

ROMANIA

The 2001 Report emphasised several threats to Romanian architectural heritage: abandonment and disuse; looting of vacant houses, manors, parks and gardens; insufficient and ineffective action and co-ordination on behalf of local and central authorities. The report spoke about the effects of such threats: mediaeval citadels, secular 18th- and 19th-century architecture, vernacular and industrial architecture in decay or victims of vandalism. A hope for a strategic response to such situations came in mid-2001 from the approval of the Law for the preservation of historic monuments (Law 422/2001).

During the 12 months since the last *Heritage at Risk* report, historic monuments in Romania have not faced a better situation. Some of the threats emphasised in the last reports, especially decay due to abandonment, were alleviated in certain cases. This is the case of the Bontida Castle (quoted in *Heritage at Risk 2001/2002*), Department of Cluj, taken under the custody of the Transilvania Trust Foundation, where a restoration campaign was started with a contribution from the Ministry of Culture and Cults, and the generous support of British charities. A programme of integrated conservation and sustainable local development is underway, due to the Mihai Eminescu Trust in Viscri (World Heritage site) and several other Saxon settlements in the south-east Transilvania Region, with the financial support of the World Bank Romania Cultural Heritage Project. Initiatives in raising interest in the wooden architecture of Maramures are in progress, with the support of the Council of Europe 'Wooden Trails' programme.

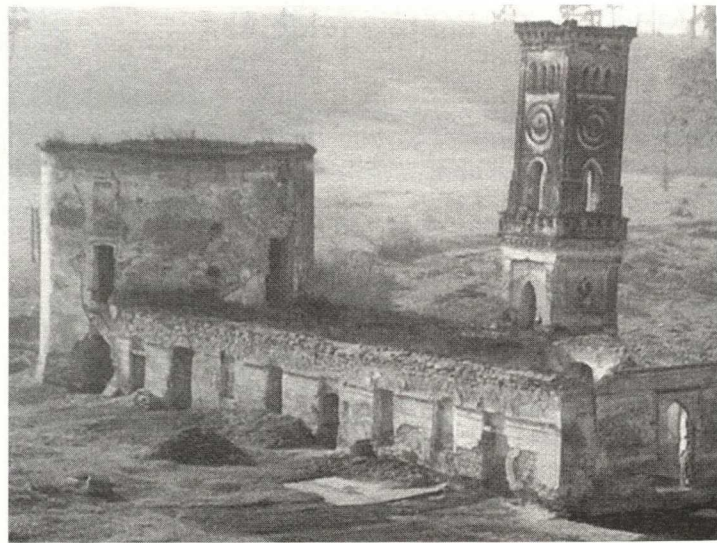
Such initiatives show a commitment to conservation of the ruined, derelict countryside historic architecture. The process of restitution of real-estate properties also makes a contribution to the process, as some of the former mansions were recuperated by the rightful owners. Nevertheless, we are far from solving the problem of preservation of rural vernacular architecture, as the villages are generally areas of severe poverty, and some of the examples given in the 2000 and 2001/2002 reports are still under threat. The situation is the same for industrial architecture, which still faces a severe lack of consideration, evaluation and effective listing and preservation, even though steps have been taken to raise consciousness of the value of this heritage (the second seminar on industrial architecture took place in September 2002, and several studies of the relics of the industrial revolution have been undertaken by enthusiasts).

In order to objectively assess the situation, the Romanian ICOSMOS National Committee jointly organised a 'round table' with the Department for Architectural History, Theory and Conservation, and the University of Architecture and Urbanism 'Ion Mincu', Bucharest. The theme of the meeting was a discussion of the risks and threats to the architectural heritage in Romania. The round table was attended by 36 professionals in the field of conservation, who evaluated the state of the architectural and archaeological heritage. The results of the debates follow.

Risk Generators

There are many causes generating threats to the architectural heritage in Romania, but there is a shared opinion that the following are the most important:

- lack of interest, civic initiative and care on behalf of the local communities and lack of education and consciousness on



Bontida Castle before restoration (Transilvania Trust Foundation, Cluj-Napoca)



Bontida Castle after first campaign (Transilvania Trust Foundation, Cluj-Napoca)

Soil erosion at Ocnele Mari (arch. Daniela Enescu, MCC, Bucharest)



behalf of the individuals in respect to the heritage values and their preservation (17% of the causes identified);

- lack of political will and the mismanagement of preservation by the authorities – both central and local (14%);
- lack of a competitive inventory and research structures and programmes (12%);
- risks of natural disasters, earthquake (8%);
- lack of monitoring and control and/or insufficient legal provisions for these activities (7%);
- lack of sufficient conservation funds – budgetary and private (6%);
- vandalism and lack of maintenance (5%);
- lack of a strategic approach in historic preservation management, insufficient specialist training (4%).

One can see that issues directly related to the activities of public bodies in the field of public education, management of preservation actions and inventories are responsible for the majority of the identified contemporary threats to the heritage (47%).

The socio-economic processes of the transition to a market economy are also having specific and negative impacts: the depopulation of rural and small urban settlements due to economic recession; careless exploitation of soil, forests and fields; speculative development.

Threats

A broad image of Romanian architectural heritage shows several threats of rapid, concentrated, short lasting and severe destructive actions:

- natural disasters – floods, earthquake, soil erosion (the Parliament issued a law concerning areas of natural risk – earthquake, floods, erosion – L 575/2001, pinpointing the position of such phenomena);
- human actions – uncontrolled speculative development or disrespectful interventions;
- vandalism and theft.

In addition, there are long term, insidious and continuously destructive actions:

- lack of maintenance or even conscious abandonment
- discontinuous financing of conservation sites
- commercialisation and unsympathetic developments in the vicinity of historic monuments.

As well as the aforementioned earthquake, all factors were active in 2001–2002.

Monuments Under Threat

Several categories of monuments are particularly endangered by these threats:

- industrial heritage, facing economic bankruptcy of the former socialist enterprises and being frequently considered as ‘scrap’ and treated as such;
- rural vernacular architectural heritage and cultural landscapes, confronted with depopulation, lack of interest and capacity for maintenance by the local community, spoiled by kitsch, unsympathetic new developments or activities;
- former mansions, with their gardens and sometimes their parks,

threatened with vandalism as a result of local and central institutional abandonment;

- lack of interest in the artistic and historic values of old churches sometimes leads to situations in which communities deploy important energy and financial means to erect new churches, while the old ones – the really valuable pieces of religious architecture – are collapsing.

Some of these types of threat are endemic to historic and cultural regions in Romania, such as the Renaissance manors and castles in Transylvania, the 18th-century painted parish churches of Oltenia, or the manors and fortified dwellings (cula) in Oltenia (proposed in the tentative UNESCO World Heritage list), the wooden architecture from Maramures. Their destruction will deeply affect the cultural profile of the area, with severe consequences for the capacity to maintain a sustainable educational and cultural tourism in the region.

City of Sighisoara: ‘Dracula Park’ Project

In March 2002, ICOMOS Romania prepared a report in response to the threat of the construction of a theme park (Dracula Park) in the vicinity of the World Heritage listed City of Sighisoara, as a part of the Special Tourist Development Programme of the Sighisoara Area (STDPSA) initiated by the Romanian Government. The park creation was seen as a complementary action to the prime objective of the STDPSA, of the ‘rehabilitation and revitalisation of the City of Sighisoara, a World Heritage Site, and the establishment in that area of an exclusive tourist and cultural area’ (Section 1, Annex to the GEO #3/2001). The ICOMOS report focused exclusively on the means of securing the preservation and enhancement of the architectural heritage of the Sighisoara Municipality, as a World Heritage City, proposed by the Romanian Government and listed by the World Heritage Committee in December 1999. A great deal of concern was expressed as no legal provision concerning the protection of the architectural heritage was respected in the implementation of the STDPSA, even though it involved a World Heritage Site (WHS). Overall there was seen to be a disregard for:

- the mandatory set-up of a Special Protection and Management Programme (SPMP) concerning the WHS
- the mandatory set-up of a Monitoring Programme of the WHS
- the compulsory update of the planning provisions with respect to the responsibilities of preservation of the WHS
- the mandatory consultancy with the National Commission of Historic Monuments (NCHM) in respect to the issuing of the planning approval in protected historic areas by the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs
- the mandatory advice of the NCHM requested with respect to interventions on historic monuments or in their protection areas (Section 4 of GEO #3/2001: the erection of a cable car to link the park to the citadel)
- the mandatory consultancy with the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs with respect to the modifications to be made to planning documents in protected areas
- the submission to the WHC of the special and impact studies issued by par. 68 of UNESCO Guidelines with respect to the WH Convention, for any development which might affect a WHS.

All are proof of disrespect for the legal provisions that were set-up to secure the architectural heritage, particularly the outstanding

WH listed heritage, against nuisances generated by anarchic or excessive developments. What is required is a scientific approach concerning the way a theme park might be set-up in the vicinity of the City of Sighisoara, and a broad and in-depth consultancy on behalf of the experts in architectural heritage conservation and management, before irreversible harm is done to the capacity for preservation and enhancement of the City of Sighisoara. Following the UNESCO evaluation of the development, the World Heritage Committee has rejected the proposal and as a consequence the Romanian Ministry for Tourism has commissioned Waterhouse Coopers to prepare a final assessment of the project. The outcome of this is yet to be known, but it is hoped that it will lead to a substantial revision, and even the cancellation, of the project at its Sighisoara location.

Case Study: Ocnele Mari Mining Disaster*

A particular situation arose at Ocnele Mari that requires urgent measures to save an interesting example of 17th-century religious architecture. For decades the soil of Ocnele Mari was drilled to extract salt by means of injecting water under pressure into the salt deposits; as a result, huge caves developed under the ground. These caves are now collapsing and threatening the buildings on top with imminent destruction.

This case is extremely important in showing that ill-thought decisions may have dramatic consequences decades later. Sometimes economic decisions, apparently having nothing in common with cultural issues, prove to be intimately linked to heritage and environment issues. This is certainly the case of Ocnele Mari. Today the government has allocated funds for the transfer of the population from the impacted area to safer zones. No effective measures have been taken to save the churches of Teica and Titireciu, or the church of Ocnele Mari, from collapse into the abysses generated by the salt exploitation.

The town of Ocnele Mari is situated in the sub-Carpathian region of Oltenia, 12 kilometres north of Ramnicu Valcea city, residence of the Valcea county. It is composed of several localities: the residence town of Gura Suhasului, on the banks of the Salt Brook, surrounded by seven villages that are spread across the slopes of several afforested hills: Ocnita, Lunca, Slatioarele, Teica, Cosota, Buda and Facai.

A former borough, with documentary reference for the first time in 1405, the town of Ocnele Mari has been famous for centuries for the exploitation and commercialisation of salt. The national importance of the town is found not only in the industrial and tourist potential of its natural richness – the salt, the forests, or

the salt waters – but also in its cultural landscape and its historical built heritage. In fact, the town is protected by Law No. 5/2000 as ‘The reservation Ocnele Mari, monument of nature’, for its natural values: Lacul Doamnei, Dealul Evantailui, Rapa Corbului. It is also protected as an ‘Area with great concentration of built heritage with cultural value of national interest’. A total of 21 buildings and sites are also inscribed in the official list of historical monuments, protected by the 422/2001 law.

Each locality has at least one parish or former monastic orthodox church of Byzantine type, dated from the 16th to the 18th centuries, with beautiful wall paintings ‘a fresco’, built by Vallachian Princes, local landowners or simple priests and rural communities. The area is rich in archaeological monuments and sites, like the Dacic Buridava fortress, 1st–2nd century BC, on the Cosota Hill. The charm of the town is found in its vernacular character of the 18th to 19th century, mixed with town feature architecture of homes and public buildings. In the 19th century, salt lakes formed at several old flooded mine sites and led to the development of two important, fashionable resorts at Ocnita and Gura Suhasului. These resorts were characterised by specific architecture: neglected in the socialist years, they were almost destroyed after 1990.

The entire town, and its cultural heritage, is now in great danger of disappearing. The traditional ‘dry exploitation’ of the solid salt in the mines over centuries was replaced after 1960 by the ‘wet method’ of intensive extraction. The result was the introduction of water into the mines, which dissolved the salt, and the formation of a large number of wells by the resulting saturated brine. Consequently great caverns were created under Ocnita, Teica and Lunca villages.

On 12 September 2001, the ceiling of a cavern under the Teica village collapsed and a lake of 100–150 metres in diameter appeared. Several houses were destroyed and the old church ‘Saints George and Dimitrie of Teica’, built in 1726 by logofat Mihalcea, with its paintings from 1782, is now in great danger – perched on the edge of the precipice created in the collapse.

Government efforts were directed to the removal of the 22 families living on top of the cavern. Several research programmes, with international help, were started in order to limit the extent of the disaster. The conclusions of the studies to now is that the situation is very difficult. A large-scale collapse could start at any time. The soil can sink and the brine will flood into the valley, destroying all the built heritage and the cultural landscape. Immediate solutions for the salvation of Teica and Titireciu churches must be found. The importance of the cultural heritage of Ocnele Mari and the economic and tourist potential of the area demand and deserve immediate attention and intervention.

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19th-century urban mansion in Iasi (arch. Ioan Sasu, Iasi)



Cantacuzino Pascanu Mansion in department Iasi (arch. Ioan Sasu, Iasi)





Ruined church – Ocnele Mari (arch. Daniela Enescu, MCC, Bucharest)



Ruined church – Ocnele Mari, interior (arch. Daniela Enescu, MCC, Bucharest)

Heritage at Risk in Rosia Montana ICOMOS Resolution 20 on Rosia Montana (Madrid, 5 December 2002)

The remains of the largest Roman gold mine in the world lie in Rosia Montana in Romania. This site is in danger of being totally

destroyed by a modern private mining project. Already international donors have decided not to contribute to this project because of the serious threats it puts on the natural and cultural heritage of the region.

ICOMOS strongly urges all interested parties in this project, as well as UNESCO and the international community involved in

Romania, to do all they can to prevent the destruction of this important archaeological site. It also calls on the national decision makers to ensure that the international, regional and national protection laws, regulations and resolutions are applied to the site and to other proposals, such as Dracula Park, adversely affecting the cultural heritage of Romania.

Statement to the Romanian Minister of Culture

The Central Massive of Transylvania is one of the richest gold mining places in Europe. Its richness was discovered in the Bronze Age, giving power and authority to the late Bronze Age cultures of the region, but it was exploited on a much higher level by the Dacians. The gold treasure of king Decebalus may well have been one of the richest of his time, so that after his victory over the Dacians in 106 AD Trajan could start huge building programmes from it, including the construction of his forum in Rome. Some hidden parts of Decebalus' treasure remained underground until some 340 kg of gold coins of Lysimachos were rediscovered in the bed of the Strigy rivulet not far from Sarmizegethusa Regia in the middle of the 16th century.

The gold mines were in use in the Bronze and Iron Ages, but most intensively in the Roman era. The centre of this activity was Ampelum, probably a municipium, and one of the most important places of the region was Alburnus Maior. Its archaeological remains are of greatest importance, and the latest excavations have proved the presence of important buildings, sanctuaries and built tombs, apart from miles of galleries and caves of the mines. In these galleries not only remains and traces of Roman mining

activity can be found, but also instruments and hidden treasures. The most famous finds are the written wax tablets, contracts, agreements and other unique inscriptions of the 2nd century AD.

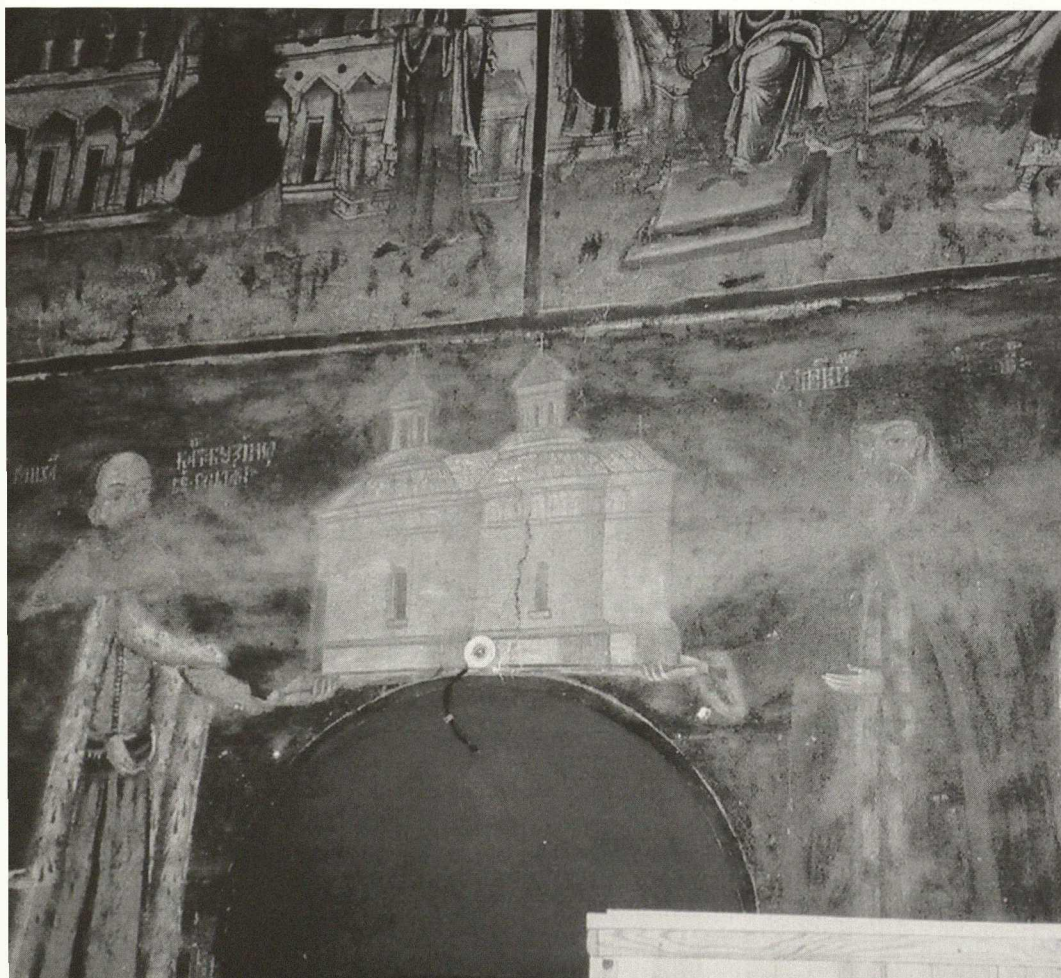
Gold mining was practised in the Middle Ages as well. A couple of Hungarian place names with their first part 'Aranyos-' (gold-) prove that gold mining and gold washing took place there, and this activity has continued up to the present day.

This short survey gives evidence that this area is of outstanding cultural value, representing the mining and winning of gold during the last three millennia. The entire area with its covered and uncovered archaeological monuments, the whole region as an outstanding cultural landscape, the preserved archaeological structures, some open to visitors, the museum with its archaeological and epigraphic material, and finally the lively village represent a unique place in Europe which needs to be preserved and maintained according to its archaeological value and its cultural qualities.

Alburnus Maior and the region of this cultural landscape must not be destroyed by the greed of today's capitalism. All aspects speak against such devastation: science, archaeological heritage management, cultural tourism, local, national and international legislation for culture and the environment.

Pécs, 9 November 2002

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ICOMOS Hungarian National Committee
Member of the International Committee
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Church Titireciu Ex Voto. (arch.
Daniela Enescu, MCC, Bucharest)