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VIMINACIUM AND THE OPENARCH PROJECT

ABSTRACT

With the idea of popularising Archaeological Open-Air Museums, archaeology as well as science, the OpenArch project was created within the EU Culture Programme. This five year project connects Archaeological Open-Air Museums from eight European countries, among which Viminacium is the only Archaeological Park. Many activities have been held in Viminacium since the beginning of the project, including two international symposia, experiments and staff exchanges. All these have brought great benefits to the experience of the management of the Viminacium Archaeological Park and to its promotion among national and international audiences, as well as to the OpenArch partners, better informing them about the challenges of popularising archaeology in the Balkans.

KEYWORDS: OPENARCH, VIMINACIUM, ARCHAEOLOGICAL OPEN-AIR MUSEUM, ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK, EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY, POPULARISATION.

OPENARCH PROJECT

OpenArch is a project funded by the EU as part of its Culture Programme and is based on the EXARC experience of international cooperation. EXARC is the international ICOM Affiliated Organisation for archaeological open-air museums, experimental archaeology, interpretation of scientific methodology and ancient technology, and has 250 members in 30 countries. The main idea of the project is to present both the tangible and intangible past to the public, through archaeological remains or reconstructions or the story of the people that lived in the past. The work of OpenArch is divided into Work Packages and one or two partners coordinate them. The leading partner

on the project is Calafell (CAT),¹ while the other partners are Foteviken (SE),² Kierikki (FI),³ Archeon (NL),⁴ Hunebedcentrum (NL),⁵ AÖZA (DE),⁶ Terramara di Montale (IT),⁷ The Nation-

1*The article results from the project: *IRS-Viminacium, Roman city and military camp – research of material and non material culture of inhabitants by using the modern technologies of remote detection, geophysics, GIS, digitalisation and 3D visualisation (no 47018)*, funded by The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, and the OpenArch project.

Read more at www.ciudadellaiberica.com.

2 Read more at www.foteviken.se.

3 Read more at www.kierikki.fi.

4 Read more at www.archeon.nl.

5 Read more at www.hunebedcentrum.nl.

6 Read more at www.steinzeitpark-dithmarschen.de.

7 Read more at www.parcomontale.it.

al Museum of Wales (WLS),⁸ The University of Exeter (EN),⁹ The Institute of Archaeology, Project Viminacium (RS)¹⁰ and EXARC (NL).¹¹ The Work Packages are Project Management, Improvement of Museum Management, Dialogue with Visitors, Dialogue with Skills, Dialogue with Science, Dialogue with Museum Organisations and, finally, Communication & Dissemination. The coordinators of the Work Package - Dialogue with Visitors - are Archeon (NL) and The Institute of Archaeology-Viminacium (RS). This Work Package focuses on the presentation of archaeology to the public. The partners have great expertise in presenting and working with the living history of sites and their history. The aim of this Work Package is to help children, young people and adults of all ages to discover their own local history, using the OpenArch method. A significant asset of archaeological open-air museums is that they do not attract a limited target group like more traditional museums do.¹²

VIMINACIUM

Viminacium is an ancient Roman site on the right bank of The Danube, in eastern Serbia. With the remains of a military camp, a city and a necropolis, in 2006 Viminacium became the first Archaeological Park in Serbia to open for visitors the whole year round. The history of the site dates back to the 1st century AD, when two Roman legions, IV Flavia and VII Claudia, founded the military camp. Later, the civilian settlement was founded and it grew into a city which became the capital of the Roman province *Moesia Superior*, or Upper Moesia (*Moesia Prima*) in Late Antiqui-

ty.¹³ Viminacium was destroyed by Hunnic attacks in 441/443. Today, remains of the city and the military camp lay beneath fertile grain and corn fields in an area larger than 450 hectares. The first excavation at Viminacium started at the end of the 19th century¹⁴ and, after a long pause, resumed in the 1970's.¹⁵ Today, protective field excavations of the city, the military camp and the cemeteries are carried out by a multidisciplinary team of The Institute of Archaeology. Objects discovered during these excavations are presented to the public in the Viminacium Archaeological Park. It is of great importance that, besides the protective construction which is made of laminated wood and a so called French tent, the permanent visits prevent the site from being robbed, as had happened in the past.¹⁶ The opening of the archaeological park took place in 2006, when all the necessary facilities were established, such as infrastructure, staff, security, etc.¹⁷ The initial tourist itinerary was defined as *Porta praetoria*,¹⁸ *Thermae*¹⁹ and

13 More about Viminacium in: Спасић-Ђурић 2002; www.viminacium.org.rs

14 These excavations were conducted by Mihailo Valtrović, Serbian architect and art historian and Miloje Vasić, the founder of Serbian archaeology. Cf. Валтровић 1884a: 3-14; Валтровић 1884b: 121-142; Васић 1907: 67-98; Васић 1895: 1-61.

15 Excavation works were conducted by the Institute of Archaeology and the State Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, mostly focused on Viminacium cemeteries. Cf. Зотовић 1986: 41-60; Зотовић 2000: 7-17; Зотовић and Јордовић 1990.

16 More about various threats and methods of protection in: Nikolić et al. 2013: 205-214.

17 More about the Viminacium Archaeological Park in: Maksin et al. 2011: 331-339; Andelković Grašar et al. 2013: 9-14; Golubović and Korać 2013: 65-74; Golubović and Tapavički-Ilić 2012: 67-73; Tapavički-Ilić 2013: 315-326.

18 *Porta Praetoria*, the northern gate of the Viminacium castrum and the remains of its two entrances with stone pavements, the basements of two towers and the sewage system, were shown at the beginning of the Viminacium tour. Cf. Golubović and Korać 2013: 68-69.

19 *Thermae* – Roman baths are preserved in several levels from different periods between the 1st and the 4th century. There are visible remains of the hypocaust, floor heating, together with four pools for warm or hot water, and a fifth pool for cold water. Baths were luxuriously furnished with

8 Read more at www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans.

9 Read more at www.exeter.ac.uk/archaeology.

10 Read more at www.viminacium.org.rs.

11 Read more at www.exarc.net.

12 Read more in: Paardekooper 2012; More about this Work Package at <http://openarch.eu/work-packages/dialogue-visitors>



Fig. 1 Domus Scientiarium Viminacium, Scientific, Research and Visitors Center

*Mausoleum*²⁰ with underground structures²¹ Since the beginning of the building project in 2008, the Domus Scientiarium has also become an important part of visits and events at Viminacium (Fig. 1).²² Today, the Viminacium Archaeological Park has been enlarged to include the site of the amphitheatre, which has been excavated since 2008, (Nikolić et al. 2014: 58-62; Nikolić and Bogdanović 2012: 42-45; Rogić and Bogdanović 2012, 46-49; Nikolić and Bogdanović 2012: 58-61) while

mosaics and fresco decoration. Cf. Миловановић 2004/5: 51-54; Rogić et al. 2007: 75-82.

20 The mausoleum is located at the Pirivoj necropolis and it is believed that this is the so-called tomb of the Roman emperor Hostilian, who is thought to have died at Viminacium. Cf. Реџић 2008: 59-61; Jovanović 2006: 39; Korać et al. 2009: 98-99.

21 Within the Viminacium basement, “Tomb with Cupids” (G-160) is presented with its original frescoes *in situ*, while the frescoes of two other tombs – “Pagan tomb” (G-2624) and “Christian tomb” (G-5517) are now kept at the National Museum in Požarevac and copies have been installed in the tomb to resemble the original context. Cf. Anđelković Grašar et al. 2013: 73-100; Korać 2007: 157-168, 168-185, 186-188; Anđelković 2012: 1-6.

22 The Scientific, Research and Visitors Centre, called the *Domus Scientiarium* is today a completed complex in the design of a Roman villa. Cf. Nikolić 2012: 66-68.

in June 2014, the Mammoth Park was opened, along with a playground for the younger visitors (Mrđić and Jovičić 2014: 54-57).

The Viminacium Archaeological Park is visited by between 50.000 and 75.000 visitors each year, with numerous children’s excursions, senior groups and individual visitors, who are the most common visitors at weekends, as well as tourists from cruises (Anđelković Grašar and Tapavički-Ilić 2014: 191-204). Besides the importance of the archaeological remains, at the Viminacium Archaeological Park, special attention is dedicated to additional activities which are of great importance to the experience and emotions of its visitors.²³ Among other things, Viminacium visitors noted that the most important part of the Viminacium tour were the interesting and informative explanations offered by the expert guides, which serve to improve and reinforce the impressions of the ancient ruins and archaeological remains (Anđelković Grašar and Tapavički-Ilić 2014: 191-204). Owing to its extensive of experience man-

23 More about Archaeological park in theory and practice in: Nikolić et al. 2011: 259-268.



Fig. 2 Experimental Archaeology, Experiment of Roman cremation of the Mala Kopašnica – Sase type

aging the archaeological park, Viminacium has become one of the coordinators of the Dialogue with Visitors Work Package.

PROJECT'S ACTIVITIES

Among other activities within the OpenArch project there are meetings and workshops, focused on presentations, lectures and discussion groups regarding 'working together' and staff sessions of the archaeological open-air museums with the aim of exchanging insight into specific methods and of improving each other's skills and abilities. Staff exchanges are considered to be a tool for the exchange of best practices between staff of different museums, targeting of those day to day workers of the museum who are closest to the general public and schools. Experiments and experimental actions are required in order to understand how objects were made, how constructions might have appeared and, not the least, how people in the past

behaved.²⁴ Within the OpenArch project, two experiments were conducted at Viminacium on 19th March, 2013. The first included a Roman cremation of the Mala Kopašnica – Sase type, typical for the area of the Middle Balkans from the 1st to the 3rd century AD (Fig. 2). The cremated remains (of a pig, for the purpose of this experiment) were later transferred to a grave pit. The results gained from this experiment, which was carried out under various conditions, formed the basis for further discussion on the differences between funerary rites. Some of the conclusions obtained from the experiment show that the remains of the deceased were not cremated within the burial pit, and that the amount of ash which was discovered during excavations does not match the amount that remains after a cremation *in situ*. The burial pit was most likely prepared in a separate ritual and after baking its walls, when everything was clear, the remains of the already cremated deceased were deposited

²⁴ More about the project's activities in: Tapavički-Ilić and Anđelković Grašar 2013: 97-100.



Fig. 3 Experimental Archaeology, Experiment of planting grapevine according to Roman customs and practices taken from ancient Roman authors

into it. Thus the funeral of the deceased was carried out in three phases, i.e. three separate rituals.²⁵

The second experiment included planting ungrafted (not cross-bred) grapevines according to Roman customs and practices taken from ancient Roman authors (Fig. 3). The planting was made next to elm trees along the parking lot next to the building of the *Domus Scientiarium*, during the week of the waning moon and included some twenty young grapevines. For the purpose of the experimental planting, replicas of agricultural tools were made (Ilić et al. in print).

It is of great importance that two international symposia were held at Viminacium, both for the OpenArch partners and for the employees of museums and scientific institutions from the Balkans. The first international symposium, “Archaeological Heritage – its Role in Education, Presentation and the Popularisation of Science”, took place at Viminacium between 5th and 8th October 2012 and host-

²⁵ More about this experiment in: Tapavički-Ilić and Mrđić, in print.

ed researchers from the EU, the Balkans, as well as from, amongst others, Russia, Japan and Africa. The second international symposium “The Impact of the Dialogue with Visitors on the Management of Archaeological Open-Air Museums” also took place at Viminacium, between 29th September and 3rd October 2014. On both occasions, books of abstracts and the conference proceedings were published by the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade and the Centre for New Technologies, Viminacium.

On 5th July 2014, the Danube Limes Day was organised at the Viminacium Archaeological Park, basically dedicated to children (Fig. 4). Reconstructions of ancient fighting techniques and Roman games were conducted by colleagues in the OpenArch project from Archeon (the Netherlands) and the Institute of Archaeology, Belgrade. At the end of the day, children and their parents, along with other audience members, enjoyed tasting food prepared according to Roman recipes and listened to a concert in the main atrium of the *Domus Scientiarium*.



Fig. 4 Roman day at Viminacium, Danube Limes Day

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REZIME**VIMINACIJUM I OPENARCH PROJEKAT**

KLJUČNE REČI: OPENARCH, VIMINACIJUM, ARHEOLOŠKI MUZEJI NA OTVORENOM, ARHEOLOŠKI PARK, EKSPERIMENTALNA ARHEOLOGIJA, POPULARIZACIJA.

OpenArch je projekat Evropske Unije iz programa “Kultura”, koji okuplja jedanaest partnera, među kojima je projekat Viminacijum Arheološkog instituta u Beogradu, jedini partner iz regiona jugo-istočne Evrope, tj. Balkana. Viminacijum učestvuje na random paketu “Dijalog sa posetiocima”. Osnovni cilj ovog paketa je da se arheologija kao nauka približi posetiocima muzeja na otvorenom, kroz metode projekta *OpenArch*. Kroz učešće u različitim radionicama, sastancima i razmeni zaposlenih u okviru projekta *OpenArch*, Arheološki park Viminacijum dobija značajnu ulogu u širenju informacija i razmeni iskustava u naučnoj i stručnoj javnosti u Srbiji. U okviru radnog paketa posvećenog eksperimentalnoj arheologiji, dva eksperimenta su sprovedena na Viminacijumu, tako otvarajući novo polje istraživanja u viminacijumskom interdisciplinarnom timu.