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The Formation of the Administrative-Territorial System in the Context of the Formation of Modern Ethnogeographical Systems in Bulgaria

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Abstract: The purpose of the article is to identify the peculiarities of formation of the modern administrative-territorial structure of Bulgaria and to analyze their compliance with the ethnogenetic factor of the territory's development. Resettlement has its genetic basis, its roots in the natural and geographical environment, ethno-cultural, socio-economic and political features of the territory. The genesis of settlement covers the time of initial settlement and economic development of the territory, as well as all its subsequent changes and transformations. This is one of the main types of socio-geographical processes that has its own dynamics, development trends, ethno-demographic and socio-economic "trajectory". The genetic taxonomy should comprehensively take into account the entire set of historical and geographical preconditions and factors of settlement, on the one hand, and the peculiarities of the settlement process itself with its dynamics, transformations and changes, on the other. This is a very complex task that requires in-depth methodological and methodological developments. The paper uses statistical and research materials. The second important component of settlement is the network of settlements (settlement network). The methodological scheme for analyzing settlement networks has been developed in great detail in social and geographical studies and is represented by numerous developments. In the context of this work, it is necessary to identify the main typological characteristics of the settlement network that determine the genetic types of settlement. The territorial organization of the population of a certain territory has the following typological features: a genetically related network of settlements has a characteristic functional and settlement structure with a certain list of functional and genetic types of settlements, their quantitative ratio and hierarchy, with more or less pronounced central locations and regional centers; a genetically related settlement network has a peculiar set of settlement locations and their evolutionary change associated with the development of the network; the network of settlements has its own territorial structure with a typical configuration, density and population of settlements, forms of their placement - single, group, agglomerated, area; the combination of such characteristics represents the territorial structure of the network of settlements. The question of correspondence between administrative-

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territorial systems of settlement, on the one hand, and genetic types of settlement, on the other, remains open. In a general sense, there will be no such correspondence: each of the administrative systems of settlement can, in principle, have a particular combination of genetic types of settlement and vice versa.

Keywords: Ethnogeographical Systems; Bulgaria; Administrative-Territorial System; NUTS; regions

1. Introduction

The formation of the modern administrative-territorial division of Bulgaria is a complex multidimensional process, which, at least ideally, should result in the formation of genetic territorial entities. It is a combination of the characteristics of the administrative-territorial structure, historical and geographical division, settlement systems and planning taxis. This approach should ensure sustainable development of the state. In the context of our study, such an analysis allows us to identify the historical and geographical features of the formation and current state of the EGS (Todorov, 2017), which will improve the possibility of providing scientifically sound proposals for improving the territorial organization of the autochthonous Bulgarian EGS.

2. Summary of the Main Material

Bulgaria has a very complicated history, which is reflected in several variants of historical and geographical zoning. The simplest of them has a historical basis and provides for the division of the country into Mysia, Macedonia and Trakia.

The natural and geographical conditions on the territory of the country, within its current borders, led to the formation of the following historical and geographical areas on this basis:

- Northern Bulgaria (Danube Plain);
- Dobrudzha;
- Mountain Bulgaria (Balkans, Rhodope Mountains, Trakia, Pirin);
- Shopluk.

Some variants distinguish between the Strandzha region and the Black Sea coast. It should be noted that this variant of zoning most closely reflects the peculiarities of the development of the territory of Bulgaria. This conclusion is based on the analysis of historical and geographical literature on the subject.

Bulgaria also distinguishes historical and geographical regions (hereinafter referred to as districts) of a lower hierarchical level. The most prominent of them are Ludogirya (North-Eastern Bulgaria), Razlog (confined to the Blagoevgrad region, another name for Macedonia), Zlatia (Western part of the Danube Plain, Montana and Vratsa regions), etc. The historical and geographical regions of Bulgaria of different hierarchical levels can be presented as follows:

- historical and geographical macro-regions - Mizia, Macedonia, Trakia;
- historical and geographical regions;
- historical and geographical districts.

A unitary mono-ethnic state with areas of compact ethno-national minority settlement, Bulgaria has carried out a relatively successful administrative and territorial reform. On the way to joining the European Union, it has made the transition from a three-tier territorial division to a two-tier one. Prior to the 1998 reform, the country was divided into 8 regions: Burgas, Varna, Lovech, Montana (1993, Mikhailovgrad), Plovdiv, Rousen (1990, Razgrad, Sofia, and Khaskov) and the city of Sofia. Administrative-territorial units of lower ranks were represented by districts and communities.

Currently, Bulgaria consists of 28 regions (the capital city of Sofia has this status), which are the highest level administrative units, and 264 communities, which represent the lowest level. It should be noted that the number of communities changed regularly in the second half of the twentieth century. However, the modern basic administrative units began to be formed in 1979, when the ATCs of Bulgaria introduced fundamentally new territorial communities - settlement systems. They reflected the then-current changes in the socio-economic development of the country and its regions, urbanization and industrialization, collectivization in agriculture, concentration of service industries, changes in the road network, etc. In fact, more than 10 years before the collapse of the socialist camp, Bulgaria made an attempt to form an ATU on the basis of territorial entities that actually existed.

The constituent administrative-territorial units in the communities are kmetstva and rayons (created only in cities, provided that the minimum population of the rayon is 25 thousand people), and the territorial units are populated places and settlements. Settlements are divided into towns and villages, and such places as farms, railway stations, and industrial settlements that existed at the time were granted the status of villages.

Pursuant to the European Union Regulation (No. 1059/2003), statistical zones and districts have been established for planning, programming, managing, resourcing, monitoring and evaluating regional development in accordance with the general classification of territorial units for statistical purposes used in EU. They are not administrative-territorial units, but only statistical units. Bulgaria is divided into two statistical areas corresponding to the European NUTS 1 (North and South-East Bulgaria; South-West and South-Central Bulgaria) and six statistical areas of NUTS 2 level (North-West, North-Central, North-East, South-East and South-West, South-Central).

The Law “On the Administrative and Territorial Structure of the Republic of Bulgaria” regulates the territorial division of the country and, in particular, the mechanisms for the creation and liquidation of regions, communities and other territorial units. Bulgaria is an example of a relatively successful implementation of administrative and territorial reform in accordance with European rules and requirements.

The genetic component of the formation of the administrative-territorial structure is deepened by some provisions of this Law. For example, Article 8 states that the administrative center of a community should be a unifying center with appropriate social and technical infrastructure that provides services to the population. Other important factors for the establishment of communities include: the presence of more than 6,000 residents, the maximum distance of settlements to the community center should not exceed 40 km, the ability to finance expenses from own revenues at a level not less than the average for communities provided for in the state budget for the relevant year (Dimitrov, 2007).

By decision of the community council, *kmetstva* may be established within its boundaries, which must consist of one or more neighboring settlements and meet two conditions stipulated in Article 16 of the Law on the Administrative and Territorial Organization of the Republic of Bulgaria: the presence of more than 100 inhabitants and the ability to perform the functions provided by the community. In other words, settlements with a population of less than 100 inhabitants are not eligible for the establishment of an administrative-territorial unit and, accordingly, the population cannot receive administrative services.

The vital activity of autochthonous ethno-national communities is largely determined by the peculiarities of the development of the state organism as a whole, and its individual administrative-territorial units in particular. That is, the

peculiarities of the development of an autochthonous community are the result of the state's activities. Accordingly, in such circumstances, the activity of administrative-territorial and administrative units of different levels is of decisive importance. In Bulgaria, these are:

- settlements (villages and towns);
- communities;
- administrative regions;
- macro-regions (modern statistical regions);
- mesoregions (modern statistical areas).

Here it should be clarified that the first three levels are the levels of government in Bulgaria, and the fourth and fifth levels are regions (NUTS II and NUTS I, respectively) for statistical purposes, created at the request of the European Union.

It should also be borne in mind that ethno-geographical formations are dynamic systems. The dynamics of social processes caused by joining the European Union is determined by the following factors:

- migration of labor potential both abroad and to large cities and the coastal zone of Bulgaria;
- concentration of industrial production in large cities and its corresponding decline in peripheral rural areas, which leads to a decrease in labor productivity in them;
- concentration of a significant number of means of production in the hands of foreigners has led to optimization of the territorial organization of industrial potential, etc.

These general features of Bulgaria's development have led to the need for a new regionalization and territorial planning scheme, different from the one created for EU accession. Some administrative regions and regions of the NUTS 2 level do not meet the passport requirements that were imposed on them. In particular, the capital city of Sofia has significantly increased its own gravity zone. This has led to the formation of five regional regions around it, which are now the poorest in the European community. Here is another example. From a purely formal point of view, the Northwest region does not meet EU requirements for statistical purposes, as it already has a population of less than 800 thousand people. That is, the state is faced with the task of forming a new regionalization scheme based on modern socio-

economic and socio-political changes and taking into account traditional natural, historical and geographical factors.

The most relevant scheme is the one introduced by the Bulgarian Law on Regional Development. It considers four regions:

- The Danube Region - the regions of Vidin, Montana, Vratsa, Pleven, Lovech, Gabrovo, Veliko Tarnovo, Ruse, Targovishte, Razgrad and Silistra;
- Black Sea region - Dobrich, Shumen, Varna, Burgas, Yambol and Sliven;
- Southwestern region - Sofia City, Sofia, Pernik, Kyustendil and Blagoevgrad;
- Trakya-Rodopa district - Pazardzhik, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Haskovo, Kirdzhali and Smolyan.

In other words, instead of mechanically composed (brought) to the EU requirements, it is proposed to form districts that have natural, historical, geographical, economic and other prerequisites for sustainable development of the territory. Thus, according to this regionalization option, the regions that are confined to the Bulgarian Danube region (the area south of the Danube), the Black Sea region, as well as the zone of attraction of the capital of the state and the highest territory of the country (Stara Planina, Rhodope, Trakia) are allocated.

Other options under discussion also include the creation of five or four NUTS 2 rayons. The closest option to the one in the Law “On Regional Development” is the creation of four rayons, in which the capital’s gravity zone is much larger. This is a regionalization project developed by the Institute for Market Economy. It envisages the creation of the following districts:

- Western District - Vidin, Montana, Vratsa, Sofia City, Sofia, Pernik, Kyustendil and Blagoevgrad;
- Northeastern (Danube region) - the regions of Pleven, Lovech, Gabrovo, Veliko Tarnovo, Ruse, Targovishte, Razgrad and Silistra;
- Black Sea region - Dobrich, Shumen, Varna, Burgas, Sliven and Yambol;
- Trakia-Rodopa region - the regions of Pazardzhik, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Haskovo, Kirdzhali and Smolyan.

Other options envisage the creation of five NUTS 2 rayons.

That is, the theoretical typologization of ethnogenetic territorial formations is based on an integrated approach and takes into account the historical, geographical,

settlement, administrative-territorial, and planning basis for the formation of the modern territory of Bulgaria. For example, the local level is formed by individual settlements of different communities - Alcek, Batovo, Donchevo, Draganovo make up the respective ESGs within the public ethnogeographic formation Dobrichka; respectively, the public level - Dobrichka, Dobrich City and others form the Dobrich region, which in turn forms the North-Eastern Statistical Region and the North and North-Eastern Statistical Zone.

Ethno-geographical formations at the regional level in Bulgaria have already been formed, and according to our concept, we should identify and systematize them; at the local level, autochthonous ESGs are subject to significant dynamics and therefore require additional study and typification, for which we should develop a special methodology.

The community is the basic administrative-territorial unit in Bulgaria, where local self-government is carried out. The local self-government body in a community is the community council.

According to the morphological structure, the whole variety of Bulgarian communities can be divided into five groups:

Communities from one settlement. These are the villages of Chavdar, Chelopech, Anton and the town of Dolna Banya, which are concentrated in the planning area of Sofia region. Also included in this group is the community of Koprivshchitsa in Sredna Gora, which is located at a considerable distance from the nearest neighboring settlements. The regional centers of Plovdiv, Yambol, and Dobrich are also independent communities.

Communities consisting of one city and several villages. This is the most common model.

Communities without cities (rural communities). They are economically the weakest, located on the periphery of the regions, and are rapidly losing population. Such are, for example, the communities of Gorna Malina in Sofia region and Yakimovo in Montana.

Communities that include more than one city. There are few such communities in the country, due to the small number of cities and their relatively even distribution. For example, in the community of Horna Oriakhovytsia, in addition to the town of the same name, there is also the town of Dolna Oriakhovytsia.

Communities with one town and one village. This is the community of Sopot with the village of Anevo, which has actually agglomerated with the city and can be considered as its neighborhood.

Thus, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Bulgaria developed a modern system of division of the country, which formally meets the requirements of the European Union. However, the established administrative-territorial units and statistical districts and zones differ in terms of key indicators. For example, the share of the area of the regions in the total national area ranges from 1.7% in Gabrovo region to 6.9% in Burgas region.

At the level of statistical zones, there is a relatively even distribution of the population. In the Northern and South-Eastern parts of Bulgaria live 50.4% of the population, and in the South-Western and South-Central parts, respectively, 49.6%. The first statistical area includes four statistical districts, while the second includes only two.

The minimum population of communities is set by law at 6 thousand people. However, there are exceptions when the population of these administrative units is less than 3 thousand people. There are five such communities in the Vidin region, four in the Kyustendil region, and one each in the regions of Veliko Tarnovo, Montana, Pernik, Plovdiv, Silistra, Sofia, Stara Zagora and Haskovo (Census, 2007).

The distribution of the population in terms of regional regions of Bulgaria is even more uneven. This figure ranges from 1.3% in the Vidin region to 9.4% in the Plovdiv region. At the same time, in the statistical areas, there is one regional region with a significantly higher population concentration than in other regions. We have analyzed the concentration taking into account three indicators: the share of the country's area, the share of the population in the overall structure of the country, and the population density. In terms of statistical regions, the leaders are the regions of Pleven (Northwest), Veliko Tarnovo (North-Central), Varna (North-East), Burgas (South-East), Plovdiv (South-Central) and Sofia (South-West). Only in the North-Central region is the Ruse region close to Veliko Tarnovo's figures. Among the other regions of Bulgaria, the Stara Zagora region, which has played a greater role than the coastal Burgas for a significant historical period, and Gabrovo region, which has the largest number of villages per 100 square kilometers, are distinguished by the highest population density.

3. Conclusions

Based on the above review, we can conclude that the historical and geographical trajectory of the development of the administrative and territorial structure of the Republic of Bulgaria has allowed us to approach the scheme of the state close to the ethnogenetic principles (Topchiev, 2009). However, the mass migration of the population associated with the country's accession to the European Union, and the resulting change in the ethno-national composition of individual communities and regions, somewhat reduces the importance of this factor.

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