

CULTURAL TOURISM: HAMLET'S CASTLE IN KRONBORG (DENMARK)

TURISMUL CULTURAL: CASTELUL LUI HAMLET DE LA KRONBORG (DANEMARCA)

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Abstract: This paper aims at showing how a literary work (in our case, William Shakespeare's well-known tragedy "Hamlet") can turn a historical site (in our case, the Kronborg Castle in Denmark) into a famous cultural tourism site. We have visited the Kronborg Castle, analysed its tourism potential, and discovered that, had Shakespeare not set the plot of his tragedy there, the Kronborg Castle would have remained anonymous, as many other Danish castles, since it does not have much to offer as a historical site, compared to other historical tourism sites. The conclusion of the paper is that tourism should not be practiced unilaterally: decision-making people in the field of tourism should take all this into account when deciding tourism offers.

Rezumat: această lucrare prezintă modul în care o operă literară (în cazul nostru, bine cunoscuta tragedie a lui William Shakespeare, "Hamlet") poate transforma un sit istoric (în cazul nostru, Castelul Kronborg din Danemarca) într-un celebru obiectiv turistic cultural. Am vizitat Castelul Kronborg, i-am analizat potențialul turistic și am descoperit că, dacă Shakespeare nu și-ar fi amplasat intriga tragediei în acest loc, Castelul Kronborg ar fi rămas anonim, ca multe alte castele daneze, deoarece nu are multe de oferit ca sit istoric în comparație cu alte situri istorice turistice. Concluzia acestei lucrări este că **turismul nu trebuie practicat unilateral: decidenții din turism ar trebui să țină seama de aceasta în luarea deciziilor cu caracter turistic.**

Key words: cultural tourism, Kronborg Castle, Hamlet, Shakespeare

Cuvinte cheie: turism cultural, Castelul Kronborg, Hamlet, Shakespeare

INTRODUCTION

Hamlet can keep cool: there is nothing rotten in Denmark. It is true though that winters can be dark and terrible, long but not too cold, with little snow (this is why Danish people go skiing in Sweden), while summers can be quite sunny (1,2).

The present day country is no longer an empire, but the Vikings' sons keep spreading. The Danes are a people of cyclists (the number of people riding bikes is double the number of pedestrians) and a people that loves recycling (about 65% of the wastes are turned into heat for the dwellings or into new items) (4). E. Keiller claims that "It is – let's admit it – an almost unanimously accepted idea that this is the people the closest to perfection: a clean, peaceful, well-organised society, populated by prosperous, tolerant people that observe the rules, have PC skills, speak 2-3 languages, and exert their right to vote".

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Helsingör is one of the most valuable Danish towns, with lots of well-preserved buildings and famous for its massive Kronborg Castle built in Renaissance style and known as Hamlet's Elsinore Castle. This is the stage of many performances of Shakespeare's "Hamlet". Even today, the atmosphere is a strange, plot-like one. Kronborg deserves being analysed from a cultural point of view: it became famous due to Shakespeare who turned it into the stage and scenery of his tragedy without ever seeing it. Without Shakespeare, the Elsinore Castle would have remained anonymous, as so many other castles in Denmark.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Kronborg Castle is situated near the town of Elsinore on the extreme tip of Zealand at the narrowest point of the Oresund, the sound between Denmark and Sweden. In this part, the sound is only 4 km wide, hence the strategic importance of maintaining a fortress at this location. The Castle, that has for centuries been one of the most important Renaissance castles in Northern Europe, was added to UNESCO's World Heritage Sites list on November 30, 2000.

The history of the Castle dates back to the fortress Krogen built at the beginning of the 15th by the Danish king Eric of Pomerania, who insisted on the payment of sound dues by all ships wishing to cross the Baltic Sea. To help enforce his demands, he built a powerful fortress consisting of a number of buildings inside a surrounding wall. The Castle acquired its current name in the 16th century, when it was rebuilt by King Frederick II into a magnificent Renaissance Castle unique in appearance and size throughout Europe. In the 17th century, a moment's carelessness by two workmen caused the Castle to go up in flames, except for the Chapel that was spared by the strength of its arches. King Christian IV restored the Castle 10 years after the fire: the exterior was magnificent once again, but the interior never fully regained its former glory. The Castle was conquered in the second half of the 17th century by the Swedish. Afterwards, the defences were strengthened significantly, and by the end of the century an advanced line of defence was added – the Crownwork. Shortly afterwards, a new series of ramparts were built around it. After their completion, Kronberg was considered the strongest fortress in Europe. From mid-18th century until the mid-19th century, Kronberg was used as a slave prison for male convicts sentenced to work on the Castle's fortifications, wearing chains and spending their nights in cold and damp dungeons. The Castle was also the place of imprisonment of Royalty. From mid-18th until the beginning of the 20th century, the Castle was completely under military administration, a period during which a number of renovations were completed.

Kronborg is also well-known as Elsinore, the setting for much of William Shakespeare's famous tragedy "Hamlet, prince of Denmark". Shakespeare's play (whose time period is somewhat uncertain: it can be understood as mostly Renaissance, contemporary with Shakespeare's England) is set at Elsinore Castle, the real Kronborg Castle of Denmark. Prince Hamlet's friend, Horatio, and some sentinels see one night a Ghost that looks exactly like the late king, King Hamlet, and decide to tell prince Hamlet about it. He decides to go with them to see the Ghost. Hamlet, Horatio, and a sentinel see the Ghost again, and it beckons to Hamlet. Horatio and the sentinel try to stop Hamlet from following, but he does. The Ghost speaks to Hamlet, calls for revenge, and reveals Claudius's murder of Hamlet's father. It tells Hamlet to remember, says adieu, and disappears. Hamlet decides to try a play performance to catch the conscience of the King. Hamlet instructs the Players how to do the upcoming performance. Claudius walks out in the middle of the play, which Hamlet sees as proof of Claudius's guilt. Wishing Hamlet dead, Claudius and Laertes conspire to set up a fencing match at which Laertes can kill Hamlet with a poisoned foil in revenge for the death of Polonius, father of Laertes (accidentally stabbed by Hamlet). Both Laertes and Hamlet are poisoned in the fight, and so is Claudius. They all die, together with Hamlet's mother, Gertrude. Fortinbras becomes the next king.

William Shakespeare's tragedy "Hamlet" has contributed many phrases to common English, from the famous "To be or not to be" to a few less known, but still in everyday English: "...all that lives must die, / Passing through nature to eternity", "Frailty, thy name is woman!", "The time is out of joint", "Neither a borrower, nor a lender be", "This above all: to thine oneself be true", "Giving more light than heat...", "And to the manner born...", "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark", "What a piece of work is a man!", "...an old

man is twice a child”, “Get thee to a nunnery”, “Purpose is but the slave to memory”, “The lady doth protest too much, methinks”, “Hoist with his own petard”, “The rest is silence”, etc.

“Hamlet” was performed in the actual Castle for the first time to mark the 200th anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare, with a cast consisting of soldiers from the Castle garrison. The stage was in the telegraph tower in the southwest corner of the Castle. The play has since been performed several times in the courtyard and at various locations on the fortifications.

A royal – Swedish or Danish – residence, Kronborg is nowadays on Danish soil and it hosts a large museum visited by thousands of tourists every year: the Kronwerk Gate, the King’s Tower (also known as Kakkelborg or the Tree’s Tower), the Telegraph Tower and the Trumpet Tower, the Dark Gate, the main Portal, the Chapel.

The building is in the Renaissance style, with an imposing façade and with large windows. The elegant and refined Trumpet Tower and the inner yard paved with rectangular stones and decorated with a fountain within a circle are exquisite. The dungeon houses the statue of Ogier the Dane who, according to legend, slumbers here until the day Denmark is in grave danger, at which time he will arise and save the nation.

The inside architecture – the rooms with their different destinations – is simple, austere, in evident contrast with the outside sobriety of the Castle. Among the exhibits there are paintings of smaller or larger size, carpets, pieces of tapestry immortalising scenes from the history of the Danes or of the Scandinavians (whose destinies used to meet until the late 19th century and early 20th century), candelabra, and furniture.

The Chapel is really something – elegant, festive, with a portable wooden altar made in Antwerp, and having three scenes: in the middle, the Golgotha, on the left, the sacrifice of St. Isaac, and on the right, several loggia and, of course, the organ, decorated with carved and coloured wood. The walls of the Chapel are simple, painted in white, and the atmosphere is sober, even austere.

The cultured visitor loving history can visit the catacombs in the basements of Kronborg: their silence remind the visitor scenes from the Scandinavian culture, fierce confrontations for power, as the one depicted by Shakespeare in his tragedy set on the very spot.

Let us say it once again: without Shakespeare who, without even visiting the Kronborg Castle, set the plot of one of his most famous plays here, this building would not have meant much. What does this mean? Supreme joy and satisfaction are the result of both reality and fiction. If we take into account the fact that Shakespeare set other plays in places he never saw – “Romeo and Juliet in Verona, “The Taming of the Shrew” in Padua – we can see the role imagination played in the shaping of the characters, of the settings, and of the times of the plots. All this speaks of man’s ability of adapting to the Divine. Through his emancipation, through his nature, man is closer to God than this world, but for it to happen, you should wear the name Shakespeare, or Goethe, or Eminescu (3).

CONCLUSIONS

Kronberg as a cultural tourism destination acquired its fame due to the genius of William Shakespeare who turned it into the stage and scenery of his tragedy “Hamlet” without ever visiting it.

Without Shakespeare, the Kronberg Castle would have remained anonymous, as many other castles in Denmark or Europe.

Though the Renaissance Castle has an imposing façade with large windows and a very elegant Trumpet Tower, its inside architecture is simple, even austere, and in contrast with the outside sobriety.

Even so, Shakespeare made it a fabulous scenery for his tragedy due to its strange atmosphere and royal plot-like scenery.

Particularly elegant and festive, the Chapel has a sober portable altar under the form of a three-scene altar bearing in its middle the image of the Golgotha and on its left side the sacrifice of St. Isaac. In exchange, the walls are painted in white providing this Protestant Chapel its sobriety, the result of the marriage between Shakespeare's imagery and Kronberg's reality.

LITERATURE

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