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THRACIAN ROYAL TOMB OF SVESHTARI - FROM AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE TO A TOURIST DESTINATION

Rezumat: Mormântul tracic regal de la Sveshtari este unul dintre cele nouă monumente de pe lista UNESCO din Bulgaria, a fost descoperit în anul 1982. Monumentul este un simbol al culturii tracice din perioada elenistică și este vizitat anual de peste 10000 de turiști și specialiști. După descoperirea și conservarea monumentului au fost schimbate patru construcții de protecție. În anul 1988 Ministerul Culturii a creat Rezervația Istorico-Arheologică Sboryanovo. Până în anul 1996 monumentul nu a fost deschis pentru public. După finalizarea proiectului "Sveshtari tomb-opened for visitors," în anul 2000, finanțat de Ministerul Culturii din Bulgaria și fundația Headley Trust din Marea Britanie monumentul a fost deschis spre vizitare publicului larg.

The Thracian royal tomb of Sveshtari, one of nine monuments of world's cultural, historical and natural heritage of UNESCO in Bulgaria was discovered at 23.09.1982, 27 years ago. The monument is a symbol of the Thracian culture in the Hellenistic era and more than 10 000 tourists and professionals annually visit it. It is subject of numerous scientific and popular publications, and it is well known to the public from movies and photo reportages. In most of them the fact that The Tomb of Sveshtari is not a single unique monument, but part of a huge political, religious and cultural center in the territories of historical and archaeological reserve Sboryanovo "during the Hellenistic era, is slightly overlooked. The wide public is not aware of the contemporary administrative and economic environment of the IAR "Sboryanovo" and Sveshtari tomb, and their importance for the development of the municipality in which they are located. Isparih Municipality is geographically located in the highest part of the Danube plain –Ludogorie, administratively it is a part of Razgrad region, economically, from the North Central Planning Region.

The climate of the municipality is temperate continental with hot summers and cold winters. The average annual temperature is 10.3 degrees Celsius. Rainfall amount is lower than the average for the country but is higher than in other areas of the Ludogorie. Hilly terrain is flat, with an average altitude of 250-300 meters lasting karsts processes have led to the creation of distinctive and unique for the area complex karsts formations, which are of great interest to paleontologists,

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speleologists and archaeologists, as well as the development of specific forms of tourism activity.

The pearl in the municipality of Iserih is IAR "Sboryanovo" with its unique nature, over 140 archaeological sites, including The Thracian royal tomb of Svestari. It has been a monument of world heritage since 1985, but even at the time of its discovery, it is clear that the monument is unique and requires security, research and support worldwide. Fortunately, this is one of the few archaeological sites where all institutions' actions had been synchronized and adequate from the very beginning. The Tomb was investigated by a team of archaeologists from AIM, with BAS manager st.n.s Maria Chichikova. Another team, from the National Institute of Cultural Monuments provided climate research and prescribed maintenance procedures, performed preservation and restoration of parts of the tomb damaged by the time and provides regular geodetic monitoring. The project for building a permanent protective exposure is prepared by NICM. Ever since the opening day, the tomb has been under close guard. Local authorities and the museum of Iserih provide the necessary security, maintenance and communications.

During the study and conservation process, which lasted seven years- until 1989, sequentially four protection covers has been build, including the last one which is in use nowadays. In all of the covers, except for the first one, different environment considering conditioners and appliances were installed. By 1995 the site's conservation and restoration of parts of the interior were finally completed . During this process the tomb was an object of research and specialists' visits of scientists from different countries, but there was a strict regime of visits, and the tourism potential therefore was at point zero.

After the establishment of IAR "Sboryanovo" in 1988 by the Ministry of Culture issued guidelines for the conservation and management of IAR "Sboryanovo" that accurately determined how Iserih Historical Museum and its other specialized agencies Razgrad Municipality should do it. Despite the existence of a complete set of documents, relating to the study, conservation and maintenance of the facility, none of them prescribes the creation of tourism infrastructure, neither document does not regulate tourist visits

Due to the lack of state funding since 1996 and because local funding was also impossible, public display of the tomb was not yet possible. The project "Sveshtari tomb-opened for visitors," was developed by NICM in 2000 with the Headley Trust, UK funding. After Its completion, The Historical Museum of Iserih began the management of the Royal Tomb of Sveshtari. It suddenly pulled to the fore a specific problem, concerning not only this specific monument, but in general the development of tourism in the region as well - lack of adequate presentation of the results of archaeological studies and in first place, of the most representative object- The Sveshtari tomb. When it comes to socializing and presentation of any monument usually efforts of institutions, organizations and private entrepreneurs are focused on establishing a tourist infrastructure, job positions for local people, facilities for visitors, generating revenue etc. And usually it is not considered that

to preserve their authenticity and natural environment, while increasing tourists' visits is very difficult and not less important.

Monuments of culture as a tourist site are a product of centuries-old specific human activity associated with an immediate impact on the environment. Therefore, the majority of archaeological and architectural monuments already exist in the foreign, permanently modified environment, which in itself is not safe for them. Stored in a more or less unchanged environment monuments like The Tomb Sveshtari are rare exceptions, and their conservation is effective only when it is complete. In this sense, the conservation and adaptation for tourists' visits of an unique object as The Sveshtari tomb, is also an unique set of tasks that require specific complex solutions. There is not a matter of the legal framework, developed at the Ministry of Culture, but a matter of how to implement an effective program for operation and maintenance of a world monument. The creation of such a program, in the ideal case, should be preceded by paleo-ekologists research, eco-marketing monitoring studies and economic forecasts. In this sense, Thracian royal tomb of Sveshtari is not the ideal case. In early 2001, there are two major concerns- a world monument opened for visits and hopelessly outdated municipal development strategy, in which It is only incidentally mentioned as a possible source of revenue. There is no municipal development strategy of tourism and no Municipal Tourism Council, there is no program of studies and socialization, and the role of a tourist center for comprehensive services, to inform and guide visitors is performed by the old guard lodge. There must be a starting point and it was the building of a decent modern reception center. It, along with a stage of a small network alley and a parking lot, was built by means of Isperih Municipality and the project "Beautiful Bulgaria" in close proximity to Sveshtari tomb, and was delivered for equipment and management to The Isperih Historical Museum in 2003. This was the last thing done a piecemeal way and a "good will gueture" in IAR "Sboryanovo".

In the same year, 2003 at its meeting The Isperih City Council adopted the Concept for development and conservation of IAR "Sboryanovo" on which experts from Sofia University, Historical Museum Isperih and NICM had been working for two years then. The concept enshrined in the fundamental principles of development, exploration and conversion of IAR "Sboryanovo and Thracian royal tomb of Sveshtari in the popular tourist destinations. Advisory Board was created for IAR "Sboryanovo, including specialists from NICM, AIM, BAS, Sofia University, the municipal administration and Historical Museum Isperih. Priorities have been adopted for the development of the reserve, which try to impose on the design and implementation of new projects. Inherent in the concept of continuity (conservation-research-exposure-socialization) ensure the progressive linking of existing in the territory of the reserve sites in a tourist complex. Very important moment is the inability to quickly and simultaneously throughout urbanization. Underlying concepts and priorities in the development of IAR "Sboryanovo" the municipality, Historical Museum and other institutions has directed they efforts in two directions:

1. Complete the complex around The Thracian royal tomb with building coverage of the tombs under the mound 12 and Mound 13.
2. Improve the infrastructure of the reserve / roads /, modernization of the current base / lodge, camp / by sewage plants, cleaning, preservation and maintenance.

In this direction are the last two major projects implemented in 2005 and 2006 under program FAR- Cultural Tourism. The first was the "Development and submission of travel route based on historical and cultural heritage of Razgrad region", in which partners were the municipalities of Razgrad and Ispereh. On our territory the big circle paths around The Thracian royal tomb of Sveshtari and the complex were built, the internal exposure in the labyrinth of the protective cover was completed, video surveillance was installed, and large amount of promotional materials was issued. The second project under program PHARE- "Access to sites of cultural and historical heritage", renovated and expanded nearly five kilometers inland reserve track and put new nameplates. At present a form for the pre-selection of a new project in Axis 3.1. EU Ispereh Municipality prepared by conversion of IAR "Sboryanovo" in complex tourist product is about to be forwarded. The project will provide the construction of permanent protective cover for the tombs near The Thracian royal tomb of Sveshtari and restoration of the fortress walls of the Thracian city, and also includes improvements of visitor-servicing infrastructure.

Another specific problem is the very location of Ispereh Municipality and The Thracian royal tomb of Sveshtari. The site is away from the established tourist routes over the years, and is far from the traditional routes connecting major Bulgarian cities and resorts. To arrive at The Thracian royal tomb of Sveshtari one needs to set the goal to go right there. One can not just make a detour on the way to another destination. This highlights a need for advertising and attracting tourists. No matter what one's preferences are, an archaeological site, even a world monument, is not only to be studied by archaeologists and other specialists, but is also an object of tourist visits. A tourist visit is not only a simple act of sale, but also the process of meeting the intellectual, emotional, cultural and even purely physical needs (walk). Different people with different special needs visit cultural monuments, sometimes-even opposites. In this sense, the shift of advertising to the "average tourist" is simply meaningless, as meaningless as to create routes, animations and programs targeted to this "mythical" creature.

From 2002 on we led accurate statistics on the number and type of visitors of the tomb, but unfortunately still advertising on the site is not targeted to specific groups of tourists, with rather few nuances. Mandatory part of the analysis of visitors' demand should be forecasting the maximum for optimum amount of visitors for a certain period of time (day, month, year, many years) that can attend the memorial without harming it. Information on the composition and needs of visitors makes it possible to control and direct visits, if necessary, the composition and number of visitors. Based on climatologists, and other biochemical studies and their own particular experience in The Ninth Annual The Historical Museum of

Ispirih has this information, although still visitors to the tomb have not reached the maximum possible and not to impose restrictions on entry prices. I realize how strange it sounds in the context of the latter our ongoing efforts to attract more-more-more visitors, but if we do start the first steps, then later we will be very difficult to preserve intact the monument for future generations. Develop a program for marketing and management of tourist visits is one of the important future tasks that lie ahead.

Gradually, tourism became one of the possible areas for developing the economic potential of Ispirih Municipality. It is also one of the main priorities in the municipal development strategy to overcome the problems in the technical infrastructure and support cultural development and preservation of cultural heritage. This trend in the development of tourism business is new not just for our museum and our community, but also for Bulgaria and was a real challenge.

