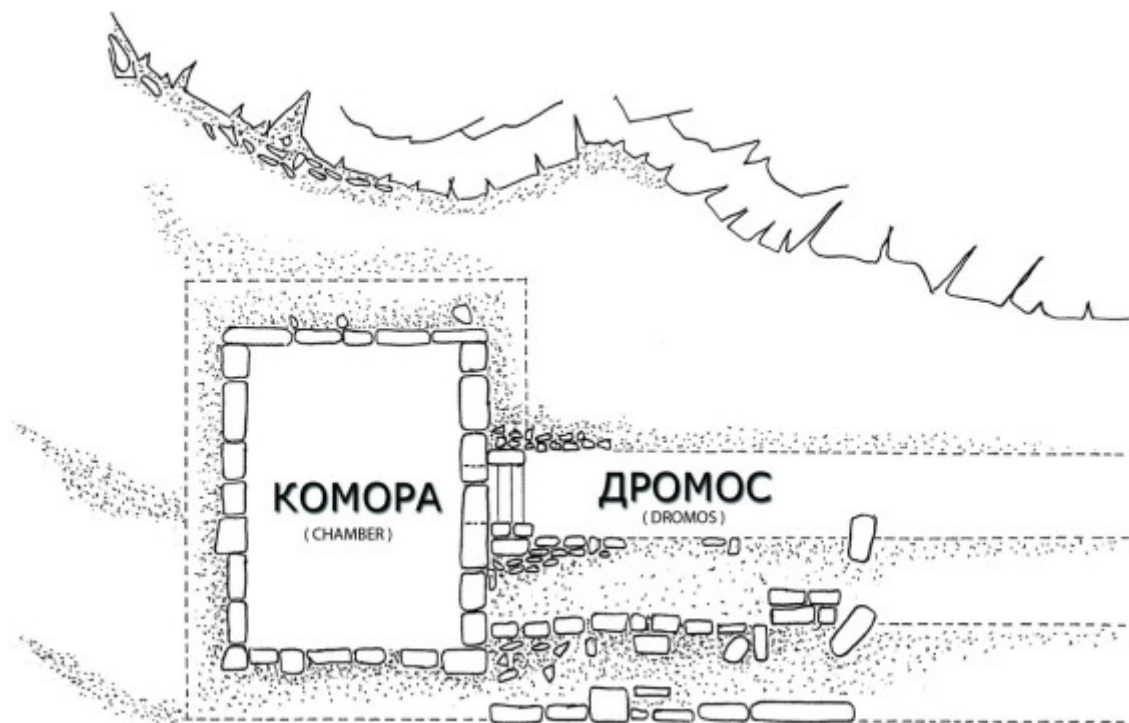


A DAY WITH MACEDONIAN ARCHAEOLOGY “ARHEO PARK BRAZDA”

July 29, 2013 NGO Archaeologica Archaeological Media, Buildings, Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2013, Education, Expeditions, Historical Archaeology, Iron Age, Journalism, Public Archaeology, Publishing, Roman archaeological park, Archaeology, archeological site, Banjani, Bojan Trpceviski, Brazda, Chucher-Sandev, Elena Karnfilovska, Europe, first, Gornjani, Indo-European, Macedonia, Milica Koceva, Museum of Macedonia, overall conceptual solution, Prehistory of Southeastern Europe, Radomir Ivanovic, representative, restaurant Chardak, Royal tomb, Saso Gjorgjevic, Skopje, Skopje valley, well organized road infrastructure, www.archaeologica.org.mk, www.arheoparkbrazda.mk

The archeological site “Gradiste – Brazda” is situated nearly 15 km north of Skopje, on a humble hill that rises over the village of Brazda. According to information (data) obtained through past researches, the site is classified as a fortified early antique settlement, dating from the 5th to the 3rd century BC and spreading over an area of 3.5 ha, which make it the largest settlement in the Skopje valley.

With the excavation of the monumental architectural edifice, known as “The Royal tomb” in 1986, the archeological site Gradiste claims a significant place in the archeological circles as well as the wider public.



With its specific characteristics, the Royal tomb at Brazda represents a unique instance of its kind on the wider Balkan peninsula.

It is a representative structure with a rectangular chamber with dimension of 9.8 by 6.6 meters and a dromos (passageway) with over 20 meters in length that steeply descends toward the west entrance of the tomb. The entire structure is built from large travertine blocks with an average weight of 500 to 1500 kg. Although it is a structure buried in the ground, the chamber blocks are decorated with a smooth rectangular frame encompassing the salient middle. The exquisite decoration of the rock, as well as the

fact that the closest travertine mines are on a distance of 20 km from the site, are arguments enough to determine the economic power of the deceased and the settlement at large which was one of the more important settlements in the 5th century BC.



Nevertheless, the city's name, its function, meaning and regional administrative status are still unknown. Who were the citizens of Gradiste? This cannot be determined with certainty as well. The presence of red-figure vases among the ceramic findings is a confirmation of the existence of cultural and economic relations with Athens. Whether it is a matter of colonists from the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula who inhabited the settlement or maybe it is a result of the driving development of the local Paionian inhabitants are question left to archeology to resolve.

The idea for the project or to turn this place into a tourist attraction so it finally receives the attention it deserves was born when we first visited this archeological site as archeology students. A monumental royal tomb dating from the 5th c. BC towered before us with its massive stone blocks, but the entrance to it was nearly impossible and the whole place was overgrown with wild vegetation and buried under year and years of piled garbage. There were no signposts or information panels, thus the visitor can neither be led to nor informed about the immense historical heritage that they unknowingly pass by. The general public was completely unaware of its existence and more importantly so was the world.





After many years and many tries to realize the wishful idea, in 2012 the association “Archaeologica” in partnership with the Museum of Macedonia and supported by ELEM through its social responsibility program, finally started working on the field in order to change the appearance (image) of this important cultural heritage turning it into the first archeological park in Macedonia – the Archeo Park Brazda.

The Archaeologica team toiled for months to arrange the site and its surroundings.

– The interior of the tomb and the passageway (dromos) were completely cleaned from wild vegetation and debris which increased the visibility of the site,



– The plateau in front of the tomb was cleared and leveled,



– An approach to the tomb was ensured by building an access path with two bridges,



– A small square was built and wooden benches were placed,



– A voluntary action was organized to clear the riverbeds of garbage



– The landscape around the park was horticultural refined



– Information panels and signposts were placed,





– Informative flyers were printed and distributed

– The opening of the Arheo Park was covered by media – A web site about the park was developed (www.arheoparkbrazda.mk)

We paid particular attention to using natural materials in the realization of the project, materials that do not stand out from their surroundings.

By opening the first archeological park in Macedonia, "Arheo park Brazda", we strive to bring archeology closer to our fellow citizens, to raise the standards of archeology in Macedonia and to simply enrich the offer of cultural landmarks.



The aim of the project is to protect as well as present a rare example from the world cultural heritage to raise the cultural and environmental awareness of the local authorities and the local population in the municipality of Chucher-Sandevó and to develop the tourism in this rural environment.

This kind of development and widening of the touristic offer of Skopje would contribute to the development of the village of Brazda as well, and of the surrounding area in this vivid and picturesque region.



The short distance to the city and the well organized road infrastructure enable a fast and simple approach to the attractive recreational locations such as, the village of Banjani, the village of Gornjani, restaurant Chardak, etc. Simultaneously, in the vicinity of village Brazda numerous cultural and historical monuments dating from the 14th to 19th century can be found, dispersed through the foothills of Skopska Crna Gora: the church of St. Nikita in Gornjani village, the church of Holy Salvation and the monastery of St. Archangel in Kuchevishte village, the churches of St.

George and St. Ilija in the village of Banjani, etc. And finally, by adding the Gradiste site to this group of cultural landmarks, we arrive at an unforgettable whole-day experience, a tourist walk through the past in Skopje and the vicinity, from the beginnings of ancient times to today.



The interest in this cultural monument significantly rose after mounting the signposts and the official opening of the “Arheo Park Brazda”. Apart from casual passersby that would learn about this place from the signpost, organized groups also visit the park. As the local inhabitants inform us, the site receives daily visits from foreign and domestic tourists who are in awe of everything this site has to offer from a cultural aspect as well as from the natural beauties that abound. The undertakings so far are just a part of the overall conceptual solution for this arheo park. Due to the heightened interest in the park, as well as the increased number of visitors, we are planning a realization of the second phase of the project that would include: setting up a wooden gazebo which would serve as an educational nest for the students of archeology and the pupils from primary schools located the vicinity of the site, as well as for larger groups of tourists; building access paths to Gradiste; setting up litter bins and additional horticultural enrichment along the paths and around the tent, as well as maintaining the park; mounting new signposts on key crossroads so as to alleviate access to the site, printing informative leaflets, etc.

We wholeheartedly hope that we will have an opportunity to realize these steps i.e. the second phase of the project, which would raise the Arheo park to world standards and contribute to the protection and promotion of the Gradiste site as a significant cultural inheritance, attract even higher numbers of foreign and domestic visitors, and encourage the development of rural tourism.