

TOURIST EXPLOITATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE DANUBE DELTA BIOSPHERE RESERVE AREA (ROMANIA)

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Abstract

Romanian summer tourism has developed extraordinarily on the Black Sea coast and in the Danube Delta. The administration of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve took measures for the protection of the natural environment and for the local development of tourism (mostly of ecologic tourism). The cultural potential of Dobrudja (represented by world-famous archaeological sites placed on the limes of the Razim-Sinoe lagoon complex and of the Danube) has enabled the emergence of a new, specialized type of tourism in the Danube Delta: the cultural (archaeological) tourism. The interface between the Dobrudjan mainland and the Danube Delta comprises the largest archaeological treasure in Romania and even in Europe (in relation to the number of superficial sites). The advantage of developing such specialized tourism is also provided by the possibility of elaborating terrestrial or aquatic itineraries. Tourism can also be advantaged by the location of the legendary Greek Island of Peuce (the "Pine Island" mentioned by Herodotus) in the eastern sector of the Dunav \uparrow Peninsula. The proposition made here is to develop cultural tourism based on the existence of historical vestiges within the area of the first Romanian region included in urban civilization.

Keywords: Natural environment; Sustainable exploitation; Littoral; Archaeological sites; Tourism

Introduction

The decision of turning the Danube Delta into Biosphere Reserve enabled an adequate administration of natural and anthropic resources within this area. The most beneficial measure concerns the preservation of biodiversity and the plans made for the economic exploitation of fish culture resources. Since the purpose is the economic development of the Danube Delta, the means include the development of mass tourism in general and of ecologic tourism, particularly. For limiting the economic activities within the area, 18 strictly protected areas have been declared (where all economic activity is strictly forbidden).

National tourism is developed only in several regions of capital importance: Prahova Valley, the Black Sea coast, the Danube Delta, Bukovina, and enclaves in Transylvania, Subcarpathian Oltenia, etc. The highest number of summer tourists is recorded on the Romanian Black Sea coast; unfortunately, most tourists are Romanian. Most foreign summer tourists are recorded in the Danube Delta, but the majority choose luxury boats (that provide lodging and meals), which means that they do not make purchases in the area. From the financial perspective, this is low-productivity tourism. In this case, tourism is nothing more than a "commercial".

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To prevent endangering the Danube Delta area, tourist infrastructure was implemented in the Dobrudja mainland. High prices led to a decrease in the number of domestic tourists who travelled on their own and to an increase of specialized tourism – for recreational fishing, safari-photo, birdwatching, etc. [1]. The number of tourists has decreased compared to the communist period, but incomes have increased significantly. This study underlines the tourist importance of the archaeological sites situated on the Danubian and maritime limes of the Black Sea. This study also includes a proposition of tourist itinerary that comprises 15 cities and several archaeological sites of national and international importance [1].

Study area

The Danube Delta is situated in the north-western sector of the Black sea basin, in a mobile region of the terrestrial crust (the Predobrudjan Depression). Its limits are: 44°46'00" N lat. (Periteasca), 45°30'00" N lat. (South of Sasik Lake), 28°40'24" E long. (Ceatal Chilia), 29°40'50" E long. (East of the Chilia secondary delta) (Fig. 1). As for its surface of 5,600 km², the Danube Delta, together with the flood-plain sector between Ceatalul Ismail and Galati city, represent the most important terminal plain of any European river (except the Volga and Kuban deltas on the territory of C.S.I.). The Ukrainian part, about one-fifth of the Delta area, covers 125,000 ha, of which 75,000 ha of land and 50,000 ha of water [2-18].



Fig. 1. Geographic location of the Danube Delta on the Romanian territory

The surface of the Razim-Sinoe lagoon complex (aquatic, swampy, and grinds) has evolved progressively, from 76,949 ha in 1835 to 96,950 ha in the year 2004 (including swampy surfaces) [19]. The lagoon complex comprises four cuvettes: Razim, Zmeica, Golovița, and Sinoe. The largest one is Razim (38,809 ha). Through government Decision No. 983/27 August 1990 (art. 5), the Danube Delta, along with the Razim-Sinoe lagoon complex, the S r turi-Murighiol Lake, the Isaccea-Tulcea lake complex (the non-developed Danubian floodplain between Isaccea and Tulcea), the Danube riverbed between Cotul Pisicii and Ceatalul Ismail, as well as coastal seawaters down to the 20m isobaths line, were declared Biosphere Reserve. It is the only delta on Earth part of this category (the commune delta of Ganges-Brahmaputra holds only a part of its surface). The Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve covers a 580,000 ha surface (larger than the Danube Delta) [20-24].

Methodology

Dobrudja in general and the Danube Delta specifically represent the most interesting regions in Romania from the geographic and historical perspective. Therefore, the scientific literature in the pertaining fields (geography, archaeology, tourism, environment, etc) is extremely rich. For this paper, field trips were organized to all the archaeological sites, for observations and measurements. The most complex research works were conducted at the Ecomuseum Research Institute in Tulcea and at the Archaeology Museum in Constanța. Cartographic materials (elaborated in person or by other institutions) were consulted, as well as orthophotoplans, made available by the ANCPI [National agency for Cadastre and Land Registration] (2014). As for the archaeological side, complete information was collected from the scientific literature. As for the tourist side, physical and geographical maps of the Danube Delta and of Dobrudja were consulted [25].

Results and Discussions

For the tourism in the Danube Delta, it was necessary to build lodging facilities at the limit between the continental mainland and the Danube Delta wetland. Most hotels and pensions (3 or 4-star ones in majority) are situated along the Danubian floodplain (north of Danubian) and around the Razim-Sinoe lagoon complex. Precisely this aspect requires the development of a specialized, cultural tourism, based on visiting the archaeological sites in the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve area. In this area, it is worth highlighting tourist objectives of major importance (cities) and of secondary importance (tumuli, settlements, crypts, necropolises, etc).

Tourist objectives of major importance

Most cities are situated on the highest points of the hillside area of Dobrudja. They were placed, during various historical periods, between Isaccea (Noviodunum) and Histria. The 15 fortresses (ancient and mediaeval objectives) are as follows: Noviodunum – ancient Roman, Byzantine and mediaeval city [26, 27]; Aegyssus – ancient Roman city [28]; Preslav – Byzantine city; Salsovia – ancient Roman city [29-32]; Halmyris – ancient Roman city [33-35]; Dunavat – ancient Roman fortification; Toprachioi (Babadag) – Roman fortification and supply point; Babadag – Thracian and Roman fortification [36, 37]; Ibida – ancient Roman city [38, 39]; Enisala (Heraclea) – Genovese mediaeval city [40]; Beidaud – Thracian fortification [41]; Bisericuta – Roman fortification; Orgame (Argamum) – ancient Greek and Roman city [42]; Histria – ancient Greek city [43-51]; Vadu – Ottoman fortification (Fig. 2).

Tourist objectives of secondary importance

The archaeological sites of secondary importance are placed at the interface between the continental and the aquatic border-land represented by the Razim-Sinoe lagoon complex, the Danube floodplain, and the Danube Delta. They pertain to several historical periods, as follows: Eneolithic age, Neolithic age, Bronze age, Iron age, Hellenistic age, Roman age, Roman-Byzantine age, Middle Ages, etc. [52] (Fig. 2). The most important tourist objectives include the following: Niculițel (ancient crypt with saints) [53, 54]; Tulcea (habitation, settlement) [28]; Malcoci (habitation, settlement); Ilgani de Jos (habitation complex, settlement and necropolis); Victoria (settlement complex, necropolis); B Iteni de Jos (settlement); Be tepe (fortified settlement, settlement complex and necropolis) [55]; Mahmudia (tumuli complex, habitation complex, settlement complex, necropolis) [56]; Plopu (settlement); Murighiol (tumuli complex, habitation complex, settlement complex); Dunav Țu de Sus (settlement); Dunav Țu de Jos (settlement complex); Chilia Veche (tumuli complex, settlement); Periprava (settlement); Taraschina (settlement, habitation) [57, 58]; Caraorman (settlement, transit point, necropolis);

Valea Nucarilor (tumuli complex, settlement); Iazurile (tumuli complex, settlement complex); Sarinasuf (settlement complex); Agighiol (grave of a Thracian prince, settlement complex); Agighiol (South) (habitation complex) [59]; Sabangia (settlement, necropolis); Sarichioi (tumuli complex, settlement complex, habitation complex); Enisala (East) (habitation) [60]; Enisala (South) (necropolis); Visterna (settlement, necropolis); Ta burun (tumuli complex, settlement complex); Iancina (fortified tower); S licioara (settlement complex, habitation); Baia Dobrudja (settlement, necropolis); Ceamurlia de Jos (tumuli complex, settlement, habitation); Lunca (tell, tumuli complex, settlement); Vi ina (settlement complex); Jurilovca (habitation); Jurilovca (North) (tumular necropolis); Mihai Viteazu (tumuli complex, settlement); Sinoie (settlement complex); Istria (Village) (settlement complex); Movilele (tumular necropolis); S cele (settlement); Nunta i (settlement complex); Vadu (North) (settlement complex); Chituc (settlement complex); Corbu (tumuli complex, settlement complex); Midia Cape (settlement complex) [52].

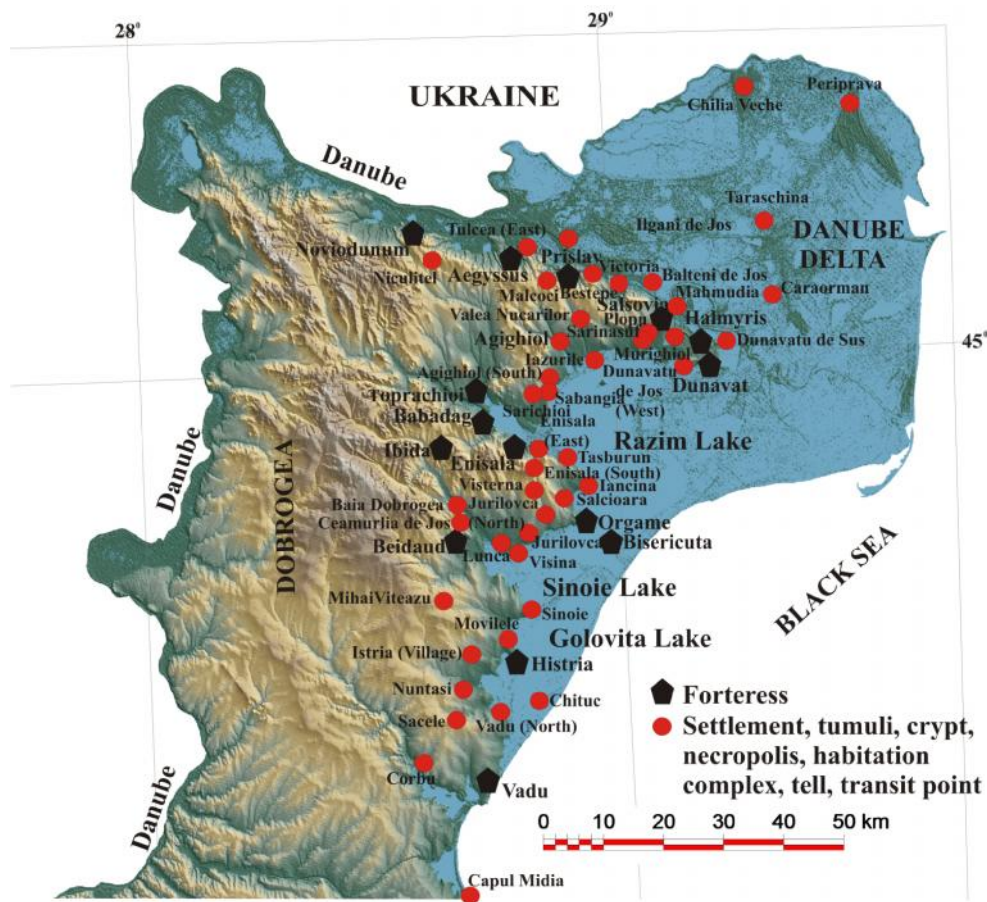


Fig. 2. Distribution of archaeological sites in the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve area

The tourist objectives situated within the Danube Delta may be visited only by water: Chilia Veche, Periprava, Taraschina, and Caraorman. A special attention should be paid to the Bisericuța site (though part of the Razim-Sinoie lagoon complex, it is placed in the immediate vicinity of the continental mainland and it is easily reachable using small boats). Thus far, the cities that receive a significant number of tourists are only those of Histria, Enisala, Orgame, and Halmyris (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. The best known cities in the Danube Delta Reserve area: Histria, Enisala, Orgame (Argamum) and Halmyris

Conclusions

One of the easiest and at the same time ecologic solutions for local economic development in the Danube Delta is represented by tourism (mostly specialized tourism). In this case, the focus is on cultural or even educational tourism, because the destination comprises the archaeological sites on the Danubian and maritime Black Sea coast (and that of the Razim-Sinoe lagoon complex, implicitly). Such a tourist branch can easily develop, because the archaeological sites are of international importance.

In case of the archaeological sites of Niculițel and Halmyris, religious tourism is another solution. The crypt of Niculiței harbours the remains of four of the earliest saints in Romania: Zotikos, Attalos, Camasis, and Philippos (4th century). At Halmyris, a discovery was made comprising the remains of saints Epictetus and Astion, martyred at Almyridensium civitas in AD 290 (the earliest saints on the Romanian territory).

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