

Collective Memory and Historic Heritage Maintenance Regional Policy in Postdevolution Wales in the Epoch of Digitalization

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ABSTRACT

The collective memory has been the element of new regional policy in Wales since 1999, when it received autonomy, and when the National Assembly was established. The maintenance of sense of national identity and the development of Welsh identity became the aim of new authorities. The responsibility for historic heritage maintenance was lied with the National Museum for Wales, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, and “Cadw”. The organizations themselves are also of interest for the study, because they were established in relation to the growth of Welsh ethnicism and attempts to protect Welsh culture in the XX century. The result of their activity is a large array of information, rich archeological collections, lists of historical, cultural and natural objects, located on the territory of Wales, and also their restoration and protection, authority consulting and studies. Herewith, each organization exercises activities on covering the maximum possible number of the region inhabitants for introduction of existing data with the use of digital technologies. Therefore, in Wales, the historic heritage holds an important place in politics, and it is distributed with the help of the specified organizations in order to reinforce Welsh national identity in the virtual space.

Keywords: *historic heritage, digitalization of culture, Welsh identity, devolution*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, on the British Isles the active process of using historic heritage runs, but it doesn't relate to the context of British past, it relates to the Celtic one. Such regions, as Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland require accounting of not solely “title” nation position, but also of its historic heritage.

In this situation Wales, being a part of the country, mostly integrated in the English / British State, holds the special place. Since the 13th century the territory of the Principality of Wales has become an administrative part of England and was under the jurisdiction of its legislation. Notwithstanding the fact, that with each passed century the English culture influence has been increasing, the Welsh have maintained ethnic self-awareness. The historic heritage became an element of national culture, which, along with the Welsh language, allowed to maintain identity and transform it into the national self-awareness in the 19th century.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

In Wales, in the end of 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries, the ethnicism has been actively developing, and

the forming of national self-awareness has been running on the basis of Welsh culture and Welsh language. The last ones took the special place as the signs of Welshness. In the course of previous century, the Welsh society has suffered significant changes.

In the course of industrialization, the traditional society values were losing their significance, and, consequently, the basis of ethnic identity – gwerin (Welsh association) has been lost, and the historic heritage (Welsh princes, bards, poetry, etc.) has ceased to be significant under pressure of the British economic activities. The Welsh identity lived through its own crisis in 1940s-50s, the British Empire dissolution in 1960s and newly arose interest to the regional culture and history.

By the end of XX century, the Welsh have obtained their own officially established flag (red dragon on the white and green background), the capital of Cardiff (since the year 1955), the status of the second official language for the Welsh one, and the TV channel, broadcasting station and other mass media in native language. But, simultaneously with it, the region's political status remained unchanged: it was deemed an administrative part of England, taxes and charges were going to the state budget, the region financing was executed through the Welsh Office (established in the year 1964).

The Welsh effort for the Home Rule wasn't that vigorous and desperate, as in Ireland, but, nevertheless, in Wales, the awareness of necessity in autonomy found support of

the British Parliament and Government. In 1973 Lord Kilbrandon's Commission recommended establishment of proper Parliaments for the regions, and in 1979 the Scottish and Welsh Devolution Referendum was held. But the local population didn't support this idea, and only in 1997 the Labourists turned to this problem again. The new Referendum approved the project by a bare majority of votes, and since 1999 the National Assembly has started its activities with the right of approval of subordinate acts within the frames of the British legislation. The issues, related to the local governance, agriculture, education, health, culture, transport, economic development planning entered in the area of its powers (Welsh Assembly Government, 2016).

The obtaining of autonomy has reinforced the position of the ethnically oriented part of the Welsh society. During the postdevolution period (from the end of the 20th century to the present time), which is under review, not only the growth of interest in historic heritage, but also the activities on forming, promoting and supporting historic heritage at the state level are observed. The problem, being studied, resides in the execution of analysis of the mechanisms, involved by the Welsh Government for the stated objective achievement.

3. STUDY ISSUES

1. The institutionalization of the mechanisms of historic heritage maintenance in Wales in the 20th-21st centuries is conditioned by its historical development within the frames of the British state. The Welsh necessity of defending proper identity in the end of 19th century has been passing in conditions of ethnicism growth in Ireland and Scotland. The stages of organizational forming of Wales historic heritage maintenance policy are closely intertwined with the British history.

2. The activities of the main organizations, which have assumed responsibility for maintenance and transfer of images of the past in regions, require detailed analysis. Throughout the decades, the National Museum, "Cadw", and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales have been working towards national history maintenance, and held a special place in the postdevolution period.

4. STUDY OBJECTIVE

After the receipt of autonomy, the active policy on historic heritage forming and maintaining has been exercised in Wales. That is why the analysis of the work of three large organizations – of the National Museum of Wales, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, and "Cadw" allows to consider the means of historic heritage maintenance and Welsh identity sustention through the maintenance of collective memory in the epoch of digital technology implementation.

5. STUDY METHODS

The study is based on the methods, suggested within the terms of the Concept of Collective Memory (Halbwachs, M, Assmann, A.), which major focus of interest refers to the problem of transferring past experience, forming of the collective representations, and support of the common (national) identity through them (Assmann, 2011).

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The addressing to historic heritage is a today's particularity of postindustrial Great Britain (Coupland, 2012). The Welsh historian, Williams, G.A., noted even in 1980s, "We live through the desperate hunt on the proper past... This reconditioned tradition is more and more becoming the celebration of the heroic past, which isn't interested in the vulgar contemporary problems..." (Williams, 1991) Williams has been writing his work "When was Wales" in the period of the Welsh extraction industry economic crisis: the mines were being closed, the unemployment was growing, and the tourist area has just started the development. The miners and their families, which have been residing in small settlements for generations, saw, how their routine gets disintegrated and how are the communities dissolved.

The situation, composed in Wales in the end of the 20th – beginning of 21st centuries, demonstrates the active use of the collective memory, aimed to support national identity. The expression of interest to the maintenance of the past and its representation for the contemporaries was conditioned by the necessity of the new government institution (National Assembly) to consolidate its positions and mobilize the society. In the postdevolution period, the Welsh culture national characteristics started to be more expressly positioned in the activities of many public and social organizations of Wales.

On the one hand, the National Assembly obtained arms of governance, related to the forming of the social opinion, collective representations, which allowed to reinforce the national identity. On the other hand, the regional representative authority institution favoured the growth of ethnicism across the population, and gradual increase of the number of those, who supported the reform. The polling, held in 2011, showed, that the number of those, who meet the Assembly's activities with approval, has increased nearly twice in the last decade (up to 63%) (National Assembly for Wales, 2011). Those organizations, which were responsible for the historic heritage maintenance: National Museum of Wales, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, and "Cadw", started to play an important role.

The idea of the national museum appearance started to form as early as in the beginning of the 21st century. It was preceded by the modification of the attitude to cultural and historic heritage of the whole Great Britain: in 1882 the Law on the British Ancient Monuments was introduced. In Wales, as well as in other parts of

the country, the organizations, aiming to spread the knowledge and enlighten the public, started to appear. In 1821, in the town of Swansea, the Cambrian Society for the Encouragement of Geology, Mineralogy and Natural History was established, and later the literary and philosophical societies, and also the town and university libraries were established. The museums, affiliated to the colleges and universities, were instituted in the town (Watson, 2011, p. 967).

A similar situation was typical for the Great Britain, but in Wales the rivalry between the towns for the status of the principal one was in progress. Several towns laid claim to this title: Cardiff, which has turned into a town, inhabited by thousands of people, by 1850, Swansea, an older industrial center, Aberystwyth, and Caernarfon.

In 1880s the Cambrian Archeological Society recommended to establish a museum in Powys, as the main museum of the Welsh old times, to which it would be able to give proper amassed collections. However, the British Parliament considered Wales to be one more English province, that's why it was suggested to transfer all articles and valuables to the British Museum. But the deputies, representing Wales in the British Parliament, still continued to raise this issue. Among them, there were the ones, who on the hand, were supporting Cardiff in its intention to be recognized as the region's principal town, but, on the other hand, saw in it the possibility of the society mobilization and national self-awareness strengthening. This is why in 1907 the National Museum for Wales was established on the basis of Cardiff town museum and library, and it has the second title in Welsh language – Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru.

The museum's building has been in the process of building in course of twenty years because of insufficient financing. It was located in Cardiff's center near the City Hall building, constructed in the same Neoclassical style, with the Doric columns in the Civic Center. Portland stones and marble were used for the face decoration, which made both buildings festive and impressive.

In the 20th century, the National Museum received the status of the leading organization in Welsh archeology (Offa's Dyke excavations), and also arranged cooperation with many Welsh museums (Department of Education and Science, 1973, p. 57). The common museum and tourist structure has been gradually built and chaired by the Museum Council of Wales. As a result, the British Government, noticing the activity and increasing significance of the local museums, started to take the Welsh culture unicity into consideration. However, as Mason, R. mentions, in connection to the political environment, the ethnocentric accent of the museums' activities was suppressed (Mason, 2007a).

Nowadays, the National Museum represents the combination of several Welsh museums within the frames of one organization. The National Museum in Cardiff, St. Fagans National Museum of History, Big Pit National Coal Museum, National Wool Museum, National Slate Museum, National Roman Legion Museum (National Museum Wales, 2019). The distinguishing

feature of each museum reflects one of the particularities of the Welsh culture and underlines the historical, ethnic, geographical and economic particularities of the region.

After the devolution, the National Museum financing was passed into the control of the National Assembly government. In 2004 the organization of Museums Archives and Libraries of Wales appeared instead of the Museum Council of Wales, and it became a subdivision of the Welsh government. The strategic concept of development, designed in a number of documents – One Wales, Museum Strategy for Wales, Culture Together, Artistic Future. Cultural Strategy for Wales, etc., - described the requirements to the work of Welsh museums and set the objectives on comprehensive representation of science, art, industry, history and culture of Wales.

The museum provided free entrance using the government financing, in order to develop museum affairs and attract tourists and local inhabitants. The charge for entrance was cancelled in 2001, which reflected in its visitation at once. By 2010-11 it has increased to up to 1.65 mn people, which is twice larger than the number of the year 2001 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2019)

According to the former Director of the National Museum, Khuikhen, M. (executed management since 2003 to 2010), the cultural tourism in Wales will never be the so brightly represented, as in Ireland and Catalonia. Essentially, the small Welsh national culture, which even many centuries later is "quiet sincere and authentically expressed", will not be the same attractive, as the "marketing" tourist centers of the European countries are considered (Miller, 2010).

A little bit later, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales was established in 1908 at the National Museum, aiming to study the historical buildings and explain archeological findings. The primary objective of this organization was the distinction of those historical buildings from their total number, which had any value, and also the evaluation of the archeological findings, and work on making the catalogue of the region's historical and cultural monuments (similar work was executed in all parts of the country). In order to do it, it was required to process thousands of the records on farms, industrial sites, houses of workers and palaces of noblemen, make photos and many other things.

The Commission's activities have been executed for over one hundred years, and now the leading role in the process of maintenance, and also of understanding of the Welsh archeological, architectural and maritime heritage significance, is assigned to it. The Commission's specialists provide an assessment, to which mass media, politics, corporations and general public listen; they create digital resources (www.historicwales.gov.uk – Historical Wales) for the general public users.

The last example is represented by a web-portal, which provides access to the records of all organizations, connected to the historical heritage. The interactive map of Wales is also placed there, it shows thousands of points, related to the archeological monuments, historical

buildings and artefacts. Through the links you can get additional information, watch the images, make itinerary and many other things (Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, 2012).

To the extent of collection and increase of the information, the Commission has transformed into the “conservation area” of the country’s historical memory. But simultaneously with it, the Commission members execute activities on information distribution as well. The rich collection of unique photographs was passed to the National Archive of Wales, and thanks to the Coflein online data base, anybody, who wishes, has access to it. The Commission employees make suggestions on educational programs in the National Curriculum of Wales, write and publish the articles in the newspapers and scientific magazines, run TV shows (Hidden Histories, BBC) and support Welsh archeological trusts. The collection of information, its digitalization and representation to the population aren’t the unique objectives, set for the regional authorities in relation to historical memory strengthening. “Cadw” (“Cadw” – Heritage in Wales) executes protection and maintenance of many cultural objects, it is the historical environment service, forming a part of the Culture Committee. Translated from the Welsh, the organization’s name means “to hold” or “to protect”.

The historical heritage and monuments of Wales consist of many types, including the castles, abbeys, industrial objects, places of shipwrecks, places of archeological excavations, historical parks and gardens. In total, there are three world heritage sites, 129 nationwide scale monuments, 428 historical landscapes and parks, 519 conservation areas in the region.

“Cadw” was established as far back as in 1984 within the frames of the legislation on cultural monuments protection. Then, it has been transferred to the management of the National Assembly, it started to cooperate with a number of organizations, among which are the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, 4 Welsh Archeological Trusts,

Historical Environment Group and Heritage Forum, organized by the local authorities (Cadw, 2019).

“Cadw” main obligations include the allocation of grants and attraction of investors for historical monuments maintenance and repairs. Since 2006, “Cadw” has been annually issuing the studies, related to the value, potential and volume of the Welsh historical environment, thanks to which it possesses current information and consistently helps to maintain historical monuments. In 2010-11 72 grants in the amount of 3.2 mn pound sterling were allocated for “the reconstruction of decayed historical areas and ecological improvements through the means of viable repairs and restoration of the listed buildings” (Welsh Assembly Government, 2016, p. 2).

One of the largest projects of “Cadw” was honoured with the prestigious European award “Europa Nostra Award” in July of 2010: St David’s Cathedral and Bishop’s Palace visited over 80 competitors of this prestigious award in the area of cultural heritage maintenance. The activities on the palace maintenance, which was definitively abandoned in 1930s, include the reconstruction of architectural particularities, replacement of rotten floors, repair of traverse rods and statues. Both traditional and innovative methods and materials were used for it. In the result, “Cadw” specialists achieved historical accuracy and availability of the passage for all visitors, including for disabled persons (Europa Nostra, 2011).

The major part of 135 objects, being under “Cadw” control, are open for visitors, organization’s specialists execute educational activities, seminars for the teachers and attract volunteers. Just in the period from January to March of 2019 1 mn people addressed to “Cadw” websites in order to get information. “Cadw” effectiveness and significance, the same as in other two specified Welsh organizations, which resides in creation of the unified “historical” space through the active use of contemporary digital and virtual technologies, produces results and proves the efficiency of the methods, selected by the Welsh regional authorities.

7. CONCLUSION

Since the ancient times, the society has been thinking of how to transfer information to the following generation for the maintenance of existent experience and accumulation of the new one. The mythological ideas were replaced with the religious ones, and the last ones were removed by the linear history, which reproduced the past and connected it to the present.

Throughout two last centuries, the attitude to these time categories has been fundamentally reconsidered. The historical memory is one of the mechanisms of the society consolidation and national identity maintenance, high-demanded in the today’s society. In Wales it became particularly actual after the receipt of autonomy in 1999, when the cultural heritage maintenance became an integrant part of the policy, conducted by the National Assembly government.

The interest to the Celtic culture, archeological excavations, evaluation of the historical value of the buildings and other objects of the past required creation of the specialized organizations, which became the National Museum, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, and “Cadw”.

This museum opening in the beginning of the previous century showed, that Wales truly has the position, diverse from England. The accumulated collections recorded the particularities of household activities and culture, traditions and religion, love to music and industry development for the contemporaries and descendants. The variety of aspects of life of all Wales without division in the North and South was demonstrated in the Nationwide Museum. After the beginning of devolution reform, the responsibility for historical memory maintenance lied with

the created system of Welsh museums. The National Museum became its center, and its well-thought-out activities, related to strategic planning and scientific work, exhibits and visitors, make it a place, which doesn't serve only for "storing" artefacts. The museums of Wales are the real and virtual space, where the Welsh identity is clearly evidenced.

The Royal Commission has a special place in the process of Welsh historical memory maintenance, which is described as "the distinguished institution of Wales' memory" (Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, 2012, p. 3). Indeed, in course of decades, exactly the Commission employees were engaged in searching for and description of the monuments of Wales. That is why the rich collection and experience of working in this sphere give an opportunity of consulting and giving recommendations, related to the historical policy issues.

The activities, related to the historical environment in Wales, are concentrated in the hands of "Cadw" specialists, because exactly they assess the possibility of existence and reconstruction of one or another historical

object. Thanks to this organization activities, the broad educational work on distribution of historical heritage information is executed. The active use of physical monuments of the past is intended to create not only the home area mental image, but Wales, precise and comprehensible by all Welsh people, which is tightly connected to the national self-awareness.

In conclusion, we would like to note, that the National Assembly and the Welsh government pay much attention to the maintenance of historical memory and of the objects, related to it. In the postdevolution period, the significance of the proper history and distinctness for Wales and its inhabitants briefly increased. The index of such regional policy positive influence is the result of social polling. If in 1979 57% of inhabitants of Wales called themselves British, in 2011 60% of them gave priority to the Welsh identity.

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