

MUNICIPALITY OF PAZARDZHİK – CULTURAL HERITAGE AND MUSEUMS

The Municipality of Pazardzhik is situated in the south of Bulgaria, in the central part of the Higher Thrace Valley on the south of the Stara Planina Mountain, at the two banks of the Maritsa river.

The area of the Municipality has been inherited since highest antiquity. Evidence could be found in the discovered tells, settlements and barrows from the Neolithic and the Chalcolithic period, and the Bronze Age. The various natural conditions, the abundance of natural resources and the crossroad location in which the present Municipality of Pazardzhik is situated, made it one of the centers of the antique culture in Bulgaria. Over 100 settlements, more than 300 barrows and flat necropolis are the monuments of the antiquity in the region. One of biggest sanctuaries has been discovered on the territory of Pazardzhik Municipality - the sanctuary of the Three Nymphs (Ognyanovo Village), and the sanctuary of Asclepius near Patalenitsa Village both dated back from the 1st- 4th century. Near the present village of Sinitevo the Thracian settlement Bessapara was situated and its ruins may be found even today.

In the Middle Ages a lot of Bulgarian fortresses with military and administrative purpose were built here.

The town of Pazardzhik was found in the beginning of the XV century and came into being as a trade center on the international via Trajana, joining Europe and Asia Minor. In the XVI century the town became the center of the separate administrative unit – Khaaza.

During the Renaissance Pazardzhik was an important spiritual center. After 1878 the town was developed as an important market, transport and trade center of a rich agricultural region.

Main cultural and historical sights in Municipality of Pazardzhik

Regional Historical Museum

The museum has been found in 1911 with the resolution of the Managing Board of the community center “Videlina” – Pazardzhik. Over 60 thousand

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valuable testimonials about the history of Pazardzhik and Pazardzhik region from the antiquity up to present days have been collected in its treasury for its one-century existence.

The Regional Historical Museum is the place where one could get an overall picture of the rich history of the city and the region.

The exhibitions of the Archaeology Department are of particular interest. There one could see various specimens of the prehistory material and spiritual culture like a model of a dwelling, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic pottery, various figurines of idols, religious articles, etc. There are impressive collections of ancient, Medieval and West-European coins, weapons, decorations as well as one of the richest collections in Bulgaria of votive tablets of the Thracian Horseman.

Original exhibits and various photographs depict the period of Bulgarian National Revival and the participation of the population in the April Uprising (1876) and in the struggles for national liberation.

The last three halls show the economic, administrative, cultural and educational history of Pazardzhik and the region after the Liberation (1878) until the middle of the 20th century.

Chronology exhibited finds, mostly stone monuments can be viewed in the Lapidarium: statues, road columns, altars, cult zoomorphic figures. There are also epigraphic monuments and architectural elements.

The Ethnographic Exhibition with the Regional Historical Museum is situated in a separate building that is a national architectural monument of culture and it functions as an independent Ethnographic Museum. It was constructed by builders from Bratsigovo in 1850. The Museum bears the characteristics of Plovdiv Baroque houses from the Revival Period and is the biggest building in Pazardzhik from that age.

The exhibition depicts the richness and variety of traditional tangible and spiritual culture of Pazardzhik region, presenting the ethnographic areas of Thrace, Sredna Gora and Rhodope Mountains. There are 15 collections of urban life articles, cloths, handicraft instruments and products, agricultural and timber-industry tools, architectural elements, folk-culture articles, folk musical instruments.

Konstantin Velichkov's Memorial House acquaints with the personality and the work of Konstantin Velichkov (1855-1907) – a prominent figure of the Bulgarian National Revival. He was a remarkable writer, artist, translator and enlightener, an active participant in the struggle for national liberation, a politician and a statesman of Bulgaria after the Liberation. Part of the interior of the writer's house is restored.

The Holy Virgin Church ("The Assumption") defined as a masterpiece of the original Bulgarian building school was built in 1836-1837. The funds were provided by the Bulgarian population and the first public loan from the Bank of Vienna. It is a monument to culture of national importance.

The wood-carved iconostasis is of a high artistic value and it is one of the best examples of the Revival art not only in Bulgaria but on the Balkan Peninsula as well. The multi-layer wood-carving, the unique combination of geometrical, plant and animal figures, arranged in compositions depicting scenes from the Bible are characteristic of the Debur-Miyash School and are close to the Levantine Baroque. The focus of human figures, the psychological relation between them, there fine sculptural and expressive implementation is beyond the orthodox traditionalism, characteristic of the 19th century.

The medieval St. Dimiter Church (12th- 13th century)

The St. Dimiter Church in Patalenitsa village, near to Batkunion Fortress is one of the most remarkable medieval cultural monuments in Bulgaria. It is one of the few well-preserved cross-domed churches, built in the 12th- 13th century on an older cult settlement, whose wall-painting vividly express Renaissance marks and represent various biblical scenes: "The Resurrection Of Christ", "The Resurrection Of Lazar", etc.

Tell Yunatsite

The **Yunacite tell**, called also "**The flat mound**" is situated in the Northwestern of the Upper Thracian lowland, some 1.5 km southwest from the village of Yunatsite, Pazardzhik district. This is the place where the two main mountain chains of the Balkans meet - the Balkano-Srednogorian and Rilo-Rhodopean, and between them the river Maritsa flows.

In the publication of the first excavations V. Mikov emphasizes the importance of the tell, pointing that the finds are unique not only for Bulgaria, but for all of the Southeastern Europe. They show the connections of the region with Asia Minor, Aegean islands, Macedonia and Hungary.

Because of the great scientific importance of the multi layer site Yunatsite, in 1976 regular archaeological excavations began. As a result of Bulgarian-Russian excavations in the tell were unearthed: Medieval cemetery (XIII-XIV century), settlement and Roman fortification (I millennium BC). In 1989 finished the excavations of the Early Bronze Age layer (III-II millennia BC), which is the thickest from that period in Bulgaria. Seventeen consecutive settlements existed during the three stages of the Early Bronze Age.

In 2002 started the realization of a new Bulgarian-Greek scientific project - "The western parts of Thrace during the Chalkolithic period - The Yunatsite tell and its surroundings", produced by Archaeological institute with museum - BAS (Sofia), Municipality of Pazardzhik, the Regional museum of history - Pazardzhik and National Hellenic Research Foundation (KERA - NHFR), Greece.

The results from the 30 years of survey of the Yunatsite tell are of extreme importance for the prehistoric science. Some new data had been revealed - for the settlement structure, architecture, economy, spiritual life and burial practices of the earliest inhabitants of the tell, who lived here for several millennia during the Chalkolithic and the Early Bronze Age.

The archaeological finds of the tell are kept in Regional Historical Museum – Pazardzhik. They participated in many temporary exhibitions of the Museum and also featured in exhibitions in Sofia, Moscow, Paris, Tokyo, Brussels, Bonn, etc.

The tell is an original open-air museum and it is included in the system of international cultural tourism.

A town of rich history and considerable cultural and educational activities, Pazardzhik has carefully preserved many remains of the past and of the spirit of the ancient cultural traditions. Today it expects with hospitality all those who want to get acquainted with the past and the present of the town and the region.

ILUSTRATIONS



Fig.1. Regional Historical Museum – Pazardzhik



Fig.2. Silver decoration for horseman's ammunition (3rd- 2nd century BC),
Ravnogor Village, Pazardzhik region (RHM- Pazardzhik)



Fig.3. Lapidarium in the Museum



Fig.4. Ethnographik Exposition



Fig.5. Konstantin Velichkov's Memorial House



Fig. 6. The Holy Virgin Church ("The Assumption")



Fig.7. Central Altar Door (The Holy Virgin Church)



Fig. 8. Iconostasis details (The Holy Virgin Church)



Fig. 9. The medieval St. Dimiter Church (12th- 13th century)



Fig. 10. Mural painting from the St. Dimiter Church



Fig.11. Tell Yunatsite



Fig. 12. Anthropomorphic idol (Tell Yunatsite)



Fig. 13. Ascos (Tell Yunatsite)



Fig. 14. Vessel (Tell Yunatsite)