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ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRESERVE „ABRITTUS” AS MODERN SITE OF THE CULTURAL TOURISM (2002 – 2005)

Rezumat: Rezervația arheologică Abritus (Razgrad) este printre cele mai importante rezervații arheologice din Bulgaria. După anii 1990 starea monumentului din rezervația Abritus nu era bună datorită crizei financiare. În perioada 2002-2005 au fost implementate proiecte europene cu sprijinul primăriei Razgrad în urma cărora s-a făcut restaurarea și modernizarea rezervației Abritus – lapidarium acoperit, spațiul expozițional modernizat, spații de parcare, amenajarea unor alei pentru plimbare și pentru persoanele cu handicap, modernizarea sistemului de iluminat, conservarea și restaurarea complexului “Villa urbană”. În această stare rezervația Abritus este mai ușor de vizitat.

The previous period, which our country passed through hardly in the 90s, caused serious damages in all the spheres of public life. In particular, it concerned the cultural heritage, especially the immobile cultural values, for which there were not systematic cares. The condition of Archaeological preserve (AP) “Abrittus” was similar – it was subject to treasure-hunters’ attacks, and the restored monuments were exposed to different devastating processes. The main reason for this condition was that the old system for maintaining the immobile monument was out-of-service. As an example, I can point that in Razgrad state grants were received for the last time in 1995 under the so-called “State task”.

Thus each municipality and museum look for means and opportunities to maintain the monuments by themselves – as for AP “Abrittus” in Razgrad, for many years it has been under the jurisdiction of the museum. This process of seeking resolves (i.e. financial means) appeared to be mission impossible in the 90s and during that period was caused many damages to the monuments, incl. AP “Abrittus”, due to the inconstant results.

For us, the first opportunities (though not so serious) for improvement the condition of the Preserve and its attractiveness for the public appeared after 2000 and they were connected with the realization of the programme “Beautiful Bulgaria”. At the very beginning, the Municipality elaborated a work programme, including many sites for intervention, of which two were museums: AP “Abrittus”

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and the Ethnographic Museum. In the years after 2002 reconstruction works were implemented in these two sites.

On the territory of AP “Abrittus” in 2002 was established Lapidarium on open air, with exhibited about 50 stone artefacts from Abrittus, lying for 30 years before that in the museum’s courtyard. We have to notice that they were well preserved, because they have been positioned correctly with the inscriptions and relieves to the land. With grants from the programme and with the efforts of the administrative board and department “Archaeology”, the first element in the Preserve’s territory was available after many years. We have to notice as well, that through the programme of the National Institute for the Cultural Monuments for studies and conservation-restoration works on the ancient town was established tourist itinerary with sector for lapidarium.

New opportunity appeared two years later through the grant scheme of PHARE Programme-ESC “Development of the cultural tourism in Bulgaria”. This programme was the only one significant opportunity for investments in the cultural heritage; the other one came years later with the cross-border cooperation programme.

The decision for applying under this grant scheme was taken rather earlier and it was supplemented during the process of specific preparation from May 2003, when the Municipalities of Razgrad and Isperih signed partnership agreement to apply with a joint project with Lead candidate Municipality of Razgrad. The detailed elaboration was done by the project team – Ivanka Bachvarova, Ivan Ivanov, Boryana Mateva and Ralitsa Ruseva, with no external support and consultants. For the project manager was nominated the deputy-mayor of Razgrad Municipality Mrs. Kina Dyakova. To overcome the difficulty on ourselves we have to thank to eng. Emiliya Georgieva, who elaborated the tender documentation for the building-construction works.

The success of the elaborated project was because of the right approaches to the problems. The grant-scheme was directed to the improvement of conditions and attractiveness of the sites, regarding the needs of the tourists. At the same time many applying beneficiaries considered the scheme as an opportunity to resolve some of their problems. Main merit of the project was its corresponding with the requirements of the programme. Other advantage was its regional character, coming with the partnership of the two municipalities and the balance of the different types of activities (conservation and restoration works, infrastructure, promotion and expositions), leading to establishment of contemporary tourist product.

Especially for AP “Abrittus” can be added that the project was supplemented with a subsidy from the Municipality for establishment of a new archaeological exposition. It was designed in a short time by the archaeologists Galena Radoslavova and Georgi Dzanev and implemented by “ARKA”, Sofia.

The main result for the Municipality of Razgrad was the stage-to-stage development of the Archaeological Preserve “Abrittus” as a tourist site. It was achieved through implementation of the following main activities:

- Establishment of parking lot;
- Reconstruction of part of museum “Abrittus” with establishment of new archaeological exposition, souvenir shop, service premises and overall improvement of the museum’s view;
- Establishment of open lapidarium and panoramic ground;
- Alley shaping, establishment of alley lightings and itinerary for disabled people;
- Building-construction works and anastylosis of Villa Urbana.

Within the other project activities can be mentioned also trainings, promotional activities (incl. publishing of promotional literature) and an interesting accent – artistic and attractive lighting of the mosque “Ibrahim Pasha”.

Very important aspect of the work was the removal of the infrastructure elements of the local antibiotics factory (fuel-tank and greenhouses), substituted by elements of tourist itinerary – parking and covered lapidarium. Many efforts were exerted, incl. with the assistance of museum experts and greenery workers, for development of the park area. Much bigger area than the one foreseen in the project (1 dka) was aesthetized and now this zone for visit with equal reason can be described as archaeological park.

The project implementation did not and could not resolve nor the problems of the museum, neither problems of the Preserve. But it allows us to make a serious step ahead, to stay synchronized with the contemporary trends in the cultural tourism and to assemble a complex product at once, not partially and for long period of time. The tourist flow that was generated (5-7 thousand people) is not satisfactory , but it is constant, in contrast to the time before 18th May, 2005. Actually, the full name of the project is “Development and promotion of the tourist product on the base of the cultural and historical heritage in the region of Razgrad”. The approbation of the project and its results is the main content of the development of AP “Abrittus” as a tourist site after 2000.

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