



УНИВЕРСИТЕТСКА
МЛАДЕЖКА АКАДЕМИЯ
ЗА УПРАВЛЕНИЕ НА ЗНАНИЯТА

MODERN DIMENSIONS IN EUROPEAN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AREA

PROCEEDINGS

PROCEEDINGS

Volume 12

А БУКВЕНТЪ С ПИСАЦИНЕМЪ

MODERN DIMENSIONS
IN
THE EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL
AND
RESEARCH AREA

Volume 12
2024

СЪВРЕМЕННИ ИЗМЕРЕНИЯ
НА
ЕВРОПЕЙСКОТО ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛНО
И
НАУЧНО ПРОСТРАНСТВО

Том 12
2024

ЗА ЕУКВИТЕ
СО ПИСМЕНИЕХЪ

The Scientific conference and the proceedings are realized within a project funded under Ordinance, funded by the Ministry of Education and Science and Contract № PCHFNP-2024-06 on the topic: “Financing of scientific event of the University Youth Knowledge Academy (UNYKA)”.

All papers are original work of the authors, and the opinions expressed are theirs.

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University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, 2024
ISSN 2367-7988

**MODERN DIMENSIONS
IN
THE EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL
AND
RESEARCH AREA**

PROCEEDINGS

with Papers of the Eighteenth International Traveling Seminar of ULSIT

“Modern Dimensions in the European Educational and Research Area.
Bulgarian-Sicilian Cultural Communication”

2nd – 7th June 2024

University of Messina

Sicily, Italy

**Academic Publisher “Za bukvite – O pismeneh”
Sofia • 2024**

CONTENTS

WELCOMING ADDRESSES	9
 PLENARY SESSION. BULGARIAN-SICILIAN CULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS. BULGARIA MEETS SICILY	
Boryana Buzhashka, Vanya Dobreva. BULGARIAN-VATICAN RELATIONS IN THE PERIOD 1975 – 2009 ACCORDING TO DOCUMENTS KEPT IN THE DIPLOMATIC ARCHIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF BULGARIA	21
Ventzislav Velev. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SOME OF THE MORE SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS IN BULGARIAN-ITALIAN POLITICAL AND CULTURAL RELATIONS.....	27
Boryana Buzhashka, Vanya Dobreva. CULTURAL CONTACTS AND INTERCONNECTIONS: THE BALKANS AND SICILIA. THE BULGARIANS IN ALBANIA.....	33
 SECTION 1. LIBRARY SCIENCE, PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT	
Ivanka Yankova, Kamelia Nusheva. INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AS A HUMAN RIGHT IN THE LIGHT OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS.....	43
Stoyan Boyanov, Marchelo Ivanov, Stoyan Garov. MEDIA POWER. A FACTOR FOR PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY	49
Kamelia Planska-Simeonova. ART AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS	55
Lubomira Parijkova. HEART BREAKING BOOKS	60
Elena Savova. LIBRARIAN PROFESSION: “GUARDS OF THE PAST, SERVANTS OF THE FUTURE”	65
Sabina Eftimova. THE USE OF FICTION AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: APPLICATION AND PERSPECTIVES	68
Valery Todorov, Ralitsa Yotova. BETWEEN TRUTH AND POST-TRUTH: EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE NEW MEDIA REALITY AND RESULTING INFORMATION DEVIATIONS.....	73
Elisaveta Tsvetkova. LIBRARIES AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – MIRAGE OR REALITY	80
Hristina Bogova. PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AS A FACTOR FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN A UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENT	85
Milka Petrova. FROM QUANTUM THINKING TO QUANTUM LEADERSHIP	92

SECTION 2.
CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE

Rumen Draganov. TOURIST ZONING IN BULGARIA AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL TOURISM	103
Ventzislav Velev. SUPERNATURAL FORCES AND MYTHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS IN BULGARIAN AND ITALIAN MYTHOLOGICAL IDEAS: COMPARISON AND ANALOGIES OF SELECTED IMAGES	108
Evgeni Velev, Sonya Spasova. THE ROLE OF VISUAL CULTURE IN EDUCATIONAL TOURISM IN THE CONTEXT OF CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE	116
Arsini Kolev. CULTURAL HERITAGE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL TOURISM	122
Nadezhda Tomova. DIGITALIZATION AND CULTURAL HERITAGE. PROJECT PRESENTATION: CREATION OF AN INTERACTIVE LABORATORY FOR RESEARCH AND GENERATION OF NEW SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE SPEAR – ALEGENDARY WEAPON FROM ANTIQUITY	128
Blagovest Petrov. CULTURAL ROUTE FOR THE MILITARY MEMORY TO COL. SERAFIMOV IN SMOLYAN REGION	134

SECTION 3.
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES AND INFORMING SCIENCE

Ivan Garvanov. DRONE DETECTION BY PARABOLIC MICROPHONE	149
Ruska Manolova, Marchelo Ivanov, Mariyan Mitkov. COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR GUARANTEEING THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION	156
Denitsa Mladenova. PROJECT ACTIVITY IN MODERN SCIENCE	164
Stefka Toleva-Stoimenova. TEACHING AND LEARNING DISCRETE MATHEMATICS	171

SECTION 4.
GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Grudi Angelov. IMPLICATION OF THE LAW FOR MANAGEMENT AND FUNCTIONING OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY SYSTEM AT TIME OF CRISES	179
Viktoria Spasova. CRYPTOGRAPHIC TECHNIQUES IN USER AUTHENTICATION	188
Plamen Teodosiev. TURKISH POLICY IN THE BALKANS. APPEARANCE OF NEO-OTTOMANISM OR IT IS AN EXPORT OF TURKISH NATIONALISM	193
Ivan Trenchev, Radoslav Stoev. INTEGRATING GAME THEORY AND CATASTROPHE THEORY FOR COUNTERACTING ADVERSARIAL AI: ALGORITHMIC APPROACH IN MILITARY TACTICAL SYSTEMS	198
Steliania Yordanova. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES	208

Stoyan Denchev. PROBLEMS OF SECURITY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS 213

Panayot Gindev, Daniela Pavlova. ANALYSIS OF THE RISKS AND CHALLENGES TO NATIONAL SECURITY ARISING FROM THE DIGITIZATION OF STATE GOVERNANCE 218

Asen Zahariev. CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN DYNAMICALLY CHANGING ENVIRONMENT 225

Asen Zahariev. NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION (NATO) ROLE AND PEACEKEEPING MECHANISMS 232

Martin Zahariev. THE PROCESSING OF PASSENGER NAME RECORDS FOR THE PURPOSES OF COMBATING TERRORISM AND SERIOUS CRIME: THE BULGARIAN PERSPECTIVE 238

SECTION 5. EXCELLCITY AT ULSIT

Lyubomir Gotsev, Boyan Jekov. CYBER THREATS AND AI SOLUTIONS IN SMART GRID: A HOLISTIC APPROACH 247

Magdalena Garvanova. DATA FUSION IN SMART CITY 257

Evelina Zdravkova, Teresa Trencheva, Elena Simova. MEDIA MORPHOSIS AND STEGANOGRAPHY IN THE INTELLIGENT CITY 262

Snezhana Petrova, Georgi Dimitrov. CONCEPTUAL AND LOGICAL MODEL OF A SMART CITY 269

Svetoslava Dimitrova, Tereza Trencheva. R&I MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION CAPACITY BUILDING: EXCELLCITY'S CURRENT PROGRESS 274

Eugenia Kovatcheva, Deyan Matev. EXCELLCITY IN ULSIT – CHALLENGES AND RISKS 278

CULTURAL ROUTE FOR THE MILITARY MEMORY TO COL. SERAFIMOV IN SMOLYAN REGION

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Abstract: *In this paper the thesis is presented that the military monuments located on the territory of the Smolyan region have the necessary potential to become an essential part of the cultural routes in the region. The necessary informative basis has been built regarding the historical events and personalities that led to the final liberation of the Rhodopes, on which to base the current proposal. Emphasis is placed on the mythologized image of Colonel Vladimir Serafimov and his command of the 21st Srednogorets Regiment, which played a major role in the heroic events during the Balkan War that took place near Mount Srednogorets. The steadily increasing interest in the tourist sites related to them, as well as the possibilities to realize this potential, through the addition of the war memorials, as an invariable part of the cultural-knowledge routes presented by the municipality of Smolyan and the Regional history museum in the city, have been assessed. In support of the proposed cultural route "Memory to Colonel Serafimov", an exemplary tourist program has been suggested, which has the resources to be implemented both independently and with the assistance of RHM – Smolyan officials.*

Keywords: *military monuments, Vladimir Serafimov, Rhodope Shipka, Balkan War, cultural route, Bulgarian army, 21st Srednogorets regiment, tourism*

Introduction

Bulgaria is a country with a strategic location, which predetermines its historical role, at the crossroads between geopolitical interests and cultural interactions, of the different eras that have left their traces on our lands. The importance of its territory often intertwined the interests of East and West, and it itself was the arena of many historical battles.

The invariable involvement of our country in the military conflicts accompanying the historical development of the region has built over the centuries the myth of the heroism of the Bulgarian soldier, and the memory of his self-sacrifice dotted our lands with monuments to known and unknown soldiers who died under the Bulgarian flag.

The Rhodope Mountains have not been spared this fate, and among its pain-filled hills lies the reverence that the local population holds for their protectors. In the heart of the mountain, a central place is occupied by the Smolyan region, which has preserved within its borders one of the most emblematic examples of military honor and self-denial – in the name of the people, Bulgaria and the Rhodopes. The recognition of the people of Rhodope, towards the heroes who shed their blood for their freedom, can be felt in every corner of the district, through the erected 65 soldiers' monuments [1], among which a mausoleum-ossuary, guarding the memory of the "Savior of the Rhodopes" Colonel Serafimov and lovingly called – "Rhodope's Shipka".

"The Savior of the Rhodopes"

Vladimir Serafimov was born on August 12, 1860 in the village of Adzhar (now Svezhen), in the large family of Daskal Geno – Vasil Levski's cousin, which predetermined his good education and the development of enlightened views. In 1877 his birthplace was burned to ashes by the Turks, and his father was killed. On his return home, Vladimir Serafimov accepts the very severe massacre carried out there (an act comparable to the one in Batak), and with misunderstanding refers to the reason for this cruelty of the Ottomans – the entry of general Gurko on the southern slopes of Stara Planina, as well as his sudden retreat, which led to the burning of the cities that were barely freed from him... and Adjar [2]! An act as tragic as it was decisive for the future display of heroism by Colonel Serafimov, who refused to repeat the actions of Gen. Gurko

did not give up the liberated territories, so that they would not turn into the ashes of his birthplace.

In 1880 he worked for a while in his brother Kosta's law office in Sofia before going to military school. Vladimir Serafimov's efforts and skills were appreciated and he was awarded a silver Cossack saber, which he never parted with [3].

His military career is dotted with acts of heroism, dedication, patriotism, gradually building the halo of a brilliant military leader and strategist on the battlefield. Orders and ranks grow with methodical succession, and the big heart of the young officer, involves with his fervor the soldiers he leads during the wars. In 1886 he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant, in 1888 to the rank of captain, in 1899 to the rank of major, and in 1904 to the rank of lieutenant colonel. Vladimir Serafimov's name became synonymous with dignity in the Bulgarian army and even Tsar Ferdinand invited him to be his adjutant, but he turned down the offer. In front of relatives he also shared why: "I cannot become a salon officer. I am a soldier and I will remain so" [3]. Once again, Colonel Serafimov declared that he prefers to be close to the soldiers he commands and the people whose freedom he protects, and does not subordinate his honor to a high position and a peaceful life while battles are still being fought in the Bulgarian lands.

With the beginning of the Balkan War (1912–1913), already a colonel, Vladimir Serafimov took command of the 21st Infantry Regiment, with which he was destined to remain in history [4].

Already in the first days of the war, the tasks set before the regiment – to break through the Turkish units in the Rhodopes and destroy the Tumrash wedge; then to advance south to cut the railway at Buk station (now Greece) and liquidate the units of the Ottoman army in northern Greece were crowned with success. The first battles of the regiment on October 5, 1912, brought defeat to the Ottoman opponents. By October 7, Devin was released, and on October 13, Colonel Serafimov was welcomed as a liberator in Pashmakli (now Smolyan), the villages of Raykovo and Ustovo [5]. Continuing its march to the south along the Arda River, the 21st Regiment gradually liberated settlements that remained for decades outside the borders of our country, the border of which until that moment was at the border of Chepelare, Pamporovo and Rozhen. The determined actions of the Bulgarian soldiers set in motion a plan by the Ottomans for a war in the Rhodopes, to use the local Mohammedan population as a fighting unit against the advancing Bulgarian units. Yaver Pasha was chosen to be the opponent of Colonel Serafimov in the battles that took place on October 19, 20 and 21, in the area of Mount Kavgadzhik (now Srednogorets) [6].

"In front is an asker, behind – shame, above – rain"

Yaver Pasha's army, numbering more than 20000 units, began to advance from Rudozem in the direction of the Arda river, with the strategy including an attack from the rear and from all sides, on the Kavgadzhik peak (1311m) established by the 21st regiment numbering 5000 soldiers.

The information about the Ottoman maneuvers reached the headquarters of the division in Asenovgrad, and after an analysis, Colonel Dimitar Geshev issued an order to Colonel Serafimov that the military unit retreat to the old Bulgarian border at Pamporovo – Chepelare – Rozhen.

"The Birth of a Legend"

The image of the cremated village of Adjara and those abandoned by gen. Gurko sub-Balkan villages, bring back dark memories in the mind of Colonel Serafimov at the sight of the issued order to retreat from the newly liberated territories. It is a memory that predetermines his next actions.

"Retire? No! Never! I will not cede to the enemy the villages in which I was welcomed as a liberator yesterday! Not a step back! To the newly freed slave, I will not return the slavery again!" [7].

Words echoing with audible power through the ages. Acts of determination and self-sacrifice that created the legend of the 21st Srednogorets Regiment. The refusal to follow an order is unthinkable in wartime. Condemned and praised for his decision, Colonel Serafimov himself describes the thoughts with which he sent his answer to the headquarters: *"I made a decision to hold the enemy at elevation 1311, because I was sure that if I gave up the height, the position of the 21st Srednogorets Regiment would become extremely dangerous, and the Bulgarian population in Ustovo, Raykovo, Smolyan, Chokmanovo, Smilyan and other villages along the direction will be destroyed"*. The thought of the

population, for whose freedom he fought, is again placed above everything [8]!

The repeatedly superior military units of Yaver Pasha did not discourage the Bulgarians, who resolutely resisted the incessant Turkish attacks. The 21st Srednogorets Regiment fought without sleep, in snow and rain, always encouraged by its officers and the personal example of Colonel Serafimov, who constantly roamed among the ranks of his soldiers [9]. The help of villagers from the liberated villages also has an extraordinary impact in the heavy battles. For 3 days, Yaver Pasha's attacks were repelled, until the turning point in the battle came, when the First Squad sent to Buk station returned and attacked the Turkish army by surprise. The rush of the unexpected attack raised battle cries and the rest of the squads also counterattacked, sending the enemy fleeing back to Rudozem [5]. The peak and Freedom of the Rhodopes are protected!

The victory over numerous opponents is impressive and brings another order of bravery to Colonel Serafimov, but not the general epaulet. The refusal to carry out an order has not been forgotten, although the reasons for awarding the order mention the decisive role of the battle at Mount Kavgajik for the liberation of the Rhodopes [10].

The halo around the personality of Colonel Serafimov shines more and more strongly in the hearts of the people and the soldiers commanded by him. His military exploits continued during the First World War, when, after successive heroic actions of the military units he commanded, he was offered the rank of general. A title that Vladimir Serafimov refused, saying: *"When I saved the Rhodope Mountains and was at the height of my glory, I was not made a general. Let me remain a colonel, as people know and love me, unlike all those generals that the people have never heard of"* [5].

“Rhodope Shipka”

On June 26, 1932, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the battles on Mount Kavgadzhik, an initiative committee was founded in the junior high school of the village of Ustovo to erect a monument in honor of the fallen heroes in the October days of 1912 [11]. The appreciation for the self-sacrifice and patriotism shown by Colonel Serafimov and the 21st Regiment were immortalized by the grateful Rhodope population on July 31, 1932, when national celebrations were organized, and in the presence of Colonel Serafimov himself – welcomed as a liberator by the local population, the first stone of the monument- ossuary was placed on Mount Srednogorets, called by the people “Rhodope Shipka” (See Appendix №2). Then he was handed a protocol from the municipal council, with which the village of Alami Dere, close to the top, was renamed to Colonel Serafimovo.

The monument itself is an obelisk with an order of bravery, in the foundations of which a church – museum and an ossuary are built, to which about 100 stairs lead. It was built with donations and according to the project of arch. Mihail Nozharov, which is also freely donated. The monument was inaugurated on 12.08.1934, a few months after the death of Colonel Serafimov on 07.04.1934. The celebrations were also honored by Tsar Boris III, who sent a military plane to show respect to this military hero and the monument, which will bear witness to the heroism of the Bulgarian soldier in front of future generations. In 1972, the monument underwent renovations that added a laurel wreath on a plinth, as well as two cannons that stand at the foot of the memorial stairs leading to the ossuary at the top (See Appendices №3 and 4) [12].

Today, “Rhodope Shipka” is one of the revered tourist destinations in the Smolyan region, and its popularity is constantly growing, keeping the memory of the heroism shown by the local population, the 21st Srednogorets Regiment, and their commander – Colonel Vladimir Serafimov.

Other monuments of Colonel Serafimov in Smolyan region

Town of Smolyan – bust-monument of Colonel Vladimir Serafimov. One of the newest monuments in the area, which was found on October 23, 1992 in the “New Center” of Smolyan, on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the heroic events that saved the Middle Rhodopes;

Town of Rudozem – bust-monument of Colonel Vladimir Serafimov, located on “Bulgaria” Square, built of black marble. It was also opened in 1992 on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the fighting on Mount Srednogorets.

Stoykite village – Karmilata area – monument to Colonel Vladimir Serafimov.

Military monuments in Smolyan region

There are 65 military monuments on the territory of the Smolyan district.

These municipalities are: in Banite – 2, in Dospat – 6, in Devin – 6, in Zlatograd – 2, in Madan – 1, in Rudozem – 6, in Smolyan – 31, in Chepelare – 11 [13].

On the website of the regional administration, there is a separate section in the “Public Registers” section, where anyone interested has the opportunity to familiarize themselves in more detail with the nature of the monuments themselves by settlements [1].

Possibilities for the realization of the military monuments in the Smolyan region, as part of tourist routes

With the help of the municipal administration and the employees of the RHM “Stoyu Shishkov – Smolyan”, it is possible to implement specific and applicable cultural and cognitive routes, including as points of them, the military monuments associated with Colonel Serafimov in the Smolyan region. Comparatively socialized memorials are indicated, in areas with a multi-layered historical past and a wealth of cultural-historical sites.

The proposed examples are distinguished by: attractiveness of the objects; accessibility for tourists of different age and level of preparation; in that the information that the objects carry is of interest to a wide range of target groups; the regions in which the routes are distinguished are characterized by the picturesqueness of the natural landscape, which, in addition to cultural and cognitive interest, also leads to aesthetic enjoyment of the tourist trip.

The prepared route can be completed within one day. It is permissible to upgrade it, according to the possibilities and requirements of tourists, by visiting the military monuments in nearby Chepelare and the village of Stoikite, which also honor those who died in the Balkan War, and directly reflect the victorious march of the military units commanded by Colonel Serafimov. Combining the military monuments with some of the cultural-historical and natural treasures of the area, will contribute to the formation of short and extremely attractive ray tourist routes, with a great informative and recreational value of each of them.

A few-day stay in the Smolyan region will allow travelers to get to know the cultural and historical sites along Gorna Arda (the village of Smolyan, the fortress “Kaleto” – Koshnitsa village, “Agushevi Konatsi” – Mogilitsa village); to visit the natural features of the city and one of the designated eco-paths (“Canyon of the Waterfalls”, “Momchilova Fortress”, “The Bride”); to note in their booklets, one of the 13 sites with which the district participates in the movement “100 National Tourist Sites of Bulgaria” [14].

Cultural-cognitive route “Memory to Colonel Vladimir Serafimov”

RHM “Stoyu Shishkov – Smolyan” – the village of Polkovnik Serafimovo – the peak “Srednogorets” – the city of Rudozem – the neighbourhood of Ustovo –“New Center” Smolyan (See Apennix №1)

The route is easy and can be done within a day. The purpose of its preparation is to acquaint tourists with the personality of Colonel Vladimir Serafimov and the memory of the heroism of his command of the 21st Srednogorets Regiment. It traces the main points of the military actions that took place in October 1912. The proposed form is a circular route that will pass through the Regional History Museum – Smolyan; the village of Alami Dere, named after the “Savior of the Rhodopes” and the monument to the fallen residents of the village; the arena of hostilities – Mount Srednogorets; the town of Rudozem, where the units of Yaver Pasha and the bust of Colonel Serafimov were stationed; the memorial plaque in the neighbourhood of Ustovo, where the liberators of Ustovo, Raykovo and Pashmakli were welcomed, to end in the “New Center” of the town of Smolyan, to honor the newest bust – a monument to the famous commander.

In the case of large organized groups, the cooperation of the museum and one of the local tour guides working for it will help to fully build the historical reconstruction of the events and the personalities who participated in them. With the help of the responsible institutions, access to the mausoleum of the “Rhodope Shipka” will be possible, as well as pre-arranged meetings with

persons keeping the memory of their ancestors for the events that happened at the beginning of the Balkan War in Smolyansko.

Regional History Museum “Stoyu Shishkov”

In the museum, a corner for Colonel Serafimov is exhibited, and among his most valuable possessions is the silver Cossack saber of the “Savior of the Rhodopes”, which was inextricably next to him throughout his military career. A visit to the museum will provide the necessary basis of knowledge about the battles at Mount Kavgadzhik, as well as about the main actors in them. Acquaintance with the entire chronology of events and their subsequent historical results for the Rhodopes and the borders of modern Bulgaria will introduce tourists to the era of the Balkan War 1912–1913.

Village of Colonel Serafimovo

It is located 7 km from the town of Smolyan and about 20 km from the Pamporovo resort, at the foot of the Srednogorets peak.

The first remembered name of the village is Osikovo. For a very short time it was also called Yabylkovo, then it was renamed Alami dere. In 1932, the local population suggested that the village be renamed Colonel Serafimovo in honor of the liberator of the Middle Rhodopes, Colonel Vladimir Serafimov, and in 1934 the village adopted its new name. Today, on the “Mogilata” elevation, in the center of the village, a monument is erected in honor of the local residents who died in the wars, and the square in the village is a shaped corner and a commemorative plaque of Colonel Serafimov has been placed. In 1836, a memorial plaque with the names of Colonel Serafimovo's residents killed in the wars of 1912–1913 and 1944–1945 was also placed in the courtyard of the church “Vyvedenie Bogorodichno”.

Srednogorets Peak (Kavgadzhik) and “Rhodope Shipka”

(See appendices №3 and №4)

The monument is located on Srednogorets peak, on the road Smolyan – Rudozem. The mausoleum-ossuary was erected in memory of the fallen soldiers of the 21st Srednogorets Regiment and is affectionately called “Rhodope Shipka”, comparing the feat with that of Mount “St. Nikola” in Stara Planina. The initiative was taken by residents of the liberated Rhodope villages, and when the first stone was laid in 1932, Colonel Vladimir Serafimov was personally present (**See appendix №2**) [16]. The mythology created around his heroism and his refusal to cede the freed land back to the enslavers turns the impressive monument into an attractive cultural-historical destination that provokes interest and a growing number of tourist visits. The ossuary remains locked and, with the assistance of local authorities, will allow worship by organized visiting groups.

Town of Rudozem

The settlement is mentioned under the name Palas in Ottoman documents from 1676. It entered the territory of Bulgaria with the Treaty of Bucharest in 1913. It was renamed Rudozem in 1934. During the fighting at Mount Srednogorets, the Ottoman military district was located in Palas, together with the warehouses for weapons and supplies, which predetermined the deployment of Yaver Pasha's units in the city. The next day, after the battle – on October 22, Palas was occupied by Bulgarian units and after the Treaty of Bucharest it remained in Bulgaria, becoming a part of the newly created Pashmakli district, as the center of Palas municipality [17]. In 1992, a bust-monument to Colonel Serafimov was erected in the center of Rudozem, in recognition of the liberation of the town from Ottoman rule.

“Ustovo” neighbourhood – town of Smolyan

On the occasion of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Balkan War and the liberation of the Ottoman Empire, in the capital of Moldova, on October 12, 2012, a commemorative plaque was discovered indicating that colonel Vladimir Serafimov, who is moving from the headquarters, in the house of the local first-year Ivan Atanatov Cylinadzhiev (**See**

appendix №5). This is on October 12, 1912, when most parts of the regiment liberated the villages of Pashmakli, Raykovo and Ustovo, united today in the town of Smolyan. The successors of Ivan Sylinadzhiev put up the memorial plaque with their own funds. When shaping the cultural route, it is imperative to seek their assistance, as the memories of their ancestors will convey the atmosphere of excitement and freedom that filled the multitude of the liberated villages at the time [18].

“New Center” – the town of Smolyan (See appendix №6)

The newest bust-monument of Vladimir Serafimov, erected in 1992 in the “New Center” of the town of Smolyan, near the Regional History Museum, is the chronological end of the proposed circular cultural-cognitive route, following the memory of the people of Rhodope to 21st Srednogorets regiment and its commander. The proud demeanor and decisive look of the fearless commander will convey the feeling of national responsibility and military honor in everyone who lays a flower in front of the monument, and will unwittingly reduce his tribute to the heroism of those who died in the wars for national unification!

Conclusion

Although military monuments are often overlooked by tourists, and the history and heroism shown in the name of Bulgaria are sometimes forgotten, there are still places where patriotism and reverence for the victims make the tourist turn away from the popular destinations.

The “Rhodope Shipka” and the memory that the Smolyan region preserves for the self-sacrificing actions of the 21st Srednogorets Regiment, in recent years has generated an increasingly large tourist flow of people who come specifically to visit the memorial. The name of the village of Colonel Serafimovo, as well as a special exhibition in the RHM “Stoyu Shishkov” – the town of Smolyan, help make the military monuments in the area a mandatory part of every tourist tour.

The attractive construction of the military monuments in the region, honoring the heroes of the Liberation, Balkan, First and Second World Wars (the military monuments in Chepelare, Smolyan, Srednogorets peak are noteworthy), help to define a natural cultural route that introduces tourists to the military history of Smolyan region.

It is also one of the few areas in the country where military monuments are not forgotten, but become tourist sites. The public register of military monuments in the district is useful in this regard, as adding locations and basic data on the construction, donors and date of opening, will enrich the necessary information part to help shape official cultural routes prepared by the relevant municipalities.

The glory of the “Rhodope Shipka” and Colonel Vladimir Serafimov, has the necessary prerequisites for imposing a cultural route, containing, as its main points, the military monuments erected in honor of the heroes. The growing popularity of the sites, as a result of periodical documentaries, articles, books, suggests a sustainable development of such a tourist tour, among organized groups or individual visitors, heterogeneous in their composition and volume. The trips held on the occasion of the celebrations of the battles’ anniversaries are already a tradition, and emphasis by the municipality on this resource will enrich the opportunities for cultural tourism within the Smolyan region.

APPLICATIONS

Appendix №1: “Memory to Col. Vladimir Serafimov” – tourist program

RHM “Stoyu Shishkov – Smolyan” – the village of Colonel Serafimovo – peak “Srednogorets” – town Rudozem –neighbourhood Ustovo – “New Centre”Smolyan.

8.45–09.00 – Arrival of the tourist group in front of RHM“Stoyu Shishkov” and meeting with an employee of the museum.

9.00–10.00 – Viewing the museum expositions and conducting a thematic discussion about the events during the Balkan War and its main characters.

10.30–11.15 – Arrival in the village of Colonel Serafimovo and learning about the fate of the local population, who selflessly helped the Bulgarian military units. Delivering a short lecture on the respect for the personality of Colonel Vladimir Serafimov, evidenced by the renaming of the village. Visiting the memorial plaque in its centre, the church and the memorial for the residents who died in the wars.

11.30–12.30 – Stay of the group around Srednogorets Peak and paying tribute to the heroism of 21st Srednogorets Regiment. Visit to the ossuary, with the assistance of the responsible institutions, and holding a talk about the three-day battles, marked the beginning of the final liberation of the Rhodopes from Ottoman rule.

12:45–13:15 – Visit to the town of Rudozem and the bust-monument of Colonel Serafimov. Enrichment of the information volume from the tour, with information about the opponent of the Bulgarians in the battles – Yaver Pasha, and the role of the town of Palas (Rudozem), for the Ottoman units in Pashmakliysko in the post-liberation years.

13:45–14:15 – Meeting with the heirs of Ivan Sulinadzhiev in Ustovo neighbourhood and the home that sheltered the liberators of today's Smolyan on 12.10.1912. Immersion in the atmosphere of the majestic moment, through the memories passed down from generations and preserved for the future, with the memorial plaque immortalizing this significant moment for Smolyan and the Sulinadzhiev family.

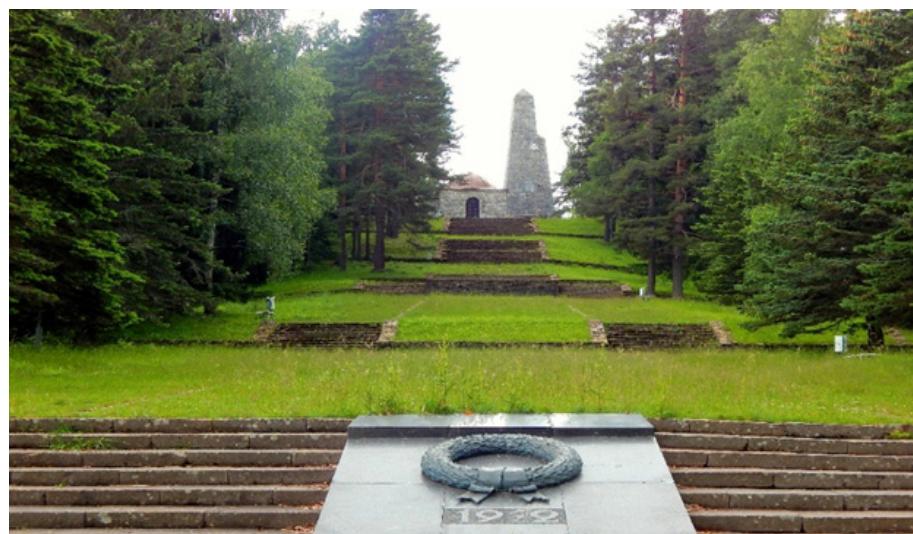
14.30 – Symbolic end of the tourist tour, in memory of Colonel Serafimov and the 21st Srednogorets Regiment, in front of the newest monument to the “Savior of the Rhodopes” in the “New Centre” of Smolyan, located near its starting point – RHM “Stoyu Shishkov”. Time for final words and a summary of the impressions from the cultural and educational tour.

Appendix №2: Col. Vladimir Serafimov was present at the laying of the first stone of the monument-ossuary on Mount Srednogorets



Source: State Archive – Smolyan, F. 223K, op. 2, a.e. 9, l. 1

Appendix №3: The monument of Mount Srednogorets – “Rhodope Shipka”



Source: personal archive

Appendix №4: “Rhodope Shipka”



Source: personal archive

Appendix №5: Memorial plaque in Ustovo neighborhood, Smolyan



Source: personal archive

Appendix №6: Monument to Colonel Serafimov in “New Center”, Smolyan



Source: personal archive

Acknowledgments

The paper was implemented within the framework of project “From hope to disappointment (the idea of the heroic) 1909–1914” with Contract KP-06-M65/4 from 16.12.2022, funded by the National Science Fund headed by Chief Assist. Antonii Stanimirov.

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КУЛТУРЕН МАРШРУТ ЗА ВОЕННАТА ПАМЕТ КЪМ ПОЛК. СЕРАФИМОВ В СМОЛЯНСКА ОБЛАСТ

Резюме: В представеният доклад е изложена тезата, че военните паметници, намиращи се на територията на област Смолян, притежават нужния потенциал, за да се превърнат в съществена част от културните маршрути в региона. Изградена е нужната информативна основа, относно историческите събития и личности, довели до окончателното освобождение на Родопите, върху която да стъпи направеното предложение. Поставен е акцент върху митологизирания образ на полк. Владимир Серафимов и командвания от него 21-ви средногорски полк, изиграли главна роля в героичните събития по време на Балканската война, състояли се край връх Средногорец. Оценен е устойчиво повишаващия се интерес към туристическите обекти свързани с тях, както и възможностите този потенциал да се реализира, чрез добавянето на военните мемориали, като неизменна част от културно – познавателните маршрути, представени от община Смолян и Регионално – исторически музей в града. В подкрепа на предложенията културен маршрут „Паметта към полковник Серафимов“ е приложена и примерна туристическа програма, която има ресурса да се реализира както самостоятелно, така и със съдействието на служители от РИМ – Смолян.

Ключови думи: военни паметници, Владимир Серафимов, Родопска Шипка, Баланска война, културен маршрут, българска армия, 21-ви средногорски полк, туризъм

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