

Project of Medieval Aghsu town archaeological tourism complex

Complejo arqueológico turístico de la ciudad medieval de Aghsu

Gafar Javiyev

Fariz Khalilli

Shola Bayramova

MIRAS Social Organization in Support of Studying of Cultural Heritage, Baku, Azerbaijan

miraspresscenter@gmail.com

Recibido el 31 de octubre de 2013

Aprobado el 1 de noviembre de 2013

Abstract: MIRAS Social Organization in Support of Studying of Cultural Heritage has implemented project ‘Medieval Aghsu Town Archaeological Tourism Complex’ in 2010-2012 years. The basic purpose of the project to enliven archaeological tourism in local Aghsu region which was beyond the attention, non involved wide mass tourist with nature and unpreserved historical and architectural works. The project assumed great importance from moral and material aspects for scientists working in archaeology, ethnography, epigraphy, numismatics, architecture, chemistry and other fields, as well as local settlers, participants of the project, the population of surrounding villages.

Key words: tourism archaeological, complex, Aghsu.

Resumen: La Organización social de MIRAS en apoyo al Estudio del Patrimonio cultural ha puesto en práctica la “ciudad medieval del proyecto de Aghsu complejo de turismo arqueológico” en 2010-2012. El objetivo básico del proyecto es avivar el turismo arqueológico en la ciudad local de Aghsu que quedó apartada de la atención, sin una amplia masa turística implicada en su naturaleza y sin la difusión de los trabajos históricos y arquitectónicos (el término del turismo arqueológico fue usado por la Organización social MIRAS remitida a este proyecto y allí cultivó el gran interés).

Palabras clave: turismo arqueológico, complejo. Aghsu.

I

ntroducción



Fig. 1. Sky view of Medieval Agsu town (Google Earth).

Archaeological tourism is one of tourism types assumed special interest in various countries of the world. Archaeological tourism has great perspectives in Azerbaijan. Experts put forward different proposals in order to develop this domain. Archaeological materials protected and shown in the museums welcomed by tourists with interest. Circumstance is created in Azerbaijan for ‘tourists’ watching these materials in excavation sites and reveal themselves. In fact wide opportunities exist in our country rich with historical and archaeological monuments to develop this field. The professionals value archae-tourism also as important way of promoting history and culture.

1.- MIRAS and archaeological tourism

The concept of ‘archaeological tourism’ was widely spread in Azerbaijan via the project ‘Development and propagation of archaeological tourism in Azerbaijan’ realized by MIRAS Organization with the support of the Council of State Support to NGOs under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan in 2011. The purpose of the project was by promoting archaeological tourism in Azerbaijan to attain the development of this domain, to increase attention to historical and archaeological monuments and interest to science of archaeology and to provide their protection. Lectures, archaeological tourism, archaeology science, as well as seminars on historical and architectural and archaeological monuments existnet in Azerbaijan were arranged in cultural and eductational institutions in these terms. ‘Azerbaijani Pearls’ book was published for lecture and seminar participants. Special Internet page ‘www.archaeotourism.az’ was created to make the project valid. Historical monuments, traditions and art of Azerbaijan are shown and the opportunities of archaeo-tourism are promoted there. ‘Azerbaijan Land of Monuments’ documentary was shot within the project, archaeological tourism opportunities of 5 archaeological monuments (Goytepe, Gala, Gebele, Shamkir and Aghsu) were presented in the film.



Fig. 2. Pasture in Medieval Aghsu town.

The project was useful for scientific community, archaeologists, historians, as well as students, under-graduates and post graduates, citizens, foreign citizens and led

way to creating conditions for interesting sphere. Archaeological tourism became one of tourism fields discussed widely with the project's influence.



Fig. 3. 7th excavation site—icestore.

2.- Project of Medieval Agsu Town Archaeological Tourism Complex

Project of Medieval Agsu Town Archaeological Tourism Complex by MIRAS Organization is one of projects serving the development of archaeological tourism.

Agsu Archaeological Expedition of NASA Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography has been conducting archaeological explorations under guidance of Professor Gafar Javiyev in Medieval Agsu Town since in 2010 March with initiative and support of MIRAS Social Organization. The explorations are conducted within the framework of the project of MIRAS Social Organization on 'Medieval Agsu Town Archaeological Tourism Complex'. The basic purpose of the project is to enliven archaeological tourism in local Agsu region which was beyond the attention, non involved wide mass tourist with nature and unpreserved historical and architectural works.



Fig. 4. Works in Medieval Agsu town.



Fig. 5. Water line in Medieval Agsu town.

The project passed four stages:

1. Implementation of archeological explorations in medieval Agsu town;
2. Conservation and restoration of archaeological finds and urban buildings, establishment of expo. complex;
3. Provision of comfortable visit of tourists, creation of relevant infrastructure;
4. Recognition and promotion of medieval Agsu town archaeological tourism complex.



Fig. 6. Ruins of Juma Mosque.

The project assumed great importance from moral and material aspects for scientists working in archaeology, ethnography, epigraphy, numismatics, architecture, chemistry and other fields, as well as local settlers, participants of the project, the population of surrounding villages. The number of visitors of the area and medieval Agsu town rather increased for some years.

3.- Medieval Agsu town

Medieval Agsu town is situated in 157 km west of Baku City, the capital of Azerbaijan. The town was established by Nader shah Afshar, well-known ruler of East

of 18th century in Shirvan Plain in 1735. Aghs was the largest city of the time in the region both for the area (40 hectare), and population (10.000 people). The city which existed in hard historical circumstance became the war zone repeatedly and destroyed. 70-year town was throughly abandoned in 1805 with the Russians' coming to the town.



Fig. 7. Juma Mosque after covering.

Since the city was of Moslems, this was built towards Mecca, the houses and public buildings were also in the direction to which a Moslem turns when praying. The foundation of the fortress walls was constructed of river stone and the walls of raw brick. A large water canal was laid along the fortress walls for protection purposes. Three large cemeteries were preserved around the fortress.

4.- Archaeological explorations

Primary explorations were conducted in the Soviet rule in 1983, the monument's stratigraphy was fixed. It was known that the monumet was one-layer and covers 18th century.

1, 5 hectare area of the city was studied in 5 excavation sites in 2010-2012 years within medieval Aghs town project with support of MIRAS, and various remnants were revealed. Basic purpose of the project to research one of last medieval

cities to which less importance is given from archaeological aspect in Azerbaijan and ignored as thought of near history; to use the area, which not included into tourism routes, not involved tourists for having plain and field for tourism, especially archaeological tourism.



Fig. 8. Covering sites—3rd and 4th excavation site.

Presently the complex is called provisionally medieval Agsu town archaeological tourism complex. In 5 excavation sites (provisionally 3, 4, 5, 6, 7th sites) there revealed the streets, roads, settlements, handcraft estates, Juma Mosque, bath complex, fortress walls, water reservoirs, ice-store, etc.

Nearly 8000 of thousands of exhibits revealed from the excavation for 3 years were enrolled, a part of them is kept in National Museum of History of Azerbaijan, Agsu town History and Local Lore Museum and in this complex.

5.- Summary

The complex is currently called medieval Agsu town archaeological tourism complex. 3 sites are covered up with the metal construction. These are exhibition complexes covered 700, 3000 and 1000 sq.m. area in 3rd, 4th and 5th excavation sites. Generally, 13 vitrines are installed in the complexes. Exhibits are shown inside. The

road between the complexes are renovated, stone roads laid and the greenness zone created.



Fig. 9. Holland ducats.



Fig. 10. Painter and his students in Medieval Agsus town.

So, real archaeological tourism object was set up near Ulguj Village of Agsu Town through the project of Medieval Agsu Town Archaeological Tourism Complex. The complex is being continued its activity. Local and foreign tourists visiting this site increase. Archaeological tourism camps are arranged in the complex.

References bibliográficas

Jabiyev Gafar, K. F. *Medieval Agsu Town*. 1-3 volume. CBS, Baku, 2010-2011. Azerbaijan Pearls. Edited by Rashad Ibrahimov. CBS, Baku, 2011. <http://www.archaeotourism.az>.

Ibrahimov, R. “Archaeological Tourism: New type of vacation”, en *MIRAS journal*, issue 1, September 2011, págs. 86-87.