This year the Commission received 49 applications for Fulbright senior scholar and graduate study grants, Hubert Humphrey fellowships and non-degree grants for doctoral students. The binational reviewing committees recommended 28 students and 13 scholars for interview. The interviews were conducted on June 28 and 29 and on July 1, 2010. The applicants represented a wide variety of fields and were well qualified and motivated. The following candidates for Fulbright scholarships and Hubert H. Humphrey fellowships in AY 2011-12 were nominated by the Commission Board:

### Senior Scholars

**Principal candidates:**
1. Plamen Makariev – philosophy
2. Stoycho Metodieiev – animal breeding
3. Violina Rizova – biogeochemistry
4. Tsanka Dikova – dental medicine
5. Dimitar Antonov – environmental science

**Alternate candidate:**
1. Petya Koprinkova-Hristova – robotics

### Graduate Students – Degree Programs

**Principal candidates:**
1. Milen Markov – business administration
2. Mariya Miteva – electronic commerce
3. Marina Petrova – graphic design
4. Radoslava Dogandjieva – international development
5. Lyubomir Minkov – business administration
6. Galina Petkova – law (Fulbright-Thanks to Scandinavia Grant)

### Non-Degree Grants for Doctoral Students

**Principal candidate:**
1. Marina Semerdjieva – economics

**Alternate candidate:**
1. Maria Kostadinova – ethnology

### Research Scholarship for the Study of Civil Society

**Principal candidates:**
1. Ivo Danchev – photography
2. Danail Danov – media studies

### Hubert Humphrey Fellowships

**Principal candidates:**
1. Irina Nedeva – journalism
2. Irina Koleva – finance
During the International Education week (November 15-19, 2010) a number of useful activities were carried out attracting the attention of students, professors, high-school principals and teachers, educators, professionals and parents.

A highlight of this year’s IEW was the official launch of 2012-2013 Fulbright Grants Competition in a joint presentation of the Fulbright Commission and Sofia University Digital Centre at the American Corner at Sofia City Library on November 15, 2010. Dr. Julia Stefanova, Fulbright Commission Executive Director, Dimiter Iliev from Sofia University Digital Centre and Dr. Iona Sarieva, U.S. Fulbright Scholar, AY 2009-10, Sofia University, Department of British and American Studies, presented respectively on the 2012-2013 Fulbright Grants Competition, Sofia University Digital Centre and Distance Education, and Interlanguage: Learners Corpus Insights. The presentation was attended by over 30 students, lecturers and researchers interested in study/lecturing/research opportunities in the US.

Another highlight of the IEW in Bulgaria were the visits of Fulbright Commission Executive Director Dr. Julia Stefanova and Commission staff members Snezhana Teneva, Maria Kostova and Anastasia Miteva to English language schools hosting English Teaching Assistants (ETAs): Plovdiv English Language School, Stara Zagora Foreign Language School, Haskovo English Language School, Smolyan Foreign Language School, Lovech Foreign Language School, Pleven Foreign Language School, Shoumen Foreign Language School, and Dobrich Foreign Language School.

The discussions with the school principals, the mentor teachers and the ETAs themselves focused on the adjustment of the American students, the benefits of their presence in the schools, as well as on new ideas and opportunities for expanding and enriching the program. EducationUSA adviser Snezhana Teneva presented on Undergraduate Study in the US in front of over 100 high school students in Lovech and Dobrich.

Worth mentioning is also the introduction of English language classes for economically disadvantaged and Roma students from Vassil Levski Elementary School in the village of Novachevo, Botevgrad district. The classes offered to 17 students take place every week. They are conducted by teacher Iliana Dimitrova.

Over 500 students and professionals visited the Fulbright stand at the Begin Group Education Fair in Sofia and the Career Fair at Sofia Technical University. EducationUSA adviser Snezhana Teneva presented on The Fulbright Program in Bulgaria and the Annual Fulbright Grants Competition at the University of National and World Economy in Sofia, City University in Pravets and 2nd English Language High School in Sofia. During and around the IEW, the Fulbright advising centre in Sofia was visited by representatives of four US institutions of higher education: Stanford Graduate School of Business, CA; Vassar College, NY; Ramapo College, NJ and Lafayette College, PA. They presented their institutions and the American educational system to interested students.

During the 11th International Education Week in Bulgaria about 1000 individuals and representatives of schools, colleges and universities, international organizations, businesses, associations, and community organizations joined in this year’s events and learned about study opportunities in the United States.
Visits of Fulbright Commission Staff Members to English Language Schools Hosting ETAs

Lovech Foreign Language School

Pleven Foreign Language School

Dobrich Foreign Language School

Shoumen Foreign Language School

English-Language Classes for Roma Students at Vassil Levski Elementary School in the Village of Novachene

English teacher Iliana Dimitrova and Roma students at Vassil Levski Elementary School
Outreach to High Schools and Universities

LEFT: Dobrich Foreign Language School

University of National and World Economy, Sofia

City University, Pravetz

2nd English Language High School, Sofia

US University Presentations and Interviews

Vassar College, NY and Ramapo College, NJ

Lafayette College, PA
IEW 2010 Special Programs at American Shelves – Fulbright Commission Partners

ABOVE: Workshop at Turgovishte Regional Library (American Shelf)

RIGHT: Daniel Peretz, Guest Lecturer at the University of Veliko Turnovo, conducting a workshop on English as a Second Language at Turgovishte Regional Library (American Shelf)

Bulgarian Fulbright Alumni Association Membership Form

Full name ...........................................................................................................................................................................................................
Home address ....................................................................................................................................................................................................
Field, Academic Rank and Degree ....................................................................................................................................................................
Present Place and Address of Employment ....................................................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................................................................................................................
Phone, Fax ..........................................................................................................................................................................................................
Type, Year and Duration of Grant ....................................................................................................................................................................
Place and Name of Host Institution ................................................................................................................................................................

Please complete and return to the Fulbright Commission office address.

N63, October-December 2010
The orientation for the AY 2010-11 American Fulbright grantees was held at the Fulbright Commission office on October 8-9, 2010. Participating in the orientation were: Dr. Julia Stefanova, Executive Director of the Fulbright Commission; Ken Moskowitz, Public Affairs Officer and member of the Fulbright Commission Board; Kimberly Atkinson, Deputy Consul; and Thomas Huey, Security Officer at the US Embassy.

On October 4, 2010, the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission welcomed Scott Righetti, program officer at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State. During his short visit to Bulgaria, he met with members of the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission and its staff as well as with American Fulbright grantees, ETAs and Bulgarian alumni.

The program included discussions, a Q & A session, a visit to the National History Museum, and a one-day trip to the old town of Plovdiv.

American and Bulgarian Fulbright alumni, US Embassy officials, and representatives of grantees’ host institutions attended the welcome reception in honor of the new U.S. Fulbrighters on October 8, 2010.
On December 17, 2010 the Fulbright Commission staff organized a meeting with U.S. grantees to discuss the development of their projects in Bulgaria.

The US grantees reported on their activities during the first three months of their stay in Bulgaria. The project discussion covered a wide range of topics: forensic accounting, legal business environment, investigative journalism, women in media leadership, teaching oil and watercolor painting, studying Bulgarian folk music, researching the influence of the Orthodox Church on the Bulgarian national identity, exploring the role of the Movement of Rights and Freedoms in the Bulgarian Parliament and documenting psychosocial treatment of victims of human trafficking.

The Fulbright English teaching assistants, based in 10 language schools throughout Bulgaria, presented their professional achievements and shared impressions from the interaction with students and colleagues at their host institutions.

The event was attended by the Ambassador of the US to the Republic of Bulgaria James Warlick, EducationUSA Regional Advising Coordinator Amy McGoldrick, Ken Moskowitz, Public Affairs Officer at the US Embassy in Bulgaria, and Ivanka Tsankova - Director, Programs for Education and Libraries at "America for Bulgaria" Foundation.

The program concluded with a Christmas party for U.S. grantees, their contact persons and Bulgarian Fulbright alumni.
Antonia Gurkovska has a B.A. degree in mural painting from the National Academy of Art in Sofia. In AY 2009-2010 she was a Fulbright student at the School of Art Institute of Chicago which allowed her to pursue a Master of Fine Arts degree in Painting and Drawing.

In the “world” and “time” we live in today access to information, recourses and communications are immense…One may just stay home and learn the world news, browse the internet and connect to people from the other side of the globe, thus getting the impression he is living up to date. But to what extend this is true?

My major interested has been Art since I remember myself. I have been studying and developing in this field from an early age. Recently I graduated from the National Academy of Arts in Sofia, Bulgaria. Some people say – Art is a reflection of life, whereas artists tend to say the opposite. Regardless the order the essence lies in the fact that they are both inevitably connected/related and equally tied to history.

Over the last few years, my art has been inspired by the challenges of coping with new perceptions, technologies, and human relations in a changing world. My latest work at the Academy focused on my travels abroad, where I was exposed to different ways of thinking, perceptions and views about the world in general. I was fascinated by the public spaces and streets occupied by the diverse crowd. I have tried to capture the obvious and hidden traces people leave. The result was a highly emotional response to these overwhelming impressions. My interest was the theme of the traveling self – the physical and psychological journey, the loss of one’s familiar ground and the rediscovery of one’s self in new cultural contexts. I was particularly interested in human relations, especially in the netherworld that a person’s adaptation to a new environment is. It was this aspect that I wanted to explore further: the interweaving between the different cultures in vibrant ‘melting-pot’ society which made the United States a unique case.

The co-habitation of a multitude of cultures, ethnicities, and the resulting identities, makes the United States a unique case.

Thanks to the Fulbright grant I am currently pursing a Masters of Fine Arts degree at the Art Institute of Chi-
cago. I have so far spent seven months living in Chicago, but they feel greater in time due to the vast experience gained through the excellent organization and efficiency of the Fulbright Program. Here are the reasons of why I am writing this.

Last August I embarked upon my journey to the “New World” charged with a lot of expectations, optimism, curiosities and two suitcases.

The first chapter of my Quest began in Charlotte, North Carolina, where I have been assigned to a Fulbright Pre-academic program, entirely sponsored by the Committee. After spending hours and hours in the air, accompanied with my endless contemplations about life on the earth I finally landed. Since I managed to successfully get the correct stamp in the right box (I believe No.6) of the DS form I was awarded with the exchange student status – J1. From the moment I was picked from the airport it was made clear that all worries about arranging my “new life” would quickly disappear.

I arrived at the hotel in the early afternoon where I was welcomed by the University of North Carolina Charlotte crew. I was given a packet with the most essential information for a newcomer (I have to add: prior to departure from Sofia, we were provided with invaluable advices on major concerns when moving to a different country). My new Charlotte family consisted of more than forty people, coming from thirty different countries. Our house was the wonderful hotel, provided with all facilities. We all had roommates, which I later on realized to be one of the best things to start with when you have to integrate to such a diverse group (not to mention that now she is one of my closest friends in US). Your roommate is the person you are most likely to get to know first and best as you are spending more time together. Once you have gained some friendship is much easier to open yourself to the rest of the group and soon you really start feeling as a member of a family. I would never forget the joyful breakfasts we had every morning for a whole month - all forty people together! Observing the socializing between all different: nations, cultures and areas of study, gathered around the natural mundane activity, was incomparable experience.... If only the rest of the World could be like this…

During the first days we were taken around the university and introduced to the faculty and students who were going to work with us. We were also given a detailed schedule of the whole duration of the program day by day by hour. The main purpose of the orientation was to familiarize and inform us as much as possible about the life in US. We had lectures and discussions on major issues like: visa regulations, individual scholarship terms and conditions, housing, healthcare, banking, education system, customs, habits, relationships, security etc…

We have been introduced (even had the chance to practice) to the universities criteria, expectations and documents processing. We were also assigned with team projects, which were meant to emphasize on our collaboration and sharing perspectives with each other. Along with the “academia” requirements we also had specially organized fun activities and surprises ranging from dinners with hosts to rafting, shopping and other sports. All of them left remarkable memories and one of my funniest pictures :) Overall the program was immaculately organized and it was structured to prepare us for a confident adaptation to the new life in the foreign country.

I had one of the best summers. I was so fortunate to meet with such a wonderful people and to become good friends with some and keep in touch with the others. After spending this unique month in Charlotte I departed for Chicago to begin my “real” studies. I have to underline on how important was the pre-academic training as it truly helped me to easily settle and quickly find my way in the university at the beginning of the semester. I was provided with a “welcome packet” which contained valuable instructions, but more importantly – contact information for different needs. I was nicely surprised to receive answers on phone calls and emails (from the contacts I have been provided) every time I had question. Thus I was ready to begin my Masters degree.

The United States represents the cradle of Twentieth Century Modern Art and still is a bustling workshop and hub of contemporary contributors. Works of American artists have had a significant influence on my own. Their ideas resonate strongly with my own interests. Studying here drew me physically closer to the contemporary Art Scene, giving me the chance to visit key museums and galleries throughout the country. Having such access is fundamental and my actual presence – crucial.

The Art Institute of Chicago is one of the top US Art schools in the country if not the top one. Being a Fulbrighter there is more than a privilege and I have always been treated with great respect. In a short time I was contacted by the regional Fulbright Association and I started to participate in various meetings and cultural events.

I am also proud to be a “Thanks to Scandinavia” Scholarship recipient, which sponsors large part of my Fulbright Grant. The funds are provided by the Institute of the Ameri-
can Jewish Committee. It is a remarkable organization which also broadened my networking with people from different cities working on different ideas. In one of the meetings held in November last year, in New York I had the pleasure of meeting with two other Bulgarian students grantees of the same scholarship. Around the same time I received an invitation to apply for one of the Enrichment Fulbright seminars held in 2010. I was approved to take part in the Denver, Colorado Seminar in March 2010. The main topic was “Global Challenges: Fostering Change through Social Enterpreneurship”. I was once again mesmerized by the perfect organization and efficiency of the program. This time I was even more surprised to find out we were 150 participants!!! I was also extremely happy to meet with some of my friends from the summer orientation. The seminar was four days long. We were hosted in a downtown hotel with everything provided. The meetings occurred in the hotel’s conference halls. There were IIE (International Institute of Education) representatives as well as Fulbright Alumni. We were working in groups on assigned topic and we had to make a presentation to the other participants. It had to address a significant problem, but also suggest a realistic solution. It was amazing how much can be done in so little time. The projects came out incredibly insightful, creative and successful.

In one of the evenings we had dinner with hosts for which we were randomly picked. I had an incredible luck of visiting the house of a family who are an ardent admirers and collectors of ancient Chinese Art. I have no words to express the beauty and the impact of what I saw in this “museum”, moreover the directness I had to these masterpieces. It really meant a lot to me. I have never had such chance before. The family was amazing and we spent unforgettable evening. The last day after the presentations we were taken to a short trip to the Rocky mountains and the Red Rocks. The nature’s vastness cannot be compared, but only personally perceived.

The farewell dinner was a surprise. It was held in an authentic restaurant in the foot of the mountain, owned by Fulbright’s long term supporters. It was absolutely memorable and impressive. There was fire in the courtyard where we sat around it and the singing was inevitable… The night was crystal and calm… Deep dark blue crept from the mountain and slowly engulfed the horizon… The stars were somehow reflecting the distant flickering lights of the city… They were narrating the closing of a chapter but also reminding of an upcoming adventures on the rollercoaster of life…

My experience in America has been like traveling through a time machine. I feel being on a treasure Island from where you can take so much if you learn to see, not just look. Fulbright really opened remarkable opportunities for me and I would like to thank you for changing the life of people who you have not even met. I have no words to express how fortunate I am to be given such chance! I believe through such acts another stone has been added towards the bridge among cultures, civilizations, religions and art, toward the world that is our home…

Disclaimer:
The text is published in its original and unedited version.
Out of America

Fresco Hunting in Bulgaria
Georgia Gene Berryhill, Ph.D.

Dr. Georgia Gene Berryhill is a Fulbright senior scholar (2003 Germany) and a Fulbright visiting professor (2005 Germany, 2010-2011 Bulgaria) in documental photography and art history. She is also a recipient of a National Endowment of the Humanities Collaborative Research grant (2006-2009). Dr. Berryhill teaches art history at the University of Maryland-University College, Adelphi, MD and works as a documental photographer.

On a cool, damp morning I arrived at my local Southern California airport suited up in padded nylon vest, zipped-leg pants and sturdy hiking boots. Besides a suitcase, I had my trusty Nikon D1H digital camera, lenses, battery packs, flash unit, flash cards, compass and field book in tow—I was on my way to Bulgaria as a Fulbright Senior specialist grantee to serve as a documental photographer and lecturer with my institutional host, The Balkan Heritage Field School.

Twenty hours later, my plane was flying low over rolling green hills, preparing to land in the capital city of Sofia. The sky was a clear, pristine blue. The first notable architecture in sight was several tall towers of apartment buildings, constructed during the Communist Era (1944-1989). On the left, was a stunning view of the snow-capped Vitosha Mountain, a popular ski resort.

The whole scene filled me with wonder and excitement. I’d spent my first two Fulbrights in northeastern Germany, but anticipated that the East European Balkans would be a unique experience. For myself, I was drawn here due to a long time desire to experience Byzantine and Medieval art, folklore and culture from an Eastern Orthodox perspective.

Meeting me at the Sofia Airport was Ivan Vasilev, executive director of the Balkan Heritage Field School. The BHFS is a legal part of the Balkan Heritage Foundation-Bulgarian public, a non-profit, non-governmental organization. “The Balkan Heritage mission is to support protection, restoration, management and promotion of sites, museums, artifacts and practices belonging or related to the cultural heritage of southeastern Europe.” (BHFS Handbook, 2010, p. 2)

Any anxieties about being in a new country quickly dissolved as I encountered the lively, suntanned field archaeologist who possessed a warm smile and a twinkle in his eye. I was in Bulgaria! Ivan expertly drove us through this amazing city of architectural contrasts to our home base.
for the next 17 days, the ancient village of Bankya, about 15 km north of Sofia. Quaint shops, cafes, spas and a large open-air market appeared as well as the much-appreciated bank ATM at the edge of town. After settling into our team base hotel, we went to a charming outdoor café bordering the central park, as a gentle drizzle floated down from the late spring sky. The menu was written in Bulgarian as well as English. I was surprised to discover that many Bulgarians spoke English fluently. However, some local language skills were helpful, at least to offer a bit of friendly communication. The BHFS provided excellent reading materials before my trip that included a handy list of words. Two in common usage everywhere and easy to remember, were “ciao” and “mersi.” Okay, so at least I could say “goodbye” and “thank you.” Desiring to learn more, I soon added “hello” (zdrasti) and “please” (molya). The more confusing communication was with head gestures: Head turning right to left meant “yes” and head nodding up and down meant “no,” the exact opposite of my life long habit.

The next day, more of our team arrived and among other things, we learned about Bulgarian dining. Delicious thick, unsweetened yoghurt, fresh chopped tomatoes and cucumbers usually accompanied a typical main course. These staples were served with breakfast, lunch and dinner as side dishes. You may also be served yoghurt for dessert, topped with honey and nuts or a berry jam. Local drinks ranged from coffee, chai (tea), wine, soft drinks and a clear alcoholic drink called rakiya, served in a small glass with salad or other appetizer. Part of getting acquainted with our team was the after dinner lesson on how to do the communal Bulgarian folk dance, the horo, a real icebreaker that had us in stitches. Thanks to team archaeologist, Vassil Tenekedjiev’s dance skills we were better acquainted in no time.

After the preliminaries, training and work began. Part of this process consisted of trips to important locations such as downtown Sofia where we visited the medieval churches of St. George’s Rotunda, St. Sofia and the St. Alexandar Nevsky Cathedral, one of the largest Orthodox churches in the world. The Neo-Byzantine structure was built between 1882 and 1912 in honor of the Russian soldiers who between 1877-1878 battled to free Bulgaria from Ottoman rule. We were delighted to hear an inspiring trio of male singers during a Sunday service.

Other significant locations included the National History Museum-Sofia, the Boyana Church, (UNESCO World Heritage Site), and the Rila Monastery (UNESCO World Heritage Site), founded by Ivan Rilski, a medieval hermit born in the 9th century. (Koeva 11) The largest monastery in Bulgaria, it is located 117 km south of Sofia on the cool, forested mountain of Rila—an ideal spot for a retreat. It is the tallest mountain in the Balkan Peninsula with Musala peak rising to 2925 m. For more information about the Rila Monastery: http://www.rilamonastery.pmg-blg.com/Gallery_fas_car_en.htm

Along the road we encountered such delights as refreshing rivers, soft green meadows and road stands selling jars of local honey mixed with nuts—delicious!

Included with the program were excellent lectures given by our erudite team of archaeologists and restoration experts. Topics ranged from detailed information on Orthodox Christian iconography and visual symbolism, taught by Vassil Tenekedjiev (branch director of BHFS Varna) to wall painting restoration by Galia Petrova and Plamen Petrov. Orthodox iconography is quite complicated and present in every church and monastery, so it was beneficial to receive this and other historical background training from Balkan experts. As explained in Palgrave’s Historical Atlas, “. . .the history of the Balkans is lengthy and complex, extending over a millennium and involving the interplay of three civi-
lizations, five empires, three major religions, ten modern nation-states, and some fourteen “major” ethnic groups.” (Hupchick & Cox, 2001, p. 11)

It was also my privilege to give two presentations on documentary photography at the New Bulgarian University for the Department of Archaeology, under the directorship of Prof. Ivan Gatsov, D.Sc.

Visual documentation is essential in the field, as “Photographs are precise records of material reality.” (Collier & Collier, 1986, p. 10) My first lecture covered pre-field preparation and techniques, the second covered post fieldwork, leading to outcomes such as, books, presentations, web sites and portfolios. Sorting, recording, filing, naming and appropriate, useful enhancements of images were also part of the content.

Outline of Lectures

- “Architecture of Orthodox Churches” by Vassil Tenekedjiev
- “Graffiti Enhancement” by Jerome Decharnai
- “Bulgarian History and Medieval Bulgarian Art” by Ivan Vasilev
- “Boyana Church Presentation” On site, by Nadezhda Lazarova
- “Documental Photography: Supportive Techniques for Archaeology and Art History” by Dr. Gene Berryhill (New Bulgarian University)
- “Archiving, Image Prepping and Presentation” by Dr. Gene Berryhill (New Bulgarian University)
- “St. Petka Church in Balsha: Introduction to the Basic Principles of Conservation and Restoration” On site: Galia Petrova, Plamen Petrov
- “Medieval-Late Medieval Churches in Western Bulgaria” by Dr. Angel Angelov
- “Iconographic Program of Orthodox Churches” by Vassil Tenekedjiev
- “Themes and Characters in Orthodox Iconography” by Vassil Tenekedjiev
- “Workshop for Data and Images Processing” by Kalina Stoyanova
- “Orthodox Iconostasis” by Vassil Tenekedjiev

After the groundwork was laid, we were ready to hit the field. The objectives were to perform database recording, sketching and measuring plus photographically document frescoes, edifices, surrounding features and medieval artifacts such as gravestones, icons and iconostases. (Vasilev, 19) With archaeologists, graduate students, cameras and equipment loaded up in the vehicles, we set out on the first of our 17 day adventure.

Field Work Churches

Briefly covered here are the five monastery/church buildings that were included in my field expedition work:

St Nicolas Church – Malo Malovo (16th century)

If you’re looking for a good hike, this is the destination. Located northwest of Sofia, we drove until the roads could no longer accommodate the vehicles, and then hiked up the rest of the mountain with the equipment and lunch on our backs. The effort was well worth it as we came upon a beautiful little frescoed building nestled in an isolated, pastoral setting within the region of Malo Malovo. “The church is the only survivor of a late mediaeval monastery complex.” (Vasilev, 2009, p. 17) Another unexpected pleasure was hearing numerous cuckoo birds calling to each other within the forested valley below. (Yes, they sound just like the German clocks—“cuckoo, cuckoo.”)

Churches and monasteries built during the Ottoman era (15-19th c.) were small and often secluded due to the in-
tolerance towards Christianity. More recently, the locale was sparsely populated “largely due to the two world wars and 50 years spent in isolation from the rest of the country during the communist era.” (Vasilev, 2009, p. 16)

We were able to photograph several of the interior frescoes; physical condition of the paintings ranged from poor to good. Unfortunately, erosion progresses with every storm, making recording and preservation efforts essential.

**St. Petka Church at Balsha (16th century)**

Due to substantial damage, a curved, wooden roof had been built over the church for protection from further deterioration. We were treated to an excellent on-site lecture given by Galia Petrova on preservation and restoration of the existing frescoes, sadly subjected to significant wear and erosion. Our photographic mission became even more urgent as we saw how fragile these images and their edifices had become. There was also evidence of an unusual script carved into the surrounding rocks, currently under investigation by BHFS associate archaeologist, Kalina Stoyanova, who speculates the script may be a memorial from the middle ages.

**St. Nicolas Church – Kalotina Village (14th century)**

Most of the work for me took place at this church, located in a pictorial farm setting in the Nishava Valley. After driving over a small, antiquated wooden bridge, we obtained the key from a villager who lived close by. Here we worked on two separate occasions, the first time to visually record the interior frescoes, the second to shoot the extensive, small scale graffiti scribed all over the narthex on the west wall. An additional bonus was the two layers of frescoes located on the east wall of the narthex. “The Holy Feasts and the Passion of Christ comprise the first layer of frescoes, while the second layer is clearly visible on the eastern wall of the narthex and the entrance to the nave.” (Panayotova, 1966, p. 167)

There were also some unusual paintings in this same room, mainly covering judgment themes, which is typical of Eastern Orthodox narthex iconography. The particular style was also significant as it featured a frequently utilized local imagery consisting of rounded heads and eyes, arched brows and drooping moustaches. An interesting tie-in was evidence that the paintings were completed during the latter part of...
the medieval golden age (14th c.) instigated during the reign of Ivan Alexander. (See History section)

With our director, Ivan Vasilev guiding us concerning what he wanted shot, graduate student Colette and I worked to make several photographs while experimenting with a variety of lighting. I utilized techniques peculiar to documentary photography with the anticipation of transcription and translation. This was painstaking, lengthy work to shoot the images in sequence down the wall, in order to piece together a panorama, as well as to digitally process and name after the fieldwork was done. I also photographed the main compass points of the building’s exterior for the record and continued logging details and small sketches in my field book.

An interesting feature of the surrounding landscape was the mounded, downhill southern slope located just below the church, indicating a likely future dig site for artifacts within the presumed medieval burial ground. Afterwards, we had a relaxing, late lunch at the nature preserve, Dragoman Marsh. It was fascinating to walk across the wide breadth of marches on boardwalks looking at the water-acclimatized plants, fowl and amphibious creatures.

Dormition Church - Iskrets Village (early 17th century)

Here lay another pastoral beauty located in northwest Bulgaria for us to explore and document on a cold, rainy spring day. The church is situated in the small village of Iskrets about 50 km from Sofia. The lovely facade of the front entry bears a fresco of Mary in a niche above the door. The term, “Dormition” in Orthodoxy refers to Mary, Mother of God, her death and acceptance into Heaven. This is celebrated annually each August by believers who flock to Orthodox churches for holiday services. (Sofia News Agency, 2010)

Greeting us at the Dormition Church was the friendly local priest who reminded us in his kindly fashion that the women team members (Patricia, Colette and myself) should not venture on the inner side of the iconostasis. This screen at the altar within the nave is an icon-bearing wall-like separation with a door in the middle. The priests pass through this door to enter into the Prothesis, where the liturgical preparation takes place. This interior configuration and tradition is present in Orthodox churches in general, and it was a priority for us to respectfully regard the culture, customs and religious beliefs. Graduate student, Scott generously offered me digital copies of his photographic recordings of this section.
One of the stunning features of this church’s frescoes was the stylized brilliant red-orange chain-like medallions that framed each icon and unified the portrait zone of saints. Exterior surrounding architecture of note included remains of a courtyard wall made of brick and stone, with two arched passages for carriage and foot traffic. Nearby, was the magnificent Iskrets Gorge and waterfall, discussed in this next section.

St. Theodore (Thyron) Church – Zemivitza (late 16th – early 17th century)

Zemivitza was my final field expedition, and we headed north, with the forecast of rain looming on the horizon. The tiny village was a short jaunt from the church so I stepped into the general store hoping to find an umbrella. Eureka! They had one model in silver, ideal for repelling rain as well as bouncing photoflash. The small stone church of St. Theodore needed overall measurement as well as interior photography of the frescoes utilizing scales. We needed to shoot every image in all four registers or zones (horizontal sections or rows of images) with a scale and then without. These zones are a typical design scheme for paintings in Orthodox churches, and Dr. Angel Angelov provided on-site background information.

At the start of our BHFS tenure, graduate student Jerome with Director Ivan came up with a handy abbreviated identification system for the digital databases. At the St. Theodore Church, due to the scales, we shot doubles of every single image which added up to about 80-100 photographs per photographer—five in all.

As with the Kalotina Church, the exterior compass points plus surrounding terrain were photographed for the recording and updating of records. Landscapes change through the years, so this was another important aspect of the overall documental photography collection. Other features of interest were a group of gravestones on the north side of the building and a bubbling river down the hill, just east of the church. After the workday, we hiked over to the spectacular Iskar River Gorge and Skaklya Waterfall which measured 85 metres high.

Historical Highlights

Bulgaria has a unique and complex history unknown to many westerners. While it is impossible to cover Balkan history adequately in this article, I will attempt to timeline some highlights in support of the continuing work of discovery, record keeping, restoration and public awareness. One of the most interesting facts is the country’s location is the likely birthing place of European civilization. As Dimitrov tells us in his book, Bulgarians: The First Europeans, “...the first highly developed civilization appears in the Vth millennium exactly in the present Bulgarian lands and whose creators are in some sense the first Europeans.” Dimitrov (2002, p. 6) Building upon this quote, I offer a brief, selected overview of Bulgaria’s amazing historical heritage.

In 5000 BC (Copper age) development of copper and gold smelting and fabrication of implements began here. Starting in 3200 BC (Bronze age) Thracians migrated into these east-
ern lands and became the largest population. (BHFS Handbook 8) It is interesting to note that Spartacus was a Thracian (Dimitrov 18) and Orpheus and Dionysus were Thracian divinities. From about 340 BC, Philip of Macedonia (Alexander the Great’s father) overtook this region, which is modern day Bulgaria. (Ancient Macedonia, 2003) Then, in 146 BC the Romans conquered the southwest region, now Macedonia, and by the middle of the first century AD, provinces of Moesia and Thracia were established. Considerable amounts of refined metal works had been produced and acquired by the Thracian aristocracy during the first millennium BC. (The National History Museum of Sofia holds a large collection of these treasures.)

In the west, Rome rose as a powerful center of pagan society, overtaking surrounding lands and persecuting the Jews and Early Christians who would not worship the reigning emperors. Christ’s apostles such as St. Paul and St. John made effective evangelistic journeys to spread Christ’s gospel message of salvation after His death by crucifixion. Persecutions and martyrdoms continued until Constantine the Great declared Christianity the state religion in the 4th century. Partly due to the influence of Constantine’s mother Helena who had converted to Christianity, important changes occurred, including at least a nominal profession of faith by Constantine. “The persecution of Christians ended in 313 when Constantine of the West and Licinius of the East proclaimed the Edict of Milan, which established a policy of religious freedom for all.” (Lactantius, [1897?-1907?]) Constantine made major changes in 330 by moving the Roman Empire to Byzantium, renaming the new capital city Constantinople, after himself. Greek colonists originally established this city of antiquity in 660 BC.

Between the 4th and 7th centuries, the Visigoths along with other tribes such as the Slavs and Turks invaded the Balkan regions. These along with the Proto-Bulgarians added to the establishment Old Great Bulgaria, in the region of Eastern Europe. The latter part of the 7th century suffered conflicts from inside and outside forces causing the fall of Great Bulgaria. The youngest son of founder Khan Kubrat (632-672), Khan Asparuh (672–701), took over the western portions of Old Great Bulgaria and the new state of Bulgaria was established. The Bulgarians defeated the armies of the Byzantine Empire in 681. Through various methods, Khan Asparuh suc-
ceeded in unifying all of the local Slavic tribes under his authority and founded the first Bulgarian capital, Pliska. (BHFS 9, 10)

In 855 an important aspect of Bulgarian culture developed due to the creation of the Glagolitic alphabet by St. Cyril and St. Methodius. King Boris I (852-89) was instrumental in the conversion of Turkics and Slavics to Orthodox Christianity in 865. He helped facilitate the creation of the written Slavic language and the Cyrillic alphabet, based on Greek uncial letters, which was the essential ingredient for the cultural development of medieval Europe. (Hupchick & Cox 17-Map 8) St. Kliment is credited as the creator of Cyrillic, still notably used in Russia, Serbia and Mongolia. He named the alphabet after his teacher, St. Cyril to honor him. Cyril and Methodius translated the liturgical books into this Slavic alphabet, which greatly enhanced the spread of Christianity. (Minaeva 92)

While the development of written language was a significant step forward culturally and politically, there was also a proliferation of icons created by eastern medieval artists. (Zarnecki 76) Other Christian image making emerged or was revived in the form of drawn symbols made for the purpose of Christian ideas in a condensed style for easy comprehension. Several of the visual signs found included crosses (or x’s), ships, trees, fishes, doves, harps, anchors, ladders and serpents. These carvings often overlapped pagan images, which made dating somewhat more difficult. This was also the period when the pendant cross was evident in Bulgaria. (Minaeva 95)

In the year 917, Simeon became emperor of the First Bulgarian Empire; Orthodoxy and relations with Byzantium appeared to be secure. However, between 1014 and 1018, the Byzantines conquered the Bulgarian lands, with domination lasting until 1185. (BHFS 10) Brothers Asen, Petar and Kaloyan reclaimed Bulgaria from the Byzantines and formed an alliance with the Roman Catholic Church, marking the beginning of the Second Bulgarian Empire. Kaloyan became king and the Bulgarian Church was recognized by the papacy as autonomous. (Hupchick & Cox 27-map 13)

Marking an unfortunate turn of events, in 1054 Constantinople’s patriarch was excommunicated by the Roman papacy in Hagia Sophia, the imperial Orthodox cathedral, originally constructed by Christian Emperor, Justinian I (527-65). Pope Leo IX sent Cardinal Humbert and two legates who delivered the Bull of excommunication and departed with these words: “Let God look and judge.” (Shelley, 1982, p. 141) This devastating action instigated the advent of the Great Schism (estimated to be around 1054). The once unified European Christian Church was torn in half—western Roman Catholic and eastern Orthodox. “Although technically a religious matter, the schism sealed a cultural division between East and West expressed in mutual political animosity and ethno-religious bigotry, the consequences of which have persisted into the present.” (Hupchick & Cox, 2001, p. 23-map 11)

The 11th century ushered in the Romanesque period in Europe. In 999 the end of the world was thought to be at hand, and numerous works of art that followed reflected this theme through imageries warning of judgment and damnation. Adding to the zeitgeist was one of the worse epochs in Christian history. In 1202 the Fourth Crusade coming out of Venice to lead a campaign in Egypt decided instead to viciously attack Constantinople, leaving the once glorious city stripped and nearly powerless. Many of the treasures taken by 1204 still remain in the Venetian City. (Zarnecki 335). “A great many examples [mosaics and paintings] survive not in Constantinople, but [also] in Bulgaria and Serbia, where many metropolitan artists presumably took refuge during the Latin occupation of the capital.” (Zarnecki, 1975, p. 336).

In spite of the weakened Constantinople’s efforts to rally, in 1393 the Ottomans were able to take control and eventually the conquered city was renamed Istanbul. The Bulgarian Crusades against them in the 15th century were not successful and the Ottomans prevailed and ruled until 1878, promoting their belief that Islam was the “divinely ordained corrective for deficiencies that crept into Judaism and Christianity.” (Hupchick & Cox, 2001, p. 9-Map 5)

Byzantine art did not abruptly end however, and artistic developments occurred in the form of illuminations with western Greek and Latin influences. The Muslims did strip Hagia Sophia of its 50 foot (15 m) silver iconostasis and large collection of relics such as bells, altar and vessels, plus several Christian themed mosaics were plastered over. Through time, the Ottoman occupation added the four exterior minarets plus the mihrab (a niche that indicates the direction of Mecca) and minbar (a mosque pulpit). In 1935 its existence as a mosque ended and the current function is as a state museum of the secular Republic of Turkey. (Istanbulvisions.com par. 2-3)
Before the Ottoman takeover, it was 619 years (1259 to 1878) earlier that a future UNESCO World Heritage church was built in Sofia, Bulgaria—the Boyana Church. Its first two sections were completed by 1259. Kaloyan and his wife Dessislava commissioned the second section. The third section was completed in the mid-19th century, supported by the surrounding community. (Boyana Church National History Museum, 2002) For the group's benefit, Nadezhda Lazarova, a well-informed lecturer on Boyana, gave us detailed information on site from her doctoral studies. Photography was restricted to exterior shots, but we were allowed to enter and view this rare gem. More information and a photo gallery of interior frescoes are available at: http://boyanachurch.org/galeryen.htm. The experiences, works of art and historical research covered thus far have whetted my appetite to dig deeper into the art history of Bulgaria. It has also sparked additional interest in eastern/western comparative studies.

Contemporary General Points of Interest

Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007 and NATO in 2004. The lev is the national currency, but the country is in the process of converting to the euro. The exchange rate is 1 euro = 2 leva. One of many enjoyable experiences in downtown Sofia was visiting the cafes and clubs that stayed open virtually all night such as one called, The Apartment. It is a nicely restored, multi-storied building with inviting rooms decorated with the owner couple's art and treasures collected from travels to exotic locations. Each large room has sofas, chairs and tables; some have computers with beamers that project onto walls that serve as giant screens—very fun for group activities on the Internet and movie watching. There was also a small room where you could purchase typical Bulgarian desserts, snacks and drinks.

I think it is important to mention that within my own experience, Bulgaria is a congenial place, one not overrun or infested with vampire stories and mafia legends. You might also think that a large city like downtown Sofia would be dangerous. It was just the opposite. We discovered how safe the city really was, even on foot in the later hours. Probably the most dicey part was the roads, where “pothole slalom driving” is almost a sport. All kidding aside, I saw no serious threat due to road conditions or high speed, reckless driving behavior. (Dare I mention the poor man in the horse-drawn cart, sharing the road with cars and speeding home in a torrential rain?)

Another interesting cultural phenomenon in the city was Prom Week, held each year in May. Graduates dress up in garb from formals to outrageous costumes and cruise around town, some standing up, shouting and waving through the sunroofs of limos. It is a noisy, fun celebration that is part of the growing, ambient prosperity and freedom of expression the Bulgarian people enjoy.

Towards the end of my tenure in Bulgaria, special meetings were arranged at the Fulbright Commission headquarters in Sofia where BHFS’s executive director, Ivan Vasilev, program director, Nayden Prahov and I met with Dr. Julia Stefanova, executive director of Fulbright Bulgaria. It turned out to be an initial introduction for Fulbright and BHFS and will likely lead to future collaborations.

Another meeting took place one evening over dinner with Ivan Vasilev and his mentor, Professor Ivan Gatsov, D.Sc., director of archaeology at the New Bulgarian University. In a quiet, upstairs room at a local café in downtown Sofia, we dined on delicious Bulgarian cuisine while comfortably chatting about a variety of topics, including ideas for a conference in Istanbul next year. This is on the top of my list of “must do’s.”

Final Remarks

My Bulgarian experience was a very pleasant surprise, not because I didn’t anticipate it to be terrific, but because it was different than expected. After all, isn’t that usually the case when you travel to different countries? I think it is a major reason why I keep moving, wanting to see and experience first hand as much as possible for myself, to side-step hearsay and stereo-types. The Bulgarians are warm and friendly, welcoming and willing to share their unique historical heritage within the Balkan States. Bulgaria does indeed show compelling evidence about the origins of European culture—this country is literally an archaeologist’s paradise.

I wish to offer my heartfelt thanks to Fulbright Bulgaria and Washington DC for supporting this life-changing opportunity. I will continue to share with students and colleagues at home and abroad about my experiences and photography collection. Besides articles, I am planning an exhibit and presentation in support of the BHFS mission:

In 2005, Balkan Heritage decided to initiate a field school programme designed to document these monuments as a first step towards their protection. The expedition focused on collecting data for the publication of a ‘corpus of mediaeval frescoes from western Bulgaria’ with the intention of bringing the frescoes to the attention of interested scholars around the world as well as to raise public awareness inside Bulgaria and the European Union. (Vasilev, 2009, p. 18)
It is my desire to return to Bulgaria and continue working with colleagues related to the BHFS, local educational institutions and to further promote the vision of the Commission set forth in 1946 by U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright:

The Fulbright Program is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government and is designed to ‘increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.’ (Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES), 2010)

My interests will strive toward these excellent goals of international exchange and mutual cooperation between scholars, colleagues, students and friends.

Graduate Students
Jerome Decharnais, Canada; Patricia Stoat, England; Colette Frantz, USA; Scott Cheney, USA.

Reference List


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