

Hypogaea 2015

Proceedings of International Congress of Speleology in Artificial Cavities
Italy, Rome, March 11/17 - 2015



EDITORS

Mario Parise

Carla Galeazzi, Roberto Bixio, Carlo Germani



THE ARTIFICIAL CAVITIES OF BULGARIA

Alexey Zhalov

Speleo Club "Heliclit" – Sofia, azhalov@gmail.com

Abstract

In the territory of Bulgaria up to date there are 6050 natural and artificial caves explored. This number do not include the hundreds to thousands of artificial galleries but there is no unified data base for their number, distribution and classifications. They have been dug through during different historical times and for different purposes. They are Ancient and Middle Age mines and artificial galleries for water derivations, geological studies, military sites, tunnels, etc. About 1000 of the known caves are used for religion purposes. Such are the rock monasteries, crypts, monk cells and churches, covering a large time span – from Antiquity to XIV century and later. The monk dwellings were initially built in natural caves, later they were enlarged and adapted for the needs of the monk life. The religious caves are found almost over the entire territory of Bulgaria - the areas of Sofia, Vidin, Vratsa, Lovech, Pleven, Haskovo, Kârdjali, etc. Many of them are concentrated in NE Bulgaria (because of the type of karstification of the rocks there) - the Plateau of Shumen (Osmar, Troytsa), the Plateau of Madara and Provadiya, the regions of Targovishte, Razgrad, Silistra, Varna (best known is Aladja Manastery), Russe, South Dobrudja, in the area of Kamen Bryag village (Yaylata), cape Kaliakra and Tyulenovo. Such have been discovered in the area of Russenski Lom, in the gorge of Provadiyska Reka River from Provadiya to Kosovo Railway Station. Entire monastery complexes have been found on the cliffs of Dobrudja Black Sea Coast. Fragments of ceramics have been found in the mine and they show two ages I-III and XII-XIII centuries A.D. The study of the rock dwellings started as early as the end of XIX century. In 1896 the book by K. and H. Škorpil "Primitive Men in Bulgaria" was the first detailed descriptions of rock monasteries in Bulgaria- North Black Sea Coast, the areas of Provadiya, Shumen and the valley of Russenski Lom.

Keywords: artificial cavities, rock-cut monasteries, Bulgaria.

Riassunto

Nel territorio bulgaro fino ad oggi sono state esplorate 6050 grotte naturali e artificiali. Questo numero non comprende le centinaia di migliaia di gallerie artificiali, delle quali non esiste una banca dati omogenea per numero, distribuzione e classificazione. Esse sono state scavate nel corso delle diverse epoche storiche e per scopi diversi. Sono miniere antiche e medievali, gallerie artificiali per derivazioni d'acqua, studi geologici, siti militari, gallerie, ecc. Circa 1000 delle grotte conosciute sono utilizzate a scopo di culto. Tali sono i monasteri rupestri, cripte, celle e chiese monastiche, che ricoprono un ampio arco di tempo: dall'antichità al XIV secolo e oltre. Le abitazioni dei monaci sono state inizialmente costruite in grotte naturali, in seguito sono state ampliate e adattate alle esigenze della vita monastica. Le grotte di culto si trovano quasi su tutto il territorio della Bulgaria: aree di Sofia, Vidin, Vratsa, Lovech, Pleven, Haskovo, Kardjali, etc. Molte di esse sono concentrate nel NE della Bulgaria (a causa del tipo di carsismo delle rocce della zona): l'Altopiano di Shumen (Osmar, Troytsa), l'Altopiano di Madara e Provadiya, le regioni di Targovishte, Razgrad, Silistra, Varna (il più noto è il Monastero di Aladja), Russe, Dobrugia meridionale, nella zona del villaggio di Kamen Bryag (Yaylada), capo Kaliakra e Tyulenovo. Altre simili sono state scoperte nella zona di Russenski Lom, nella gola di Provadiyska sul fiume Reka, dalla Provadiya alla stazione ferroviaria di Kosovo. Interi complessi monastici sono stati trovati sulle scogliere della Dobrugia, sulla Costa del Mar Nero. Frammenti di ceramica sono stati trovati nella miniera e sono riconducibili ai secoli I-III e XII-XIII d.C. Lo studio degli insediamenti rupestri è iniziato già alla fine del XIX secolo. Nel 1896 nel volume di K. e H. Škorpil "Uomini primitivi in Bulgaria" sono state pubblicate le prime descrizioni dettagliate dei monasteri di roccia della Bulgaria: Costa nord del Mar Nero, aree di Provadiya, Shumen e nella valle del Russenski Lom.

Parole chiave: cavità artificiali, monasteri rupestri, Bulgaria.

General information

Karstic features are developed on 22.7% (25.171 square km) of the Bulgarian territory. Up to date in Bulgaria there are 6050 natural and artificial caves explored. Some of them are developed or cut in non carbonate rocks. About 1000 of the known caves are registered as artificial. All of them are used for religion purposes. Such are the rock monasteries, crypts, monk cells and churches, covering a large time span – from antiquity to XIV century and later. The monk dwellings were initially built in natural caves, later they were enlarged and adapted for the needs of the monk life. In addition,

hundreds to thousands of artificial galleries exist in Bulgaria, but there is no unified data base for their number, distribution and classifications. They are found mainly in the mountain regions, dug through during different historical times and for different purposes. The oldest galleries date back to the ancient Thracian times and are associated mainly with gold exploitation. During Roman times and the Middle Ages, galleries were dug for ore exploitation, especially iron. Hundreds of kilometres of galleries were built after the establishment of the Third Bulgarian Kingdom, and the quick development of the mining industry.



Fig. 1: distribution of the basic rock cut monasteries and churches in Bulgaria.

Fig. 1: distribuzione dei principali monasteri rupestri in Bulgaria.

Artificial galleries of different lengths have also been dug for water derivations, geological studies, military sites, tunnels, etc.

Religious Caves

The religious caves are found almost over the entire territory of Bulgaria - the areas of Sofia, Vidin, Vratsa, Lovech, Pleven, Haskovo, Kârdjali, etc. Many of them are concentrated in NE Bulgaria (because of the type of karstification of the local rocks): the Plateau of

Shumen (Osmar, Troytsa), the Plateau of Madara and Provadiya, the regions of Targovishte, Razgrad, Silistra, Varna (the best known is the Aladja Monastery), Russe, South Dobrudja, in the area of Kamen Bryag village (Yaylata), cape Kaliakra and Tyulenovo. Others have been discovered in the area of Russenski Lom, and in the gorge of Provadiyska Reka River from Provadiya to Kosovo Railway Station. Entire monastery complexes have been found on the cliffs of Dobrudja, along the Black Sea Coast. (Figs. 1, 2)

Some of the most important artificial cavities

The rock-cut churches of Ivanovo are a group of monolithic churches, chapels and monasteries, located 20 km S of Rousse. The complex is noted for its beautiful and well-preserved medieval frescoes. The monastery complex owes much of its fame to XIII and XIV centuries frescoes, preserved in five of the churches, which are thought of as wonderful examples of Bulgarian mediaeval art. The rock-cut churches of Ivanovo were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1979 (Fig. 3).

The Aladzha Monastery is a medieval Orthodox Christian cave monastery complex in NE Bulgaria. The monastery caves were hewn into a 25 m high vertical karst cliff near the upper edge of the Franga plateau on several levels. The complex includes two small nearby catacombs. It was an active hesychast monastic community since the XII century and survived until

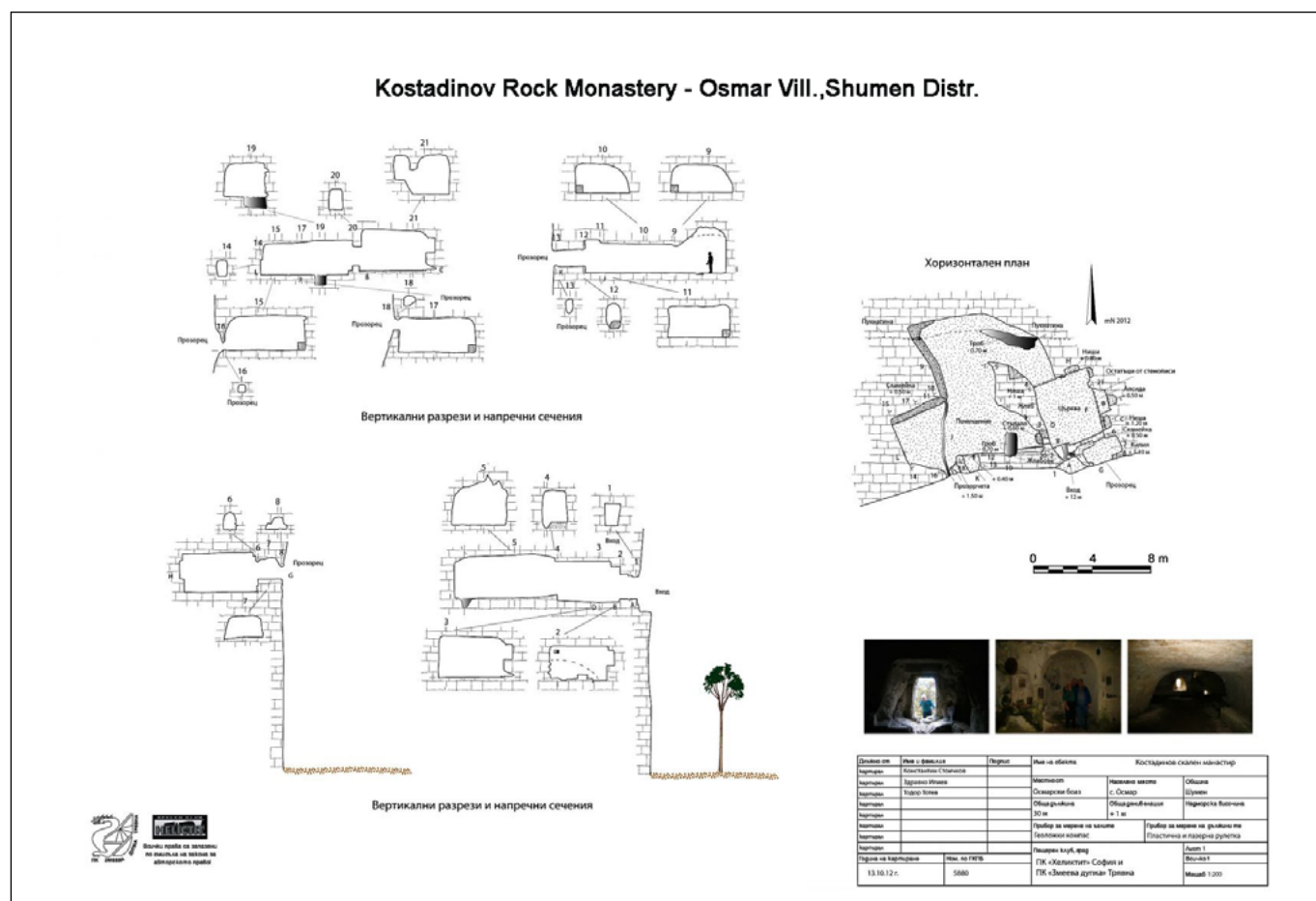


Fig. 2: map of the Kostadin Rock Monastery on Khan Krum vill. Shumen Plateau.

Fig. 2: mappa del Monastero rupestre di Kostadin nel villaggio di Khan Krum, Shumen Plateau.



Fig. 3: frescoes in rock cut church "St. Holly Mother of God", Ivanovo.

Fig. 3: affreschi nella chiesa rupestre "St. Holly Mother of God", Ivanovo.



Fig. 4: cut section of Aladzha Monastery - Varna.

Fig. 4: profilo - sezione del Monastero di Aladzha - Varna.

the early XVIII century (Fig. 4).

On the road from Kurdzhali to Haskovo, in the Hissar Tepe Hill, there are ancient galleries and shafts, named Ini-Kler. The area is a diagenetically altered deposit of gold and all of the workings in the area represent a remarkably large ancient gold mine. Fragments of ceramics have been found in the mine and they show two ages: I-III, and XII-XIII centuries A.D. (ATANASOV V., 2002) (Figs. 5, 6).

The study of the rock dwellings started as early as

the end of XIX century. In 1896 the book by K. and H. ŠKORPIL "Primitive Men in Bulgaria" (ŠKORPIL K.&H., 1896) published the first detailed descriptions of rock monasteries in Bulgaria: from the North Black Sea Coast, to the areas of Provadiya, Shumen and the valley of Russenski Lom. VELKOV I., studied the cave church Ipandi near the village Mihalich, Haskovo District, in 1933. Later, MIYATEV K., 1934; KAMBUROV P., 1985, MASLEV, 1959, 1963; A. MARGOS A., 1971, 1981, 1983, 1986; VALOV, 1978; ATANASSOV G., 1984, 1986,

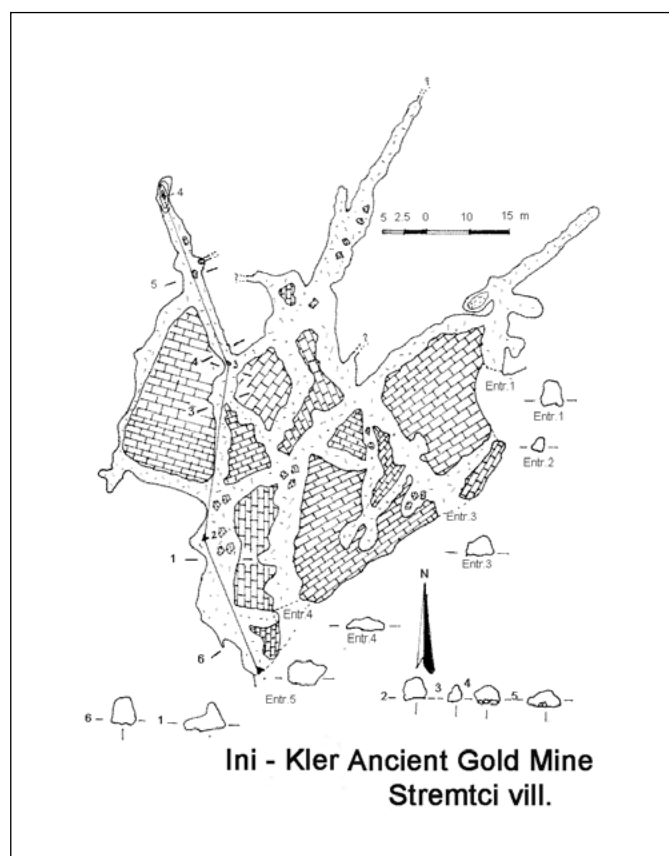


Fig. 5: map of the ancient golden mine Ini-Kler near Stremtci vill.

Fig. 5: planimetria della antica miniera d'oro di Ini-Kler vicina al villaggio di Stremtci.



Fig. 6: gallery in the ancient golden mine Ini-Kler.

Fig. 6: galleria dell'antica miniera d'oro di Ini-Kler.

1993, 2004 and others also explored the cave churches along Russenski Lom and Bely Lom Rivers and Dobrudzha – North East Bulgaria. Together with the morphological studies of the cave monasteries, many researchers paid attention to the Medieval graffiti drawings and signs therein hosted. A. Margos is the most active researchers of the cave monasteries in the areas of Provadiya, Nikopol, Karlukovo, Beli Lom valley, Razgrad and others.

References

- ATANASOV G., 1984, *Medieval rock churches in Silistra district*, Bull. People Mus. in Varna, vol. 20(35), pp. 91-97.
- ATANASOV G., 1986, *Rock churches in Dobrudzha along Danube*, Vekove, vol. 6, pp. 9-14.
- ATANASOV G., 1993, *Early Medieval rock monasteries in the middle course of dry valley Kanagyol (Dristra)*, in Dobrudzha, Bull. People Mus. in Varna, vol. 29(44), pp. 122-143.
- ATANASOV G. et al., 2004, *Cave ritual sites of Dobrudzha: Shrines, temples and monasteries*, Silistra, RITT Publishers, p. 33.
- ATANASOV V., 2002, *The ancient gold mine perperikon near Stremtsi Vill., Kurdzhali Region*, Ann. of Mine Geol. Univ. "St.Ivan Rilski" in Sofia, vol. 45, I; Geology, pp. 89-96.
- SKORPIL K.&H., 1896, *Primitive Men in Bulgaria*, H.G. Danov Publ. in Plovdiv, p. 23.
- KAMBUROV P., 1985, *Medieval rock monastery and churches near Svalenik vill., Russe Distr.*, Vekove, Sofia, vol. 2, pp. 40-46.
- MIYATEV K., 1934, *The cave church "St. Marina"*, Ann. Peopl. Mus. in Sofia, 1932/1933, pp. 287-294.
- MASLEV, 1959, *Madara-habitat of hermits*, Archaeologia, Sofia, vol. 3-4, pp. 24-34.
- MASLEV, 1963, *Non explored rock churches in Kolarougrads region*, Bull. Arch. Inst. in Sofia, pp. 95-98.
- MARGOS A., 1971, *For the dating of ancient Bulgarian rock inscriptions in the rock cave monastery near Royak vill.*, Provadia area. Bull. People Mus. in Varna, vol. 7, pp. 203-207.
- MARGOS A., 1981, *Medieval rock monasteries along Provadia gorge*, Bull. People Mus. in Varna, vol. 17, pp. 112-118.
- MARGOS A., 1983, *Medieval rock monasteries along Dry River*, Bull. People Mus. in Varna, vol. 19, pp. 125-129.
- MARGOS A., 1986, *Rock monasteries along Beli Lom River*, Tourist Mag. Vol. 9, p. 24.
- VALOV, 1978, *The rock monastery in the area Albutin – Vidin District*, Bull. of the Museums of NW Bulgaria, vol. 2, pp. 83-106.
- VELKOV I., 1933, *Some fortresses, settlements and sacred places in Rhodopes*, Bull. Hist. Soc. in Sofia, vol. 13, pp. 180-184.