

## CULTURAL TOURISM AND THE TRANSBOUNDARY COOPERATION

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### *Abstract*

*The article provides a brief overview of the opportunities provided by the joint development of cultural tourism in the Balkan Peninsula region. It is proposed to develop some routes as a product of cross-border cooperation. Attention is directed to the Thracian-Illyrian cultural heritage. The Thracian-Illyrian tribes have participated in the genesis of all Balkan nations. Their heritage provides an opportunity to create a single regional Balkan emitting and receiving market for cultural tourism. Specific routes will be mentioned on the residences of the Odrysians and Satrae, Dacians and Getae, Paeonians and Dardani, who through cross-border cooperation projects could become attractive tourist products.*

**Key words:** *cultural tourism, Thracian-Illyrian heritage, routes, residences*

### INTRODUCTION

Alternative types of tourism are created by the wishes of communities who have realized their responsibility for the environment, who would not want to replace the stress in their everyday life with the stress of mass tourism and can afford it [4]. This does not mean that all other participants in mass tourism are not aware of these needs, and perhaps simply cannot afford another type of tourism. The very word „alternative“ means literally „one after another“, i.e. choice between two or more options. On the one hand, as is the case with Bulgaria, there are mainly the mass sea recreative and mountain ski tourism, and on the other most other species. They are alternative mainly because they are not massive. Otherwise, most of them have been developed long before the so-called „mass“ types of tourism. Moreover, according to the tourist resources of a country, some types of tourism declared alternative in some countries, others are mass - culturally, culturally, culturally, etc., which have no less harmful influences than the classic mass tourism types. Tourism resources are territorially limited, which enables individual countries to specialize in the development of different types of tourism [5]. Alternative types of tourism, even if they are not the main purpose of the trip, contribute to

the extension of the tourist season and diversification of leisure time in mass tourism. The promotion of alternative tourism types is boosted by the drop in the revenues from mass tourism and, above all, its profitability. The most active in the promotion of alternative types of tourism are those that do not have the necessary resources to develop typical mass tourism such as Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and others. It is hardly necessary for the developing mass tourism countries to shrink it at the expense of the alternative, but rather to make it „softer“ to approach the characteristics to the alternative.

Undoubtedly, the diversification of leisure time can be successful with the development of alternative types of tourism. The great benefit of developing them to extend the season, employment, average stays, revenue, etc. is well known.

The problem is that if we want to be successful, these species must develop strategically, in a complex way, not in a piece, to have a finished look that satisfies tourists and brings advantages over competition. Unfortunately, countries with the necessary tourism resources do not always have the means to develop the different types of tourism at a competitive level.

One of the promising types of tourism that has become very popular in recent times is **cultural tourism**.

Unfortunately, the economic results of the development of this type of tourism in Bulgaria are far too insignificant for now. Revealing some of the causes of this condition is not enough in itself. It is necessary to identify some steps that would help to channel the efforts for the development of cultural tourism.

The very concepts of culture and cultural tourism are so diverse and involve so many varieties that many researchers have some reason to say that this type of tourism has a much larger market share than it counts.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The purpose of this research is not the definition, nature, specificities and importance of cultural tourism. In our tourist literature they are well described by researchers such as T.Parusheva, Br. Koprinarov, St. Marinov, M. Neshkov and others [3, 4, 5, 6].

We will only look at some peculiarities that make it difficult to solve the problem of attracting enough participants and distract the efforts for the successful development of this kind of tourism.

The methods used for the current article are analysis and synthesis of specialized literature on the topic and presentation of the critical opinion on the actual situation of cultural tourism and the transboundary cooperation.



Fig.1.The main problems the development of cultural tourism is facing in the Balkans' area  
 Source: Own design.

Based on the analysis, the author expressed his own opinions on what it could be made to develop cultural tourism in the Balkans' area.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Let's start with the definition of the very notion of culture. Perhaps nobody knows how many definitions this term has. According to UNESCO's definition, „Culture is a multiplicity of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional traits of a society or a social group, it encompasses not only art and literature, but also the way of life, cohabitation, value systems, traditions and beliefs.“ Or, formulated briefly, culture is a set of all material and spiritual achievements created by a society that are realized and used by it. From the definition we see how multi-layered is the concept, how much various human activities and relationships affect. Koprinarov points out the relation of culture to the different aspects of human everyday life - „Human environment; social heritage and traditions; Lifestyle; behaviour; rules of social life; international relations; values and norms; symbols and meanings; perceptions; similarities and differences between people“ [3].

A number of others could be added to them, but they also indicate what an incredible variety of relationships are intertwined in the notion of culture and how many different aspects should be considered when an action plan is exhausted. All these relations arise on the part of the material and intangible elements of the „higher culture“ - historical landmarks, works of art, painting, music, architecture, museums, etc., and on the other - language, education, clothing, religion and ritual, crafts, folklore, etc.

The diversity of the concept of culture also provokes diversity in the definitions of cultural tourism. One of them, Drayer, defines him as: „Cultural tourism is all trips whose motives are based on cultural activities, all the activities the tourist feels like“[3].

This and almost all other definitions of culture and cultural tourism are so comprehensive that they practically include all kinds of tourism as far as they are the achievements of society and it is impossible to say that one type of tourism is cultural and another non-cultural. We only distinguish between motivational, cognitive, educational, religious, festival, etc. types of

cultural tourism - for specialists and mass tourism. That is why it would be good to decide exactly what is meant by saying that Bulgaria will develop cultural tourism and what exactly the subspecies will develop predominantly in order not to dilute the efforts. Bulgaria is a relatively poor country and does not have the necessary financial and human resources to develop at the same time all the subcategories of cultural tourism at a competitive level. In such a small territory as our country are so invaluable natural and anthropogenic tourism resources that many people have reason to ask themselves why with such resources and such huge for our scale, modern bed base our revenues from international tourism are only about 6.2 billion BGN per year?

The reasons are numerous, but as far as cultural tourism is concerned, we will mention, as a start, the extremely strong competition in this area of our neighbouring countries. It is often pointed out that Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Turkey are the richest countries of ancient artefacts in Europe. But to what extent is this known to the general public? That Bulgaria is a country with ancient culture, one of the cradles of European, and why not of the world civilizations? Just the Greeks have the unbelievable luck of being heirs of the culture of ancient Greece and the Eastern Roman Empire. The Hellenic culture is spread by Alexander the Macedonian and the Diadochi in the satrapies of the East. The glorious examples of Hellenic art have become the model of imitation of Roman artists, sculptors, architects, poets, and so on. And Roman legions have spread these patterns throughout the world. Later, during the Renaissance, in the Southern European art, the Hellenic and the Roman models were revived and became the subject of the admiration and imitation of the then-creators, thanks to the patrons such as Cosimo and Lorenzo di Medici, and the Byzantine philosophers and cultural figures who saved the Venetian galleys after the capture of Constantinople by Mehmed Fatih II. During the Enlightenment through the so-called Grand Tours, this worldview and these works became available to young aristocrats and bourgeoisers from Northern Europe and

the United Kingdom. This generalization of Hellenic and Roman art has in fact played the role of free advertising and propaganda for centuries. If this were to be done for good, we would need inexhaustible means to match the results of this „advertisement“. Despite this huge advantage, it could be offset, to a certain extent, by properly selecting the emitting and receiving markets and choosing a win-win strategy for the development of cultural tourism.

Still, in which direction to concentrate our efforts if we want to become a visible factor in the international tourism market of cultural tourism and to realize significant revenues corresponding to our rich cultural and historical heritage. There is currently a campaign for project preparation and application for European funds for cultural tourism projects. There would be nothing wrong with the enrichment of our cultural and historical heritage, if it was not the danger of dissipating the efforts and the means and degenerating away - in every village an ancient fortress or a church, if possible metropolitan. Like any - a village with a stadium as a world championship, despite the lack of population.

At the moment, talking about the development of cultural tourism in our country, we mean mainly the development of recipes and receptive local markets. Creating prerequisites for development of an integrated tourism and integrated tourist product is also favourable for the sustainable development [1]. Its combination also with rural tourism, leads to the creation of unique tourism service that satisfies the new needs – divergence, adventure, nearness to town, nature, humanism, delicious dishes, relatively low cost [2]. But before we start creating and shaping the product, we have to answer a number of questions: Who and what are the expected guests? What are the possible emitting markets and what are the interests of potential tourists from sending countries? Where will the tourists come from, how will they learn about the monuments of culture in Bulgaria, scattered around villages and mountains that they do not suspect that they exist or have the opportunity to reach them? What will be relied on by

different visitors - on organized or non-organized trips, with group or individual transport, how and where will the shelter and the food be? Who and how will organize and perform their reception and service, etc.?

Perhaps the most important questions we first need to answer are the subdued cultural tourism with the most attractive power and chances of conquering market segments, and which are these segments. Probably the greatest chances we would have if we use our unique immovable cultural and historical heritage as a basis for the development of cultural tourism - formations, mounds, necropolises, religious buildings, etc. But at what age should we set, at what time, in order to be competitive, attract the attention of potential tourists? We have already pointed out that we could hardly fight countries like Greece and Italy in the field of ancient Hellenic and Roman cultures. Not that we do not have wonderful examples of these epochs, but when one wants to see the Pope, he goes to Rome. There is another problem in our Balkan region. In the last 11-12 centuries the borders of the Balkan countries have been remade hundreds of times. Still there are disputes about which historical monuments from which people are created and whose culture they belong to. Perhaps the historical heritage with comparatively the least controversial monuments is the Thracian-Illyrian, since at that time modern states did not exist.

Apart from the fact that the Thracian-Illyrian tribes participate in the ethnogenesis of all Balkan peoples, focusing on their cultural heritage gives us the unique chance to create a **common Balkan cultural and historical product and a Balkan receptive and emitting market as a manifestation of cross-border cooperation**. Indeed, there are also unclear, undisclosed and controversial issues, but we believe that with the combined efforts of all Balkan countries this common product would more easily find its place on the international tourism market. The main problem is that Balkan history and culture have always stayed away from the attention of the broad masses in Europe and the world and are not known despite their great universal and

historical significance. Considerable means will be needed to shape and promote the product. Perhaps initially we are likely to face Greece's reluctance to impose a new regional product on cultural tourism, as it is an established destination for a brand-name cultural tour. But we hope everyone would benefit from offering a new exciting travel product.

Logically, the question arises - with what and how should it begin? Some of our historians and archaeologists call on tour operators to co-finance excavations. Unfortunately, firstly, Bulgarian tour operators do not have the necessary financial capabilities and secondly, they are commissioners and distributors and expect to be offered a ready-made product. Clearly, in order to create such a product, the coordinated efforts of archaeologists, historians, ethnographers, tour operators, hoteliers, restaurateurs, interested NGOs, government bodies, etc. are needed.

As a **starting point for cross-border cooperation**, we think that it is necessary to identify routes that would be of mutual interest to the Balkan countries and methodically start with the creation of the specific products. For this purpose, we offer the following example routes that would enter the Balkan product of cultural tourism - „Following the Traces of the Ancient Thracians“:

### 1. Residences of Odrysian Kings and Thracian Cult Complexes



Fig.2. The route including the residences of Odrysian Kings and Thracian Cult Complexes

Source: <https://www.google.bg/maps/>

- **Tekirdağ**, Turkey (Rodosto), which is home to the Byzantine residences - probably from the times of Teres; Heraion Teichos (the fortress of Hera) - capital during the time of Cersobleptes, son of Cotys, conquered by Philip II of

Macedon; The holy mountain of Heraion Oros (Tekirdağ), called by the Thracians Ganeada - the Great Goddess Mother from which many residences and tombs are scattered [7].

- **Doriskos**, near Enos / Enez (near the Turkish-Greek border), a Thracian fortress occupied during the times of the Odrysian kings Teres and his son Sparatocos after the Persians withdrew; the second Odrysian capital in this region. At 20 km north of Enos there is the ancient Ipsel (Kipsella), where Kerseblept begins to coin the coins, and against the mouth of Maritsa, Samothraki island is the sanctuary where the Thracian kings were dedicated to the Samothrakian mysteries, as well as Philip II, who intervened there and so to speak in a „church marriage“ with his wife Olympiada. The route could include other Thracian residences in the area of Alexandroupoulos.

- **Tatul** (Momchilgrad Municipality), an ancient cult complex, existed and used for thousands of years from the Neolithic Age (VII - VI millennium BC) to the Middle Ages. Perperek - 15 km. northeast of Kardzhali, an ancient sanctuary from the Chalcolithic period (before 8000 B.C.), a Thracian temple complex of the Satrae tribe, a fortress and a town where later West-Romans, Goths, East-Romans and Bulgarians lived. Destroyed in 1362 [7].



Fig.3. Burial mask of Seuthos the III found near Golyama Kosmatka

Source: <http://trakia-tours.com/king-seuthes-iii-gallery-174.html>

- **The valley of the Thracian kings - Seuthopolis**, at the bottom of the Koprinka dam near Kazanlak, the capital of the Odrysian kingdom of 320 BC, founded by Seuthes III. Unfortunately, this only well-studied Thracian city can be exposed to visitors only if the

project of arch. J. Tilev for his visualization. To this complex belongs the Thracian tomb in Kazanlak, the cult buildings in the mounds near the town of Shipka - the Golyama Kosmatka, Ostrusha, Shushmanets, Grifoni, Helvetia, the Great Arsenal and others [10]. There's an additional activity for people, interested in visiting the sanctuary near Starosel and the fortress-residence on Kozi Gramadi Peak.

- **Kabile** (10 km from Yambol) - an ancient Thracian town from IV century BC (created around 2000 BC), a crossing of the Ainos (Enez) roads - through Hemus (Stara Planina) and Via Diagonalis - from Byzantium (Istanbul) through Serdica (Sofia) to Naissos (Niš). Residence of Odrysian kings Sparatocos and Scostodos. In the 4th century AD is the episcopal centre of Thrace. Destroyed by the Avars in 583.

**2. Getae and Dacians** (likely to have been parts of the same North-Thracian people, as the Getae lived on both sides of the Lower Danube, in Bulgaria and Romania, and the Dacians in the mountains westwards till the river Tisza).

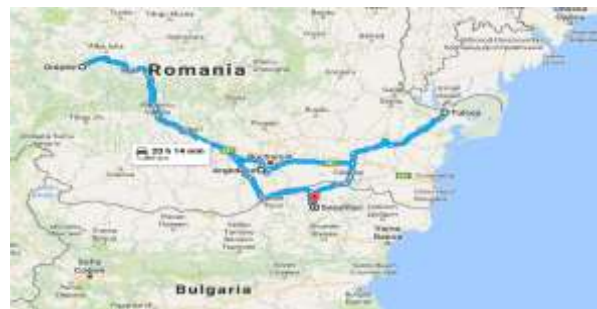


Fig.4. The route including the key attractions regarding Getae and Dacians

Source: <https://www.google.bg/maps/>

-**Historical-archaeological reserve „Sboryanovo“**, 10 km from Iserih, to the village of Sveshtari. It includes the remains of the Thracian town of Helis (dedicated to Helios the God of the Sun), which existed from the end of the 4th century BC. until 250 BC. - Residence of the Getae king Dromichaetes, the victor of diadochus Lysimachus. Perhaps earlier in the early Iron Age of this place was Dausdava - „The Wolf City“. Daos - a wolf, an attribute of Helios, from which the ethnonym of the Dakoi - Dacians probably originates.



The Sveshtari Thracian-Hellenistic tomb, where burial of Dromichaetes was found, is declared by UNESCO as an object of world cultural and historical heritage, as well as the Muslim sanctuary Demir Baba Teke, revered by the Alevi.

- An additional activity, if preferred, to the Danube delta and a visit to the town of **Tulcea**, where the ancient Thracian (Getae) town of Aegyssus, founded in the Bronze Age - II millennium BC was located.

-**Argedava**, in Popești, Mihăilești, in the district of Giurgiu, Romania - the supposed capital of **Burebista**, king of the Dacians and Getae, ruled between 82 and 44 BC. His vast country covers the area from the Carpathian territories in Slovakia to the Stara Planina and from the Middle Danube to the Black Sea, till Apolonia (Sozopol).



Fig.5. Sarmizegetuza Regia, the old capital of Decebal, the King of Dacia

Source:

[https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarmizegetusa\\_Regia](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarmizegetusa_Regia) [11]

- The **Mountains of Orăștie**, near the village of Gradishte, dist. Hunedoara. There are six Dacian fortresses - **Sarmizegetusa**, the capital of the last Dacian king - **Decebal "The Brave"** (86-106 AD), Costești-Blidaru, Piatra Roșie, Costești-Cetățuie, Căpâlna and Bănița. The six fortresses, built in the style of murus dacicus that formed the defensive system of Decebal against the Romans, are included in the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage [9].

### 3. Paeonians and Dardani

-**Skupi**, an archaeological reserve on the territory of the city of Skopje, originally founded by the Dardani and was their temporary capital. After his capture by the Romans and receiving the status of municipia (106 AD), the governor of the province of Dardania resided there.

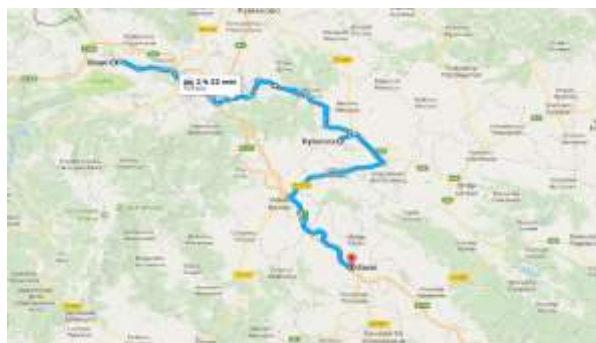


Fig.6. The route including the key attractions regarding Paeonians and Dardani

Source: <https://www.google.bg/maps/>

-**Bylazora**, near village of Knezhje, municipality Sveti Nikole in Republic of Macedonia – a presumable capital of the Paeonians. Captured in 217 A.D. by the armies of Philip V Macedonian. The Paeonians inhabited by the territory between the Scombrus Mountain (present day Vitosha) to the north and the ancient Kingdom of Macedon to the south and between the rivers Struma and Vardar [8]. The tribal group of the Paeonians is part of the Thracian-Illyrian society. They are probably a mixture of Pelasgian, Illyrian and Thracian tribes with colonists returning from Asia Minor - Phrygians, Misians, Carians.



Fig.7. Archaeological site of Bylazora

Source:

<https://www.google.ro/search?q=Archaeological+site+of+Bylazora> [12]

- **Stobi**, Gradsko Municipality, at the mouth of the river Vardar and Cherna in the Republic of Macedonia – an ancient paeonian city, conquered in 168 B.C. by the Romans. Since 325 B.C. is the seat of bishop. It is the largest archaeological complex in the Republic of Macedonia.

## CONCLUSIONS

At a later stage, other routes could be added to these routes. But there is a danger of local patriotism getting so many suggestions that ultimately no solutions can be reached. In order to offer these routes we were guided by the point of view of a tourism specialist. To achieve this, however, it is necessary to form teams of narrow specialists in the relevant fields to turn them into ready-made tourist products.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty that has to be overcome on the way of offering and promoting this product on the tourist market is to promote the history and culture of the Thracian-Illyrian tribes and to make it known to potential tourists. That's why the usual means of advertising and propaganda will not be enough. Perhaps the best effect for the promotion of this culture would be the creation and popularization of science-fiction, feature films and video games for everyday life, culture, gods and heroes (Dionysus, Zamolkses, Rezos, Orpheus, Spartak, Decebal, etc.). The task requires enormous resources, but there is no better way to promote it. Unfortunately, the few films of this age related to the Thracian peoples - the "Dacians" and the "Trajan's Column" - are only remembered by a small part of the older population of the former socialist camp. In the only film of a newer years in which the main heroes are Thracians – "Hercules", directed by Brett Ratner, in 2014, they represent the Thracians as Greek tribes, and the mythical hero Rezos - a candidate for the king of the nonexistent then-Greece. In the film "The Golden Fleece", Orpheus's role is played by an African American, and may cause the wrong idea that the Thracians were African tribes. These paradoxes show how important it is to clarify to the general public what the Thracians are if we want to make a success in promoting this product of cultural tourism.

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