

# THE LIFE AND WORKS OF THE FIRST TEACHERS OF THE SLAVS AND THEIR DISCIPLES AS AN OBJECT OF A DIGITAL MUSEUM EXHIBITION

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**Abstract:** The article presents a concept of the author concerning the creation of a future Interactive Museum of Lifework and Heritage of St. St. Cyril and Methodius. The aim of the museum is to create an interactive environment that will communicate and promote the cultural heritage of the Slavic First Teachers and their disciples among diverse audience by means of the latest information and communication technologies. The collective experience of the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre – BAS in creating various web-based resources would be a great starting point for the implementation of such large-scale project.

**Keywords:** cultural heritage, Cyril and Methodius, interactive museum, museum pedagogy, non-formal education.

## **Introduction**

The issue of preserving national and cultural identity is one of the characteristic features of today's world at a time when more and more people are talking about, "planetary consciousness", "borderless world" and "cultural diversity". Moreover, we can argue that those tendencies are directly related to each other. The representation of each nation in today's cultural milieu and their contribution to the civilization is of great significance. Nowadays, cultural identity is an important prerequisite for the positive acceptance of a society or a nation.

In response to this public challenge, the current paper proposes a large-scale conceptual project whose aim is to create on the territory of Sofia city an Interactive Museum of St. St. Cyril and Methodius dedicated to their lifeworks and heritage.

Sofia is an ultra-modern tourist destination on the European Cyril and Methodius Cultural Route.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the common practice, known from the past, the idea does not involve building a repository of exhibits, although it would be wonderful to have such, but establishing a research, information and educational center based on the latest trends in the museum field and implementing specialized programs and applied scientific knowledge. The project is focused on the European and world significance of the mission of St. St. Cyril and Methodius as "a cornerstone of the European identity of the Slavic nations". That requires founding an attractive international cultural center, comparable to

the most famous museums in Europe, able to trace the opportunities of the most modern museum aesthetics, i.e. to be a complex historical means through which the work of the Thessalonian brothers could be emphasized as a phenomenon having a special significance both for the European and the world civilization, with achievements lasting more than a thousand of years.

**The goals** set with establishing a museum dedicated to exhibit the lifework of the Holy Brothers St. St. Cyril and Methodius, will be to re-create the history of the Slavic script, offering visitors an exciting journey through four historical eras – Middle Ages, Renaissance, New Times and Nowadays.

### **Methodology of the study**

This is a museological development exploring the the latest achievements in the museum field and based on a prospective approach to present the author's idea regarding concerning the creation of a future Interactive Museum which to display the historical narrative of the Holy Seven Apostles of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Slavic alphabets using the tools of state-of-art technologies and interactive audio-visual applications.

### **Conception**

#### **The task of the Museum**

The task of the museum will be to offer its guests an innovative interactive experience in historical culture, available traditionally only in archaeological field studies, manuscript sections of world libraries and old archives. That is supposed to be a new form of presentation and perception of information, which will also provoke the visitors' interest in a series of cognitive discoveries. It will create a unique opportunity for an individual journey – beyond conventional museum expositions, where visitors can make their own virtual tour according to their specific preferences. Controlling the digital panels in the virtual decor simply with the touch of his/her hand, the visitor will browse through the expositions and learn about the history of the Slavic script and the heritage of the Holy Brothers. St. St. Cyril and Methodius.

#### **Structure of the Museum**

Upon entering the interior of the building, visitors' attention will be focused on the video walls located in separate halls, so that they will be attracted naturally by the dynamic vision and oriented without unnecessary guidance along the informational axis of the museum, commencing from the historic narration about the missions of St. St. Cyril and Methodius and ending with the most recent achievements in the field of St. St. Cyril and Methodius

studies. Through the incorporation of ultra-modern multimedia tools and the use of holographic effects, impressions of the museum will intensify and, having a strong effect on the senses of visitors, its exhibits produce the desired impact on the visitors. The casual visitor who communicates daily on the global network and is accustomed to three-dimensional images in the cinema, architecture and animation is difficult to be intrigued. (Concerning the educational functions of a museum see [1] and [2].)

The museum will consist of five video-exposition halls and two more for expositions of artefacts, as follows:

### **First Hall “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”**

The hall will also include two video walls.

The first video wall will provide a virtual walk along the Cyril and Methodius Route. Through it, the visitor will be able to visit the historical places – those connected with the lives and the work of the Holy Brothers – Medieval Thessaloniki, Constantinople with the St. Sofia Cathedral, the alleged location of the Polychronion Monastery, Baghdad and its monuments from the time of the mission to the Saracens, Kherson with the ruins of the Khazar Khaganate, Great Moravia (Mikulčice, Velehrad), Blaten Principality (Blatengrad (nowadays Zalavár in Western Hungary), Nitra), Venice, Rome (“Santa Maria Maggiore” and “San Clemente”); In connection with St. Methodius’ life and activity following the death of St. Cyril: Passau, Elvangen, Regensburg, Reichenau. Interactive historical maps will also mark the missions of the two brothers. One could view 3D images of archaeological remains from the time of St. St. Cyril and Methodius, as well as museum expositions dedicated to their memory in the respective locations. The second video wall, named “The memory of St. St. Cyril and Methodius”, will also present an organized collection of electronic exhibits and data about the sources for the lives and the work of the Holy Brothers. The collection will offer a compendium of digitized images of the so-called written monuments complimented with a summary. The exhibition will be accessed through an interactive map of the library, where the sources are kept. There will also be several smaller video sections in the First Hall of the Interactive Museum that will be presenting the following virtual collections:

– Pinacotheca Cyrillo-Methodiana: St. St. Cyril and Methodius in different spheres of the ecclesiastic and secular fine art – iconography, murals, stained glass, mosaics, wood carving, embroidery (banners and school flags), sphragistics (school seals with the images of St. St. Cyril and Methodius, jubilee coins, medals, plaques), monumental sculpture, plastic and bas-reliefs – in Bulgaria and worldwide (with 3D panoramic model on the exhibits).

– Phonothecca Cyrillo-Methodiana:

St. St. Cyril and Methodius in the art of music – audio and video recordings of musical works including church chants, school hymns, pop songs, large music pieces dedicated to St. St. Cyril and Methodius, in different arrangements and performed by different musicians. Audio recordings of recitals about St. St. Cyril and Methodius by distinguished performers of artistic declamation.

– Bibliotheca Cyrillo-Methodiana:

Containing old-printed books, art and scientific section:

St. St. Cyril and Methodius in old-printed books (transcription of materials in contemporary language, inclusive);

St. St. Cyril and Methodius in art literature (poetry, prose, drama, respectively from the revival, post-liberation period and

– Audio-Videotheca Cyrillo-Methodiana:

The interpretation of St. St. Cyril and Methodius tradition by modern audio-visual arts (street art, graphics, comics, cinema, performance and flash mob);

St. St. Cyril and Methodius in satire and cartoons; as images in modern graphic design.

The attraction planned here is to play a short entertaining animation based on the life of the Holy Brothers.

### **Second Hall “Disciples of St. St. Cyril and Methodius”**

The exhibitions will be developed in a similar way. The first video wall will provide a virtual walk along the road On St. Kliment and St. Naum. Through it, the tourists will visit destinations related to the lives and work of the two disciples of St. St. Cyril and Methodius: Pliska with the archaeological complex – present condition and restoration, Ohrid School of Writing, the Monastery St. Panteleimon, and St. Archangels; The Theotokos Peribleptos church, Kutmichevitsa (Devoll), Glavinitsa (Ballsh). An interactive historical map will show the historical topoi, monuments and museum expositions at the memorial sites of St. Clement and St. Naum.

The second video wall will also present an organized collection of electronic exhibits and sources of information about:

- sources about the lives and works of St. Kliment and St. Naum
- works by St. Kliment and St. Naum

The disciples of St. St. Cyril and Methodius in fine arts (Pinacotheca Naumo-Clementina);

The disciples of St. St. Cyril and Methodius in belle-letters (Bibliotheca Naumo-Clementina);

The disciples of St. St. Cyril and Methodius in music (Phonotheca and Audio – Videotheca Naumo-Clementina).

A 3D reconstruction of the architectural complex in Pliska to create a sense of space is planned as an attraction in that hall.

### **Third Hall “Old Slavonic Alphabets – Scribes and Written monuments”**

The interactive museum will acquaint the visitor with the old graphic system created by St. St. Cyril and Methodius and their disciples. It will provide virtual access to some of the main libraries of Slavic manuscripts through collections of electronic exhibits and sources of information – concerning the most famous Old Bulgarian written monuments (Glagolitic and Cyrillic), the medieval writers and their works. A documentary reconstruction film will yet tell in detail the creation of a written book.

The planned attraction for that hall is the organization of a medieval scriptorium at the museum with the study of Cyrillic calligraphy. A kaleidoscope with images in glagolitic letters will be offered to the little ones.

### **Forth Hall “Celebrating the memory of St. St. Cyril and Methodius and their disciples”**

It will also have two video displays.

The first video wall will be dedicated to the Bulgarian public holiday 24th May<sup>2</sup> dedicated to celebration of St. St. Cyril and Methodius.

The video wall will provide virtual access to the new times through the collection of electronic exhibits of archival materials and sources of information on the celebration of 24th May during the various periods of the Bulgaria history (Revival, Post-Liberation Bulgaria, totalitarianism, modern days Bulgaria after November 10, 1989). The atmosphere of the 1930s/1940s will come alive before the eyes of the visitor through film screenings and documentary footage of celebrating the holiday.

The planned attraction here is a parallel hologram – a reenactment of the manifestation on 24<sup>th</sup> May at the time of totalitarianism. Another attraction will be a hologram visualization of the event nowadays. The historical panorama still intensifies the sensory perception of the visitor, bringing him/her into the most real environment.

The second video wall will also present the anniversary celebration of St. St. Cyril and Methodius and their disciples. The visitor will be able to browse the archives and follow the commemoration of the round anniversary of St. St. Seven Apostles of Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

A separate video section will also present the cultural importance of the Day of Bulgarian Higher Education Students celebrated on the feast day of St. Kliment of Ohrid – November 25/December 8.

### **Fifth hall “Scientific Research on St. St. Seven Apostles of Bulgarian Orthodox Church”**

The main Cyrillo-Methodian research centers and their most famous representatives will be displayed in that hall. The most important discoveries in Cyrillo-Methodian studies and information about the most prominent researchers will be provided via rich archival material.

#### **Expected results**

The interactive nature of the museum reveals its great potential to expand continuously its exhibition collections, in cooperation with national and international academic institutions, as the expected results are:

- to enrich the content of local cultural products, joining a wide network of modern museums, dedicated to preserving cultural and historical heritage;
- to award a honourable place to Bulgaria in the preservation of Cyrillo-Methodian – spiritual tradition, highlighting its historical connections with the cultural and educational work in the PanSlavic and PanEuropean plan;
- to meet the modern requirements of the audience using modern technological applications, new perceptions and take part in the research – with active participation of the visitor;
- to play an active social role in the educational process, developing a sense of identity, belonging, value and recognition;
- to raise tourist interest throughout the year as part of a unified strategy for cultural revival and renewal.
- to foster social interactions in society, creating a social platform for cultural-public debate.
- to contribute to the development of the local cultural-historical tourist product and the related infrastructure.
- to support the international visibility of Bulgaria by including the museum in the Trans-European telecommunication network for access to the European cultural heritage.

#### **Experience of the Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre – BAS in creating various web-based resources**

The Cyrillo-Methodian Research Center at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (CMRC) has an indisputable capacity to coordinate and supervise the work of creating such a museum. That is a scientific and educational institution with a well – established position in interdisciplinary research in the field of St. St. Cyril and Methodius studies being an authority both in our country and abroad. The team has accumulated serious experience in the implementation of large national, international and European projects on the topic of preserving

national and cultural identity, among which: Construction and development of the Center for excellence “Heritage of BG”; National Interdisciplinary Research Infrastructure for Resources and Technologies for the Bulgarian Language and Cultural Heritage CLaDA, integrated within the framework of the European infrastructures CLARIN and DARIAH; National scientific program “Cultural Historical Heritage, National Memory and Public Progress” (CHHNMP).<sup>3</sup>

As a multidisciplinary academic institution, CMRC has the necessary human resources to carry out scientific activities according to the project proposal. It already has an electronic edition of a map of the Slavic St. St. Cyril and Methodius sources.<sup>4</sup> See also [3, 4, 5].

The Center has a collection of digitized images of 118 monuments dedicated to Cyril and Methodius in Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, China, Macedonia, Portugal, Hungary, Russia, Slovakia, USA, Serbia, Ukraine and Czechia, most of them were erected during the last decades; over 70 examples of philately from Bulgaria, the Vatican, Greece, Macedonia, Mozambique, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine and the Czech Republic; 15 samples from Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic; more than 30 examples of faleristics (orders, medals, badges, plaques ) from Bulgaria, the Vatican, Greece, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine and the Czech Republic and 13 flags with images of the Holy Teachers [6]. Visit the digital archive with images of Cyril and Methodius and their disciples. At the moment, more than two hundred frescoes and icons, created during the period from the middle of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century, have been found. Their documentation, description and research, as well as further expansion of their list (See [7, 8]) are pending. The beginning of a collection of cartoons with images of Cyril and Methodius, depicting amusing stories of shortcomings, adventures and other exploits from the life of these two historical characters [9]. Topic for the status of St. St. Cyril Methodius studies in various Slavic schools. See [10, 11, 12, 13].

A lot of archival and factual material has been collected, affecting the question of Holy Brothers’ cult and their disciples’ and the celebration of the Holy Seven Apostles of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church during different historical periods. See [14, 15, 16].

Further investigations on the endeavors of St. St. Cyril and Methodius are being carried out. Educational games to acquaint students with the history of the Bulgarian writing system have been developed as a part of the project “Interdisciplinary cluster” Cyrilometodikon”. The purpose of the project is to popularize the heritage and traditions of St. St. Cyril and Methodius in Bulgaria amongst the youngest (Some of them were tested for classes at the Sunday School at the Metropolitan Church “St. Sofia”).<sup>5</sup> In connection with the initiative “European Researchers Night” and “Open doors of CMSC”, icon

painting and calligraphy workshops were organized and held. A number of exhibitions have been created, presenting to the general public the scientific problems of the link and the corresponding milestone anniversaries.<sup>6</sup> Albums and booklets have been made and released on the occasion of some of those events. All this is accumulated experience and material that will be applied to the implementation of the Interactive Museum of the Endeavors and Traditions of St. St. Cyril and Methodius.

### Conclusion

The exhibition plan of the Interactive Museum of the Endeavors and Traditions of St. St. Cyril and Methodius is for now only a fascinating vision. Though, we hope that the ideas embedded in it will still have an impact on Bulgarian Museology and will enrich it. The museography proposal will probably open a discussion. My hopes are that, reaching a larger number of readers through this article, the proposal will provoke the interest of the public in the future museum and will also mobilize it to undertake its creation. Bulgaria and Bulgarian memory do deserve such a museum.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/cyрил-and-methodius-route>.
- <sup>2</sup> Until recently the memory of St. St. Cyril and Methodius and their disciples has been celebrated solely in Bulgaria since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. In late 19<sup>th</sup> century it began being celebrated in the Czech and Slovak lands, later in Croatian lands. In late 20<sup>th</sup> century it was proclaimed a holiday in the USSR, too. There are a lot of polemics, even in Bulgaria, on how the holiday should be called and celebrated.
- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.kmnc.bg/научна-дейност/проекти/>.
- <sup>4</sup> <https://cyrmet-sl.kmnc.bg/index.html>.
- <sup>5</sup> See more in: also <https://lms.kmnc.bg/course/view.php?id=16>.
- <sup>6</sup> See more in: <https://www.kmnc.bg/научна-дейност/изложби>, and <https://www.kmnc.bg/e-кмнц/дигитални-изложби/>.

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### About the Author

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## **ЖИВОТЪТ И ДЕЛОТО НА СЛАВЯНСКИТЕ ПЪРВОУЧИТЕЛИ И ТЕХНИТЕ УЧЕНИЦИ КАТО ОБЕКТ НА ДИГИТАЛНА МУЗЕЙНА ЕКСПОЗИЦИЯ**

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**Резюме:** В доклада е изложена концепцията на авторката за създаване на един бъдещ Интерактивен музей на Кирило-Методиевото дело и традиции, който има за цел да представя и популяризира културното наследство на славянските първоучители и техните ученици сред разнообразни публики чрез възможностите на най-новите информационни и комуникационни технологии в интерактивна музейна среда. Резюмира се дейността на Кирило-Методиевския научен център (КМНЦ) по създаване на различни уеббазирани ресурси, които биха били чудесна стартова база за осъществяването на такова мащабно начинание.

**Ключови думи:** културно наследство, Кирил и Методий, интерактивен музей, музейна педагогика, неформално образование.

### **За автора**

**Татяна Илиева** е доц. д-р в Кирило-Методиевския научен център при БАН, магистър по класическа филология и теология и доктор по езикознание със защитена дисертация на тема „Богословската терминология в Йоан-Екзарховия превод на „Небеса“ (2006). Научните ѝ интереси включват старобългарска лексикология и лексикография, история на превода на Свещеното писание и св. отци в средновековна България, историческа литургика, лингвокултурология, лингвостатистика.

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