

SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL TOURISM IN BĂRĂGANUL MOȘTISTEI BASED ON SACRED MONUMENTS

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Abstract

The sacral cultural landscape requires greater attention in the analysis of knowledge, through the multitude of details and messages it conveys, through painting and laic architecture. This study attempts to highlight and value the potential that the Mostiștea Bărăgan has from this point of view. The method of analysis is the empirical one of the interview which had as basis of analysis and discussion the knowledge of the main lay monuments (some of them without religious activity) of the locals, but also of those who visit the area. The results support the local administrations to pay more attention to these monuments that form a special cultural landscape, the sacred one. It can be an important source of tourism for a geographical area whose physical-geographical landscape is not particularly remarkable. Together with the wealth of lakes used for fishing and recreational purposes, this sacred cultural landscape could become an additional source of tourist attraction.

Key words: landscape, laic architecture, religious activity, tourist attraction

Introduction

Rural community life was, and still continues to be, based on the unwritten rules of local religious life. Many monuments existing in the countryside create the cultural system of a historical stage (Dumitrașcu et al., 2023). Rural life is part of this cultural system. As regards the study area, respectively the Plain of Bărăganului Mostiștei, we can say that it offers for analysis a sacral cultural landscape. In the lowland area, where living conditions are more difficult, people have appealed to faith more, so we find buildings such as places of worship. Whether Serbian or Bulgarian or Armenian Orthodox Christians or Protestants or Roman Catholics lived here, the need to venerate, to pray remained the same. Many of the religious monuments in the Mostiștea Bărăgan, as throughout Romania, are keepers of special symbols of great cultural value and attraction (Szemkovics et al., 2021; Teodorescu et al., 2016; Dumitran, 2015).

Material and methods

In the analysis of the geographic space of the Baragan of Mostiștea, in order to analyze the sacral cultural landscape, we used qualitative methods, such as interviews, but also field research. Many of the analyzed monuments are, for the local population, symbols of centuries of local life. From churches to monuments that have created gravescapes, all of them are the results of a continuous life in a rural area near a capital city - Bucharest. The selection of monuments followed certain criteria:

- The age of the monuments creating the sacramental landscape of the Baraganul Mostiștei;
- Importance of monuments for the community;
- Cultural relevance of each monument;
- Educational resource for generations of grass-roots communities.

Results

In the lowlands, as in any other geographical area, people have needed faith, and have created places of religious worship. Whether Serbian or Bulgarian or Armenian Orthodox Christians or Protestants or Roman Catholics lived here, the need to worship, to pray, remains the same. Several monuments and sites were analyzed in the present study, including the archaeological site of Sultana, at the center of which is a necropolis. This is found in the analysis of two important cultures in the southern part of Romania, such as Boian and Gumelnița, which are genetically related, but different from a chronological perspective, and the way they produced and decorated everyday objects, specific items with strong visual impact, such as pottery and ornaments (Dumitrașcu et al., 2023. At Sultana-Malu

Redou, about 4500-4400 BC. Hr, to this day the population has not lacked religiosity, as witnessed by discoveries such as: the "Goddess of Sultana" and "Vessel with lovers" and the last trophies erected in 2023 in honor of the heroes of the nation (in the locality Măriuța and Coțofana, right near the Boundary Cross here) or the last church built in the Presnei Valley in 2008 (Teodorescu et al, 2013). In 98% of the places of worship where religious services are held belong to the Orthodox Christian cult, part of them representing historical monuments. These places of worship are mainly built of brick. They have retained their beauty, authenticity, richness and simplicity in equal measure, even after so many centuries! The best examples of this are the former Negoiești Monastery - 1643 (Fig. 1), later transformed into a church of myrrh, and the Plătărești Monastery - 1641 (Fig.2), the foundations of Elina Doamna and Matei Basarab (ruler of Wallachia).



Fig. 1: Biserica fostei mănăstiri Negoiești, Parohia Negoiești



Fig. 2: Biserica Sfintei Mănăstiri Plătărești

Unfortunately, many of the cult places have been destroyed, as is the case of Codreni Monastery (Fig. 3), whose church, cells, enclosure walls can no longer be admired except in the dry summer periods, when the monastery (local river) retreats and the tower and some enclosure walls or cells can still be observed. The sacral cultural landscape is completed by the multitude of historic monument churches (Fig. 4) in the area we are referring to, by the newer or older trophies in almost every village, which are located not only at crossroads, but also at the entrance or exit of the localities, which proves once again the belief in divinity (Dumitran et al, 2015).



Fig. 3: Mănăstirea Codreni, ctitorie 1678



Fig. 4: Biserica veche din Valea Presnei

A less positive aspect are the abandoned churches, and in this regard we bring the following examples: the abandoned church in Luica (Fig. 5, Fig. 6 and Fig. 7), the ruins of a church in the village of Pelinu (Fig. 8), the ruins of the church in the village of Pițigaia, the degraded state of the church in the village of Hagiești, the ruins of the church in the village of Frunzânești, commune of Fundeni (Fig. 9), the church in the field of Valea Presnei. These places of worship have been damaged by earthquakes in Pițigaia and Frunzânești, by weather phenomena in Hagiești, by changes in the relief, as in the case of the Codreni monastery and Valea Presnei, and by the lack of involvement of the authorities and parishioners, as in the case of the abandoned church in Luica. The thoroughness with which natural phenomena must be monitored is a well-known fact (Zeleňáková et al, 2017). This is the only way monuments can be preserved in good condition. It must be said that in the last case the inhabitants of that locality needed a more generous space for the faithful to enter, but also because the church was in a continuous degradation due to carelessness (Szemkovics et al., 2018; Teodorescu et al., 2013; Băbăț et al., 2023).



Fig. 5: Biserica de la Luica, 1852



Fig. 6: Pisanie biserica de la Luica



Fig. 7: Altarul bisericii din Luica



Fig. 8: Biserica de la Pelinu, 1849



Fig. 9: Biserica de la Fundeni

The question of religious tourism appears. Many of these monuments are visited, without any recorded statistics, due to curiosity and religious involvement. They are included in the list of historical monuments in the analyzed area - Baraganul Mostistei. Also, not all of the churches, crosses or trophies visited are part of the category of historical monuments, some of them are a reflection of people's faith and care for places of worship or for everything that is sacred.

The church of Pițigaia (Fig. 10) occupies a special place in the area we are analyzing! We must remember that Pițigaia, close to Bucharest, 15 km away, is an almost deserted village, the existence of the 10 houses still standing is clear proof that in rural areas, without investment in infrastructure, everything will ruin! The church was shaken in the 1977 earthquake. Although, the spires have fallen, the roof no longer exists, only the walls are left standing, people have not stopped praying, bringing there icons in honor of the saints and lighting candles or candles for them (Fig. 10), because there is no other place of worship. The church is about 1 km from the village center.



Fig. 10: The ruin of the church and icons placed for worship in the church of Pițigaia.

Discussion

The need to show the beauty of these deteriorating or decayed objectives, which after restoration would acquire a greater artistic and cultural value. Not only the existence of the churches shows the richness of the sacred landscape in the studied area, but also the multitude of church icons and religious books, which are of extraordinary beauty or are very old (in Arțari there are icons from the 18th century, although the church was founded in the mid-19th century).

The monastery of Plătărești and the church of Negoiești, founded in 1646 and 1649 respectively, are living proof of the existence of an ancient Orthodox Christianity and of the fact that they have survived over the centuries thanks to the care of the clergy and the faithful. The fact that people come to these sites and worship or pray there shows their sanctity, their importance and the fact that, although in a dilapidated state, they will forever remain landmarks of spirituality not only for their communities, but also places of pilgrimage for those who know them or will come to know them.

Conclusion

Churches built of stone and brick, with frescoes, are today true gems of secular architecture. In architectural style, they are not sophisticated, but they correspond to Byzantine art and architecture. It is imperative to invest in infrastructure, to connect these buildings of culture and spirituality to all transportation networks. The absence of signposts makes all the beauties of the Bărăganul Mostiștei become non-existent, I believe that a rethinking of the infrastructure will be beneficial for visitors, pilgrims, but also for the locals, which would lead to an improvement in learning about culture, civilization, popular traditions.

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Souhrn

Kulturní krajina je dokladem lidské existence, činnosti, kterou vykonávala, a víry, kterou společenství vyjadřovalo. Důkazy jsou zhmotněny v památkách, jejichž duchovní hodnota se s postupem času zvyšuje. Všechny tyto hodnoty, které tvoří posvátnou kulturní krajinu, si zaslouží zhodnocení v kulturně-turistických okruzích.

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