

INTRODUCTION

The present volume represents the second issue of the journal *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica* from 2017, dedicated to the historical residences, which I coordinated together with Letiția Cosnean Nistor, who is a researcher at the Vasile Pârvan Archaeological Institute in Bucharest. This second volume is more heterogenous than the first and it contains a group of three studies and articles that address different issues on the residencies from Transylvania, Banat and Hungary, followed by a group of research reports in the Princely Palace from Alba Iulia; furthermore, another group contains presentations of multiannual projects proposed during the last few decades by researchers and NGOs for the palaces, castles and mansions from Transylvania. Finally, the volume contains a presentation of Gábor Margittai's book on the dramatic fate of certain descendants of the Hungarian aristocracy (owners of Transylvanian residences) during the years of the Romanian communism and post-communism.

Several of the published materials somewhat surpass the chronological frame and the themes stated in the call for papers originally launched in 2016, since they also approach the current situations of the former residences that belonged to the elites of the present countries, Hungary and Romania, as a continuation of the introductory study from the first volume.¹ The reason is that, in Romania, after the political changes of the 90s, the general situation of the residences had not changed in a positive way. Their authenticity and the fact that they are documentary sources for the history of the elites continue to be endangered and the differences between the ways in which we write about them in different parts of Europe continue to increase.

In Romania (and not only – as one of the studies present in the volume shows), the dramatic fate triggered by the confiscation from May 1949, the intentional destructions and their forced repurposing put into practice during the totalitarian regime was not interrupted after 1989, not even in the case of the buildings that had been declared historical monuments. Some of them are even absent from the List of Historical Monuments, which is said to contain only approximately 70-80% of the palaces, castles and mansions in Romania. Moreover, in the case of those which had been covered by the law of monuments, the protection from the state is unreal. The repossession (based on a faulty legislation) lasted for dozens of years and the new or old owners often received ruins whose salvation implied very high financial costs. At the same time, the

¹ Ileana Burnichioiu, "Historical Residential Architecture under Totalitarian Regimes and After: Romanian Case Study," *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica (Palaces, Castles and Manor Houses of Medieval and Early Modern Times)*, 21, 1 (2017) 13-44.

institutions empowered by the law to act in the field of monument protection are much too weak to hold any real ability to intervene through financial support, or even through monitoring documentation and specialized consultancy. Furthermore, the local authorities which took over some of the buildings either lack vision or they ignore the legislation and the monument protection norms by overlooking their historical and architectural value. In this context, there is an open road towards some of the more ambitious and aggressive projects, meant to bring a certain satisfaction to mass tourism and to the real-estate interests. However, in the field of monument protection, the Romanian schools do not form sufficient specialists in conservation, restoration and monument research. The latter field still does not have an institutionalized frame in which what in western Europe is named *Bauforschung* and *Building Archaeology* could develop adequately, with positive effects in field documentation and in compiling specialized archives accessible by the projects that undergo field documentation or by the future generations. In atonement, during the last few years, certain NGOs had the initiative to inventory the monuments, to verify which are present in the List of Monuments and which are not, to offer consultancy to the owners, to seek donations, to include the historical residencies in transnational programs or to organize summer schools for the formation of future specialists. Their impact is still somewhat diminished in comparison with the necessities in the field, since many of the residencies are compound of generous proportions and they are either in collapse or in a state of pre-collapse.

Another issue identified during the post-revolution decades regarding the old residencies is the difficulty of a small group of researchers to publish the results of their research in time. If any archaeological research in Romania, traditionally and as an official regulation, must be published at least as a small report in the *Chronical of Archaeological Research*, other studies (architectural, parietal, dendrochronological etc.) that had been privately financed, with low costs, are difficult to carry out, control or to be known. Some of them are gathered within documentations (written, photographic) for commissions of national or regional approval, but they are not completely accessible to the public or they are impossible to consult, due to the fact that since 2000 there is no longer any means for their centralization; other such studies remain in the private archives of those who had carried them out. The low rate of the publication of the results of the research represents the reason for which this second volume also included research reports since the study I authored in the previous volume offered as an example a list of parietal investigations carried out after 2003 only under the coordination of a restaurateur painter², but their presentation at events and their publication in an extended form had become an issue of personal choice and an effort supported at best by an NGO and by private donations.

² Burnichioiu, "Historical Residential Architecture," 43-44.

In this volume, Zsuzsanna Kopeczny from the Museum of Banat approached the military role played by the medieval noble residencies that disappeared in the Tisa – Danube – Mures area during the Ottoman wars. By using different types of sources, she identified 25 noble residencies in the area, after which she discussed three particular cases of late medieval castles: Fellak (today Felnac, Arad County), Eperjes (today Chelmac, Arad County) and Facsád (today Făget, Timiș County). The study shows how fruitful and how necessary a systematic restoration endeavour could be, by engaging different types of available sources in the situation in which the vestiges in the field had long disappeared and their archaeology is still in an incipient stage.

Zsolt Kovács, a specialist in the premodern and modern Transylvanian art history, discusses an issue approached in his doctoral thesis, namely that of the noble political emblems from the 17th-18th centuries, with examples from the parietal art from the Bethlen castles from Criș (Keresd/Kreisch, Mureș County) and the Bornemisza castle from Gurghiu (Görgényszentimre/Görgen, Mureș County), analysed in relation with the written sources. Their analysis sheds light on the affiliation of the province with a European cultural phenomenon characteristic to the 16th-18th centuries and with the influence in Transylvania of certain well-known works from the European political theory signed by authors such as Julius Wilhelm Zinzgref, Franz Reinzer or Anton Vanossi.

The article of the Budapest-based professor Béla Zsolt Szakács represents a wake-up call for the loss of authenticity of certain ruined fortresses and castles and the loss of their continuation as historical sources in the Central Eastern Europe. Considered to be the expressions of a glorious past, under the pretext that they must be protected from the elements and that they must be given back to tourism, a series of medieval fortresses/castles (regal or noble) from Hungary, Poland, Lithuania and Croatia have actually become the victims of certain vain reconstruction plans. The author raises the theoretical issues regarding today's monument protection and he argues that the reconstructions (that had been the justifiable solution for the monuments and cities from post-war Europe, thus a period that must be considered to be outdated) alter or completely destroy the buildings' possibility of being historical sources.

In 2014, two out of the three courts that belonged to the princely residence from Alba Iulia in the 17th Century started to be studied in the field for the first time and the researched continued intermittently until 2017. This volume contains in the preamble an information report on the types of research conducted between 2014-2017, with their main results, and more detailed reports on two smaller areas that contained discoveries from the Roman epochs until the first half of the 19th Century. One of them (signed by Balázs Halmos, Katalin Marótyz, and Ileana Burnichioiu) contains an application of the most appropriate survey method for *Bauforschung* called *true-to-form survey* to the medieval and

Renaissance building remains identified during the wall research from 2014-2017 in the wing “E” of the Princely Palace in Alba Iulia. This part is the so-called “Provost’s Gate” (according with the written sources of 17th-18th Centuries). The second one (written by Stefan Wagner) approaches a sector of a Roman castrum that had been reused as the southern side for one of the princely palace wings, attributed to Gabriel Bethlen (wing “D”).

In the third section of the volume, a collective of authors (Tímea Berki, Zsolt Csók, Árpád Furu, Csilla Hegedüs, Bálint Szabó, and Attila Weisz) present the efforts of the Transylvania Trust Foundation for the professional training for the Transylvanian monument protection, centred around the Bonțida Castle (Bonchida, Cluj County), where a workshop on art history and archaeology is periodically held. Moreover, engineer Dorotthya Makay, a member of the Pont Group that elaborated the “Castle in Transylvania”.³ The strategy shows that for the conservation and valorization of the Transylvanian old residencies, a specific approach is needed, namely a forward-looking strategy adapted to the residencies’ dramatic history during the last hundred years (in which the confiscation from 1949 was the most memorable moment), to the current state of conservation, to the ownership situation and the owners who must be identified, held responsible and supported, to the current legislation for the field of monuments and buildings. Beginning from the current situations, the present material shows which measures could be taken, with whom and in what order one can conduct a strategy of research, salvaging and re-vitalisation of the former residencies.

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³ See <https://www.castleintransylvania.ro>.