Historical monuments, cultural edifices and medieval architecture - the cultural touristic potential for the village Râu de Mori

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Abstract

The rural district of Râu de Mori represents a social, objective, historical and cultural reality that is specific to the area and it has important local values that are not very known today. This study evidentiates the historical, cultural and traditional values of the rural district Râu de Mori in order to promote the tourism in this area. There are presented and analysed the medieval historical monuments, the cultural edifices and the traditional architecture of the houses from the district.

Although the touristic activities in the area are determined by the presence in the district of two glacial lakes in the National Park Retezat (Bucura and Zănoaga) and four massifs (Țarcu, Godeanu, Puiel-Iorgovanu and Retezat) that offer the area a high attractivity due to the diversity of the landscape, only a few now that the high touristic potential is also related to the cultural edifices including the historical medieval monuments, the traditional architecture and the ancient traditions that are being kept even today by the local people.

The historical and cultural value of the district is remarkable due to the presence of a few roman settlements from the categories of „villae rusticae“, „vicus“ or „pages“, in the villages: Ostrov, Râu de Mori, and Clopotiva.

The identified medieval monuments of the district are closely related to the family Cândea, this family was mentioned in medieval papers as the founder of new villages (Suseni, Gureni, Colți), Colț citadel or of the nobiliary court from Râu de Mori.

Due to their history and their architecture the churches and the monasteries from this area are very interesting for the tourists.

In all the villages from the district we can find the same architecture of the houses as in the XVI-XIX centuries that gives unity to the space in the diversity of the landscape and of the environment.

Material and Methods

The working methodology was:
→ bibliographic study;
→ field visits in order to do:
  - the direct observation, the best method to study the rural life;
  - statistic documentations;

Results and Discussions

After we visit the area, we can say that the district of Râu de Mori is a part of “Țara Hațegului” and it is situated in the south-western part of Hunedoara county at the intersection of the 45°30’ north parallel latitude with the 22°55’ meridian east longitude, at the limit between the high plain and the mountains on a surface of 38782 hectares. The county communicates with the other regions through the national road DN 68; this road has also connections with other local roads. The area has a rich hydrographic network, most of the villages are situated near the rivers as: Râu Mare, Sibișelul and Râuşor.

The identified medieval monuments are represented by the Colț Citadel (Foto 1) and the buildings from the nobiliary court of the Cândea family. The Colț Citadel is the most important medieval monument from the area and it is situated on the right side of Râuşor in the village of Suseni. It was built at the beginning of the 14th century on a cliff at an altitude of 200 meters. At first, it was a tower with a square plan, each side having 7,5 meters and the walls had 1,70 - 1,80 meters in order to be a refuge for the Cândea family.

In the 15th and the 16th centuries were added the inside walls that can be seen today and the last buildings were made in the 17th century. The citadel functioned for 4 centuries and the evolution of the
weapons and the necessities of the owners determined the leaving of the citadel in the favor of the nobiliary court. Due to its position in the landscape, the Coț citadel was remarked by the writer Jules Verne and became an inspiration for the book "The Castle from the Carpathians" [5].

![Foto 1 The ruins of the Coț Citadel- Suseni (Varan, 2011)](image)

The nobiliary court of the Cândea family is located in the center of the village Râu de Mori and it benefits of the special landscape around the citadel that dominates the valley of the river.

The National Commission of the Historical Monuments declared this ensemble as being a "historical monument with a function of a touristic complex with a high degree of comfort, a place for cultural, scientific, business or memorial gatherings. In order to make this possible, the palace, the chapel, the stable and the annex are being restored.

The Palace, the oldest part of the ensemble (Foto 2), is a building that has the shape of an L, the first level is partially buried in the ground and it is covered with vaults of rock of brick and the anchors of a few doors are made of stone in a Renaissance style [2].

The ground level was rebuilt several times and it keeps spaces that are covered with Baroque stone vaults and it dates back in the 17th century. In here it is the reception, some rooms and a restaurant with an office and a toilet [2]. The last level hosted the spaces for the inhabitants, in here there could have been made 14 rooms and flats. The connection between the floors is made through two stairs in the opposite corners, one of them goes straight to the reception, and the third stair connects the ground floor with the rooms open to the public.

The Chapel is arranged as an auditorium and it can host reunions of 20-30 people for conferences, watching movies or recitals.

The stable was built at the end of the 17th century and it is going to be transformed in a dance hall.

The Annex dates back to the end of the 19th century. At the ground level, there is going to be made a place for storing food and at the first floor there are going to be made rooms with four beds. At the endings of the building there are going to be emergency stairs.
The analyzed cultural edifices are: the Colț Monastery, the Medieval church from Ostrov, the church from Râu de Mori and the Calvin Church.

The Colț monastery is an ecclesiastical monument situated in the south area of the village Suseni, on the valley of the Răușor river and it has probably been the most important orthodox monastery until the 16th century. As a proof the monastery is located on the domain of the family Cândea, a family known for its wealth.

The monastery’s church (foto3) is located on a little plateau at the end of a leak that comes from the Măgura Zimbrului (1251), at the entrance in an area of a defile of the river Răușor. It is a building with a rectangular altar (3x3 meters) and an orthogonal aisle (7 x 5 meters). The particularity is that the tower is built above the altar (h=12 meters) and it is supported by two counterforts that are perpendicular on the free corners. On the north and the east side, the first floor has elongated windows with marks of stone plat bands carved in the early gothic style [2].

What is amazing in this church is represented by the traces of the splendid fresco from the walls. Today there are kept only a few remains that are destroyed by the bad conditions, but they are being restored. The correspondents of these pictures are found at the Cozia monastery. The theme of the Acatist hymn is represented on 24 scenes. The titular saint from the past remained an enigma even today. Ecaterina Cinceza-Buculei supposed that it should have been the Transfiguration because of the presence of some scenes about this subject on the altar. It is supposed that the founder of the monastery was Cândea I, the chronology and the evolution of the church Colț being connected to the nobiliary family Cândea that owned the valley of Râu de Mori [7].
The medieval church of Ostrov (Foto 4) was studied intensively by Radu Popa who supposed that the tower of the bell could be “the remain of a building from the roman era” idea that was also found in some circles in Lugoj.

The researches revealed an evident variation of the wall’s thickness (0,90 - 0,60 meters) and the placement of the tower with the bell towards the right side of the central axis. The entrance is framed by two windows with typical archaic forms (a drawing with the plan of the Ostrov church and the spire of the church).

As a result of the researches conducted between 1995-1996, the frame of the south entrance was revealed. It is an opening with a width of 0,65 X 1,6 meters. Above this entrance was discovered a niche that is becoming wider in another room with a semicircular closure. A meter to the west was identified one of the two medieval windows of the monument. In the upper side, the opening of the window is cut in sharp angular shapes. The window has no similitudes in the architecture of the area of Țara Hațegului [7].

The new elements are linked to the existence of a new support for the icon’s wall that has been built after the church. A special figure is represented by the superb roman marble base of the monument.

The stylistic elements of medieval architecture kept especially the spire. At the second level there was another entrance with a mobile scale that was transformed by adding a brick wall. This level has windows on three sides. The initial roof was built from stone pieces and roman bricks that were arranged in a pyramidal cone. Over it is a pyramidal cover.

In the chronological evolution of the church followed the operation that enriched it with a superb fresco, of which it was kept the icon of the Virgin Mary Hodighitna [7]. Some traces of fresco also appear on the niche of the south entrance. In the interior, in the area of the window situated between the old entrance from the south and the one that is used now, there were recovered many fragments that resulted from the breaking of the actual fresco. All the art historians that analysed it were unanimous about its quality of execution even in the actual condition, with the mutilated faces.

A special problem that appears only in the Ostrov village is the delimitation of the cemetery around the church. The cemetery was surrounded with 208 roman stones that had epigraphs, figurative or nonfigurative pieces.

The orthodox church of Râu de Mori (Foto 5) is situated near the old constructions of the Kendeffy manor and it has the appearance of a transformed building. The spire-tower from the west side is a massive wooden construction that is supported in the front side of two massive counterforts and it is at the height of the last floor. Other two counterforts that have a simplier shape but that are inequal as dimensions support the north and the south sides of the spire [7].

The last level of the tower is made of wood with a pyramidal roof. From the west wall of the ship there were conserved only a few older fragments that were englobed in an elongated ship with a semicircular altar.

There are more opinions that refer to the age of the church. Some say that it was built in the 14th century, a period in which there are numerous sources that mention that the church was a property of the family Cândea. There are opinions that say the church in previous to the 13th century (one of the people that say that is the priest from Râu de Mori, Cosmin Pasconi).
At the entrance in the church there is a stone that it is believed to be from Colți. The epigraphic text, that was decoded only partially, reveals the death of a hierarch of the church that was buried at the Colți church. The church was repaired in 1877, at the construction it was used stone from the river.

Another religious edifice that functioned in the village in the medieval period and from which only the ruins remained is the *calvin church* that was built in the perimeter of the nobiliary court of the Kendeffy family.

The binding walls of the same width as the walls of the church (1 meter) can be observed at the both corners of the north side. The south oriented altar seems to argumentate a rearrangement with a religious purpose of some old rooms of the court. The ship (9,50 X 8 meters) has an entrance through the north and an altar in the axis (4,70 X 6,30 meters). On the east side there is another hole that could come from another secondary entrance. The windows, 3 on the west side, of which one is at the altar, one on the east side and a smaller one on the axis of the altar, have a circular form [7].

Regarding the construction data there are some different opinions: Vasile Drăguț dates it in the 15th century, Eugenia Oreceanu dates it also in the 15th century and Radu Popa dates it in the 16th century [5].

In the year 1784 the church suffered some important damages: the chairs, the windows and the roof were destroyed, the bell was stolen and the graves were robbed.

To all these religious edifices it was added in 2002 the church from Nisipoasa on the valley of the Râul Mare river and it is situated on the road that goes to the National Park Retezat and the Gura Apei dam.

The houses built in the 17th - 19th century in the district of Râu de Mori, have a traditional architecture that gives unity to the space in the diversity of the relief and of the landscape. These are positioned close to the street, they are made of wood or they have a stone foundation and wooden walls and they have different rooms with different facilities (Foto 6, Foto7):

- »vestibule » or » porch » ( hall);
- a kitchen;
- a room;
- the cellar - the attic

In the court of the house there are the stables, the pigsty, the chicken coop and the place for the firewood.
Although the architectural style of the modern house is very different compared to the old constructions, the tradition of building the houses very near to the street has been kept. The construction materials are now the bricks, the concrete blocks and the tiles (Foto 8).
Conclusions

All the analysed religious buildings are real artistic and medieval architecture monuments with a high potential of cultural tourism.

The touristic potential of the district Râu de Mori can be improved by integrating the religious edifices, the historical monuments, the houses with a traditional architecture in the circuits of the art lovers.

The valorisation of the analysed elements, of the landscape's natural beauty, of the diversity of traditions specific to this area, needs some serious organising efforts, a good strategy and an integrated managerial concept.

References

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