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ЩОДО ПИТАННЯ «КОМПЕНСАЦІЇ» ВТРАЧЕНИХ ОСОБОЮ ІНФОРМАЦІЙНИХ МОЖЛИВОСТЕЙ ПРИ ОБМЕЖЕННІ ПРАВА НА ІНФОРМАЦІЮ

GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCES

TOWARDS THE HISTORY AND CULTURAL-HISTORICAL HERITAGE OF THE VILLAGE OF BOZHENTSI: DOCUMENTS, PERSONALITIES AND INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY

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Abstract: In the Bulgarian historical and cultural memory, there are settlements that transcend their local significance and establish themselves as bearers of national identity and tradition. This report aims to trace both the historical evolution of the settlement and the formation and consolidation of its cultural and historical heritage. The study is based on a wide range of source material, including archival documents, publications in the state and periodical press, as well as testimonies related to the activities of significant individuals and institutions. Through them, not only the past of Bozhentsi is reconstructed, but also the process of its understanding and institutionalization as a cultural and historical phenomenon. Referring to the analyses and documents, we must note that the formation of the cultural and historical heritage of the village of Bozhentsi is the result of a long-term historical process in which material and intangible elements of traditional culture are intertwined. This heritage reflects both the specific natural and geographical conditions, as well as the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the local population during different historical periods. All the facts and arguments presented reinforce the opinion that Bozhentsi represents a model for the successful preservation and updating of cultural and historical heritage in Bulgaria, which can be used as an example in other similar cases.

Keywords: Historical evolution, Bozhentsi, cultural and historical heritage, national memory, the changes.

In the Bulgarian historical and cultural memory, there are settlements that go beyond their local significance and establish themselves as bearers of national identity and tradition. Among them, the village of Bozhentsi occupies a special place, whose development over the centuries reflects the complex interactions between historical processes, cultural practices and institutional policies for the preservation of heritage. This report aims to trace both the historical evolution of the settlement and the formation and consolidation of its cultural and historical heritage. The study is based on a wide range of source material, including archival documents, publications in the state and periodical press, as well as testimonies related to the activities of significant individuals and institutions. Through them, not only the past of Bozhentsi is reconstructed, but also the process of its understanding and institutionalization as a cultural and historical phenomenon. Particular attention is paid to the role of state policies and the scientific community in building the image of the settlement as an architectural and historical reserve. In this context, the report emphasizes the relationship between documentary heritage, the human factor and institutional memory as mutually complementary elements in the process of preserving and interpreting the cultural and historical wealth of Bozhentsi. In this way, the aim is not only to present a specific historical example, but also to contribute to a broader understanding of the mechanisms of preserving and updating cultural heritage in Bulgaria.

To achieve the set goal, the following tasks are formulated:

1. To reconstruct the historical development of the village of Bozhentsi through an analysis of the available archival documents and journalistic sources.
2. To study the genesis and development of the cultural and historical heritage of the settlement, including its tangible and intangible dimensions.
3. To analyze the role of the state and periodical press in the promotion and establishment of Bozhentsi as a cultural and historical site.
4. To highlight the contribution of key individuals (researchers, public figures, institutional figures) to the preservation and interpretation of the village's heritage.

5. To trace the process of institutionalization of Bozhentsi as an architectural and historical reserve and the role of state policy in this process.

6. To examine the interaction between documents, individuals and institutional memory as a factor in building a sustainable cultural and historical image of the settlement.

7. To make generalizations regarding the importance of Bozhentsi as an example of preserving and updating the cultural and historical heritage in Bulgaria.

The object of this study is the village of Bozhentsi as a historical settlement and a cultural and historical architectural complex, established in the national memory.

The subject of the study is the processes of historical development, formation and institutionalization of the cultural and historical heritage of the village of Bozhentsi, examined through documentary sources, the role of individuals and the functioning of institutional memory.

The study is based on a complex methodological approach, including:

- Historical-descriptive method – for tracing the main stages in the development of the settlement;
- Source analysis – for critical study of archival documents, regulatory acts and publications in the periodical press;
- Comparative-historical method – for placing the development of Bozhentsi in the broader context of similar processes in Bulgaria;
- Interdisciplinary approach – combining elements of history, cultural studies and socio-economic geography;
- Analysis of institutional memory – for clarifying the role of state and scientific institutions in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.

The study is based on a diverse set of sources, including:

- archival documents (state and local archives);
- publications in the state and periodical press;
- normative acts and official documents related to the status of the settlement;
- works of researchers and testimonies of individuals related to the

preservation of Bozhentsi.

Small in territorial scope, but extremely significant as a cultural monument, the village of Bozhentsi has always been at the center of the vast world. Supporting this fact is its location, near the old Roman road Nicopolis ad Istrum – Augusta Traiana – Constantinople, which in the past provided its residents with trade trips and connections with Russia, Italy, Austria-Hungary, France, etc. Geographically, the village is located about 15 km from the regional center, the city of Gabrovo. The natural environment is extremely favorable, characterized by a temperate continental climate and an altitude of 520 to 570 m. The village is hidden at the foot of the southern part of the Gabrovo hills, part of the Pre-Balkans, cut through by the rivers Yantra and the tributary of the Dryanovska river, the Andak river – which springs from the village. It is the Andak river that the local population also calls Bozhanka. A third-class republican road III -5524 leads to the village. According to the information established in historiography, the beginning of the settlement dates back to the period after the fall of the Tarnovo Kingdom under Ottoman rule at the end of the 14th century. The legends about the origin of the village are connected with the story of the boyar Bozhana and her brother Trapesko – originating from the Asen family, who after the fall of Tarnovgrad, about 633 years ago, settled on the northern slopes of the Stara Planina and founded a settlement with the name Bozhentsi. There is also another legend, based on the assumption that on the mound near the settlement in the past there was a Roman rest station for people and animals /in Latin "mansia"/. From this we conclude that it is possible that, due to the pronunciation of the word, the locals called it "Manastirya". It is also possible that, due to the religious rites performed there, they also defined it as "God's Place", close to the name "Bozhentsi".

Although with limited documentary confirmation, this tradition fits into the broader context of the formation of a number of Balkan settlements as refuges in conditions of political instability. During the Ottoman period, Bozhentsi developed as a typical mountain village, whose economy was based on crafts, trade and agriculture. Its favorable location near important roads connecting Northern and Southern Bulgaria contributed to its economic revival. Gradually, the village

established itself as a local trade and craft center, in which a number of traditional crafts developed – abadjiystv, furriery, blacksmithing and others. The first recorded information about Bozhentsi comes from the Turkish tax registers of 1750. They mention a Kolibar settlement Bozhentsi, consisting of 24 houses. The village museum preserves several documents left by the merchant and usurer Mincho Popov (grandfather Minyu Popa) and several more Turkish ones, which after a thorough study will probably shed more light on the history of the village (according to Milcho Stoychev 1975)..

The most significant upsurge in the development of the settlement was observed during the period of the Bulgarian Renaissance. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the village reached a significant economic (mainly from trade – they exported wool and furs, wax and honey, as well as the products of skilled abadjis and blacksmiths not only to Turkey, but also to Russia, Italy, Germany) and cultural flourishing, which was reflected in the construction of the characteristic Renaissance architectural environment. Spacious residential and business complexes were formed, distinguished by functionality, aesthetics and adaptation to the geographical environment. This period was also marked by the strengthening of education, as well as the active participation of the local population in the processes of national awakening. After the Liberation, significant changes occurred in its socio-economic development. Some of the traditional crafts gradually lost their importance in the conditions of modernization and industrialization, which led to a certain economic decline and demographic decline. However, it was the preserved architectural and cultural environment that became the basis for the further rethinking of the role of Bozhentsi in the national context. With 110 houses and about 500 inhabitants, at the end of the 19th century Bozhentsi was already an administrative, commercial, cultural and spiritual center. But gradually, an almost continuous process of emigration to the nearby city of Gabrovo began, leaving uninhabited houses, aged from 100 to 250 years.

Following the changes, we cannot fail to note that in the 20th century, a process of conscious preservation of the cultural and historical heritage of the

settlement began. As a result of the targeted state policy and scientific interest, Bozhentsi was declared an architectural and historical reserve on September 6, 1964, which marked the beginning of a new stage in its development. This act not only guaranteed the preservation of the material cultural environment, but also contributed to the establishment of the village as a significant object of cultural tourism for Bulgaria. In the same 1964, at the end, UNESCO included it in the prestigious list of cultural monuments of world importance. Nowadays, the village is an established tourist center, which offers a number of opportunities for hiking in the Stara Planina Mountains.

A more tangible change occurred in the 1970s, when it transformed from a "neighborhood" into a "village". The specific historical development of the village, about which information is scarce until the Liberation, created conditions for preserving its Revival appearance until the middle of the 20th century. According to Protocol No. 29 of a meeting of the Council for the Preservation of Cultural Monuments at the Institute of Cultural Heritage, held on November 1, 1962, the proposal to declare the village of Bozhentsi – Gabrovo an architectural reserve was considered. The report was presented by architect D. Vasileva, supported by a positive opinion from the Chairman – arch. B. Markov, arch. R. Rachev, prof. T. Zlatev, prof. V. Zahariev, colonel M. Mihov and others. The decision of the ONS – Gabrovo to restore the old souvenir crafts in the village by opening relevant workshops was also discussed. It was noted that the houses should be completely restored with their full interior decoration and furnishings, and that the mechanism and construction of a large wax pressing press should be preserved – there were only three left in Bulgaria at that time. A complete restoration and renovation of the café was also proposed, as well as the construction of a modern building for use as a cinema, library, etc., but it should not contradict the character and style of the village. A bolder proposal was also made to turn some of the buildings into holiday homes for students, which remained only on paper. Based on the draft proposal, Decision No. 115 of 1964 of the State Committee for the Construction of the Village of Bozhentsi, Gabrovo District – at that time, a historical architectural reserve was

taken. In the same 1964, UNESCO included it in the prestigious list of cultural monuments of world importance. The Decision, signed and motivated by Prof. Eng. G. Brankov, includes the arguments that "..the village of Bozhentsi is our only village that has completely preserved its character from the era of the Revival, which contains and preserves valuable ethnographic and architectural monuments and urban ensembles, and because its geographical location and climatic conditions allow it to be a resort and tourist site." The reserve is also recognized as a protected area, on the basis of Art. 8, item 4 of the Law on Spatial Planning / State Gazette No. 1 / 2001 / and any investment initiative within its scope is implemented in accordance with the Law on Cultural Heritage, complying with Ordinance No. 9 / State Gazette No. 26/1978 / – rules for the protection, development and improvement of the Bozhentsi IAR. According to Decision No. 53 / 31.03.2016 and on the basis of Art. 21, para. 2 of the Law on the Protection and Development of Culture, Art. 8, para. 1 of the Law on the Protection and Development of Culture, Art. 17, para. 2, item 4 and Art. 29, para. 1, item 3 and para. 2 of the Law on Cultural Heritage, the Municipal Council – Gabrovo changed the name of the organizational form of the AIR "Bozhentsi", which began to be called the Museum of Architectural and Historical Reserve "Bozhentsi", as it is still known today.

The results of the study lead to the conclusion that the historical development of Bozhentsi reflects the transition from a medieval refuge to a Renaissance economic and cultural center, and subsequently – to an object of institutionalized cultural memory. This evolution reveals the complex interaction between geographical conditions, historical circumstances and human activity, which determines the unique appearance of the settlement in Bulgarian history. Referring to the analyses and documents, we must note that the formation of the cultural and historical heritage of the village of Bozhentsi is the result of a long-term historical process in which material and intangible elements of traditional culture are intertwined. This heritage reflects both the specific natural and geographical conditions, as well as the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the local population during different historical periods. It is also necessary to note that one of

the most significant components of its cultural and historical heritage is its architectural environment, formed mainly during the period of the Bulgarian Revival. Residential and farm buildings are distinguished by characteristic constructive and compositional solutions – massive stone foundations, wooden bay windows, wide eaves and courtyards, which combine functionality and aesthetics. This architecture is not only an expression of the craftsmanship of local builders, but also a reflection of the social status and economic capabilities of the population (Koeva, 2002).

An important aspect of the architectural heritage is its integrity and preservation, which distinguishes Bozhentsi from many other Bulgarian settlements. According to research on the Bulgarian Renaissance architecture, it is the complex nature of the construction and the harmony between the individual elements that create the unique appearance of such settlements (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1980). In this sense, we believe that Bozhentsi can be considered a representative model of a traditional Bulgarian settlement environment. Along with the material dimensions, an important place is also occupied by the intangible cultural heritage. It includes traditions, customs, forms of social organization and daily practices that have been preserved in the local community. The traditional way of life, associated with seasonal activities, family rituals and religious holidays, builds a specific cultural identity, passed down through generations (Georgieva, 1993). Traditional crafts are also of particular importance, playing a key role in the socio-economic and cultural life of the settlement. The development of crafts such as abadjiystv, furriery and woodworking not only provided a livelihood for the population, but also contributed to the formation of local artistic traditions, such as the Tryavna School. These activities became an important element of the cultural heritage, reflecting both the practical skills and aesthetic views of the local community. The process of forming the cultural and historical heritage of Bozhentsi cannot be considered in isolation from broader social and cultural processes. During the Revival, the desire to preserve traditional values and affirm the Bulgarian identity intensified, which was reflected in both architecture and cultural practices. In this context, the settlement became a carrier of sustainable cultural and educational models that outlived its

initial functional role.

In the 20th century, a new stage in the development of the cultural and historical heritage of Bozhentsi occurred, associated with its awareness as a public value. Scientific research and state policy draw attention to the need to preserve the traditional architectural environment and cultural practices. This leads to the implementation of specific measures for protection and conservation, which ultimately contribute to the declaration of the settlement as an architectural and historical reserve (Council of Ministers, 1964). Emphasizing the essence and manifestation of the processes, we can argue that the cultural and historical heritage of Bozhentsi represents a complex system of tangible and intangible elements, formed as a result of long-term historical processes. Its value is determined not only by the degree of preservation, but also by its ability to reflect the cultural identity and historical memory of Bulgarian society. This is precisely what makes Bozhentsi a significant object of both scientific interest and contemporary policies for the preservation of cultural heritage. As already noted, the study of the historical development and cultural and historical heritage of the village is based to a significant extent on the analysis of various documentary sources. They allow not only the reconstruction of specific historical processes, but also the tracing of the way in which the settlement was perceived, interpreted and institutionalized in different periods. An essential place is occupied by archival documents stored in the regional and central state archives. They include administrative correspondence, reports, protocols and regulatory acts related to the status and development of the settlement. For example, documents from the State Archives – Gabrovo contain information about the measures taken to preserve the architectural appearance of Bozhentsi as early as the middle of the 20th century (State Archives – Gabrovo, file 134K, op. 1, a.e. 56). These materials testify to the growing interest of state institutions in the preservation of the traditional settlement environment.

Of particular importance are the documents related to the declaration of Bozhentsi as an architectural and historical reserve. In decrees and accompanying reports, the aspiration to institutionalize cultural heritage as part of the national policy

in the field of culture is clearly highlighted (Council of Ministers, 1964). The analysis of these documents shows that the process is not a one-time act, but the result of continuous efforts by specialists, institutions and local figures. Along with archival sources, a significant role is played by the periodical press, which reflects both public attitudes and official positions regarding cultural heritage. Publications in newspapers such as “Rabotnichesko delo” and “Kultura” present Bozhentsi as an example of a successfully preserved Renaissance environment and emphasize the need for its preservation (“Rabotnichesko delo”, 1972; “Kultura”, 1980). These texts fulfill a dual function – on the one hand, they inform the public, and on the other – they form cultural policies by popularizing certain values. A number of publications emphasize the uniqueness of the architectural ensemble and its importance for the national cultural identity. For example, an article from the early 1970s emphasizes that Bozhentsi “preserves in an authentic form the spirit of the Bulgarian Revival settlement” (“Rabotnichesko delo”, 1972). Such assessments are important because they contribute to the establishment of the settlement as a symbol of traditional Bulgarian culture. The periodical press also reflects the activities of scientists, architects and cultural figures who actively participate in the process of research and preservation of Bozhentsi. Through interviews, popular science articles and reports, a public image of the settlement as a valuable cultural site is built. In this sense, the media become an intermediary between the scientific community, institutions and the general public. The available documentary base and the periodical press play a key role both in the reconstruction of Bozhentsi’s past and in its establishment as an object of cultural memory. Their joint research allows for a deeper understanding of the processes of preservation, interpretation and institutionalization of cultural and historical heritage.

The cultural and historical heritage of the village of Bozhentsi could not have been preserved without the active role of key individuals – researchers, public figures and local activists who participated in the study, promotion and protection of the architectural and cultural values of the settlement. In this sense, the human factor turns out to be just as important as the materials and architectural structures

themselves. Here we will recall one of the most striking testimonies of generosity, left by the wealthy merchant and founder of the local revolutionary committee Ivan Karadimitrov. According to the information we have, in 1867 he donated 110 Turkish liras, with which the master craftsman Gencho Kanev from Tryavna built a school with a community center and a library. At the end of the last century, his descendants made a will in which they provided the village with their father's house free of charge. According to legend, in 1872, probably under the threshold of the barn, the villagers found a hidden pot with 200 gold coins, which were used to build a junior high school with a dining room and a kindergarten. The school building dates back to 1972, on the main street that leads to the square and is close to the center of the village. The civil architecture in the village is an expression of certain stages in its economic and cultural-historical development. Public buildings include the cafe, the old municipality, the school and the monastery school, the church and the vise – a wax press with a candle factory. According to information and the date carved directly in front of the door, the three-nave church "St. Prophet Elijah" was built in 1835. The villagers also managed to obtain permission to erect a bell tower, which was prohibited by the Turkish authorities, and the bell was delivered from the Russian city of Tula. The church has a particularly great value for the silhouette of the village, because it is built on a high place, almost at the end, and the bell tower is visible from all sides.



Fig. 1. Photo of the Prophet Elijah Church in the village

Source: https://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%

One of the memorable names is Stoyan Milchev Mutafchiev (1852 – 1925) – a

hush and volunteer from the III Volunteer Battalion of the Russo-Turkish Liberation War, wounded in the Battle of Stara Zagora, an honorary citizen of Gabrovo. He is the father of Petar Stoyanov Mutafchiev – a historian, Byzantine scholar and specialist in medieval history, member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (1937), full professor at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Participant in the Balkan, Inter-Allied Wars and. From in the First World War.

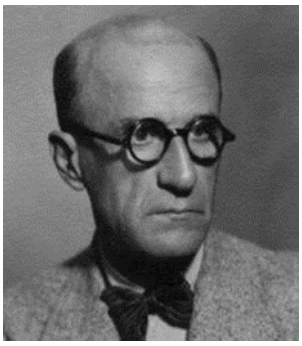


Fig. 2. Portrait of P. Mutafchiev (1883 – 1943)

Source: https://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%91%

The personality of Dimitar Donchev Popov (Komitovski) (1859 – 1918) is associated with his participation in the Serbian-Turkish war of 1876, and the following year he enlisted as a volunteer in the IX battalion in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877 – 1878. After the Liberation, he moved to and lived in the town of Popovo, where he was a well-known merchant and generous donor.

The one connected with the democratic processes in our country after 1989 and among the founders of the Union of Democratic Forces is Svetoslav Denchev Luchnikov. He is from a family originating from the village. At his request, he was buried in the churchyard. in 2002.



Fig. 3. Portrait of S. Luchnikov (1922 – 2002)

Source: https://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%91%

Scientific interest in Bozhentsi began in the mid-20th century, when researchers from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and regional local history institutes undertook systematic studies of the Bulgarian Renaissance architecture and local traditions (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1980). These studies include both a description of the architectural ensembles and documentation of the intangible cultural heritage, such as customs, crafts and everyday life. Of particular importance are the works of M. Koeva, who analyzes the Bulgarian Renaissance architecture in village complexes and emphasizes the uniqueness of the layout and construction solutions in Bozhentsi (Koeva, 2002). Her research not only documents the architectural features, but also provides grounds for subsequent measures to preserve and institutionalize the settlement as an architectural and historical reserve. In addition to scientific researchers, significant contributions are made by public figures and cultural figures who, through publications, initiatives and participation in committees, support the process of preserving cultural heritage. Their activities often include mediation between state institutions, local authorities and the community. For example, publications in the newspaper “Culture” from the late 1970s and early 1980s present Bozhentsi as a model for the successful protection of a traditional Bulgarian settlement, emphasizing the role of public and scientific figures (“Culture”, 1980). Local residents also play an indispensable role in preserving the heritage. They not only maintain and inhabit the architectural complexes, but also actively participate in the preservation of intangible values – crafts, customs and holidays. The joint interaction between institutions and the local community is a key factor in the sustainability of cultural and historical heritage. As experts note, without the participation of the local community, institutional efforts would be significantly less effective (Dimitrov, 2005). Combining the efforts of researchers, public figures and local residents, the process of preserving and promoting Bozhentsi is becoming an example of successful institutionalized cultural memory. Interaction and partnership allow for the preservation of both architectural values and intangible cultural practices, ensuring the sustainability of the heritage over time.

It is necessary to pay due tribute to the human factor, which is a central

element in the process of forming and preserving the cultural and historical heritage of Bozhentsi. Without the active involvement of individuals and the community, the efforts of state institutions and scientific organizations would not have the same effectiveness. We must emphasize that the preservation of cultural heritage is not only a technical and institutional task, but also a process that depends on the knowledge, efforts and objective commitment of people.

This report focuses on the complex nature of the historical development and cultural and historical heritage of the village of Bozhentsi, examined through the prism of documentary evidence, the role of individuals and the functioning of institutional memory. The conducted research showed that Bozhentsi is not just a preserved Revival settlement, but a dynamic cultural and historical phenomenon, the significance of which is formed as a result of long-term historical processes and targeted efforts for its preservation. The analysis of the historical development of the settlement revealed its evolution from a medieval refuge to a significant economic and cultural center during the Revival, followed by a period of transformation after the Liberation. It is the preserved architectural environment and traditional way of life that create the prerequisites for its later affirmation as an object of cultural value. The study of the cultural and historical heritage outlined its dual nature – as a set of material and intangible elements that complement each other and build the overall appearance of the settlement. The architectural environment, traditional crafts and cultural practices form a sustainable local identity, which is preserved and transmitted through generations. Of particular importance is the analysis of the documentary base and the periodical press, which reveal the process of institutionalization of Bozhentsi as a cultural and historical site. Archival documents and publications in the press not only reflect, but also actively participate in the formation of public perception of the value of the settlement.

Both scientific researchers and cultural figures, as well as the local community, have made a significant contribution to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. Their interaction with state institutions leads to the construction of an effective model for the preservation of cultural and historical heritage, which is

expressed in the declaration of Bozhentsi as an architectural and historical reserve. In this sense, it is appropriate to add that the village of Bozhentsi can be considered a representative example of the successful combination of historical authenticity, institutional support and public engagement. It not only preserves the past, but also turns it into an active resource for cultural development and identity in the modern era of globalization.

Conclusions:

- The historical development of the village of Bozhentsi is the result of the interaction between geographical, socio-economic and political factors that determined its establishment as a revival center.
- The cultural and historical heritage of the village is complex, including both material (architecture) and intangible elements (traditions, crafts, cultural practices).
- Archival documents and periodicals play a key role in the reconstruction of historical development and in the formation of public perception of the significance of Bozhentsi.
- The institutionalization of the village of Bozhentsi as an architectural and historical reserve is the result of a targeted state policy, supported by the scientific community and public initiatives.
- The role of individuals is a significant factor in the process of preserving cultural heritage, with their contribution being manifested both in the scientific and public spheres.
- The local community is of key importance for the sustainability of cultural heritage, through the preservation of traditions and active participation in the processes of its preservation.

All the facts and arguments presented confirm the opinion that Bozhentsi represents a model for the successful preservation and updating of cultural and historical heritage in Bulgaria, which can be used as an example in other similar cases.

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