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**SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN
SWIMMING SPORTS IN BULGARIA UNTIL 1944**

ABSTRACT BOOK

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INTRODUCTION

After Liberation from Ottoman rule in 1878, the re-establishment of Bulgarian statehood took place with difficulty and enthusiasm under adverse political conditions, both external and internal. The need for militarily applicable physical education in schools soon became apparent. Until the First World War, prevailing attitudes in society linked physical education chiefly with military preparation, which proved important for the teaching of gymnastics in schools and for the nascent public sports organizations.

Following the First and the Second Balkan Wars and the First World War, physical education and sport expanded their influence within society and exerted a strong effect on the development of bodily culture and the civic education of youth. Thus, over roughly a quarter of a century, substantial progress was achieved across most fields of physical education and sport as branches of bodily culture, which was established as part of Bulgarians' daily life.

The process of developing physical education and sport reasonably encompassed swimming, and, from 1931, the swimming sports, which are more specialized (because they are practiced in an environment unfamiliar to humans and they may be life-saving). Until the political changes of 1944, the development and promotion of swimming were carried out by three significant public-patriotic and sports organizations: the Union of Bulgarian Gymnastic Societies "Yunak", the cultural-educational association "Bulgarian National Maritime Concord", and the Bulgarian National Sports Federation.

This study attempts to contribute to the clarification and analysis of still insufficiently researched but important events, processes and trends in the development of swimming and the swimming sports (from 1931) in the period up to 1944. At the outset of the research the aim was to determine the scope and nature of the activities of the Union of Bulgarian Gymnastic Societies (UBGS) "Yunak", the Bulgarian National Maritime Concord (BNMC) and the Bulgarian National Sports Federation (BNSF), to establish key facts and processes in the history of swimming. And, after constructing the historical narrative, to clarify the influences, relationships, characteristics and changes associated with the introduction and development of swimming and the swimming sports in Bulgaria up to the mid-1940s, and their impact on Bulgarian society in the context of understanding the complex social nature of sport as a cultural phenomenon.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Bulgarian National Maritime Concord | BNMC |
| Bulgarian National Sports Federation | BNSF |
| Bulgarian National Maritime Sports Federation | BNMSF |
| Bulgarian Olympic Committee | BOC |
| Bulgarian Swimming Union | BSU |
| Bulgarian Water Polo Federation | BFVT |
| Bulgarian Federation of Swimming Sports | BFSS |
| Central State Archive | CSA |
| High Institute of Physical Culture | HIFC |
| International Olympic Academy | IOA |
| International Olympic Committee | IOC |
| International Amateur Swimming Federation | FINA |
| Ministry of National Education | MNE |
| Ministry of Internal Affairs and National Health | MIAHN |
| Ministry of Public Buildings, Roads and Urban Development | MPBRUD |
| National Olympic Academy | NOA |
| National Sports Academy | NSA |
| State Higher School of Physical Education | SHSPE |
| State Archive | DA |
| Sofia Regional Sports Area | SRSA |
| Student Academic Sports Society | SASS |
| Union of Bulgarian Gymnastics Societies „Yunak“ | UBGS „Yunak“ |

CHAPTER ONE „GENERAL STATEMENTS“

1.1. Problem Statement

Swimming and the swimming sports (and underwater disciplines as well) are unique because they are practiced in an environment alien to humans — water. Swimming as an activity has meanings that can be broadly categorized into five areas, summarized in the textbook "Swimming" by I. Popov, N. Izov, and St. Andonov (Sofia, 2018).

The social significance of swimming is quite important, because the ability to swim is life-saving — it concerns both the protection of the swimmer and the rescue of potential drowned men. Other aspects of its social significance include the positive leisure and the prestige function of swimming — every success in that popular sport exerts a strong influence on society.

The health-improving significance also has great social value but generally it is considered a separate topic. At the beginning of XX-th century (1901), Daniel Blanshu – a Swiss teacher and an important figure in SBDG "Yunak," wrote about swimming in "Complete Gymnastics Manual": „*There is, perhaps, no other exercise that is so beneficial.*“

The applied significance has three aspects. The professional-applied aspect is evident in professions where good swimming skills are required (lifeguards, sailors, fishermen, divers, etc.). The sports-applied character is present in swimming sports, as well as triathlon, aquathlon, modern pentathlon, etc. The military-applied aspect is evident when swimming is part of the training of military personnel.

The educational significance includes harmonious development in swimming activities, which fosters valuable aesthetic, moral, labor, intellectual, and volitional qualities, as well as hygienic habits.

The sporting significance stems from the enormous prestige of swimming worldwide. Swimming sports under the aegis of WORLD AQUATICS (formerly FINA until 2023) rank second in the number of disciplines (and, correspondingly, medal sets) included in the programme of the 2024 Summer Olympic Games in Paris – a total of 47, following WORLD ATHLETICS (48). Swimming and athletics are traditionally the two pillars of the Olympic Games programme, and their scheduling rarely overlaps.

Viewed through the prism of its various meanings, the ability to swim is an essential part of human culture. It, therefore, occupies a special place in physical culture and is among the most influential means of achieving physical education and building a harmonious human personality.

Today, the trends in the development of contemporary sport are negative. We are witnessing significant changes in its socio-cultural nature, which was formed in Europe in the last century. Modern elite professional media-advertising sport is increasingly deviating from its moral foundations and principles, upon which it has become a social phenomenon, at the expense of the commercialization of almost all levels – a process that began a century ago and is now likely at its culmination, with unclear final consequences.

Serious deformations are observed in the consumer society's attitude towards sport. The human and socio-cultural functions of motor activity, established during the formation of sport, and its role as an important element of education are being tested. In parallel, the mass media (increasingly social media) impose models of behaviour, often from popular figures and entities, which change the pedagogical and moral essence of sport, turning it into a highly marketable product. These processes are difficult to control, and there is an increasingly clear commercial model of behaviour and thinking among managers in sports organizations.

At the same time, reformation attempts by state institutions for a more comprehensive, targeted, and effective physical education are only weakly effective. One possible way to counter these trends in sport and physical education is to at least partially return to their roots and initially formed moral principles, refracted through current realities.

An essential means in this regard is to fully grasp and study past experiences through an analytical and critical view of the surrounding reality. Following informed discussions, it is crucial to define approaches for impactful actions to achieve positive ideological influences on today's commercial sport as a national and global social phenomenon. In this sense, the present study is important because it attempts to comprehensively present, for the first time in academic circles, the activities of the three patriotic and cultural public organizations – UBGS "Yunak," BNMC, and BNSF – in developing swimming and swimming sports up to 1944.

In Bulgaria, there remains a need for in-depth theoretical and conceptual knowledge to build a comprehensive understanding of the essence and mission of sport as a social phenomenon in the country. Such studies help clarifying the socio-cultural changes and processes that occur with the development and imposition of each sport in Bulgaria, particularly in the first few decades after the Liberation. Swimming and swimming sports hold a significant place in the overall picture of this process.

The flourishing of industrial society in Europe, the influence of new philosophical and pedagogical ideas, the construction of national education systems, and the development of military affairs are the main factors in creating a range of systems for physical education in various countries. In Bulgaria, these factors were absent after the Liberation, and physical education and sport had to develop rapidly based on imported European cultural experiences. To clarify this process, we need to understand the basic elements of sport and explain their integration in accordance with its universal social functions in the specific conditions of Bulgarian society.

The cultural development of sport as a new social phenomenon in Bulgaria began at the end of the 19th century with the activity of Swiss gymnastics teachers. The arrival of these teachers in 1894 was at the invitation of the Ministry of Education. Their work throughout the country in all areas of physical culture led to the creation of a modern-for-the-time program of physical education in Bulgarian schools, which predominantly included elements from the German, Swiss, and Czech systems. The process of searching for its own path in the field of physical education was also adapted to the most important distinctions of Bulgarian national character and customs, for the establishment of which some of the Swiss teachers conducted special studies. Thus, the serious challenge of adapting foreign systems of physical education to the conditions and realities of our country was largely fulfilled. The Swiss also actively participated in the formation of gymnastics societies throughout the country. In 1898, 23 societies in Sofia created the Yunak Union of Bulgarian Gymnastics Societies.

Sport in industrial society was built as a social phenomenon in England at the beginning of the 19th century, rapidly institutionalizing itself with its own organization and activities, making it part of the culture of the middle class in the country. This powerful socio-cultural phenomenon is, in fact, amateur sport, which later became the foundation of the modern Olympic movement. Alongside this, a variation emerged at the end of the 19th century – commercial sport, which established the spectacular element, and some of its social functions involved stereotypes of behaviour for the masses, through which it became a growing economic phenomenon. Thus, the English sports-cultural model acquired two dimensions, turning it into a means of cultural influence among young people worldwide – through colleges (amateur sport with its rules, fair play, and gentlemanliness) and sports clubs (commercial sport, which evolved into professional sport).

Against the backdrop of national systems of physical education in Europe and the growing influence of the English model, mainly in the rest of the world and in the colonies of the empire, it is no coincidence that in Bulgaria, it was the Yunaks through their gymnastics societies in the coastal and riverside cities who were the first to start conducting organized swimming activities at the beginning of the 20th century. Before that, there were similar attempts, but only in military-applied swimming in Ruse for sailors from the Danube Flotilla and in the Maritime Section in Varna. After 1920, swimming began to develop in an organized manner at the national level by the Bulgarian National Maritime Association, and from 1931, it gained new social territories as sports swimming and other swimming sports through the actions of BNMC and the BNSF. The actions of these three organizations and the role of the state established changes in the socio-cultural characteristics in the stages of swimming development up to 1944.

The study of the complex interactions that change socio-cultural functions in the process of introducing and expanding the scope of swimming in Bulgaria is at the heart of this work. Clarifying the historiographical picture, together with accumulating knowledge about specific policies, results, and facts from the activities of the organizations and the state regarding the imposition of swimming, helps establish new practices in Bulgarian society and changes the characteristics of swimming and swimming sports as a social and public phenomenon up to 1944.

1.2. Analysis of Historical Sources and Literary Studies

1.2.1. Studies on the Topic

1.2.1.1 Social and Cultural Functions of Physical Education and Sport“

Physical exercise, conceived and applied in a certain way, can contribute to the forging of characters, strengthen the collective, and in a democratic society serve as a link between the different classes of society. It then escapes from its narrow physiological boundaries, establishes itself at the centre of pedagogy, and by touching, on the one hand, the psyche, and on the other, art, becomes a major factor for overall progress (The Spiritual Heritage of Pierre de Coubertin, Sofia 1982). Thus, the French pedagogue, historian, and journalist Pierre de Coubertin (1863–1937), who was the inspirer, ideologue, and founder of modern Olympism and the contemporary Olympic Games, formulated in one of his Olympic letters from 1918, part of the basic socio-cultural characteristics of physical education and sport as social systems and public phenomena: powerful means for the harmonious development of the individual, basic factors for uniting society and for its development.

The review of literary studies on one of the main topics in the theory of sport, which is the social significance of sport, includes a review of the most important works of iconic world scientists who have worked in different periods and countries: Heinrich Riese, Karl Diem, Peter McIntosh, Gérard Mainaud, Bernard Gillet, Robert H. Boyle, Nikolai Ponomarev, Norbert Elias, Eric Dunning, and Jay Coakley. The greatest attention is paid to the socio-cultural functions of sport identified and researched by them.

In Bulgarian science, the classic definition of "sport" is by Tsvetan Zhelyazkov: *A multifaceted social phenomenon characterised as a motor human activity aimed at physical perfection, sports-technical mastery, and high achievements in the chosen sport* (Terminological Dictionary for Physical Culture and Sport, Sofia 1983). Zhelyazkov argues that there are two approaches to understanding the essence of sport and its social functions. In the system-integrative approach, sport has the most common features and functions as a multifaceted social phenomenon, which is characterised by a specialised system of means, methods, and forms of motor activity for strengthening health, improving physical fitness, and the harmonious development and expression of the human. The other approach to clarifying the essence of sport in modern society is the system-functional approach. In general, its task is to reveal the active essence of sport as a specific motor activity – playful and competitive. At the same time, sport is linked to other substructures of the social system, such as healthcare, leisure, science, culture, education, ecology, trade, and services, among others.

These findings clarify why the established socio-cultural functions of sport by different authors represent a diverse palette of characteristics and meanings that manifest in studies of periods, countries, and societies with their specificities, systems of physical education, historical realities, and needs of social strata and the individual, depending on the researcher's perspective.

The topic of the social essence of sport is also developed by Lozan Mitev and Daniela Dasheva, according to whom sport is: *All forms of motor activity that, through organized or unorganized participation, aim to express or improve physical and mental fitness, form social connections, or achieve results in competitions at all levels* (Theory and Methodology of Sports Training, Sofia 2001). While according to Mitev, sport is: *A freely chosen activity related to motor actions (exercises, games, bodily movements, dances, etc.) that place the individual in conditions of testing and struggle and are carried out in conditions of rivalry/competition with others, natural conditions, and with oneself* (History of Physical Culture in Bulgaria, Sofia 2005).

In the process of establishing socio-cultural functions in the system of sport as a public phenomenon by different authors, the results in their summary represent a diverse palette of characteristics, with influence and impact being two-way – from social needs to sport and vice versa. The different properties manifest in studies of individual periods, countries, and societies with their specificities and national systems of physical education, historical realities, and diverse needs of both social strata and the individual.

1.2.1.2 Swimming and Swimming Sports in Bulgaria until 1944

The earliest years of swimming, and later swimming sports, in Bulgaria are the subject of few specialised studies. Short publications predominate – in swimming textbooks, in the history of physical culture, and in collections of a general nature. The important aspects of the socio-cultural and educational basis in the implementation of physical education are rarely considered. The works of Mirolub Kutinchev, Vasil Tsonkov and Natalia Petrova, Hristofor Panayotov (the popular science almanac "The Clear Blue Corridors," Sofia 1982), Pancho Balov, Marko Damyanov, Rayna Bardareva, Ivan Popov, Ivan Tsanov, Ivan Aleksiev, Nikolai Izov and Yordan Donev have been examined.

The concise form of most of the works suggests a small amount of empirical facts presented, which are insufficient to perform a comprehensive analysis to clarify the historiographical picture around the beginning and development of swimming until 1944. Adding the ideological emphasis, obligatory for all spheres of Bulgarian society until 1989 (with a slight emphasis on it in the studies, with the exception of the works of V. Tsonkov and P. Balov), it becomes clear why the activities of the cultural and patriotic organizations UBGS "Yunak," BNMC, and BNSF, disbanded after 1944, have not been fully researched in depth. The exceptions are the studies of Ivan Popov, Ivan Tsanov (the activities of BNMC and BNSF), Nikolai Izov (the activities of "Yunak" and the beginning of academic training in water sports at SHSPE), Yordan Donev (the earliest history of water polo), and Ivan Aleksiev.

1.2.2. Historical Sources

The dissertation uses historical information from three types of primary sources – documents, memoirs, and video recordings. The document archives have been studied - orders, letters, opinions, brochures, invitations, leaflets, orders, and photographs in the Central State Archive – Sofia and the State Archive – Burgas, from the activities of the three organizations that developed swimming and swimming sports in our country until 1944 – UBGS "Yunak," BNMC, and BNSF. The preserved primary historical sources, especially in the historical archives, are incomplete and fragmented. This study includes 37 archival documents, 24 of which are previously unknown.

The memoirs of Yosif Buresh from the Historical Archive of the National Sports Academy "Vassil Levski" have been studied; two unpublished documents from the archive of the Association of Bulgarian Swimmers - a Report on the Balkan Swimming and Diving Championships in 1931, provided by Borislav Georgiev, and the unpublished manuscript book with the swimming records of Bulgaria in the period 1931–1960, kept by Ivan Krastev; historical information from two documentaries and one newsreel from the archive of the Bulgarian National Film Archive.

The study uses 192 publications in the magazines "Health and Strength" (1899–1944) and "Glavatar" (1924-1943), publications of UBGS "Yunak," the magazines "Maritime Concord" (1924–1944) and "Maritime Library" (1921–1926, 1931) – published by the Bulgarian National Maritime Concord, the newspaper "Sport" (1923-1944) – the leading sports newspaper in the country, which in some periods was considered the unofficial organ of the BNSF. As well as other printed publications – "Varna News," "Free Voice," "Maritime Thought," "Swimming & Water Polo," and others.

1.3. Research Hypothesis

In the available studies regarding the development of swimming and swimming sports until 1944, there is a significant factual deficit. The presence of blank spots from the historical past does not allow for an objective clarification of the socio-cultural essence of swimming during the period. For this reason, there is a need for scientific research based on a detailed factual study to carry out a historiographical description of the processes and, accordingly, an assessment and analysis of the socio-cultural functions of swimming and the changes caused by the systems of swimming and swimming sports in their capacity as a social phenomenon in Bulgarian society until 1944. The

factual deficit and incomplete study of the development of swimming and swimming sports in the country during the period 1878–1944 support the formation of the following hypothesis:

In the studied period, the swimming system, through its socio-cultural functions, establishes a multifaceted and beneficial influence on Bulgarian society. The introduction of swimming into the country from the beginning of the 20th century begins with the absence of traditions, a distanced attitude of the population towards swimming skills, a lack of specialists and material base (swimming pools). For less than half a century until 1944, swimming as a specific activity and sport (as well as swimming sports after 1931) rapidly expands its significance and enters the life of Bulgarians with various activities that positively impact the culture of society. There is a reasonable assumption that most of these activities are part of the broad scope of the policies of the organizations that develop swimming and swimming sports in Bulgaria until 1944.

1.4. Aim and Objectives of the Research

The aim of this study is to establish the changes in Bulgarian society that occur from the development of the scope and influence of the socio-cultural functions of the swimming and swimming sports system in Bulgaria until 1944, in the context of the significance of swimming in the overall socio-cultural reality in sport in the country and in accordance with the problems and issues raised in the hypothesis. The aim requires the fulfilment and resolution of the following research tasks:

Task 1. Review and analysis of literary studies in two directions – socio-cultural functions of physical education and sport; development of swimming and swimming sports in Bulgaria until 1944.

Task 2. Collection of a sufficient amount of empirical data due to the need to make a thorough review of historical facts, events, and processes in the development of swimming and swimming sports. To formulate a more objective characteristic and assessment of the activities of the "Yunak" Union, BNMC, and BNSF and to clarify the cooperation between them, also with the state and municipal authorities, and with other organizations related to the development of swimming.

Task 3. Objectification of the historical processes of cultural, ideological, and organizational impact of the "Yunak" Union, BNMC, and BNSF on the development of swimming and swimming sports, and more precisely on swimming training, organized swimming, pool construction, sports swimming, water rescue, water polo, and diving.

Task 4. Revelation and definition of the contributions and consequences of the activities of the three organizations and state institutions, reflected in the expansion of the scope and influence of the socio-cultural functions of the systems of swimming and swimming sports and causing significant cultural changes in Bulgarian society.

1.5. Object and Subject of Research

The object of the research is the activities of the organizations UBGS "Yunak," BNMC, and BNSF, as well as the state, the Ministry of National Education, and the youth organization "Brannik" regarding the development of sport in the country.

The subject of the research is the spectrum of various activities of the same organizations in the development of swimming. The activities are: promoting swimming; creating literature; swimming training; organized development of swimming; conducting courses for specialists; the emergence and development of sports swimming and swimming sports; pool construction; organizational changes; international activity and relations with the state. These activities expand the influence of the social system of swimming on Bulgarian society and culture.

1.6. Organization and Methodology of the Research

The research was conducted in three stages.

First stage. Systematization of literary sources and enrichment of empirical facts.

- Internet research of digitized periodicals and the existence of publications in them related to the development of swimming and the activities of UBGS "Yunak", BNMC and BNMS for its development in the period 1898–1944. Sources from the digital archives of the "Pencho Slaveykov" Regional Library – Varna (magazine "Maritime Concord", magazine "Maritime Library", magazine "Maritime Thought", newspaper "Varna News", newspaper "Free Voice") and the "Sports Library" platform (issues of the newspaper "Sport") were covered.

- Research in historical archives and libraries in the country: Central State Archive – Sofia, State Archive – Burgas, National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius," Sofia Library, "Pencho Slaveykov" Regional Library – Varna, "Peyo Yavorov" Regional Library – Burgas, National Library "Ivan Vazov" – Plovdiv, Historical Archive of NSA, Library of NSA, and Archive of the Museum of the History of Physical Culture and Sport. Based on the research in these institutions, a large volume of information and empirical data was collected, enabling a comprehensive study

of the activities of UBGs "Yunak", BNMC and BNSF in the development of swimming and swimming sports in the studied period.

Second stage. Processing of the obtained information through verification and analysis of data, reconstruction of events, and formation of a timeline of the processes in swimming and swimming sports, based on which a research thesis was built. The main socio-cultural functions of swimming as a social system and public phenomenon were derived, and indicators for analysis were formulated.

Third stage. Development of the dissertation, conducting retrospective and comparative analysis, forming the historical narrative, expert assessment. Preparing four publications thematically related to the research, which have been included in referenced publications.

The relatively long study period and the complexity of the research created the need to use the following complex of methods:

1. Study of literary sources.
2. Collection, analysis, and verification of data from the discovered primary historical sources – archival documents, memoirs, and video materials and secondary sources – publications in the media.
3. Comparative analysis.
4. Retrospective analysis and reconstruction of historical events.
5. Survey (with the long-standing general secretary of the Bulgarian Swimming Sports Federation, Stefan Zlatarov, regarding the search for archives in the late 1970s).
6. Expert assessment
7. Stylistic processing. In the course of the research, the following problems arose:
 - Accessibility of the stored material from periodicals: Part of the annual issues of the newspaper "Sport" (1923–1944) in the National Library "St. St. Cyril and Methodius" in Sofia are inaccessible for use due to significant damage to their physical integrity. Their digitisation is ongoing and not yet completed, and the equipment used to view the available photolenses, many of which are torn and practically unusable, is extremely outdated and the work with it is very difficult. This necessitated prolonged research work in the National Library "Ivan Vazov" in Plovdiv, in the Museum of Sport in Sofia, where the issues of the newspaper "Sport" are in better condition, as well as in the "Sports Library" platform.

- Reflection of the historical, political, social, and sports-cultural context: In a complex historical study such as the present one, an objective and critical attitude towards facts and persons is necessary. For this reason, there is a need for the analysis and assessment of actions and their motives to be in accordance with the events, spirit, and social realities in Bulgaria and Bulgarian sport during the studied period.

1.7. Methodological Bases of the Concept for Studying the Socio-Cultural Functions of Physical Education and Sport

The socio-cultural functions of sport have been studied by many foreign and Bulgarian researchers, who have defined various and numerous characteristics depending on their worldview and philosophical views, as well as on the periods and societies that are the objects of the research. *At the heart of sport as a public phenomenon is its inseparable link with cultural, educational, social, and health development, which makes it difficult to uniquely define it as a social phenomenon*, according to T. Zhelyazkov ("Fundamentals of Sports Training," Sofia 2020).

In the present study, based on the areas of physical culture distinguished in sports science (physical education, sport, hygiene, civic principle, and public principle), as well as on the most significant socio-cultural functions of sport in Bulgaria and in accordance with the specifics of the historical context in the studied period in the country, the relevant areas of the most widespread influences of the social system of swimming on Bulgarian society were defined. The large amount of empirical data collected from historical sources and literary studies made it possible to formulate indicators for analyzing the socio-cultural characteristics of swimming and swimming sports.

In the course of the research, the presence of the different indicators for analysis among the activities of the organizations that develop swimming and swimming sports in the studied period establishes the corresponding socio-cultural functions. With the increase in the number of institutionalized structures whose activity, management decisions, and activities influence the systems of swimming and swimming sports, the scope of characteristics expands, which changes their impact on Bulgarian society and culture.

Table № 1. Socio-Cultural Functions of Swimming in Bulgaria until 1944

| Functions | Indicators for Analysis |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Health and Hygiene | Physical/recreational activities in a water environment Swimming demonstrations |
| Education and Upbringing | Publication of methodological literature Courses for specialists Swimming lessons |
| Promotion and Propaganda | Publishing periodicals Distribution of brochures, posters and others Conducting talks and lectures |
| Sports-Competitive Function | Conducting competitions Forming standardised rules Publishing competition rules |
| Military-Applied Function | Training in military-applied swimming Competitions in military-applied swimming Water rescue |
| Social Accessibility | Regulatory framework for pool construction Pool construction Bathhouse construction Summer sea and river camps for students |

1.8. Periodization of Swimming in Bulgaria 1878-1944

The study of historical events and phenomena necessitates that, whenever possible, they be examined in their sequence and that the collected materials and facts be presented in distinct parts. These are the corresponding segments of time – periods, stages, and epochs. The introduction of periods is done to differentiate historical time.

Period: *Segments of time in which the processes and phenomena related to the development of physical education and sport have relative homogeneity and interconnectedness, completeness, and finality*, according to Rayna Bardareva ("Sport in Bulgaria – Emergence and Development 1878-1918." Sofia 1993). In most studies on the history of physical culture (physical education) in our country, the most common periodisation is 1878–1918 and 1919–1944. Sometimes, in studies of individual sports, a different periodisation is observed, with the main criterion being the specifics of the studied historical processes.

All authors are adamant that sports swimming began to develop with the construction of the "Diana" pool in Sofia and the holding of the Balkan Championships in 1931. The only specialised

periodisation (1878–1922 and 1923–1944) of swimming is by Ivan Tsanov. According to him, the beginning of sports swimming was in 1923, when BNMC was officially established and began actions to develop it at the national level.

What was done by BNMC until 1930 carries some of the characteristics of sports swimming, develops it in an organized manner in many places in the country, competitions are held in open water areas, but they do not have standardized rules, there are no qualified judges, and records are not kept. In the present study, the years between 1923 and 1930 are distinguished as a period of organized swimming, resulting in the following periodization:

Table № 2. Periodisation of Swimming in Bulgaria until 1944

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Prehistory of Organized Swimming | 1878–1922 |
| Period of Organized Swimming | 1923–1930 |
| Period of Sports Swimming and Swimming Sports | 1931–1944 |

1.9. Limitations of the Study

Due to the enormous volume of periodicals in the studied period, the research of sources from the press was limited to the official publications of SBDG "Yunak" – "Health and Strength" and "Glavatar," of BNMS – "Maritime Library" and "Maritime Concord," and the most authoritative publication in the field of sport in the Kingdom of Bulgaria, the newspaper "Sport". Additional studies were conducted in regional periodicals on specific issues.

CHAPTER TWO „APPEARANCE OF SWIMMING IN BULGARIA AFTER THE LIBERATION AND CHANGES UNTIL 1930”

2.1. Genesis of Swimming Sport

2.1.1. Beginnings of Swimming Sport in England

The emergence of swimming sport in England is not merely a chronicle of sporting achievements, but also a period of significant socio-cultural shifts. During the Victorian era, from the 1830s to the end of the 19th century, physical culture developed rapidly amidst considerable social transformations in the country – industrialization, urbanization, the rise of civil society, and the expansion of the middle class. The construction of private and public pools and baths began, which became venues for social events, recreation, and physical activities.

Within this context, swimming evolved from a skill with health and hygiene benefits, and a means of survival in aquatic environments, into a competitive sport. By 1846, at least ten indoor swimming pools with diving boards were operating in the British capital, and by 1870, London had 26 swimming baths. Initially, these pools were mainly accessible to the middle class, who used them to enhance their swimming skills, but they also offered social functions such as invigoration, health improvement, and leisure.

Between 1868 and 1879, swimming was incorporated into the British Army, starting with parliamentary regulations for soldiers' activities and training, which integrated swimming instruction into all branches of the armed forces. Organizationally, on 7 January 1869, the 'Swimming Congress' saw clubs from London establish the Associated Metropolitan Swimming Clubs (AMSC), which set the first official rules for swimming competitions. Over time, the organization underwent several mergers, eventually adopting the name Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) on 21 June 1886, with 96 clubs. In 1888, the ASA held the first water polo championship. The number of clubs in the ASA grew from 469 in 1900 to 1,073 in 1908 and 1,423 in 1914.

2.1.2. Socio-Cultural Characteristics of Swimming in Western Europe during the 19th Century

Swimming in Europe during the 19th century evolved through mutual influence between its practical applications (military and life-saving), balneology, and the rise of organized sport. The national context varied across England, Germany, and France – access to swimming facilities

(open water areas and the gradual construction of pools) and national physical education systems shaped the socio-cultural functions of swimming in each country.

In England, the focus was on early infrastructure development, maritime culture, and a strong competitive spirit; in Germany, gymnastic development predominated, with an emphasis on educational-national aspects and clubs, alongside a structured approach to sports development; in France, the medical and spa tradition held sway for a long time, delaying the adoption of competitive swimming. These national specificities established distinct socio-cultural functions for swimming, tailored to the historical context and societal needs in England, Germany, and France.

Thus, the evolution of swimming sport became an indicator of European cultural development during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

2.1.3. Establishment of FINA in 1908

The founding of the Fédération Internationale de Natation (FINA) on 19 July 1908 in London, during the Olympic Games, was driven by the need for standardization and unity, marking a pivotal moment in the history of international swimming and its organization. Eight countries participated in the establishment – Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Hungary, Germany, France, and Great Britain (represented by delegates from England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland). FINA's primary goals included promoting and advancing swimming sports worldwide, developing and enforcing uniform international rules for swimming, diving, and water polo, creating a robust system for verifying and registering world records, and overseeing the conduct of swimming events at the Olympic Games and international competitions.

2.2. Swimming in Folk Life and Traditions

2.2.1. Swimming in Bulgarian Folk Songs

Swimming is present in folk art, notably in folk songs, suggesting its role in Bulgarian life. Specific skills in folk creativity often denote success, victory, satisfaction, and fame attained in diverse situations, including competition. In folk songs from the collection "Bulgarian Folk Songs from Macedonia" (1924) compiled by Pancho Mikhailov, the collection "The Black Sea Played, 101 Bulgarian Folk Songs about the Sea" (2011) by Ancho Kaloyanov, and "Bulgarian Folk Songs" by the Miladinov Brothers (1861), there are themes related to swimming, even swimming contests, usually involving women. Male heroism prevails in songs featuring contests, but swimming is

more often associated with female characters. Female participation is linked to miracles. The representation of women in folk songs involving swimming is traditionally exaggerated to highlight the strength of Bulgarian women.

It is reasonable to assume that swimming was rarely part of Bulgarian life before the Liberation, as suggested by its association with miracles in folklore. When swimming ability did exist in society, it was often due to residing near bodies of water, where self-taught swimmers (typically fishermen) needed to be fearless in the water.

2.2.2. The Bulgarian Soldier and Swimming in the Bulgarian Army, 1913-1918

Numerous illustrative incidents and recollections from the front lines and interwar period highlight the lack of swimming skills in the Bulgarian land forces. An indicative example is the reaction of Bulgarian soldiers who, during a break from fighting in the Balkan War, encountered the Aegean Sea for the first time. The heroes of the 28th Struma Infantry Regiment experienced joy and astonishment when they reached the Marmara Sea near Rodosto in the autumn of 1912. Some soldiers spent hours gazing at the waves, but only one ventured into the water to swim.

Heartbreakingly, many soldiers and civilians drowned in the Aegean Sea after the Inter-Allied War in the camp on the Greek island of Trikeri. Journalist Vladimir Sis managed to enter the camp posing as a German archaeologist. Only Bulgarian prisoners of war and people from territories in Western Thrace with a compact Bulgarian population, liberated from Ottoman rule during the Balkan War and later seized by the Greeks during the Inter-Allied War, were transferred to Trikeri. Sis documented this in his book "The Graves of Trikeri" (1914).

During battles on the Secret Front in World War I, six soldiers of the 53rd Infantry Regiment drowned while trying to cool off in the Buzău River. Similar incidents occurred in other regiments under General Todor Kantardzhiev's command, leading to a ban on bathing in rivers and pools. Some accounts even mention Bulgarian soldiers being shot by their superiors for refusing to cross the Danube due to fear of water, though these stories could not be verified with documentary evidence.

In late 19th and early 20th century Bulgarian society, swimming was not traditionally practiced. This conclusion is based on the fact that the skill, with few exceptions, was not part of Bulgarian life, and its presence in folk songs is associated with miracles; furthermore, swimming skills were uncommon in the Bulgarian land forces during the early 20th-century wars.

2.3. Prehistory of Organized Swimming in Bulgaria, 1878–1922

2.3.1. Introduction of Modern Swimming Forms

The first organized swimming training after the Liberation had a military-applied nature. It was conducted by the newly formed Danube Flotilla and Maritime Unit in Ruse in 1879 (**education and upbringing**). With the construction of the Central Mineral Baths in Sofia, featuring an indoor pool measuring 16.5 by 7 meters, the primary socio-cultural functions of swimming – **health and hygiene**, and **social accessibility** – began to gain prominence.

2.3.2. Swimming in the Union of Bulgarian Gymnastics Societies "Yunak"

2.3.2.1. UBGS "Yunak" and its Physical Education System

The approach to physical education shifted in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, largely due to the activities of the Union of Bulgarian Gymnastics Societies "Yunak," along with the influence of distinguished educators and politicians such as Todor Yonchev and Georgi Zhivkov.

Crucially, the Ministry of Education invited ten Swiss physical education teachers who arrived in 1894 and first developed a school physical education program. The Swiss believed that civic gymnastics (physical education) societies were essential for the development of physical culture. They assisted Todor Yonchev, Panayot Belev, and other teachers across the country in establishing societies, which numbered 23 by 1898 and united to form UBGS "Yunak".

Sport was a new social phenomenon in Bulgaria, and the multifaceted work of the Swiss teachers marked the beginning of its cultural development. They worked in all areas of physical culture, most importantly creating a modern (for the time) educational program in physical education. The foreigners recognized the need to tailor the program to the Bulgarian national character and way of life, conducting research into native customs. They used these findings to enhance the main goals of school gymnastics in line with Yunak ideology, borrowing from German, Swiss, and Czech national physical education systems.

The Swiss made their most significant contribution to the development of Bulgarian physical culture as public figures in UBGS "Yunak". They were a driving force behind reforms to the school physical education program, and created and published modern methodological literature. Leading figures in the Union's Technical Commission (effectively the sports leadership), they conducted headmaster courses for specialists and supported the organizational activities of local societies.

The Yunak system of physical education included moral and physical development and training. The main goal of gymnastics was the harmonious development of the individual, encompassing health and hygiene education, aesthetic development, development of motor skills such as strength, dexterity, and endurance, cultivating virtues and love for Bulgaria, and creating habits of regular sports participation.

The physical education system of the Union "Yunak" was well-structured, including the Union's goals (promoting and developing gymnastics and improving the nation's physical and moral strength), methodological courses for specialists (one-year courses for headmasters and three-year courses for teachers), organization of regional and national assemblies, construction of facilities, societal activities, and publishing periodicals and methodological guides. Implementing all elements of the system established UBGS "Yunak" as an organization for the physical, moral, and spiritual development of youth, with Yunak values comprising universal moral qualities essential for the harmonious development of young people, combined with patriotism in post-Liberation Bulgarian society.

2.3.2.2. UBGS "Yunak" Literature on Swimming

The literature created and published by members of the Union "Yunak" established two socio-cultural functions of swimming as a public phenomenon: **education and upbringing**, and **popularization and propaganda**.

The magazines "Health and Strength" and "Glavatar" educated and informed society, promoting swimming and its benefits among Bulgarians. The two unique Bulgarian methodologies – "Complete Gymnastics Guide" (1901) by Daniel Blanshu and Petar Goleminov, and "Swimming" (1904) by Panayot Belev – were crucial for practical work in physical education. Publications in "Glavatar" enhanced the competence of instruction and turned the publication into a powerful tool for qualifying teachers and headmasters. Blanshu and Belev's guides devoted significant attention to water rescue, methodologically initiating the development and changes in life-saving activity, establishing the **military-applied function** of swimming in Bulgaria as a public phenomenon.

2.3.2.3. UBGS "Yunak" Courses for Training Specialists

Organizing courses for specialists – headmasters and teachers – was among the primary means for achieving the goals of the "Yunak" organization, as outlined in its 1898 charter. The first headmaster course, from 31 July to 15 August 1900, was led by Panayot Belev, Daniel Blanshu, and Louis Ayer. Support was requested from the Ministry of Public Education, which *promised full cooperation in an encouraging letter*. The program included a theoretical explanation of the essence of gymnastics – a collective term for all physical exercises, activities, and the so-called special sports of "Yunak," including swimming. Lectures were given by a doctor on physiology, anatomy, and first aid.

"Yunak" headmaster courses were held before World War I in 1903, 1907, 1910, 1912, and 1914. They lasted from two weeks to a month, and were taught by the Swiss teachers. With an average of 30 to 50 trainees, "Yunak" trained at least 200 headmasters by 1915. Meanwhile, with the support of the MNE, the Union began conducting three-year courses, with the first scheduled for 1911 but postponed to 1912. The course concluded in 1914 and included swimming training, which took place in the Central Baths in Sofia.

In summary, approximately 400 trainees completed specialist training courses – headmaster courses (1900, 1903, 1907, 1910, 1912, and 1914) and three-year courses (1912–1914, 1923–1925, and 1926–1928) – including swimming training. This activity was crucial to the Union's understanding of its societal role: creating worthy Bulgarians by instilling patriotism and virtue. This established the spread and influence of the socio-cultural functions of health and hygiene, and education and training.

2.3.2.4. Swimming Training in Gymnastics Societies in Cities Along the Danube River and Black Sea

Swimming was present in the physical education programmes of UBGS "Yunak" as early as 1899, when it was approved in the special sports category. These activities were conducted according to the desires and capabilities of the societies.

On 12 October 1894, the "Sokol" physical exercise society was established in Ruse with a temporary charter and departments for gymnastics, rowing, swimming, skating, and cycling. Three months later, the name was changed to "Gorsko Pile" and Article 1 of the regular charter stated that it would develop among its members a *love of physical exercise, rowing, sailing, bathing, horseback riding, cycling, and skating*. By 1895, "Gorsko Pile" offered swimming training in the

Danube River and owned two small boats for recreation. In autumn 1898, the organization was renamed "Yunak" for the third time, joined the union of the same name, and elected the Swiss Charles Duwanel as its headmaster. On 12 November 1901, a *new sailing and water rescue department* was created, and the full name became the Ruse Gymnastics-Swimming Society "Yunak". In 1908, Midshipman Arnaudov reportedly led swimming group activities in Ruse, including short and long-distance swimming and diving.

Swimmers from Ruse participated in a documented swimming competition on 6 July 1908 in the Danube River near Silistra. The competitions were organized by the local "Dorostolski Yunak" society, headed at the time by Louis Ayer. The society noted the competition in its report, and swimmers from Tutrakan and Ruse participated alongside Yunaks from Silistra. In 1907, a sailing group was established at the Varna "Chernomorski Yunak" society, and activities were planned as described in the report for the second semester.

The activities of gymnastics societies in cities along the Danube River and Black Sea established several socio-cultural functions for the swimming system. The leading directions of influence on society through the policies of the Yunaks in Ruse, Burgas, and Varna, and later in other cities, involved previously unfamiliar activities – swimming demonstrations, initial training in the skill linked to the beneficial **hygienic and health consequences** of water activities, and the introduction of **competitions** with a competitive and recreational character.

2.4. Other Swimming Events Until 1922

In Varna in 1915, a competition was held for swimming, rowing, and sailing boats in the Black Sea. All were part of the program of the "First Marine Festival, given by the officers of His Majesty's Fleet on the occasion of the Accession to the Throne of his August Chief" (Tsar Ferdinand) on 2 August 1915 in the marine garden "San-Stefanska Bulgaria."

*Table №3. Socio-Cultural Changes in the Prehistory
Period of Organized Swimming (1878–1922)*

| Socio-Cultural Functions | Structure |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Health and Hygiene | UBGS "Yunak", Sofia Municipality, Danube Flotilla, Black Sea Fleet |
| Education and Upbringing | UBGS "Yunak", Danube Flotilla, Black Sea Fleet |
| Promotion and Propaganda | UBGS "Yunak" |
| Sports-Competitive Function | UBGS "Yunak" (Silistra), Black Sea Fleet (Varna) |
| Military-Applied Function | UBGS "Yunak" (Ruse), Danube Flotilla, Black Sea Fleet |
| Social Accessibility | Sofia Municipality |

Table №3 presents the socio-cultural functions of swimming as a public phenomenon during the prehistory period of organized swimming in the Kingdom of Bulgaria (1878–1922). Their manifestations resulted from the activities of four institutionalised entities: UBGS "Yunak", the Sofia Municipality, the Danube Flotilla, and the Black Sea Fleet.

The **popularization and promotion** of swimming and its significance for human health and its cultural role in developed Western European society were widespread nationally. For other functions during this period, the action was more localized, with only the core social characteristic of swimming – **health and hygiene** – established as a result of the activities of all four active entities during the period. The **educational and upbringing function** was most complete and foundational, developed through the courses for "Yunak" specialists and swimming training in cities along the Danube River and on the Black Sea coast, as well as the methodologies published by Blanshu and Belev, also distributed nationally. The **military-applied function** was established through swimming training in the Danube Flotilla and Black Sea Fleet, and through the activities of the gymnastics society "Yunak" in Ruse.

During this period, the Central Mineral Baths in Sofia were constructed, rapidly becoming a powerful factor in enhancing citizens' **social access to water**, alongside improving **their health and hygiene** as a result of group bathing, which became part of the lifestyle of more and more citizens and catalyzed their socialization.

2.5. Activities of the Bulgarian National Maritime Concord During the Organized Swimming Period, 1923–1930

2.5.1. Ideology of the Bulgarian National Maritime Concord

The ideology behind the establishment of BNMC in Varna in 1920 as a cultural and educational organization was the so-called Bulgarian maritime idea. Researcher Atanas Panayotov characterizes this social phenomenon: *In general, it can be defined as a socio-political process expressed in continuous interaction between maritime policy (generated and exercised by the legislative, judicial, and executive branches), material maritime culture (maritime economy and maritime defence), and spiritual maritime culture (maritime traditions, educational and cultural institutions) in the Bulgarian Maritime Idea* (Varna, 2003).

The creation of the BNMC reflected the desire of its founders – mostly officers from the disbanded fleet after the Treaty of Neuilly – to promote and implement the maritime idea. Its widespread dissemination generated broad public support for potential future actions by authorities leading to the development of all social spheres related to the sea. The most important initiatives of the BNMC included lobbying for the development of maritime affairs and maritime (water) sports, participating in maritime and river transport and trade, persuading political parties and society of the benefits of building and modernizing ports, legislatively regulating the use of the Black Sea and the Danube River with neighbouring countries, the so-called Bulgariazation of our Black Sea coasts, and regulating fishing and salt production. The BNMC created the Maritime Museum in Varna and the Institute for the Study of the Sea.

2.5.2. Establishment of the BNMC and the Maritime Sports Legion in Varna, 1920–1923

In Varna in 1923, with an officially recognized national, societal, non-partisan, and maritime organization that preached a clearly defined philosophy for comprehensive popularization, establishment, and development of the Bulgarian maritime idea, as well as the existence of the Maritime Sports Legion, the period of organized development of Bulgarian swimming began.

The BNMC was poised to become the most important organization for the spread of swimming in Bulgaria until 1944. With the founding of the Maritime Concord and Maritime Sports Legion in Varna, the foundation of activities that would later influence society through two of the functions of water sports (swimming) – **promotion and sports and competitions** – began to form in their charters.

2.5.3. Literature on Swimming and Activities for its Development by the BNMC during the Organized Swimming Period, 1923–1930

The printed word, along with talks and lectures, was among the most powerful weapons in the BNMC's promotional arsenal. With the publication of the magazines *Maritime Library* and *Maritime Concord* **promotion and propaganda** became the most influential activities of the cultural and educational organization BNMC on society.

Following the Maritime Sports Legion in Varna, which merged with the Maritime Concord, three more legions were created in 1924 – a maritime legion in Burgas and river legions in Ruse and Veliko Tarnovo. On 19 August 1924, the first competition in swimming, diving, and rowing, organized by the Maritime Concord, was held in the sea near Burgas. Legions from Varna, Burgas, and Ruse participated. In 1925, two more sports legions were formed, giving the BNMC two sports centres on the Black Sea – Varna and Burgas, on the Danube River – Ruse and Vidin, and in the interior of the country – Veliko Tarnovo (Yantra River) and Plovdiv (Maritsa River). In the same year, 1925, Regulations for the Maritime and River Legions of the BNMC came into effect, tasking the organization with developing almost all water sports that exist today: swimming, water polo, rowing, sailing, etc. In 1927, the Maritime Concord, together with the MNE, began a series of summer courses for swimming instructors held in Varna (1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, and 1938), training over 150 instructors. Also in 1927 and 1928, competitions between maritime units were revived near Varna. Sailors from the Maritime Police Service and the Maritime Training Unit – successors to the Black Sea Fleet – participated. The disciplines were sports and military-applied: swimming, rowing, water rescue, etc.

Plovdiv received two new facilities for water sports in the summer of 1929 – the modern river baths on the Maritsa River and the renovated lake in the "Tsar Simeon" garden. The impressive "First Bulgarian Summer Bathing and Swimming School" facility, with a beach and two 25 by 12.5 m pools on the right bank of the Maritsa, was opened for operation. Its construction was a private initiative of "Eng. Darakchiev and Co.", supported by the local branch of the BNMC. On the same day, the renovated lake in the "Tsar Simeon" garden was also opened, having been repaired, equipped for sports, and flooded by the Plovdiv branch of the BNMC, enhancing **social accessibility**.

The organized swimming period ended in 1930. For the BNMC, water sports proved to be a powerful means for promoting its main goals in its national welfare activities, leading to the establishment of the **promotional socio-cultural function** of swimming.

Over eight years, sports legions were created in Varna, Burgas, Ruse, Vidin, Veliko Tarnovo, Plovdiv, and Lom. In mid-1930, they had approximately 450 members, all of whom had passed a swimming test and most of whom had participated in Bulgarian competitions (Burgas 1924, Ruse 1925, Varna 1926, Vidin 1927, Varna 1928, Varna 1929, and Lom 1930), representing the spread and influence of the **sports-competitive function** of swimming in society across much of the country.

With the construction of the first two outdoor pools in Plovdiv and the expansion of marine summer colonies by the branches, **social accessibility** was established as a socio-cultural function of swimming. On the Black Sea, branches of the BNMC built and organized children's summer camps from 1924, largely funded by the BNMC and local organizations. Each summer, between 700 and 1,000 children attended the camps.

The competitions in Ruse, Vidin, and Lom became massive cultural and patriotic holidays, generating enormous interest and providing clear evidence of the vitality of the maritime idea and the attractive power of water sports. There were at least 20 other competitions, including about ten in Varna – of the legions, between two legions, of the maritime units in swimming, rowing, and water rescue – establishing the **military-applied function**.

Table № 4. Socio-Cultural Changes During the Organized Swimming Period (1923–1930)

| Socio-Cultural Functions | Structures |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Health and Hygiene | BNMC, UBGS "Yunak", Municipalities of Sofia and Varna, Black Sea Fleet, Danube Flotilla; Burgas, Ruse, Plovdiv, Yambol, Veliko Tarnovo, Vidin, Lom, Svishtov, Vratsa |
| Education and Upbringing | Ministry of National Education, BNMC, UBGS "Yunak", BNSF, Danube Flotilla, Black Sea Fleet |
| Promotion and Propaganda | BNMC, UBGS "Yunak" |
| Sports-Competitive Function | BNMC, UBGS "Yunak", Sofia, Varna, Burgas, Ruse, Plovdiv, Veliko Tarnovo, Vidin, Lom, Yambol, Black Sea Fleet |
| Military-Applied Function | BNMC, Varna Municipality, Black Sea Fleet, Danube Flotilla |
| Social Accessibility | BNMC, Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Ruse, Lom, Veliko Tarnovo, Sozopol, Vidin, Vratsa |

Table № 4 presents the socio-cultural functions of swimming as a public phenomenon established during the organized swimming period in the Kingdom of Bulgaria (1878–1922). Their changes resulted from the activities of six institutionalized entities: BNMC, UBGS "Yunak", the Municipalities of Sofia and Varna, the Danube Flotilla, and the Black Sea Fleet, as well as 9 other

municipalities. Individual functions manifested in different cities, most often resulting from the activities of local branches of the BNMC, and sometimes sports clubs that were members of the BNSF, which had yet to develop swimming activities.

The primary socio-cultural function of swimming – **health and hygiene** – had the widest reach across the country, as seen in the table. This is logical because the leading indicator for its analysis (physical and/or recreational activities in an aquatic environment) extended everywhere swimming was practiced, regardless of the nature of the different activities.

Education and upbringing were concentrated in the BNMC (courses for instructors) and UBGS "Yunak" (three-year courses for physical education teachers), with both organizations supported by the MNE in their activities. **Military-applied swimming** training continued in the Danube Flotilla and Black Sea Fleet, which also held competitions in military-applied disciplines, including water rescue, and BNMC.

The sports-competitive function was established, primarily due to the BNMC – its central leadership for organizing Bulgarian championships and its branches in the cities for local competitions. The total number of competitions organized by the Maritime Concord during the period was approximately 30. Together with those organized by the Union "Yunak" (5), the Black Sea Fleet (5), and clubs of the BNSF (5), the total number of swimming events with a **sports-competitive character** for the period was at least 45. The extremely important socio-cultural function of the swimming system, **social accessibility**, was also being established in significantly more locations in the country. In Sofia, the indoor pool of the Central Mineral Baths became an integral part of the city's culture and social life. The two pools in Plovdiv and the renovation of Tsar-Simeonovo Lake for water sports and swimming, in addition to impacting social accessibility, also influenced the development of **training activities**. Recreation and sports at outdoor baths – river and sea – often established by local branches of the Maritime Union, as well as the holding of summer student colonies (camps), also organized by divisions of the BNMC, shaped the holistic character of **social accessibility** as a function of swimming in society during the period.

CHAPTER THREE “CHANGES IN SWIMMING AND SWIMMING SPORTS 1931-1944”

3.1. Beginning of Competitive Swimming in Bulgaria

3.1.1. Construction of the "Diana" Pool in Sofia in 1931

On 21 November 1930, the Bulgarian Olympic Committee (BOC) General Assembly decided to organize an inter-Balkan tournament – the Balkan Games – in 1931, with participation from Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey, and Yugoslavia, in football, gymnastics, fencing, equestrian sports, motorcycling, and cycling. Gymnastics was later dropped, but the opportunity arose to add swimming and diving at the request of Romania, Greece, and Yugoslavia. Responsibility for the selection and preparation of the Bulgarian team fell to the BNMC, which also had decisive input regarding the organization of the starts.

Surprisingly, in April 1931, the possibility arose to urgently construct a pool in Sofia. The project was approved by the BOC, prepared with the assistance of the German engineer, and included in the Construction Commission's program. The pool would be near the "AS 23" stadium in Borisova Garden, measuring 50 by 18 m, with a depth of 1.50 to 5 m, a diving tower, and stands for 1,000 people. Funds would be provided by the BOC, donations, and fees.

However, less than a month later, a group of journalists were invited to visit and view the progress on the construction of the modern pool in the "Diana" sports park behind Borisova Garden. To their surprise, they found that the Bulgarian society "Diana" had already built an impressive pool entirely of reinforced concrete, measuring 80 by 20 m. The depth on one side was 80 cm, gradually increasing to 4.50 m at the other end, where the 3, 5, and 10 m diving tower was located. A children's pool measuring 20 by 20 m and 80 cm deep was also attached to the large pool.

The BOC's plans for a new pool were cancelled, and it was officially confirmed that "Diana" would host the swimming and diving competitions of the Balkan Games. A wooden bridge was built on the longer pool to section off and mark a 50-meter length. On 19 July 1931, the opening of the complex featured the first competition in Bulgaria on a 50-meter pool, following FINA rules. The organizers were the Sofia branch of the BNMC, headed by Ivan Selveliev – chief editor of the "Sport" newspaper – and the owners of "Diana."

3.1.2. Balkan Swimming and Diving Games in Sofia, 28–29 September 1931

At the BNMC Bulgarian water sports competitions in Ruse on 22–23 August 1931, the best swimmers were selected to form an expanded national team. Qualifications were held on 3, 5, and 7 September 1931 at "Diana," with 60 athletes from Varna, Burgas, Lom, Vidin, Ruse, Plovdiv, and Sofia participating. After which, 28 athletes underwent three weeks of training in Sofia under the direction of Engineer G. Darakchiev. The swimming and diving competitions of the Balkan

Games, with overall rankings, were held between the teams of Bulgaria and Greece only, attracting enormous spectator interest on 28–29 September 1931. Over 1,000 tickets were sold. The Greek team won.

In summary, the construction of the "Diana" pool was an extremely important event for the development of swimming and swimming sports in Sofia and Bulgaria. The presence of a modern sports park in arid Sofia established the socio-cultural function of swimming as a public phenomenon – **social accessibility**. There was also a **sports-competitive function**, with the first starts in Bulgaria under FINA rules on a 50-meter pool. Swimming quickly became part of the lifestyle of the capital's citizens – as a beneficial activity and a previously unknown sports skill for society, and as an interesting and attractive sport. Sunbathing (the area around the pool was covered in sand brought from the sea), accompanied by bathing and swimming outdoors in the "Diana" sports park, appealed to more and more Sofians. This sharply increased the influence of **the health and hygiene function** in the city, which until then had exerted its beneficial influence on society year-round, but only in the indoor pool of the Central Mineral Baths. The **social accessibility function** gained significant reach in the country with the established river baths in Lom, Veliko Tarnovo, and Ruse, and with the pool in Gorna Dzhumaya.

3.2. Development of Competitive Swimming, 1932–1944

3.2.1. Creation of a Water Sports Committee at the SRSA in 1932

A month after the Balkan Games in the capital, the first two swimming sections were created within existing universal sports clubs – "Levski" and "AS 23" – in just a week. By the end of the year, "Levski" organized a swimming course with 20 participants in the indoor pool of the Sofia Mineral Baths, led by Stefan Menshik. Beginners and advanced swimmers participated. Regular training sessions for "Levski" and "AS 23" were held in the baths pool throughout the winter. In August 1932, a Water Sports Committee was created from 6 universal sports clubs under the Sofia Regional Sports Area – SRSA (member of the BNSF).

3.2.2. Acceptance of the BNMC as a Member of FINA in 1933

In summary, along with the main function of **health and hygiene**, which continued to strengthen its spread among the capital's residents, the sports-competitive function also experienced a surge, with the number of competitions (under FINA rules) increasing rapidly after the BNMC was accepted as a member of the international organization in 1933. The actions of the two organizations in Sofia – BNMC and BNSF – clearly distinguished their working directions. The

national federation prioritised the development of sports swimming, water polo, and diving to achieve sports results. While the BNMC also paid attention to sports swimming, it emphasized training activities and courses for specialists. For the BNMC, swimming became a primary means for achieving its patriotic goals by recruiting members for the organization.

3.2.3. Literature on Swimming Sports

Along with "Sport", the major political dailies had good sports sections, and swimming was also covered regularly, especially in "Zarya", "Zora", and "Utro" (**publication of periodicals – promotion and propaganda**). The "Maritime Concord" magazine sharply increased coverage of sports swimming, diving, rowing, and water rescue. It also featured reports from the BNMC and Fleet competitions – for Bulgarian championships and competitions between maritime and police units (**military-applied function**) – and presented the organization's large-scale activities in building pools across the country (social accessibility).

In 1934, Stefan Menshik's methodology "Technique of Water Sport" was published. The book was part of the "Library of the 'Levski' Sports Newspaper series", which was close to the club but a private publication (**methodological literature – education and upbringing**).

The pinnacle of literature on swimming sports until 1944 was "Swimming and Swimming Sport" (1937) by Emanuil Atanasov - Emata, published by the Sofia branch of the BNMC. The book comprehensively presented everything about swimming through the years, both worldwide and in Bulgaria. The foreword was written by Prof. Dr. Stefan Konsulov, who emphasized the continued need to spread the maritime idea, of which the development of swimming was an important part. The distribution of periodicals and methodological literature continue across the country was on a national scale, with the two books published during the period being of a high standard. This further strengthened the influence of the activities, mainly of BNMC, as well as of the publishers of the daily newspapers "Sport," on the socio-cultural functions of swimming and the changes they brought about in Bulgarian society in the areas of **promotion and propaganda, and education and upbringing**.

3.2.4. Interactions and Activities of the BNMC and BNSF and their Impact on the Development of Competitive Swimming, 1933–1941

During the period, the BNMC held at least 140 competitions, while the Sofia Regional Sports Area (SRSA) organized 60 in Sofia. Adding the nearly 30 competitions held by the Concord from 1923–

1930 brings the total for the BNMC to over 170. The regional and club competitions up to 1930 in the BNSF numbered about 20, and in "Yunak" at least 10. This leads to the realistic figure of at least 260 swimming competitions in the period from the early 1920s to mid-1942, when the Bulgarian Swimming Union was created from the BNSF, based solely on the experience and clubs from the SRSA.

Table № 7. All-Bulgarian Competitions of the BNMC

| Year | City | Venue |
|-------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1924 | Burgas | Black Sea |
| 1925 | Ruse | Danube River |
| 1926 | Varna | Black Sea |
| 1927 | Vidin | Danube River |
| 1928 | Varna | Black Sea |
| 1929 | Varna | Black Sea |
| 1930 | Lom | Danube River |
| 1931 | Ruse | Designated 50 m pool in Danube River |
| 1932 | Burgas | Designated 50 m pool in the port |
| 1933 | Varna | Designated 50 m pool in the port |
| 1934 | Sofia | "Diana" pool, 50 m |
| 1937 | Yambol | City Pool 20 by 30 m |
| 1938 | Ladzhene | Mineral Pool 50 m |
| 1939 | Ladzhene | Mineral Pool 50 m |
| 1940 | Pernik | City Pool 50 m |
| 1941 | Sofia | "Diana" pool 50 m |

There was a widespread national dissemination of the six socio-cultural functions of swimming and swimming sports in the country during the study period, which were a consequence of the activities of the BNMC and BNSF (SRSA). The number of main entities developing swimming increased (to 18) and its social characteristics, and consequently the cultural changes in society, were a result of their activities.

3.2.5. Pool Construction

After 1932, the process of pool construction intensified thanks to the efforts of the BNMS (logistical, organizational, financial, and lobbying for regulations), municipalities, private individuals, and the state. By 1942, Bulgaria was the most developed country in this respect in the region after Romania, and the "Princess Maria Louise" complexes in Sofia and in the Ladzhene were above the European average.

Table № 8. Pools in the Kingdom of Bulgaria until 1944

| Year | Location | Pool | Dimensions |
|-------------|---|---|------------------------------|
| 1913 | Sofia | Central Mineral Baths (indoor)* | 16.5/7 m |
| 1929 | Plovdiv | "First Bulgarian Summer Bath"*** | two at 25/12.5 m |
| 1931 | Sofia | "Diana" (diving tower)*** | 80/20 m (50/20 section) |
| 1931 | Pazardzhik | "Svoboda"* | 20/13.5 m (50/13.5 extended) |
| 1932 | Gorna Dzhumaya | Gorna Dzhumaya+ | 40/20 m (33/20 section) |
| 1932 | Sofia | Pavlovo (diving tower)*** | 25/12.5 m |
| 1933 | Sofia | Boyana*** | 25/12.5 m |
| 1933 | v. Vladislavtsi, Godechko** | | 12.5/6 m |
| 1933 | v. Tsar Asparuhovo, St.Zag. ** | | 10/5 m |
| 1933 | v. Treklyano, Kyustendilsko** | | 10/5 m |
| 1934 | Ruse | "Banichkite" (floating)*** | 10/6 m |
| 1934 | v. Kumaritsa, Sofiysko** | | 10/5 m |
| 1935 | v. Popovtsi, St.Zagorsko** | | 10/5 m |
| 1935 | v. Mirkovo, Pirdopsko** | | 10/5 m |
| 1935 | v. Byala, Varnensko** | | 10/5 m |
| 1935 | Stara Zagora | "Mebel bad"+ | 50/20 m |
| 1935 | Peshtera | Peshtera+ | 25/10 m |
| 1935 | Yambol | Yambol+ | 30/20 m |
| 1935 | Kazanlak | Kazanlak+ | 25/12.5 m |
| 1935 | Lom | Lom+ | 33.3/25 m |
| 1935 | Asenovgrad | Asenovgrad+ | 120/30 m |
| 1935 | Sliven | Sliven+ | 25/12.5 m |
| 1935 | Sadovo | Sadovo+ | 20/12.5 m |
| 1935 | Razgrad | 8th Cavalry Gendarmerie++ | 30/20 m |
| 1936 | Targovishte | Targovishte+ | 25/12.5 m |
| 1936 | Lovech | Lovech+ | 25/12.5 m |
| 1936 | Petrich | Petrich+ | 20/10 m |
| 1937 | Plovdiv | "Park bad"* | 50/20 m |
| 1937 | Burgas | Maritime Sgovor (in port)+ | 50/20 m |
| 1937 | Varna | Port+ | 50/15 m |
| 1937 | v. Ladzhene | Mineral Pool* | 50/25 m |
| 1937 | Pernik | Mines "Pernik" (diving tower)+ | 50/25 m |
| 1937 | Samokov | "Hunting Park"*** | 25/12.5 m |
| 1937 | Byala Slatina | Byala Slatina+ | 20/10 m |
| 1937 | Vratsa | "Lido-Venice"+ | 25/12.5 m |
| 1937 | v. Tsareva livada, Dryanovo* (diving tower) | | 20/10 m |
| 1937 | v. Vladislavtsi, Tsaribrodsko** | | 10/5 m |
| 1939 | Sofia | "Princess Maria Louise" (diving tower)* | 50/25 m |
| 1940 | Pleven | Kaylaka+ | 25/12.5 m |
| 1940 | Svishtov | Svishtov+ | 25/12.5 m |
| 1940 | Ruse | Ruse+ | 25/12.5 m |
| 1940 | Gabrovo | Gabrovo+ | 25/12.5 m |
| 1940 | Shumen | Shumen+ | 25/12.5 m |
| 1942 | Sofia | "Prince Simeon Tarnovski"* | 50/25 m |

+ Built/initiated by the Bulgarian National Maritime Sgovor (22 in total).

++ Built by the Gendarmerie (1), which is a structure of the Ministry of Interior and is part of the police forces. Built by the respective municipality (7).

** Small pool (bath), built by the Ministry of Social Policy (8).

*** Private initiative (7).

Note: The list of 37 pools and 8 small pools (baths) in the villages is incomplete due to lack of data. According to the official report of the BNSF (BPS) from 1943, the number of pools alone in the Kingdom of Bulgaria is over 50. According to data from BNMC, at least 25 of them were built/initiated by the Maritime Concord, mainly by its branches on municipal plots.

3.2.6. Swimming in the Activities of UBGS "Yunak" 1931–1944

3.2.7. Creation of the Bulgarian Swimming Union, Plans, and Activities 1942–1944

Table № 9. Swimming Competitions in the Kingdom of Bulgaria until 1944

| Organizer | Number |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1908–1930 | |
| UBGS "Yunak" | 5 |
| Navy | 5 |
| BNMC | 30 |
| Other | 5 |
| Total | 45 |
| 1931-1941 | |
| BNMC | 140 |
| SRSA | 60 |
| BNSF | 30 |
| UBGS "Yunak" | 10 |
| Navy | 10 |
| Military Competitions | 10 |
| Total | 260 |
| 1942-1944 | |
| Bulgarian Swimming Union | 80 |
| Navy | 5 |
| Military Competitions | 10 |
| "Brannik" | 10 |
| BNMC | 10 |
| UBGS "Yunak" | 5 |
| Total | 120 |
| For 1908–1944 | 425 |

Note: Due to a lack of official statistics, the data is the result of research in this study and may be incomplete.

3.2.8. Other Swimming Sports

During the period, water polo and diving established the following socio-cultural functions in society: **health and hygiene** and **sports-competitive function**.

3.3. Beginning of Academic Training in Water Sports at the State Higher School of Physical Education in 1942

The beginning of academic training in water sports at State Higher School of Physical Education – SHSPE (predecessor of NSA) established the socio-cultural functions of **education and upbringing**, and **health and hygiene** for swimming and water sports as a public phenomenon.

Table № 10. Branches of BNMC that Develop Swimming and Clubs in BNSF with Swimming Sections, in the Period of Competitive Swimming 1931-1944

| City | BNMC | BNSF |
|---------------|--|---|
| Asenovgrad | Branch Asenovgrad (pool*) | - |
| Bitola | - | "Svoboda" |
| Burgas | Branch Burgas (pool*) | "Levski", "Chernomorets" |
| Byala Slatina | Branch Byala Slatina (pool*) | - |
| Sofia | Branch Sofia (pools – 6), Swimming squads in 15 schools | "Levski", "AS 23", "Botev", "Slavia", "Sportklub", "Akoah", "Shipka", "Polet" (Malashevtsi) |
| V. Tarnovo | Branch Veliko Tarnovo | - |
| Varna | Varna branch (pool*) | "Vladislav" |
| Vidin | Branch Vidin | "Bdin" |
| Vratsa | Branch Vratsa (pool*) | - |
| Gabrovo | Branch Gabrovo (pool*) | "Orlovets" |
| G. Dzhumaya | Branch Gorna Dzhumaya (pool*) | - |
| Kazanlak | Branch Kazanlak (pool*) | - |
| Kavala | - | "Kavala" |
| Lom | Branch Lom (pool*) | "Levski" |
| Lovech | Branch Lovech (pool*) | - |
| v. Ladzhene | Branch Ladzhene (pool*) | - |
| Ohrid | Branch Ohrid | "Ohrid" |
| Pazardzhik | Branch Pazardzhik (pool) | "Benkovski" |
| Petrich | Branch Petrich (pool*) | - |
| Pernik | Branch Pernik (pool*) | "Krakra" ("Minyor") |
| Peshtera | Branch Peshtera (pool*) | - |
| Pleven | Branch Pleven (pool*) | - |
| Plovdiv | Branch Plovdiv (pool – 3) | "Levski" |
| Ruse | Branch Ruse (pool*) | "Dinamo" |
| Sozopol | Branch Sozopol | - |
| Sadovo | Branch Sadovo (pool*) | - |
| Svishtov | Branch Svishtov (pool*) | "Dunav" |
| Sliven | Branch Sliven (pool*) | - |
| Stara Zagora | Branch Stara Zagora (pool*) | "Trayana" |
| Targovishte | Branch Targovishte (pool*) | - |
| Shumen | Branch Shumen (pool*) | "Khan Omurtag" |
| Yambol | Branch Yambol (pool*) | - |

* The pool was built/initiated by the BNMC

Note: There is data that BSU to BNSF formed swimming sections in clubs in Skopje, Valadanovo, Strumica, Drama, but there is no data on their activity.

Table № 11. Socio-Cultural Changes in the Period of Competitive Swimming and Swimming Sports (1931–1944)

| Socio-Cultural Functions | Structures |
|--|--|
| Health and Hygiene | BNMC – 30 local branches and BNSF – 24 clubs (see Table 10), UBGS "Yunak", MNE, SRSA, CWS, BSU, Danube Flotilla, Black Sea Fleet, Bulgarian Army, BOC, SASS "Academic" at SU, SHSPE, Maritime School of H.M., Union of Sailors for Rowing, Sailing, and Swimming, Military School of H.M., "Brannik", Police. Municipalities: Sofia, Varna, Burgas, Ruse, Vidin, Lom, Plovdiv, Veliko Tarnovo, Yambol, Pazardzhik (with their built marine and river baths/beaches). |
| Education and Upbringing | SHSPE, BNMC, UBGS "Yunak", MNE, Danube Flotilla, Black Sea Fleet, Bulgarian Army, Military School of H.M., Maritime School of H.M., Union of Sailors for Rowing, Sailing, and Swimming; Police. |
| Promotion and Propaganda | BNMC, UBGS "Yunak", "Sport" newspaper, national dailies. |
| Sports-Competitive Function | BNMC, BNSF, BSU, SRSA, CWS, UBGS "Yunak", "Brannik", Danube Flotilla, Black Sea Fleet, BOC, MNE, SASS "Academic" at SU, Maritime School of H.M., Union of Sailors for Rowing, Sailing, and Swimming, Bulgarian Army, Military School of H.M.; Police |
| Military-Applied Function | Danube Flotilla, Black Sea Fleet, Bulgarian Army, Military School of H.M., Maritime School of H.M., Union of Sailors for Rowing, Sailing, and Swimming, Police, |
| - training and competitions in military-applied swimming | BNMC, UBGS "Yunak" |
| - life-saving activity | BNMC, municipalities: Varna, Burgas, Ruse. |
| Social Accessibility | BNMC (at least 22 pools), Municipalities: Sofia (3), Pazardzhik (1), Plovdiv (1), Ladzhene (1), Tsareva livada (1); Gendarmerie (1) Private initiative (7) - see Table № 8. |
| - swimming pools | Ministry of Social Policy (8) |
| - small pools – baths, in villages | BNMC and municipalities: Varna, Burgas, Ruse, Vidin, Lom, Plovdiv, Yambol, Veliko Tarnovo, Sozopol |
| - built marine and river baths | At least 10 colonies with an average total of between 700 and 1000 students each summer |
| - summer marine colonies for children and students | |
| Note: From the development of water polo and diving during the period, health and hygiene, education and training, and the sports-competitive function are established. | |

CONCLUSION

In the course of the research, based on a factual study of primary and secondary historical sources and the completion of the outlined research tasks, analysis and verification of the results, reconstruction of individual historical events, and expert assessment, the formulated hypothesis was confirmed:

In the studied period, the swimming system, through its socio-cultural functions, established a multifaceted and beneficial influence on Bulgarian society. The introduction of swimming into the country from the beginning of the 20th century began with the absence of traditions, a distanced attitude of the population towards swimming skills, a lack of specialists and material base (pools). For less than half a century until 1944, swimming as a specific activity and sport (as well as swimming sports after 1931) rapidly expanded its significance and entered the life of Bulgarians with various activities that positively impacted the culture of society. There is a reasonable assumption that most of these activities are part of the broad scope of the policies of the organizations that developed swimming and swimming sports in Bulgaria until 1944.

After the Liberation in 1878, swimming was a taboo for the people. The population was afraid of water, and overall, the Bulgarian people had an underdeveloped swimming culture.

First, in UBGS "Yunak," was evident the strong link between the ideal of sport in Bulgaria, aimed at the harmonious development of the individual, and the socio-cultural function for the development of sport (in particular, swimming) in organizational and competitive terms. In practice, "Yunak" prepared the morality of every young person to seek harmonious development according to the European cultural model, and swimming (not only) began to shape it and provide it to the individuals. This influence of the Union was generated through specialist courses, educational methodology, popularizing literature, and swimming training in societies in the cities along the Danube River and the Black Sea.

The Bulgarian National Maritime Concord formed its young members by promoting the patriotic maritime idea, which aimed at the prosperity of Bulgaria by using all the opportunities of the sea, rivers, and water borders of the country. The development of water sports, especially swimming and rowing, was part of this ideology and a means of achieving the national goals of the BNMS, which relied on popularising the ability to swim through training, building pools, and organizing marine camps for adolescents. And the competitions of the Maritime Concord became patriotic

holidays. At the Bulgarian National Sports Federation, achieving good sports results in swimming, water polo, and diving was the main goal of the organization.

Conclusion 1. The three public patriotic organizations – UBGS "Yunak," BNMC, and BNSF, which mainly developed swimming in the studied period, did so separately and less often through joint actions. Nevertheless, swimming skills and physical activities in water, through propaganda, training, sports, health, military-applied, and social functions established by their various policies, gradually formed and expanded radical and even dramatic social changes. Thus, in practice, "Yunak" and BNMC created new cultural standards in the attitude of Bulgarian society towards water and swimming.

Conclusion 2. Especially impressive was the rapidly growing popularity of swimming in the 1930s, when the process coincided with the overall progress of the country in that period. The influence of swimming sports and competitions expanded the health and patriotic aspects in the education of adolescents in the country, and this penetration was particularly strong among educated young people in Sofia and major cities, and among some women. The competitive element represented a qualitatively new cultural level of swimming. After the initial period of organized swimming in open water areas, competitions reached their peak in 1930s-1944 – they were conducted in pools and according to internationally standardized rules.

Conclusion 3. In the early 1940s, swimming finally entered the lives of many Bulgarians through the activities of an impressive group of 18 institutions in Sofia, in the larger cities, in the army and the navy. The social needs were met by the increased construction of pools and baths in the smaller settlements as well. Regarding the social and economic conditions in the country this was an impressive socio-cultural phenomenon. The leading role in this process was played by the BNMC, the state, the municipalities, and business.

Conclusion 4. As in Europe, the evolution of swimming sport in Bulgaria became one of the indicators of the level of cultural development of society. The process developed from the beginning of the 20th century till 1944. At that time, the country managed for 10 years to catch up and to compensate its 100 years lag behind in swimming development compared to the countries in Western Europe. The leading factor in this process was the spiritual revolution in Bulgarian society after the Liberation, which caused rapid development in all spheres of public life. In sport, the most important prerequisite for this progress was the manifested cultural heroism, which

catalyzed the wide range of policies of UBGS "Yunak", BNMC, and BNSF. Among them were also activities for the development of swimming and swimming sports. After 1944, these merits and achievements were erased from the popular memory with the smelting and disbandment of the three organizations.

Despite the historical, rather than applied, nature of this study, the following recommendations can be outlined:

Recommendation 1. Similar studies, under certain conditions and with sufficiently wide popularization of their results, can become a good basis for the beginning of the return of some of the authentic moral characteristics and values of Bulgarian sport. Those values were demonstrated by UBGS "Yunak," BNMC, and BNSF: patriotism, dedication to national causes, discipline, respect of proven authorities, absence of commercial goals. Unfortunately, commercialism in the modern social context is the leading motive in the implementation of more and more organized sports activities not only in professional sport but also among amateurs and adolescents.

Recommendation 2. The actions of the BNMC are indicative of how a cultural and educational public organization managed to build/initiate the construction of 25 pools throughout the country. This process and its results can be successfully used as an inspiring example for current sports leaders that it is entirely possible with good organization, determination, dedication, and relative unselfishness to achieve impressive results in all aspects of socially useful work.

Recommendation 3. Due to wartime, the BNMC failed to bring to a successful end its lobbying for the creation and adoption of a Law on the Construction of Pools in Bulgaria. This goal could become a public task of the federations that develop swimming sports in our country today (BFPS and BFWP), to introduce mandatory state regulations for adherence to current international standards and practices in the future construction of sports pools in the country.

Scientific publications in referenced journals on the dissertation topic:

- 1. Krastev, N.** The Unknown Merit of the Bulgarian National Maritime Concord for the Beginning of Swimming Sport in Bulgaria in 1931. in: Economic Management. Sofia 2025, Year VI, No. 1, pp. 102–114.
- 2. Krastev, N., Donev, Y.** The Beginning of Water Polo in Bulgaria (1932–1944). in: Sport and Science. Sofia 2024, No. 3–4, pp. 195–208.
- 3. Krastev, N.** Unknown Facts about the First Republican Championship in Men's Water Polo in 1949. in: Collection of Reports from the XV International Scientific Conference "Contemporary Trends in Physical Education and Sport" of the Department of Sport at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", held on 18.11.2023. Sofia 2024, pp. 313–320.
- 4. Krastev, N.** The Unknown First Republican Long-Distance Swimming Championships (1949–1951). in: Yearbook of the NSA "Vasil Levski". Sofia 2024, Book 2, pp. 153–159.