

THE HERITAGE OF THE APUSENI MOUNTAINS

A magnificent landscape at risk

Abstract

“The spirit builds the place and, in the same time, the place endows and structures the spirit” is stated in the Declaration of Québec, conceived in 2008. No better place to express this reasoning than the commune of Bucium, in the Apuseni mountains, in the heart of Transylvania. The landscape of Bucium is created by superposing a multitude of natural and anthropic layers, such as: topography, specific geological assemblies, particular ecosystems, a rich subsoil including the most precious metal: gold, systems of underground mining cumulating an experience of more than 2000 years, traditional housing and costumes, specific handicrafts and even a specific musical instrument (*bucium*) whose sound is inspired from the context of the place. RPER Association (Rencontres du Patrimoine Europe-Roumanie), born in Paris the same year with the Declaration (2008) decided to establish in Bucium the headquarters of its yearly Summer University. The paper briefly presents the results of the work coordinated by RPER and their continuity for the future.

Keywords: spirit of the place, landscape, mining, heritage, tradition

To the memory of the architect Şerban Cantacuzino (1928-2018), friend of RPER, who has always been in love with the Romanian heritage

Introduction

In the same year when the Declaration “On the Preservation of the Spirit of the Place” was being signed in Québec (2008) [1], an Association dedicated to the preservation of heritage (Rencontres du Patrimoine Europe-Roumanie - RPER) [2], was born in Paris and, afterwards, Romania. RPER had the particular understanding of heritage as a whole of layers related with a particular place. The “spirit of the place” seems to be a perfect definition for the area of Bucium, where the binomial material/immaterial heritage perfectly meets the ancestral values. “The spirit of the place may be defined as the ensemble of material elements (sites, landscapes, constructions, roads, objects) and immaterial elements (memory, oral stories, written documents, rituals, festivals, crafts, traditional knowledge, values, texts, colors, perfumes), therefore the physical and spiritual elements that confer to the place sense, value, emotion and mystery. Instead of separating the spirit from the place and the material from the immaterial, and

consider them as opposite, we explored the diverse manners of union of the two concepts in a tight interaction and their way of constructing each other. The spirit builds the place and, in the meantime, the place invests and structures the spirit” (Québec Declaration, 2008) [1].

There is for sure a spirit, an effervescence of life specific to a certain place, with a deep effect on people, aside from producing only aesthetic pleasure, conferring sense to the Latin expression „genius loci”. „The spirit of the place” becomes, therefore, the fresco of a specific site, concentrating all its specific attributes. This genius loci ensures the everlasting continuity of tradition. “Popular art evolves according to other laws and another rhythm: for it there is no time. It is useless to search for epochs. Executed in ephemeral materials, the secret of its lasting consists in its uninterrupted renewal” [3].

The RPER Association created the Summer University from Bucium, a yearly event, held continuously since 2009. The Summer University developed in time as a melting pot of ideas and solutions, a fertile space for interdisciplinary communication for specialists in restoration from Romania, France and other European countries, for students from Bucharest, Cluj, Sibiu etc. and for representatives of the local community of Bucium. One of the characteristics of the Bucium Summer University is simultaneous action on several layers, such as demonstrated in the five published Repertoires of Rural Patrimony of the area. Due to the annual editions of the University we have now the inventory of the most representative traditional households of the commune, as well as of the workshops and installations of popular technique, of the landscape elements and equipments for traditional mining with extended documentation on all these objectives (architecture survey, photography, data collection), ideas and strategy interventions. This work also lead to the official classification of constructions with historical value as monuments, inscribed in the official national list (crosses, votive and commemorative crucifixes on the road), to the rehabilitation in traditional techniques of two houses (the Colda house from Bucium Poieni village – built in 1851, the Doicear house from Fereşti village, built in 1870) and to the animation of the local community for keeping in a good shape and revitalizing exceptional constructions (discovered and awarded a prize within the contest *The Most Trimmed House* - „Casa cea mai dichisită”).

The provocations of the last editions of the Summer University Bucium were Mărioara Abrudeanu house, from Valea Negrişii village, raised at the beginning of the last century, proposed to be transformed in the Cultural Centre Ovidiu Bârlea (famous folklore scientist born in the area), the Gligor house (which was repaired *in situ* through an emergency intervention) and several designs of proposals of intervention required by owners of houses in Bucium. A complete restoration project for the Cross erected by the Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna, an important historical figure of the XIX-th century, was realized as well. The cross had been inventoried and measured during the previous editions of the Summer School and afterwards was officially included in the List of National Monuments (Fig. 1).

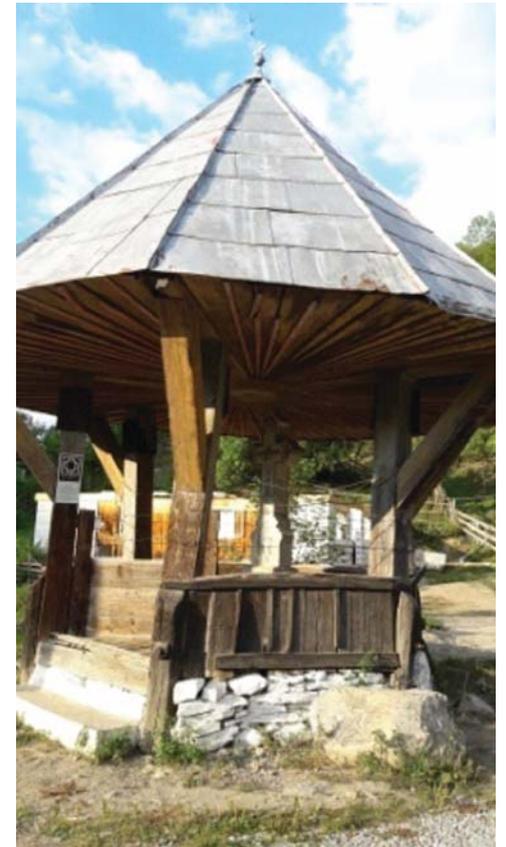


Fig. 1. The Cross erected by the Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna – 1897, on the site of a former wooden cross from 1847, and its protection structure in wood (photo credits: Elena-Codina Duşoiu, 2015).

Methodology

Since 2009 10 editions of the Summer University took place in Bucium, with diverse investigation topics: “Along the Roman Roads”

– 2009 and 2010, “Restoration of the Old School of the Village and Repertoire of the Rural Heritage of Bucium” – 2011, 2012, “Repertoire of the Rural Heritage of Bucium” – 2012, 2013, 2014, “Survey and Restoration Project for the Church from Bucium – Izbita” – 2015, “Survey of the Mărioara Abrudeanu House” (1860-1890) – 2017, „The Cultural Centre Ovidiu Bârlea House – Intervention Project. Inventory of Rural Furniture” – 2018, „Reparation of the Gligor House. Intervention Projects on Traditional Houses and on the Cross erected by the Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna” – 2019 [2]. The Summer Schools were focused on various components of intervention in territory, from studies concerning inventory and survey of traditional houses, their assemblage in diverse volumetric and planimetric typologies, complex surveys, restoration and rehabilitation projects: the church from Bucium Izbita (erected before 1790, with its first construction phase in the end of the XVIIth century), project for the Ovidiu Bârlea cultural centre from Bucium Poieni in a traditional house, the house of the Gligor family (end of the XIXth century) etc. Landscape studies have been developed as well, concerning the placement of the mining galleries and traditional mining constructions on the valley of the Abruzel river. The Summer University managed as well to realize concrete interventions of rehabilitation in traditional techniques on houses with historical value, that have been practically restored (the Colda house - 1851 and the Doicear house - 1870). Other actions conducted by the Summer Universities were classifying some architecture monuments into the official List of monuments of Romania (six votive and commemorative crosses), the competition *The Most Trimmed House* (meant to encourage local community in keeping traditional values and maintaining their houses within the ancestral spirit of the Romanian village), development strategies for the touristic promotion for the Bucium commune and its surroundings, with the purpose of strengthening local community. RPER also activated collaboration mechanisms, such as partnerships with local cultural entities – Cultural Association „Ovidiu Bârlea”, Association “Baia Domnilor” (*The Mine of Lords*), Museum of the Bucium Inhabitants. During the various editions, participants in the Summer University had the chance to connect themselves to all the later described superposed layers that form “the spirit of the place”, to study and interpret them and to get involved into their preservation, in the integrality of their values [4].

Pre-industrial archeology – traditional mining

In the surroundings of Bucium, there is a whole network of mining galleries, whose entrances are covered with vegetation that has not been removed in years. Some of those are still in relation with traditional mills specially conceived for golden ore, located in neighbor households (*şteampuri*). Such construction has been restored and is now exposed in the Museum of Bucium Inhabitants, in a perfect functioning state (Fig. 2). The access to the majority of mining galleries was made through the well known itinerary of miners through the Abruzel valley, but many more entrances have been discovered during the Summer

Universities by the students of the Babeş-Bolyai University from Cluj, guided in this adventure by the legendary “shepherd Colda”, a tireless provider of stories that make the place reborn.



Fig. 2. Reconstruction of a traditional ore mill (*şteamp*) at the Museum of Bucium Inhabitants (photo credits: Elena-Codina Duşoiu, 2017).

Landscape

The natural and anthropogenic elements of the place create a prototype of landscape specific to the Apuseni mountains, which have a rather accessible height (about 1000 ms), forests of coniferous and foliated species, hay meadows, villages settled on the valleys of rivers or spread on the hills, ships and cows grazing as living accents and, not least, clues of the long periods of traditional mining exploitation (Fig. 3). This type of landscape, in which the people of the place get integrated as elements in movement, should be classified as a heritage value in itself, respected and understood by all visitors of Țara Moşilor (Land of the *Moşi*, as are called its inhabitants). The identification study of cultural and natural heritage resources with the purpose of their touristic valorization, the creation of itineraries and of a network of services offered by the local people, the investigation in situ of the whole territory of Bucium with the purpose of identification of local resources, registration of the touristic itineraries through a GIS system, conceiving a series of thematic itineraries (Itinerary of the sites of gold from Apuseni, Itinerary of the “Trimmed houses” etc.) were all formulated within a strategy of touristic development. The team specialized in tourism and geography tightly interacted with local people in collecting data and involved as well the other participants of the Summer University in going through future personalized touristic itineraries. Life of the inhabitants of Bucium was organized around gold that was extracted from the mountain called Vâlcoiul de aur, a topographic element which organized the life of people through centuries.



Fig. 3. Landscape from a hill in the commune of Mogoş, in the neighborhood of Bucium (photo credits: Elena-Codina Duşoiu, 2017).

Sacred architecture. The church. The cross. *How sad would be the space if not marked by the churches!*, once said, with wisdom and nostalgia, the philosopher Petre Țuţea[5]. In Apuseni the towers sting the sky from between the hills, with the precision of arrows. Though they are built in brick and stone, the churches of the place repeat the silhouette of wooden churches from Maramureş, a prototype of spirituality related with the legends of the North. Admiring these dominants of height, thinking flies to the exercises of essentialised skylines sketched by the architect G.M.Cantacuzino, subtle observer of landscape and of the spatial characteristics of place. The church from Bucium-Izbita was chosen as subject for the Summer University of 2015, whose participants realized the complete survey of the church and formulated proposals for its conservation. In the attic of the church original icons and old cult objects were found and proposed for restoration (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Church from Bucium Izbita – emergence of the tower in landscape (source: watercolor by the author, 2018).

While the height of the churches dominates the landscape, road crosses enjoy divine blessing as well (Fig. 5). Roads are protected by stone or wooden crosses, some wearing the well known wish: „Norocu la băişagu” (*Good luck at mining*). Six of those, documented by the students of the Bucium Summer Universities, have been classified as historical monuments with local importance.



Fig. 5. One of the six stone crosses protected by wooden constructions documented and listed as monuments by the Bucium Summer University (photo credits: Elena-Codina Duşoiu, 2019).

Traditional habitation

During the time, the RPER Association inventoried various traditional houses and households that have been completely measured, with the detailing of important constructive elements (joints, facades, socles, eaves etc.) and published repertoires of rural patrimony, elaborated since 2011. The repertoires created a compendium which illustrated the typology of the traditional house from Țara Moșilor, solid, integrated to a complex household, conceived for the families of the miners and mainly maintained by the wives who waited for their husbands to come back from the underground. More than 90% of the houses of the region are built in wooden beams and have roofs covered with shingle. A morphologic element giving identity to the house prototype is the exterior entrance porch (*târnaț*), including as well a tall covered stair leading to the main dwelling level (Fig. 6). The household was surrounded by a tall wooden fence, provided with a massive gate proper for carriages and people. Beside the inventories, RPER realized the rehabilitation in traditional techniques of two houses considered to be representative for the area (the Colda house from Bucium Poieni village, raised in 1851, fully restored and the Doicear house from the Ferești village from the year 1870, which has been provided with a new shingle roof, waking them to a new life.



Fig. 6. The house of a shingle master on the Valley of the Abruzel river (photo credits: Elena-Codina Dușoiu, 2019).

Community - people

The most important component of the place consists, undoubtedly, in the people. They take further tradition and legends and are a living source of information and stories. Local community consists in former miners, craftsmen, their wives and mothers, women more than 80 years old that traverse every day several hills and kilometers (Fig. 7). Together with them there are families from Cluj or other neighboring towns who come back to discover the perfume of the roots, spending long holidays in fatherly houses that they helped to revive to a new life. Beside those, strangers settled in Bucium as well, as a consequence of falling in love with the forests of the Apuseni mountains. This allowed homes as the "Ursita" Inn (Inn of the Destiny) to appear. "Ursita" is an old traditional rehabilitated house that shelters an impressive collection of objects from the past centuries: icons, furniture, pottery, towels etc.

A communication deck with the local community was created as well through the annual competition "The Most Trimmed House", an opportunity for the participants of



Fig. 7. Ladies living on the hills of Mogoș and Bucium (photo credits: Elena-Codina Dușoiu, 2017)

the Summer Universities to make friends with the inhabitants of the Bucium commune and to involve them into their projects.

The traditional Romanian interior from Țara Moșilor

The interior of the house from Țara Moșilor has elements which are typical to the ambience of the Romanian house from the mountain area, integrating some elements of urban interior as well. The majority of the houses are accessed through the exterior porch (*târnaț*), a multifunctional space dedicated to all members of the family, conducting through all the rooms of the house.

There is a main room ("the clean room"), dedicated to celebrations and guests, oriented through the street. This room is followed by the room dedicated to everyday activities, that sometimes is a kitchen as well, a main hall ("tinda"), sheltering some working tools, and sometimes a toilet integrated to the house. (Fig. 8)

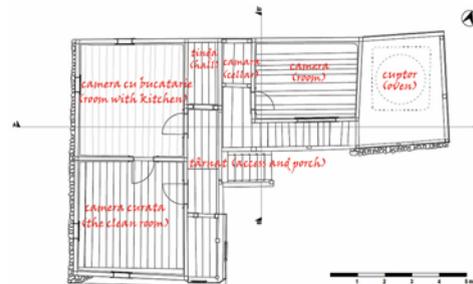


Fig. 8. Plan of the Mărioara Abrudeanu house, XIX-th century (realized during the Bucium Summer University 2017).

The former editions identified a local style in interior furniture, in different physical conditions. Furniture was made in massive wood of fir tree, cherry tree, ash, birch, and was mainly carved out or painted, sometimes with marquetry in other essences. This generated the idea of an inventory, to be realized, based on a research to be continued on several years, pointing out some traditional elements giving identity to the interior ambience. The inventory was started with the 2018 edition, when a compendium of documentary sheets was realized. Furniture objects such as the traditional wooden sofa - "lavița", (Fig. 9), the kitchen cabinet (called with the regional term "credent"), the multifunctional bed, with an incorporated chest, tables with different dimensions and utilities, chairs, stools etc. The 2018 edition identified more than 100 pieces of furniture and inventoried more than 50.

The actuality, ergonomic efficiency and flexibility of these furniture objects are



Fig. 9. Traditional multifunctional furniture in the Colda house (photo credits: Elena-Codina Dușoiu, 2018).

impressive, proving that actually design was born neither in the XXth century, nor in urban space.

Objects of everyday life

Many times legends are based on objects, which testify, together with people, about past times. Climbing through the Detunate rocks, just above the church from Bucium-Poieni, a halt called "Fefelega" welcomes the travelers. The host, a jestful former miner, presenting himself with his nickname, Vătălău, recommends himself to be the great-grandson of the famous Fefelega, the character created by Ion Agârbiceanu, priest and writer, a personality of Bucium. He may show you the saddle of the horse Bator, baskets for carrying golden ore (*corfe*), gas lamps etc. (Fig. 10)

Many of the "trimmed houses" have been awarded, as well, beside the integrality of their architectural volume, for the collection of authentic objects held by the proprietaries (there are old ladies of the place that still know how to use the spinning cradle or the loom).



Fig. 10. Homemade bags (*desagi*) to be carried on the back or on horseback (photo credits: Elena-Codina Dușoiu, 2018).

The traditional costume

The ladies of Bucium are still proud of their costume, considered to be the nicest in the whole area of the Apuseni mountains (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11. Two pieces of the popular costume of Bucium (photo credits: Marcela Alexandrescu, 2017).

The suit is composed out of a long white shirt in hemp cloth, black apron in wool wore in front (*opreg*), another red one behind (*zadie*), a big headkerchief, sheep waistcoat, long stocks and traditional shoes (*opinci*). Jewels are habitual as well, especially specific earrings in pure gold. Many women wear as well the colors of the national flag as a belt. I was surprised to discover that many young women know how to sew traditional clothes with the same talent and skill as their great grandmothers.

Sound

It is not random that sound was the one that gave the name of the Bucium commune. With its grave and long vibration, the alpenhorn (*bucium*) is a living call from mountains and forests (Fig. 12). The closing ceremony of the 2017 edition of the Summer University included the participants at the MOTZart festival (dedicated to the traditional instrument *tulnic*), organized by the well known musician Mircea Florian and other artists that delighted us with their sonorous harmonies.



Fig. 12. An ancient photo showing a peasant playing his bucium (<http://www.micul-dac.ro/?p=905>).

Results (some conclusions)

We may ask ourselves which is, in the end, the result of the editions of the Bucium Summer University, thoroughly organized, lived with passion and continued with dedication? The activity has several components: a practical one, consisting in the restoration of constructions using traditional techniques (the Colda house – built in 1851 and the Gligor house, from Bucium Poieni village, the Doicear house from Ferești village, built in 1870, the Cross erected by the Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna, 1897) and a scientific one: six publications containing Repertories of the rural patrimony of Bucium.

The two practical rehabilitation interventions functioned as pilot insertions in the tissue of the village, being in the same time good practice models for the rural area and vectors for a correct recuperation of the local built heritage.

A complete restoration project for the Cross erected by the Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna, an important historical figure of the XIX-th century is a present provocation RPER is working at (since 2019), expecting to be turned in a restoration site.

The six “Repertories of the rural patrimony of Bucium” represent a complete survey of the categories of mobile and immobile heritage of the place and constitute now a valuable reference source for the further investigation concerning the area, for instance in the *Monography of the Bucium Commune* the author bases his conclusions concerning the architecture of the place on the documentation published in the Repertories [6]. The almost complete documentation on the valuable establishments, churches and road crosses, elements of industrial archaeology dedicated to gold extraction, landscape, traditional furniture transforms the study into a basic scientific material for any researcher aiming to investigate the area.

Due to the editions of the Bucium Summer University, sustainable links with local community have been constructed as well, supported by “The Most Trimmed House” competition, by partnerships with local associations, by strategies for touristic development which are beginning to be turned into reality in collaboration with local administration. The fact that the RPER Association managed to classify six local constructions (historical road crosses) as monuments officially listed in the National List of Patrimony opened for the inhabitants of the place a new conscience of the value of their living area, changing the paradigm of their interpretation on their own habitat (Fig. 13,14).



Fig. 13. The Gligor house in Bucium Poieni before its reparation (source: watercolor by the author, 2019).

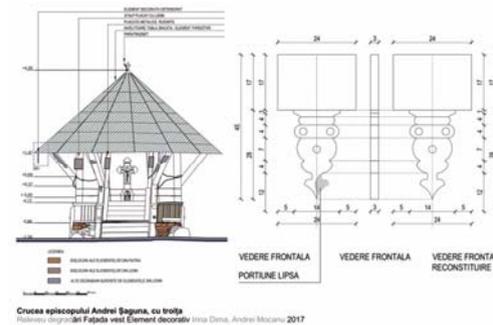


Fig. 14. The Cross erected by the Metropolitan Andrei Șaguna (source: study realized during the Summer University in 2017)

But maybe the most important realization is the fact that the participants to the various editions of the Summer University (more than 150) remained in love with this blessed place and animated with the desire of protecting and multiplying its values.

Acknowledgement

The activity of the Summer Universities from Bucium has been developed due to all participants: professors, students, architects, sociologists, geographers, historians, photographers and, of course, to the members, founders and friends of RPER. A warm tribute to all of them!

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