

Prof. Davorin TRPESKI, PhD³

UKIM – Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics - Skopje

Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology

14 YEARS OF THE MACEDONIAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE BLUE SHIELD (2002-2016)⁴

The Blue Shield is an organization established and supported by UNESCO and in the same time it is an equivalent of the Red Cross working in the part of protection of the cultural heritage during dangers, emergency situations and wars. The basic goal of the Macedonian National Committee of the Blue Shield as a specialized nongovernmental organization is protection of cultural heritage in hazard (in case of armed conflict, natural disasters and other risks). The protection of the cultural heritage by the National Committee is realized by:

- Facilitation of any international response action in case of hazards or critical situation which may be hazard for the national cultural heritage, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS);
- Encouraging the preservation and respect of the cultural assets, especially through promoting standards for prevention of risks;
- Acting as a competent entity for protection of endangered cultural heritage;
- Developing and promoting strategies for protection of the cultural heritage in case of armed conflict, natural disasters and other hazards;
- Training experts, at national or other level, for prevention, control and rehabilitation after disasters;
- Cooperation and coordination of activities with the national committees for monuments and sites (ICOMOS), museums (ICOM),

³ President of the Macedonian National Committee of the Blue Shield.

⁴ This paper has been presented at the celebration of the "Twenty Years of the International Committee of the Blue Shield (1996-2016)" in Dojran on 18 of May 2016.

libraries and librarians (IFLA) and archives (ICA) as well as other national and international organizations for protection of endangered cultural heritage.

The Macedonian National Committee of the Blue Shield is an organization which was established in 2002, immediately after the war conflict in Macedonia when a significant part of a valuable Macedonian cultural heritage has been destroyed, damaged or under severe risk of damage or destruction. That situation initiated that some of the staff of the institutions which are responsible for the cultural heritage protection establish this organization in Macedonia and its first president was Prof. Krste Bogoeski, Ph.D. In addition to Prof. Bogoeski, the first MNC Blue Shield composition included Zaharinka Aleksoska – Bacheva, Branislava Mihajlova, Lazar Shumanov, Jovan Ristov etc.

In the first years, the functioning, MNC Blue Shield was towards establishment of the organization among the other organizations and institutions whose primary goal is cultural heritage and its protection. After that, through various activities, mainly by organizing various forums, round tables, monitoring and opinions about certain problems relating to the cultural heritage protection, MNC Blue Shield managed to find its rightful place as an organization with a goal to build partnerships with the state institutions which are responsible for the cultural assets. In the past 14 years of its existence, MNC Blue Shield has organized around 20 forums, 1 research project, 2 monitoring activities individually and as same number events combined in partnership with other nongovernmental organizations or institutions in the areas of cultural heritage protection, primarily with MNCICOM, MNCICOMOS etc.

Individually, MNC Blue Shield has realized the following most important events (forums, round tables, monitoring activities and opinions about certain problems relating to cultural heritage):

2015

- Forum: “The Local Self-Government and the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets in Disasters Caused by Humans”;
- Forum: “Priorities in the Protection of Museum and Library Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Macedonia”;
- Forum: “Protection of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Macedonia: Hazards, and Risk Assessment”;
- “Monitoring of the Status of the Protected Structures in the City of Tetovo after the Flood of 3 August 2015”.

- 2014
- Forum: “Sixty Years of the Hague Convention (1954-2014)”;
 - Forum: “Protection and Salvation of Ruins: Measures and Procedure in case of Natural Disasters and other Mishaps”;
 - Forum: “Methods of Risk Evaluation of the Cultural Heritage in the Museum Depots in Macedonia”.
- 2013
- Forum: “Implementation of the Second Protocol of the 1954 The Hague Convention”;
 - Production of a new website of MNC Blue Shield;
 - Establishment of a E-journal of MNC Blue Shield, “E-Shield”.
- 2012
- Forum: “Protection of the Cultural Heritage in the Museums in Macedonia – Situation and Experiences”;
 - Forum: “Library and Audiovisual Cultural Heritage in Macedonia – Situation and Protection”;
 - Poster: “Young People and the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Macedonia”.
- 2011
- Forum: “Situation of the Natural and Cultural Heritage in the Museums in Macedonia”;
- 2010
- Forum: “Protection Infrastructure for Management with Emergencies Relating to Cultural Heritage”;
 - Forum: “Situation of the Cultural Heritage in the Natural Science Museums and Collections in Macedonia”;
 - Forum: “Protection of Cultural Heritage in Emergency Circumstances”;
 - Monitoring of the Situation of the NI Institute and Museum Ohrid and other Culture Structures after the Heavy Rain on 31 March 2010 in Ohrid.
- 2009
- Forum: “Sacral Cultural Heritage in Macedonia in case of War and Emergency Situation: Holder – User – Community”;
 - Research Project: Mapping of the Endangerment of the Cultural Heritage in the Museums of Macedonia”.
- 2008

- Forum: “Four Years of Implementation of the Law on Cultural Heritage Protection”;
- Forum: “Staffing Situation and Needs in the Institutes for Protection of Cultural Heritage and in the Museums”.

2007

- Forum: “Education of the Professional Staff in the Cultural Institutions in the area of Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage in case of Natural Disasters”.

2005

- Forum: “Special Measures for Protection of Cultural Heritage in case of War or Emergency Situations”.

After many years of operation as a unique nongovernmental organization that works under the auspices of UNESCO in the area of endangered cultural heritage protection in the Republic of Macedonia, in 2013 MNC Blue Shield started its annual electronic journal of the Blue Shield – “E-Shield”. The papers in the journal are published bilingually, in Macedonian and in English. The journal publishes papers in the areas of heritology, protection of cultural heritage and the disciplines closely related to the protection of heritage. The journal favors domestic and foreign authors with original papers about topics relating to cultural heritage and its protection on the Macedonian territory. It also publishes original papers about the wider Southeast Europe area. Despite many problems we are facing, mainly financial; we managed to publish two issues in 2013 and 2015.

We are living in a milieu and in a period when even in peacetime the cultural heritage is endangered and devastated. Some will say that that is the law of entropy – everything deteriorates! Yes, but in the Macedonian case, it is not quite true. I think that only here valuable artifacts are stolen from the museums and taken out of the country; icons are stolen from the churches and end in private collections abroad; ruin or burn a sacral structure which is a cultural monument and nobody takes the responsibility for that; ruin a cultural monument of profane character construct a new illegal structure on its place; certain cultural monuments to be excluded from the category in order to intervene in it; or even proclaim newly constructed structures for cultural assets and direct the finances towards them and leave the valuable and real cultural heritage to deteriorate. Despite the fact that we as a nongovernmental organization react on some of these actions

with the relevant institutions, however, with this dynamics of losing of the Macedonian cultural heritage, we may say that it does not have a bright future. Nevertheless, we can only hope and believe that soon the institutions will stand before the challenge and direct their energy to the protection of the real cultural heritage. I will MNC Blue Shield many years of activity in the future and to engage more intensively in the realization of its goals.

As a part of this twenty year jubilee of the International Committee of Blue Shield, the Executive Board of MNC Blue Shield has decided to grant Gratitude Plaques to institutions and persons that gave their contributions in the segment of international activities of the Committee and in the international promotion of MNC Blue Shield in the past years. The Gratitude Plaques we are granting represent only a modest thanks to them, but nonetheless we are immeasurably grateful for their work with our Committee.

Consequently, on behalf of the EB of MNC Blue Shield I'm granting Gratitude Plaques to: **Prof. Krste Bogoeski, Ph.D. for his contribution in the promotion of MNC Blue Shield as a member of the Board of the Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield.** I would also like to grant a Gratitude Plaque to the **Sector for International Cooperation and cooperation with UNESCO in the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Macedonia for the permanent support to MNC Blue Shield for participation in the international events about protection of cultural heritage.** I believe that they will not stop here, but will continue the cooperation and engagements with MNC Blue Shield in future with stronger pace.