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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE BRSKOVO IN MONTENEGRO – POSSIBILITIES FOR PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

**Abstract:** Archaeological excavations of the medieval site of Brskovo, in the north of Montenegro, raised questions, that is, doubts about the presentation and tourist valorization of the site after archaeologists have completed their excavations. The inaccessibility of the terrain, the distance from the city, and the lack of road and any other infrastructure, do not leave the possibility of interpretation and presentation of the results of archaeological research in the field. The potential possibility of reopening the mine and the willingness of the investor to invest in the construction of the archaeological park, i.e. in the dislocation, conservation, and presentation of architecture discovered during excavations, is one of the possibilities for future presentation. Arranging an archeological park, i.e. reconstruction of a medieval settlement, with the establishment of a mining museum and connecting with tourist facilities that are being built near the site, is one of the possible ways of presenting, promoting, and interpreting this archeological site, very important for Montenegro.

**Key words:** Brskovo, archeological site, interpretation, presentation, archeological park

### INTRODUCTION

The last decades of the 20th century brought radical changes in the tourist offer and consumption of tourist services on the entire world market. The change in interest and reasons for traveling has led to an increase in interest in the cultural heritage of all world meridians. Travel opportunities, relatively cheap and easy transfer to destinations, easier accessibility, and distant cultures, have led to an increase in visits and interest in cultural heritage among the widest population of consumers of the tourist offer. Ancient cities, urban units, architectural achievements of the past, and sacral buildings of different religions become the most important and most visible part of the offer of a destination and in most cases the decisive reason for choosing a place to travel. Statistics say that 40% of travel is related to cultural tourism, which means that the motive of every fourth traveler is to get to know the cultural heritage of the destination to which they travel.

Tourism as the dominant economic branch in Montenegro accounts for about 23% of GDP and is therefore a strategic orientation of the state economy. All strategic documents in which the development of tourism is planned, mention cultural tourism as one of the most important directions of development. The richness of cultural and historical heritage and a large number of cultural assets on the territory of Montenegro represent a good basis for the development and improvement of this branch of tourism. The World Tourism Organization defines cultural tourism as the movement of people due to the desire to meet the need for diversity, with the desire to raise the individual level of culture leading to new knowledge and experiences, which increases the educational role of cultural tourism.<sup>1</sup>

However, despite the great importance of the tourist offer and despite a large number of excavated archeological sites, the presentation of the archeological heritage in Montenegro lags far behind the world practice. Especially the modern approach to the interpretation and presentation of the archeological heritage is poorly developed. In terms of archeological tourism, the interpretation is imposed as an important communicative link between tourism and heritage, which explains to visitors the meaning and value of specific heritage sites, which are usually not visually impressive (remains in the form of excavated foundations, lower walls, pillars, etc.).<sup>2</sup>

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE BRSKOVO

In the context of the story of the possibilities of developing cultural and archeological tourism, the remains of the medieval mining settlement Brskovo, located in the north of Montenegro, can be an example of good practice in using archaeological heritage to develop the local community. The remains of the old mining settlement of Brskovo, one of the most significant medieval sites in Montenegro, are located in inaccessible areas of the northern side of the mountain Bjelasica, about 15 km from the town of Mojkovac (**Fig.1**) The site consists of Gradina (**Fig.2**) and the settlement of Doganjice (**Figs 3, 4**). Although there are certain indications that the mine was exploited in the ancient period, Brskovo flourished between the 13th and 14th centuries, during the rise of the medieval Serbian state.<sup>3</sup>

Archaeological excavations at this site have been sporadically carried out since 2009, and since 2017 it has grown into systematic excavations conducted by the Center for Conservation and Archeology of Montenegro.<sup>4</sup> The focus of the scientists is on discovering and defining the medieval fortifications and settlements that were formed in the very center of the fertile area.

Archaeological excavations of the site, which is of great importance for the history and culture of Montenegro, raise the question of its presentation in the context of the space or place where it is located. Inaccessible terrain, distance from the city,

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<sup>1</sup> WTO 1985.

<sup>2</sup> Plemić, Rabotić 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Živanović 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Archaeological excavations at this site is led by Miloš Živanović, to whom we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the provided photographs and information about the site and plans for its arrangement.

lack of road, and any other infrastructure, impose the dilemma of justification of investing in the site and its arrangement for the purpose of presentation and tourist valorization.



Fig. 1. Medieval town Brskovo, from the southwest  
(source: Documentation of the Center for Conservation and Archeology of Montenegro)



Fig. 2. Brskovo fort, Gradina  
(source: Documentation of the Center for Conservation and Archeology of Montenegro)

## POSSIBILITIES FOR PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE OF BRSKOVO

In the case of Brskovo, there is a specific moment of renovation of the mine and re-exploitation of the ore with the investment of a company that is ready to invest in excavations, protection, and presentation of the archeological site. With the participation of investors, the issue of justification of the arrangement of the site and the possibility of its long-term maintenance gain a new dimension and become certainly funded activities. In this way, the security of long-term financing of systematic archaeological excavations is provided as a condition for the successful interpretation and presentation of life in the mining town during the period between the 13th and 14th centuries.



Fig. 3 Doganjice site, from the north  
(source: Documentation of the Center for Conservation and Archeology of Montenegro)

Renovation of the mine and exploitation of the ore will devastate and permanently destroy most of the area where the remains of the medieval Brskovo are located. The task of archaeologists and services for the protection of cultural heritage is to excavate the site in the coming period and create conditions for its presentation and tourist valorization. The devastation of the site imposes as the only solution for the presentation, dislocation of the remains of the discovered buildings, or their partial or complete reconstruction at another location. In that way, an archeological park would be formed with all the necessary contents for a modern presentation and interpretation of cultural heritage.

In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to meet certain conditions:

- Systematic archaeological excavations that will be realized in the coming years leaves enough time to provide conditions for modern interpretation and presentation of the site.

- One of the primary goals and initial steps in the preparation of the archaeological site for presentation is the development of a sustainable development strategy that must be included in the planning documents, such as the spatial plan of the special purpose area, the detailed regulation plan and other documents, which address all issues of property rights as well as infrastructural issues related to the use of sites that are very common in practice and can be a limiting factor.

- Of special importance for the organization and functioning is the definition of management and titular. Which will take care of the preservation and use of the archaeological site, which must also be harmonized with the monumental significance of the site and includes cooperation with all relevant institutions and the local community.



Fig. 4. Church in Doganjice, from the north  
(source: Documentation of the Center for Conservation and Archeology of Montenegro)

- In the first, initial, phase of preparation and arrangement of the site, the decisive role is played by scientists, i.e. archaeologists who are engaged in excavations at the site. Their task is to explain the importance of the site, ensure the participation of local governments, provide support to the local community, and involve representatives of the civil sector in the promotion.

- Connect the tourist infrastructure with the offer of the archeological park, i.e. use a large number of visitors to Bjelasica who are engaged in skiing and hiking and connect their trails with a visit to the site. The duration of the summer and winter tourist seasons and the development of tourist infrastructure and hotel facilities in the immediate vicinity of the site will provide visits for most of the year.

- All activities in order to provide conditions for the modern presentation of cultural heritage should be harmonized with the plans for ecological protection and preservation of the natural environment, taking into account the degree of devastation that will be caused by the exploitation of ore in the immediate vicinity.

- The degree of excavations and preservation of the Garden, which is located outside the zone of ore exploitation, provides an opportunity to organize a visitor center in which modern types of presentation and interpretation will be found.

- The degree of excavations and preservation of the Gradina, which is located outside the ore exploitation zone, provides an opportunity to organize a visitor center in which modern types of presentation and interpretation will be found.

- Organize the Mining Museum within the Visitor Center, which will be the central, i.e. starting point of the story about Brskovo, its rich history, its inhabitants, ore exploration in the Middle Ages, and connections with other cities in the period between the 12th and 14th centuries.

- Ensure the constant presence of a tourist guide who will guide visitors with his story through medieval mining and whose story will be complemented by modern presentation instruments such as info boards, shelves with brochures, books and maps, LCD TVs and more.

- Establish contact and cooperation with educational institutions, i.e. incorporate the content of the Museum of Mining and the story of medieval Brskovo into curricula and establish a good custom of organizing visits to the site, for children of all ages.

## CONCLUSION

Sustainable development of archeological sites is not possible without the full support of the state, i.e. local government. Integrating the local community, involving the non-governmental sector, animating the tourism industry, incorporating the story of the archeological site and its historical and cultural continuity into school curricula, and providing secure, long-term funding from the mining company conditions are created for successful presentation and interpretation of one of the most important archeological sites in Montenegro. By realizing all the mentioned conditions, the dilemma is eliminated, i.e. the question of the justification of the arrangement of this archeological site and its originality.

*Translation: Ivana Živanović*

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**Rezime:**

**MOGUĆNOSTI ZA PREZENTACIJU I INTERPRETACIJU ARHEOLOŠKOG LOKALITETA BRSKOVO U CRNOJ GORI**

**Ključne reči:** Brskovo, arheološki lokalitet, interpretacija, prezentacija, arheološki park

Ostaci starog rudarskog naselja Brskova, jednog od najznačajnijih srednjovjekovnih lokaliteta u Crnoj Gori, nalaze se u nepristupačnim predjelima sjeverne strane planine Bjelasice, udaljeni oko 15 km od grada Mojkovca. Lokalitet čine Gradina i naselje Doganjice. Iako postoje određene indicije da je rudnik eksploatisan još u vrijeme antike, Brskovo svoj procvat doživljava između 13 i 14. vijeka, u periodu uspona srednjovjekovne srpske države. Arheološka iskopavanja na ovom lokalitetu sporadično traju od 2009. godine, da bi od 2017. godine prerasla u sistematska istraživanja koja sprovodi Centar za konzervaciju i arheologiju Crne Gore. Fokus istraživača je na otkrivanju i definisanju srednjovjekovnog utvrđenja i naselja koji su formirani u samom središtu rudonosnog područja.

Arheološka istraživanja srednjovjekovnog lokaliteta Brskovo, na sjeveru Crne Gore, nameću pitanja, odnosno, nedomice u vezi sa prezentacijom i turističkom valorizacijom lokaliteta nakon što arheolozi završe svoja istraživanja. Nepristupačnost, udaljenost od grada, nepostojanje putne i bilo koje druge infrastrukture, ne ostavljaju mogućnost interpretacije i prezentacije rezultata istraživanja na terenu. Potencijal za ponovno otvaranje rudnika i spremnost investitora da uloži sredstva u izgradnju arheološkog parka, odnosno u dislokaciju, konzervaciju i prezentaciju objekata otkrivenih prilikom arheoloških iskopavanja, predstavljaju neke od mogućnosti za buduću prezentaciju. Uređenje arheoparka, odnosno rekonstrukcija srednjovjekovnog naselja, uz osnivanje muzeja rudarstva i povezivanje sa turističkim kapacitetima koji se grade u blizini lokaliteta, dodatno predstavljaju eventualne vidove promocije i interpretacije ovog, za Crnu Goru, veoma značajnog arheološkog lokaliteta.