

Unknown, Forgotten and (Re)discovered: A Possible New Life for Three Fortresses near the Town of Kavarna

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Abstract: *The paper represents the results of ethnographical research focused on the policies of local authorities and attitudes of media and communities on topics related to protection and promotion of immovable heritage of local importance in Kavarna Municipality. Three case studies, concerning the remains of fortified settlements reveal the different approaches towards cultural heritage that is left aside of venues of high national interest and the potential of these little-known sites to gain recognition. Methodological approach included documentary and media analyses and ethnographic fieldwork.*

Keywords: immovable cultural heritage, local importance, fortified settlements, heritage promotion

Ключови думи: недвижими културни ценности, местно значение, укрепени селища, популяризиране на наследство



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INTRODUCTION

The region of Kavarna, with its almost untouched nature and a multilayered history, from Neolithic settlements, through Ancient, Medieval and Ottoman period to nowadays Bulgaria, has been included in the ethnological research concerning policies for protection and promotion of immovable cultural heritage (ICH) of local importance. The entire project includes four municipalities, placed in Northeastern (Balchik and Kavarna) and Southwestern (Sandanski and Garmen) parts of the country. Similar in size, local economic profile, demographic features and geographic position near State borders these regions attract tourists, but at the same time struggle to keep their migrating and decreasing population. Evaluating the local authorities' policies and



Picture 1. A rocky grave at the National Archaeological Reserve 'Yailata'. May 2022.

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Снимка 1. Каменен гроб от Национален археологичен резерват „Яйлата“. Май, 2022.

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communities' knowledge, dedication and involvement in the processes of preservation and promotion of cultural sites, the team aims to reveal how ICH of local importance might contribute to regional economic development and strengthening community ties¹.

The heritage sites in Kavarna Municipality with a received status² of ICH of local importance are only eleven and all of them are announced as such in a single document, published in the State Gazette in 1967. According to the official list, among them are: 4 ancient settlements – near the villages of Belgun, Bojurets, Balgarevo (Tauk Liman area) and Kavarna town; 2 fortified settlements – near villages of Balgarevo (Dalboka area) and Kamen Bryag; 1 ancient and medieval settlement near Vranino village; 1 ancient fortress – Balgarevo village

(Tauk Liman area); 2 ancient necropoleis – near Kavarna town and Kamen Bryag village; 1 rocky site with cave monasteries – near Kamen Bryag village. After more than 50 years and a number of archeological surveys and excavations the knowledge of some of these sites has evolved, leading to new perception of their functionalities and historical significance. Focusing on three specific locations, the goal of this paper is to explore their hidden potential to impact economy, sociocultural life and tourist flow in the area surveyed.

Methodological approach included documentary and media analyses during the first phase of the research and ethnographic fieldwork – during the second. The documentary analysis included a thorough examination of the legal framework concerning the protection of cultural heritage, local government ordinances, programs and documents, and scientific literature. Semi-structured interviews, a focus group discussion and on-spot visits to the ICH of local importance took place during the fieldwork research in May 2022.

KAVARNA MUNICIPALITY – TOURISM AND CULTURAL LIFE

The municipality of Kavarna is located in the historical, geographical, and cultural region of Dobrudja in Northeastern Bulgaria and is part of the administrative structure of Dobrich District. It is situated in the Eastern parts of the Danube Plain, accessing part of the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast. It consists of 21 settlements. According to the National Statistical Institute (NSI), as of September 2022, the population of the municipality is over 13 thousand people, of which nearly 11 thousand live in the only town – Kavarna. Located 500 km from the Capital Sofia, 50 km from the largest city in Northeastern Bulgaria and on its Black Sea area – Varna (where the nearest civil airport and railway station are located), and 30 km from the nearest large tourist resort Albena, the town, but

¹ Cf. Asenova et al. 2021: 707; Vladimirov 2021.

² According to Bulgarian Cultural Heritage Act the announcement of archeological or architectural site as ICH follows two mandatory steps – first one is the site to be declared as ICH and second (if reasonable) – to receive a status of ICH – Cultural Heritage Act 2009.

also the entire region, remains aside from the main country roads. The main economic sectors of the local economy are: tourism (hotels and restaurants); agriculture, forestry and fisheries; production and distribution of electricity; trade; and real estate business.

The proximity to the Black Sea Coast of the municipal center of Kavarna and five villages predispose tourism development and the efforts to build tourist infrastructure in the municipality. Although there are no large tourist resorts, recreational areas outside the settlements exist (Morska zona and Ikantalaka areas and Rusalka Resort). Several complexes with golf courses have been built, such as Traction Cliffs Golf Resort and Golf Coast Hotel. The type of tourism combining golf activities with seaside recreation is developed only in the municipalities of Balchik and Kavarna. However, besides the growth in places for accommodation the tourist capacity of municipality, counted in number of beds for rent is insignificant (approx. 2,500 beds as of 2019, according official data³ and over 7,000 – as of 2021, according media⁴) compared to the accommodation capacity of the neighbouring municipality of Balchik with over 26,000 beds for rent as of 2019⁵.

The rocky coast and the lack of long sandy beaches, as well as the relative remoteness of highways, airports and railway stations are some of the reasons for that make Kavarna seaside less attractive than big resorts. On the other hand, there are two architectural reserves, combining cultural and natural phenomena thus making them unique sites to be visited. The National Archaeological Reserve 'Yailata' is famous of its flat plateau on high rocky terraces with once inhabited caves, ancient cut-into-the-rock cemeteries and small fortress, described by Karel Shkorpil

and Sergei Torbatov⁶ as part of the fortification system of the Roman province of Little Scythia. The Natural and Archaeological Reserve Kaliakra is placed upon Cape Kaliakra, the eastern-most point of the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast. It is home to the well-studied Tiris settlement, dating back to the 4th century BC, with preserved and partially restored Roman fortress⁷. Famous nationwide both reserves establish cultural tourism as leading segment in the area, this paving the way for other ICH sites to be developed as such.

The two archaeological reserves are managed by the Historical Museum of Kavarna, under which jurisdiction operates also an Ethnographic complex. Other cultural institutions in the municipality include Art Gallery 'Hristo Gradechliev' and 3D Cinema 'Petar Slabakov', both in the town of Kavarna and the cultural community centres (chitalishe) in the town and nine other villages – responsible for protection and promotion of local intangible cultural heritage.

With several annual festivals in its cultural calendar, Kavarna Municipality focuses on events as the main source of tourist attraction and income for local entrepreneurs. Among them are: the youth festival 'With Bulgaria in Our Hearts' gathering descendants of Bulgarians from Albania, Moldova, Ukraine, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia; National Amateur Theatre Festival; the 'Jazz at the Village' festival at Kamen Bryag village; the 'Mussels and Fish Fest' food festival⁸. The most famous and gaining the town of Kavarna the name of Bulgarian Rock Capital has been the 'Kavarna Rock Fest' that took place between 2006 – 2016 with rock star participants as Alice Cooper, *Halloween*, *Motörhead*, *Twisted Sisters* and many more. It has been highly promoted and covered in media on national level.

³ PIDPM Kavarna 2021: 34.

⁴ TravelNews 2021.

⁵ IDPM Balchik 2021: 61.

⁶ In his book 'The defense system of the late roman province of Scythia: The end of the 3rd - the 7th century AD' Sergey Torbatov cites a number of unpublished observations made by Karel Shkorpil from the end 19th – beginning 20th century, archived in the Scientific Archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, fond 165k – Torbatov 2002.

⁷ Petrunova 2012.

⁸ Kavarna.bg.

RECOGNISIBILITY OF THE IMMOVABLE HERITAGE

At the time of the documentary and field surveys, the municipality of Kavarna has 2 ICH of national importance – the aforementioned reserves 'Yailata' and 'Kaliakra', the described 11 sites with the status of ICH of local importance and over 60 declared sites of cultural heritage, which are still in the process of evaluation and (probably) further announcement of the obtained status.

During the fieldwork in May 2022, it has been revealed that the ICH of local importance in the villages of Vranino and Belgun are located in arable lands and do not exist as

separate sites. They have not been studied in depth and scientific knowledge about them is based on few artifacts found on the surface. Moreover, local communities are unaware of the existence of such (potential) heritage sites.

The sites near Kamen Bryag village – a fortified settlement, a necropolis and a cave monastery have been studied and preserved, but not exhibited. Only a metal plate on the ground testifies that there are archeological remains in the area. However, the vegetation on the plateau makes these remains almost invisible to non-expert eyes. The cave monastery is placed on the cliff wall over the sea and at the moment is inaccessible for tourists.



Picture 2. Metal plate on the archeological site near Kamen Bryag village. May 2022.

Author: Julia Popcheva

Снимка 2. Метална плоча от археологическия обект близо до Камен бряг. Май, 2022.

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The ICH in Dalboka area, near Balgarevo village has been partially explored in 2006, due to wind turbines investments intentions, but is currently deserted. The other two sites near the village in Tauc Liman area, are part of the private property of Rusalka Resort, but not promoted in resort's advertisements⁹.

Currently, only the ICH near Bozhurets village and Kavarna (on Cape Chirakman) are being studied by planned archeological excavations. At Cape Chirakman the work continues each archeological season. Due to its status of *alive* archeological site, together with the local community perception that Cape Chirakman is the true symbol of Kavarna¹⁰, it is the only one recognizable ICH of local importance in the region. The cape and the remains of the ancient town Bizone enjoy tourist's and partial media interest and are recognized as valuable cultural heritage that needs protection, conservation and promotion.

The lack of awareness of ICH of local importance is also visible in the municipal documents, as in the Integrated Development Plan of the Municipality of Kavarna (IDPM) for the period 2021 – 2027 only 'Bizone' as a settlement and Tauc Liman area are mentioned¹¹. On the other hand, along with the ICH of local importance with received status, there are listed also some declared cultural heritage sites like: the Hammam – a massive stone dome bath; the Old Port Storages – buildings for grain storage from 18 – 19th century; the Stone Bridge – built by local craftsmen during the same time period and the only one in the entire area¹². The mixing of ICH with status and the declared ones shows also that among the latter there are sites of higher significance and degree of recognition by local communities as well as by the municipal administration and experts.

Besides Chirakman and Bizone, the ICH of local importance almost don't gain media attention. Even the municipality owned mobile

app *Kavarna Guide* available for iOS and Android OS presents only Cape Chirakman with its historical site and Tauc Liman area with its natural beauty and protected animal species.

UNKNOWN FORTRESSES NEAR KAVARNA – CURRENT STATUS AND POTENTIAL

As part of ICH of local importance with a received status, there are three sites with Roman fortification remains. According current results it is shown that with targeted archeological research, conservation, restoration and exhibition activities, these ICH could become tourist sites that not only generate income but also provide jobs for residents of the region.

Sveti Nikola Fortress – Tauc Liman Area

Located about 18 km east of Kavarna town, between Cape Kaliakra and the National Archaeological Reserve 'Yailata', southeast of Sveti Nikola village and in the area of Rusalka Resort, little is known about Sveti Nikola Fortress. It has been researched in 1967 – 1968, during the building and construction of the resort. It is a small fortification unit from the early Byzantine era, covering an area of about 7–8 hectares. Remains of a former Thracian and Late Antique fortresses and two solid quadrangular towers set about 33 metres apart has been found and documented. It is believed that the fortress was built around the middle of the 6th century, existed for a century and served as Roman road station¹³. Located in Tauc Liman area, it guarded a settlement with a harbour¹⁴. According other remains found, this settlement has existed till Middle Ages around 9th – 14th century.

Nowadays the Tauc Liman is more famous with its nature, caves and lake, than with its past. Although, as respondents mention and a photo in Torbatov's book confirms¹⁵, part of the

⁹ *Rusalkaresort*.

¹⁰ *IEFEM – AEIM 1236-III 2022*.

¹¹ *PIDPM Kavarna 2021*: 50-51.

¹² *Ibid*.

¹³ *Torbatov 2002*: 223-224.

¹⁴ *Velev, Vasilev 1982; Dimitrova 2007*.

¹⁵ *Torbatov 2002*: 224

fortress has been integrated in the restaurant of the resort, the history of the place remains hidden.

As Kavarna Mayor stated in an interview, the land where Rusalka Resort is build is part of the State Forest Fund, meaning that there should be a free access towards the sea¹⁶. However, reaching the place by car, our team stopped in front of a barrier, we could not proceed and as long as it was seen that the restaurant is closed, our decision was not to trespass the territory without permission. Thus, the issue with the access towards this ICH of local importance remains unclear in the cases when the resort is not opened for tourists.

However, in the past Rusalka Resort owners have been willing to work together with local authorities in promoting cultural heritage. As the director of Historical Museum in Kavarna mentioned "in Rusalka, previous year we have made temporary exhibitions there with movable cultural heritage...there were boards on which the tourist could read on spot that there is something else besides the nature, the resort. They are at relevant historical place"¹⁷. Such relations between owners and authorities might lead to direct promotion of the ICH with local importance or to indirect advertisement of both resort and cultural heritage site.

As the place offers accommodation and tourist infrastructure, another opportunity for ICH promotion can be the organization of dedicated events on spot, like seminars, reenactments, educational trips or tours around the close standing fortresses, some of them having the same purpose of Roman road stations. The site might be included in eco hiking routes or cultural routes around the coast that might connect several heritage sites of a decent proximity, like the already mentioned architectural reserves and the fortified settlements that we are going to discuss below – Timum and Bizone.

The Fortified Settlement Timum – Dalboka area

Only 8 km away from Kavarna and 2 km – from Balgarevo village, next to the road towards the most famous mussel's farm on Bulgarian Black Sea Coast, the remains of fortified settlement and two fortresses have been found. Unlike the one near Sveti Nikola village, this settlement's name has been found in historical sources as Timum. It appears in the listing of settlements on the western shore of the Black Sea in the Cosmography of the anonymous author from Ravenna where Timum is listed as *a civitas* between Bizone and Tirisa (Kaliakra)¹⁸. According to archaeological data, the site was inhabited from the Late Iron Age until the end of the 6th – beginning of the 7th century and later in the 9th – 10th centuries and there were two fortresses built – a Roman road station and an early Byzantine fortress. In the early 20th century walls and remains of at least two representative buildings were visible above the surface, but in 1950s stones from the site were used for the construction of homes the road to Balgarevo village. In late antiquity Timum had a status of a town with a harbour in the nearby bay and had a significant defensive role¹⁹.

In the 1960s, the remains of a church could be identified in the central part of the settlement. During the archeological surveys made at 1991, 1994 and 1995 only a part of the western fortress wall has been clearly visible on the site²⁰.

Currently, after the partial archeological excavation from 2006, if a non-expert the visitor will not be able to see and recognize the remains of the fortified settlement as it is overgrown with vegetation. No artefacts are visible above the ground. Even the holes of the partial archeological research stay untouched and even dangerous, as they are not secured or pointed out in any way.

¹⁶ IEFEM – AEIM 1241-III 2022.

¹⁷ IEFEM – AEIM 1240-III 2022: 30.

¹⁸ Kuzov, Manolova-Voykova, Rocov 2007: 149.

¹⁹ Bobcheva 1982; Kuzov, Manolova-Voykova, Rocov 2007; Petrunova 2008a.

²⁰ Torbatov 2002: 234.



Picture 3. A view towards Cape Chirackman. May, 2022. Author: Julia Popcheva
Снимка 3. Гледка в посока на нос Чиракман. Май, 2022. Автор: Юлия Попчева

Our respondents believe that Timum might have the potential of becoming interesting archeological site, if researched dedicatedly²¹, and of a touristic site, due to the already existing infrastructure and close proximity to the mussel farm and its restaurant²². The distance of few kilometers to Kavarna is a prerequisite for construction of a hiking trail, thus connecting the town with the ICH. Cultural routes between fortresses and reenactments on spot are also to be considered as opportunity for tourist development.

*Bizone Settlement – Cape Chirakman,
Kavarna Town*

The ancient settlement of Bizone is located in the coastal part of the Kavarna town at Cape

Chirakman plateau, which was inhabited from Neolithic times till its conquest by the Ottoman Empire. Bizone was established around 7th – 6th century BC, but after an earthquake in 1st century AD part of the Cape collapsed into the sea. The town had trade connections with Ancient Greek colonies on the Black Sea and Aegean Sea coasts. First fortress walls were built in 5th century by Byzantine Empire and had probably three defense lines. Later this fortress was destroyed and a new Medieval Bulgarian one was built between 13th – 14th century. Between 14th – 17th century the site was used as a cemetery²³.

Today the ICH is not only an archeological site, but also a place to visit with restored fortress wall and restored basilica. It is accessible by a short trail starting from the

²¹ IEFEM – AEIM 1236-III 2022.

²² IEFEM – AEIM 1240-III 2022.

²³ Bobcheva 1974. Torbatov 2002: 244; Petrunova 2008.

old port where a big parking lot, restaurants, shops and informational boards build tourist infrastructure. Although this infrastructure requires improvements, as 'benches, railings, gravel paving, signage, gazebo' are still needed²⁴, Chirakman is attractive area for both tourists and citizen. With ongoing archeological excavations on the plateau and in some periods – underwater researches in the bay beneath, together with conservational and restoration activities, Chirakman (and its Bizone ICH site) has the potential to become a famous destination for recreational, cultural and diving tourism and a gathering point for citizens and visitors of Kavarna.

CONCLUSIONS

Unlike the two archeological reserves, which generate revenue for the municipality by offering a paid tourist product, neither of discussed ICH of local importance has been developed as a heritage site with economic value. With investment in dedicated programs, including in public-private partnerships, the heritage sites might become attractive for visitors, generate revenues and open new job positions.

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Nowadays the ICH zone discussed are not densely populated, like in ancient times, but even deserted. The wide unbuilt areas provide the opportunities of constructing modern tourist centers where archeological artefact would meet the new digital technologies, thus developing a number of cultural and educational programs. With their partially shared history and close proximity, the ICH sites between modern Kavarna town and Kamen bryag village, including the two archeological reserves and three discussed fortresses, could be successfully integrated in a number multicited project.

Last, but not least, in the project for Integrated Development Plan of the Municipality of Kavarna for the period 2021 – 2027, among the priorities is listed the development of tourism with local identity by overcoming the seasonality of marine recreational tourism and increasing the tourist base due to the unique cultural and historical monuments and historical-architectural complexes, and natural features²⁵. The research, protection and promotion of immovable cultural heritage of local importance, including the unknown, forgotten and rediscovered fortified settlements is a big step in fulfilling this strategy.

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²⁴ *IEFEM – AEIM 1241-III* 2022.

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Непознати, забравени и (пре)открити: един възможен нов живот за три крепости край гр. Каварна

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Районът на Северното Черноморие, от гр. Шабла до гр. Варна, е осеян с множество селища и крепости, останки от различни исторически периоди, като някои обекти са обявени за недвижими културни ценности (НКЦ) с местно или национално значение. Статията представя резултатите от етнографско изследване, насочено към политиките на местните власти и нагласите на медиите и общностите по теми, свързани с опазването и популяризирането на НКЦ с местно значение в община Каварна. Разгледана е степента на разпознаваемост на тези обекти. Основният фокус е върху три случая на останки от укрепени селища – Свети Никола, Тимум и Бизоне. Изследвани са политиките, мерките и проблемите, свързани с тяхното опазване и публично представяне, възможностите за популяризирането им като туристически обекти и потенциала им като активи за развитието на местната икономика. Проучването е реализирано чрез извършване на обстоен документален и медиен анализ, както и чрез етнографска работа на терен, включваща посещение на НКЦ, срещи с местните власти и жители от общината.



