, tourism subregions, tourism regions.

In 1970 Marin Bachvarov and others defined four tourism regions – Black Sea, Sofia, Central and Rila-Rhodopean, being the territory that we discuss to the range of the third mentioned region.

More detailed is the tourism division, made by Lyubomir Dinev and others, who specify the taxonomical tourist scheme in a descending direction as follows: main tourism region, tourism region, tourism micro region, tourism localization, tourism core and tourism site. The authors outline seven main tourism regions (Danubian, Staroplaninsky, Zadbalkansko-Srednogorsky, Rilo-Pirinsky, Rodopsky, Vitoshko-Osogovsky and Black Sea).

According to this classification the territory that we present includes lands and sites from the Zadbalkansko-Srednogorsky tourism region, consisting of three parts: Sashtinska Sredna Gora, The Rose Valley and Sarnena Sredna Gora. Emphasis in our further discussion will be in the central part of the territory, but it has been formally set apart concerning the physical geography and cultural-historical aspect.

In the next attempts to set a tourism division (1971) the Central region was divided into Sredno-Staroplaninsky and Srednogorsky. That led to a deeper detailization and exposure of the tourist potential of the territory. Fixed as an objectively functioning touristically forming area the Srednogorsky area was divided into Panagyursko-Karlovsky and Kazanlashko-Starozagorsky subregions. Thus the territory was outlined relatively circumstantially, but structurally it was divided into two parts in the direction West-East.

The division we discuss has its positive explanation in terms of the “horizontal” tourism coverage. In terms of the objective tourism process however, we consider that it has a conditional character.

In high extent this is confirmed by the scientific researches that followed, in which the economic indicators played a significant role, such as investments, revenue and common costs and calendar results, but also geopolitical benefits, cultural realization and others.

In the next attempts to get a tourism division of Bulgaria the stress falls not on the natural and social activities, which hypertrophies the idea of a national tourism frame of Bulgaria.

Some attempts to get an adequate tourism regional image, modifying it accordingly to the conjuncture or other reason determine the spirit of the territory. That confirms the conviction that the Srednogorsko-Zadbalkansky region (the area represented in a higher rank) is a type of forming region. Its primary resource secureness includes sites of the Thracian, Roman and of the Bulgarian national revival history. Although it has potential this is not conveniently used. This region is connected with the absorption of 2% of the tourism incomes and 1,5% of the income of our country.

In terms of the last tourism division of Bulgaria, we note that the Zadbalkansko-Srednogorsky region is a forming type of tourism region with surface of 8,1% of the general tourism surface of Bulgaria, and in it lives 8,5% of the country population.

In terms of the first indicator, it takes the fourth place after Plovdivsko-Zapadnorodopsky, Black Sea and Rilo-Pirinsky regions, as well as in terms of the second one (after Plovdivsko-Zapadnorodopsky, Black Sea and Sofia).

That determines the accumulation potential of the territory, which takes a substantial part in the development of the national tourist activity.

The development of tourism in “The Rose Valley” has had impacts on the economy, environment and society (fig.1). If until recently the focus was on the direct influences, now the question deals with the indirect effect of the contact with the “tourist”.

The economic emphasis in the preceding stage has leading character, which reformats local and regional, as well as national strategies.

In that stage, however, it is caused by the importance and the self-determination of the individual, in terms of satisfied social needs, namely the position held in the local society. Last but not the least – the political-geographical recognition of the territory.

The consequences of the tourism activity (or passivity) became more and more comprehensive. The authentic character of the region, whose peculiarities we didn't discuss thorough, but are part of its tourist attractiveness, is an important tourism resource. Priceless, we could say, because it is authentic.



Fig. 1 - The Rose Valley.

The significance of tourism advertising cannot be ignored but it has not been conveniently used.

Bulgaria has a face that we can see in its banner. White as the bright hopes of national prosperity, green – as the spread out of far and wide fields, and red - as the blood of those, who shed it, for Bulgaria to be what is nowadays.

In the next part we present tourist images of national tourist sites, situated in the territory considered.

TOURIST SITES IN THE REGION

The town of **Kazanlak** is situated at the foot of the Stara Planina Mountains in the picturesque Rose Valley, which paints the Kazanlak Valley with its creamy-red color. In V-IV century BC the Thracian town of Sevtopolis, named after the Thracian king Sevt III, became capital of the Thracian Odrusean state (a wealthy civilization in the valley of the ancient river Tonzos – today Tundzha). Many tombs from that time have been discovered, with the Kazanlak Tomb in the lead, giving excellent idea of the way of living of Thracians. The contemporary town originated in the beginning of the XV century. Until the end of the XIX century Kazanlak was famous for its production of rose oil, brazier goods, friezes and braids (fig. 2). After the Liberation crafts fell into decay, because of the loss of the markets in the huge Ottoman Empire, the contemporary development of the town began. The textile, aviation and military industries developed. In recent times Kazanlak has an important place in the economy of Bulgaria. Hydraulics, pneumatics, arms industry, food industry, textile industry, the production of essential oils, perfumery and cosmetics and others also developed. Here is the only enterprise producing stringed musical instruments at the Balkan Peninsula – “Kremona Bulgaria”.



Fig.2 – Kazanlak town view and a Thracian tomb.

Kazanlak has traditions in the spheres of culture and education. In 1836 Neofit Bozveli introduced here the reciprocal methods of education, in 1860 the first school was established, and in 1873 – the library room of “Iskra”. In 1883 the Kazanlak Pedagogical School was opened. Kazanlak is well known as the town of the hundred artists and dozens of nationwide famous actors.

Sites of the town are The Art gallery, the native houses of the artists Dechko Uzunov and Nenko Balkanski, The Museum of the Rose, the churches of “St. John the Precursor” and “The Holy Trinity”, the Convent, the ethnographic complex “Kulata”.

The literature and art museum of “Chudomir” presents in the List of the 100 national tourist sites of Bulgaria. It was established in 1969. In 1979 as a part of it a documental art exhibition was established, including original manuscripts and documents, photos and facsimiles, objects and belongings labeled and rated by Bulgarian writers, artists and art specialists.

The Kazanlak Thracian Tomb is situated on the Tyulbeto hill near the town. From 1979 it is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. It dates back to the end of the fourth century or to the first quarter of the third century BC. It consists of an entrance, a corridor and a beehive burial chamber. The wall-paintings in the chamber are of great artistic value. Near the tomb was built its exact replica for the visitors. In summer here takes place the interesting spectacle “Mysteries in the Valley”. During the last years another 10 Thracian tombs were discovered in the surroundings of Kazanlak. Among the most famous of them are Ostrusha – 2 kilometers south of the town of Shipka, Golyama Arsenalka – near the village of Sheynovo, the tombs of the necropolis of Shushmanets near the town of Shipka - Helvetsia, The Griffins, and the Tomb with the columns.

The town of Shipka is situated in the northern periphery of the Kazanlak valley, at the foot of the Balkan Mountains, at the southern entrance of the Shipka Pass. It is 12 km away from the town of Kazanlak. The settlement exists from the IX-VI century BC, when the Bulgarian lands were inhabited by the Thracians. The period VI-II century BC is thought to be a period of prosperity of the Thracian culture. In I century the Thracian lands were conquered by the Romans. When in 1396 Bulgaria fell under the Ottoman rule, the settlement of Shipka was established to guard and maintain the pass. It was mentioned in documents from 1472.

Thousand of tourists visit the temple-memorial “Birth of Christ” (fig.2), at the foot of the historical peak of St. Nikola in honor of all Russia soldiers who died in the Liberation wars. Built in 1902 in the style of the Yaroslav church architecture from XVII century the monastery is richly decorated with multi-colored ceramics, and the domes and crosses are gold-plated. Its main entrance is originally formed with three arches, on which is built the bell tower, 53 m high. 17 bells are mounted on it, the largest of which weighs almost 12 tons. On three marble

plates are written the names of 18 491 Russian soldiers and Bulgarian volunteers, who died on the battlefields of Bulgaria. In the ground part, on the plates of 17 sarcophagi are written the names of the regiments and the units that took part in the battles at Shipka and Sheinovo.

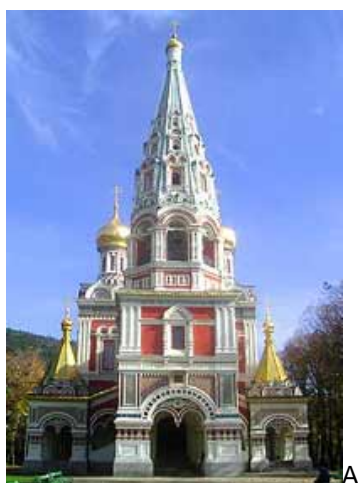


Fig 2 – The temple-memorial “Birth of Christ” (A) and the Monument of Victory (B).

Three kilometers away from the town of Shipka is situated the village of Sheinovo, one of the important places in the Liberation war. Here are the Park and the Monument of Victory (fig. 2). The pylon, high about 16 m, has the form of a sword, stuck with its handle in earth.

The National park-museum Shipka-Buzludzha, includes the peaks in Stara Planina Shipka and Buzludzha and the area of the settlements of Shipka and Sheinovo, connected with the epic fights during the Russo-Turkish war from 1877-1878.

At the peak of Shipka is the Monument of Liberty, built in 1934. It resembles a Medieval Bulgarian tower. It is 31,5 m high and to it lead 894 steps. In the middle of the ground floor is a monolithic marble sarcophagus under which are kept the bones of 317 defenders of the Shipka Pass. On the first floor is a monument of the Greek goddess of victory – Nike. The exhibition situated in the remaining seven floors of the monument, includes a rich collection of personal belongings of the participants in the battles, medals, photos and documents, paintings and weapons. On the northern part of the monument is a bronze figure of a lion, and on the other three sides are written the names of the settlement where the other great battles took place – Shipka, Stara Zagora and Sheinovo.

The area of the Shipka Peak is a unique museum in the open, showing the places of military operations. The complex includes 26 monuments, reconstructions of positions, batteries and dug-outs. Not far away is the rocky peak Orlovo Gnezdo, the field of spectacular battle.

Every year on 3rd March (the national holiday of Bulgaria) and on 23rd August (the most dramatic day of the Shipka epopee) occasions are held.

To the East of Shipka is the peak of Buzludzha, where is the place of execution of the leader Hadzhi Dimitar. Under the peak on 20th July 1891 the Buzludzha Congress took place, in which the Bulgaria social-democratic party was established.

The town of **Kalofer** is beautifully situated along the two banks of the Tundzha River, at the eastern foot of the Strazhata Hill (a natural connection between Stara Planina and Sredna Gora). Above it the highest peak of the Balkan – Botev, stretches its arms. It is the birthplace of the great Bulgarian poet and revolutionary Hristo Botev. During the first half of the XIX century Kalofer reached its zenith. There were more than 1000 braiding cog wheels, a lot of fulling-mills and dye houses. The Kalofer craftsmen and tradesmen traded with Tzarigrad, Vienna, Odessa, Braila. It was no accident that it was called “Altan Kalofer” (Golden Kalofer).

In 1845 a new bigger school was built, and in 1871 also a girls’ school was established. Different educational societies were established too. During the War of Liberation Kalofer was burned down and plundered. Sights of the settlement are: the house-museum of “Hristo Botev”, the school of Daskal Botyo, the memorial complex with the impressive monument of Hristo Botev, the monument of the leader Kalifer and others. The “Holy Nativity of Mary” convent is 6 km away from the town, on the both banks of the Byala River. In its upper stream the river cuts the incredibly beautiful canyon of “South Dzhendem”, declared a natural reserve. Here is the Raiskoto Praskalo waterfall – the highest one on the Balkans.

The town of **Karlovo** is situated in the valley of the same name, which is part of the famous Rose Valley, on the both banks of the Stara Reka River, left feeder of the Stryama River. It is home town of the greatest Bulgarian – the Apostle of liberty Vasil Levski (fig. 3).



Fig. 3 - Street in Karlovo and The monument of Vasil Levski.

The present-day town is a comparatively new settlement. It originated right after the Ottoman invasion as an administrative centre and the residence of the local Turkish feudal lords, near the old village of Sushitsa. The settlement was called Karlovo after the local Turkish feudal lord. For Karlovo the beginning of the XIX century was a time of rapid economic growth, cultural uplift and revolutionary excitement. Hundreds of cog wheels and water mills worked along the Stara Reka River. Rich tradesmen bought the production of the skilful craftsmen coppersmiths, goldsmiths, braiders, tailors, leather-workers, and traded with distant foreign countries – Egypt, Albania, Dubrovnik, Walachia, Vienna. The town became famous for its production and trade with rose oil. Karlovo transformed into a large vivid settlement with arranged centre, clock tower, pretty houses. The Russian-Turkish Liberation War put an end to the wealthy life of the town, in spite of the won freedom. In 1877 Turkish soldiers plundered and burned it down.

The town was the birthplace of teacher Botyo Petkov, the father of Hristo Botev, of doctor Ivan Bogorov (Bulgarian national revival bookman, publisher of the first Bulgarian newspaper “Bulgarian Eagle” in Leipzig in 1846-1847), the brothers Evlogi and Hristo Georgievi (eminent representatives of the originating in that time bourgeoisie, patriots who gave 6 million golden levs for Bulgarian university), Braiko Hadzhigenov, Hristo Popvasilev and others. In Karlovo was born also the famous Bulgarian alpinist Hristo Prodanov, who first climbed a peak higher than 8000 m – Lhotse (8516 m), and was the first Bulgarian who made a step on the “Roof of the world” – Mount Everest (8848 m, on 20th April 1984), and remained forever in its freezing embrace.

Sites of interest in Karlovo are the Monument of Vasil Levski (in the old part of town), the churches of “St. Nikola” and “The Virgin Mary” with wall-paintings by Stanislav Dospevski, the ancient stone fountain, the Art gallery, Aleksandrovata, Koprinarovata, Patevata and Pulevata houses, and others. In “The Old School” (1871) – a monument from the age of the Bulgarian revival, is situated the Museum of History.

Sopot is situated 5 km western from Karlovo. The settlement was mentioned for the first time in documents from 1376. The town once had the beautiful Bulgarian name Byala Cherkva (White Church), eternalized by the most noted citizen of Sopot – Ivan Vazov, in his book “Pod Igoto” (“Under the Yoke”). During the Bulgarian Renaissance it was a craftsman’s settlement with developed goldsmith’s trade, homespun tailoring, braiding, rose oil production. Because of the needs of the rose oil trade, in Sopot was even established a glass factory, known as “Shishedzhiinitsata”. Because of its bloom, it was called Altan Sopot (Golden Sopot). During the Liberation it was burned down, and its population was killed or banished. Its economic progress is connected with the building of the railway line Sofia-

Karlovo-Burgas. The town developed also due to tourism. Many tourists are attracted by the “Ivan Vazov” Museum House (established in 1935), the Convent, the water-mill of Dyado Stoyan, immortalized in “Pod Igoto”, The “St. Spas” Monastery, where Levski found shelter, and others (fig. 4).



Fig. 4 – A view of Sopot city and the the “S. Spas” Monastery.

The convent is situated just 150 m to the North of the town centre. In XV century at the place of the small church of “The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin” existed a chapel. In 1665 residential building were erected around it, which is the evidence for the establishment of the monastery itself. In 1877 the monastery was burned down by the Turks. The trellis vine in the yard is more than 350 years old and is thought to be one of the oldest in Bulgaria.

Botev Peak is the highest point of the Stara Planina Mountain – 2376 m, and it is third by height in Bulgaria after the peaks of Musala and Vihren. The peak is on the territory of the Central Balkan National Park – one of the largest European national parks. From Raiskite skali (The Paradise Rocks) in this part of the mountain falls the highest of all 300 waterfalls in Bulgaria, and also on the Balkans – the Raiskoto Praskalo Waterfall (124,5 m). It collects waters from the everlasting snow-drift, situated almost at Botev Peak itself.

A meteorological station and a television tower were built on its territory, which spreads tv and radio signal over about 50% of the territory of Bulgaria. Until 1950 Botev Peak was called Yumrukchal.

CONCLUSION

“The Rose Valley” is a tourist term. It includes the territory full of rose fields, as well as the settlements which for a long time have been historical benchmarks of the Bulgarian self-awareness and self-confidence.

“The Concentration” of the Bulgarian here is not only a historical fact, but also historical regularity. It plays significant role in the development of the scientific thought of Bulgaria, because it represents enough argumentative conditions for preservation of history and culture.

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