

## FEATURES OF THE BUILT PATRIMONY AND THE HERITAGE OF THE “LANDS” IN THE ROMANIAN TISA BASIN

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**ABSTRACT** – We realised this analysis, as a part of an international project, in order to underline the potential of this region for its appropriate territorial arrangement targeting touristic activities. In order to analyse the built patrimony in the Romanian Tisa Basin we considered relevant a regional synthesis where we analysed territorial units from two general perspectives (the spatial and the temporal one) revealed in a synthesis and a map which allowed us underline the significance of capitalising the built patrimony in this region where the rivers flowing into the Tisa ensured its unity. We started our study from the list for historical monuments of the counties with part of their territory or with the whole territory in the Romanian Tisa Basin. We revealed the importance of the built patrimony in the Romanian Tisa Basin and the spiritual heritage belonging to the twelve ethnographic units named “lands” in several possible directions of touristic capitalisation we mentioned at the end of our paper.

**Keywords:** historical monuments, spiritual heritage, regional development

### FEATURES OF THE BUILT PATRIMONY ACCORDING TO THE LIST OF HISTORICAL MONUMENTS

*Our study used as a statistical basis the list of historical monuments for the counties totally or partially included in the Romanian Tisa Basin. Authorities published that list in Annex 1 of the Order no. 2314 of July the 8<sup>th</sup>, 2004, published in “Monitorul Oficial” no. 646 of July the 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004, based on Law no. 422 of July the 18<sup>th</sup>, 2001.*

In the Romanian Tisa Basin, the authorities declared historical monuments over 7500 monuments, piles, and sites. Out of those, over 2300 had national and universal cultural value, while the other were relevant in what their patrimony was concerned only at a local level. In the researched region, the best represented from a numeric perspective were Cluj, Mureş, Bistriţa-Năsăud, and Alba counties, while Mureş County was in the top of the hierarchy of the historical monuments having a national and universal cultural significance. Still, both at the regional and state levels, the monuments included in the UNESCO patrimony were the ones recommending certain counties for practicing tourism, especially those having a higher number of monuments on the world patrimony list: Maramureş, Alba, and Hunedoara counties, although other counties in the region hosted such monuments but not so numerous: Sibiu, Harghita, and Mureş counties.

### MONUMENTS INCLUDED IN THE UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

The UNESCO patrimony included four categories of historical monuments (Figure 1).

#### Wooden churches of Maramureş

The eight wooden churches of Maramureş were included in the UNESCO patrimony in 1999 (CODE 904): Bârsana (Bârsana commune), Budeşti (Budeşti commune), Deseşti (Deseşti commune), Ieud-Deal (Ieud commune), Plopiş (Şişeşti commune), Poienile Izei (Poienile Izei commune), Rogoz (Târgu Lăpuş town), and Şurdeşti (Şişeşti commune) (all of them in Maramureş County). They had the

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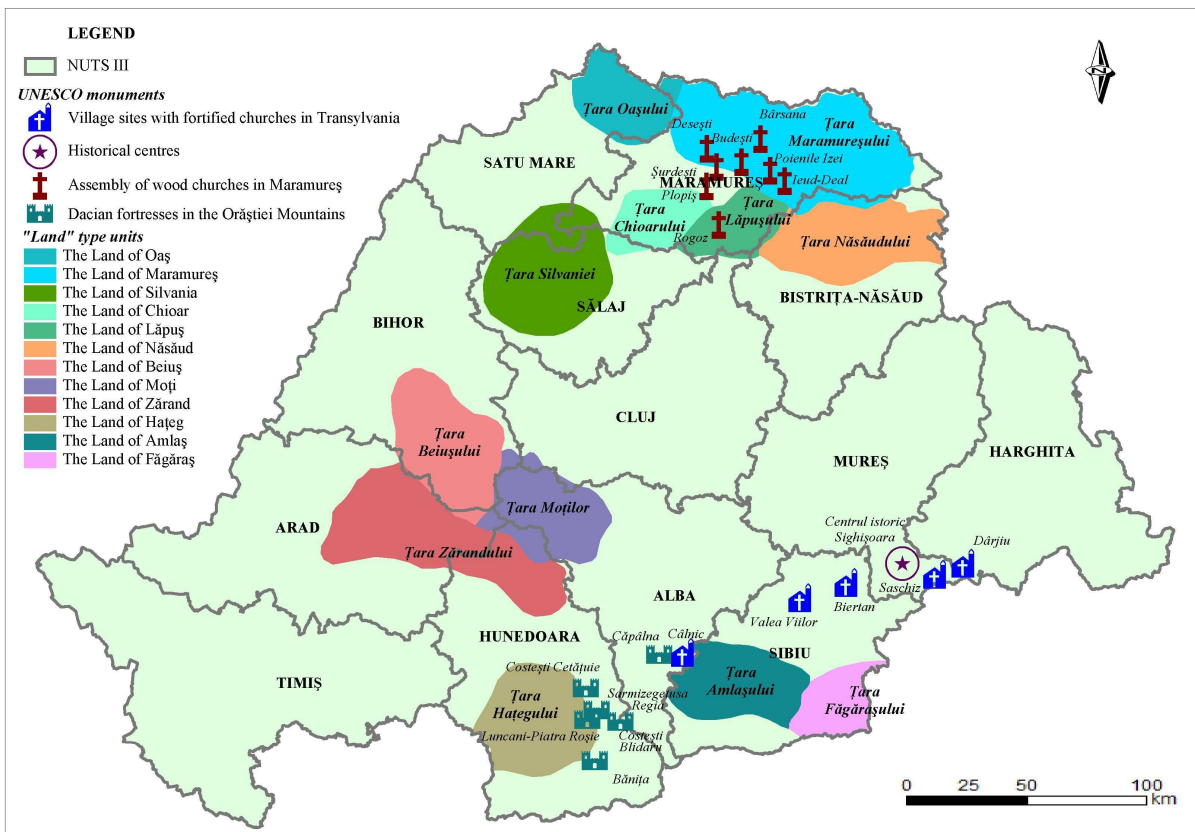
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following features: they were representative monuments for wood architecture; they dated back in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, but they were several centuries older architectural types; they displayed conceptual unity according to Medieval Romanian architecture characteristic of Orthodox churches; they had an open porch; they impressed due to their unusual dimensions for wooden constructions as they were monumental; they had impressing proportion of volumes; they displayed harmony between the whole and its parts; their sculptural models (similar to the wooden houses in Maramureş) underlined several construction elements; absence of colour.

**Sighișoara historical centre**

It was included in the UNESCO patrimony in 1999 (CODE 902).

The area included in the world heritage was the historical site that appeared because of the development of the medieval settlement adapted to landforms. The historical centre of Sighișoara city consisted of “The Citadel” – a settlement lying on the hill nearby the Târnava Mare river – and of “The Lower Town” lying at the bottom of the respective hill. The settlement developed around “The Lower Town”. Still inhabited, the historical centre of Sighișoara, the best preserved settlement of the Saxons of Transylvania, kept almost unchanged its model of urban organisation (its street network, its quarters), as well as the architectural value of its buildings, with high density of the ones that the authorities declared historical monuments. Among the arguments that recommended declaring the historical centre of the town a UNESCO site was also its representativeness for the entire urban area of Transylvania that it influenced during the Middle Ages both as settlement type and as traditional architecture.



**Figure 1.** The Romanian Tisa Basin. Elements of the Built Patrimony and the “Land” Type Units (author: Oana-Ramona Ilovan, cartography: Ciprian Moldovan)

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**Village sites with fortified churches in Transylvania**

They were included in the UNESCO patrimony in 1993 and 1999 (CODE 595, 596). These lied in the south-west and south of Transylvania, and in the Tisa region and were the following: Biertan (Sibiu County), Valea Viilor (Sibiu County), Călnic (Alba County), Dârjiu (Harghita County), and Saschiz (Mureş County).

Migratory people's invasions as well as those of the Turks determined the Saxon colonies in Transylvania to fortify their churches in order to save both their lives and goods.

The value of *the village sites with fortified churches* (five of the total seven being in the analysed region) consisted of revealing defensive architecture as an architectural element sending to political, social, and economic circumstances under which the Saxon communities of Transylvania developed. Those fortified churches were representative from an architectural perspective both at the regional and at the European level for a certain historical period (the Late Middle Ages), starting with the Saxons' colonisation in the old “king's territories” (“fundus regius”) in Transylvania. They were also valuable if we took into account their very good conservation state. Characteristic of the village sites of the Saxons of Transylvania was a certain landscape determined by the following elements: regulated networks for their streets, compact fronts, houses with high surrounding walls, and grouping of buildings around the centrally placed church.

Among the arguments supporting the universal cultural value of those historical monuments, we listed the following: they influenced the architecture of civil buildings and of nearby Romanian and Hungarian churches; they formed a whole that revealed the historical, social, and religious factors that conditioned their appearance as well as the way in which the cultural representations of the Saxon communities of Transylvania changed the environment; high density of fortified churches in Transylvania; diversity of fortresses' types on a small territory (three main types of fortifications: the church with fortified precincts, the fortified church (Saschiz), and the church fortress (Valea Viilor); those churches maintained and thus transmitted valuable interior elements such as the wall painting fragments in Dârjiu and the 16<sup>th</sup> century furniture in Saschiz and Valea Viilor; those five settlements were characteristic of the villages that the Saxons inhabited on the king's territories in Transylvania as they were lineal type settlements, some of them with secondary axes, parallel to the main one, with regulated streets (e.g. Călnic, Valea Viilor, and Biertan); the protected area – the historical nucleus – kept the long narrow strips of land mentioned in documents or by researchers as well as the way in which they organised those pieces of land; the names of places that referred to the old pieces of land with their owners were present in the oral tradition; narrow pieces of land characteristic of those settlements; public buildings maintained around the fortified church (the number of buildings and their architectural value was to be underlined for all those settlements); two types of households that maintained almost unchanged; diversity of ornamental solutions and certain important changes of architectural elements marked the evolution of households; they were still multiethnic settlements with ethnic sections.

**Dacian fortresses in the Orăştie Mountains**

The Dacian fortresses in the Orăştie Mountains (included in the UNESCO patrimony in 1999-CODE 906) lied in Hunedoara and Alba counties, in the south-west of Transylvania historical region. They were the following: Sarmizegetusa Regia (main settlement of the Dacian kingdom) - Grădiştea de Munte (Orăştioara de Sus commune); Costeşti-Cetăţuie (Orăştioara de Sus commune); Costeşti-Blidaru (Orăştioara de Sus commune); Luncani-Piatra Roşie (Boşorod commune); Băniţa (Băniţa, commune, all in Hunedoara County); and Căpâlna (Săsciori commune, Alba County). We included the Dacian fortress in Băniţa on the list of the monuments in the region, although the commune itself did not lie in the region, but in its neighbourhood. We chose this solution in order to offer a whole image of the UNESCO patrimony, having in view where that Dacian fortress lied.

The appearance and development of the fortified settlements and the building of fortresses, defended with walls of rock, starting with the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. were proof of an economic and cultural flourishing period. Two major events influenced the evolution of the Dacian kingdom. The first was the appearance of the Dacian kingdom ruled by King Burebista (82-44 B.C.),

and the second was the restoration of the Dacian ruling in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. led by King Decebal (87-106). Between the two above-mentioned kings, in the fortresses of the Orăștie Mountains, they created a defence system and they built sanctuaries around them. Therefore, those edifices were standing as testimonies of the Dacians' military and religious spirit within a large region (approximately 500 km<sup>2</sup>), where the fortified buildings, forts, and watching towers stood. Among the arguments that determined declaring those fortresses as part of world heritage, researchers identified also the fortification techniques (characteristic of the first part of the Iron Age) and sculpture in rock.

### **THE “LANDS” IN THE ROMANIAN TISA BASIN – MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL PATRIMONY**

The immaterial heritage that obeyed the rules and opportunities capitalised especially by cultural tourism, similarly to the built patrimony (monuments included on the national list or on the UNESCO one) was present in the Romanian Tisa Basin because of the region's hosting of twelve “land” type units. Therefore, the researched region included also *ethnographical resources* one could not ignore if taking into account the fact that those areas revealed a certain *life style* that was at the basis of a built patrimony adapted to people's diverse activities and visions upon life. That was why we discussed the material and spiritual heritage of the following “lands”: the Land of Oaș; the Land of Maramureș; the Land of Năsăud; the Land of Lăpuș; the Land of Chioar; the Land of Silvania; the Land of the Moți; the Land of Beiuș; the Land of Zărand; the Land of Hațeg, the Land of Făgăraș, and the Land of Amlaș. In this context, we underlined the significance of settlements, of the village architecture and of village installations, of occupations, of handicrafts, of customs, and of traditional clothes.

*The Land of Oaș* stood out though the preservation of features of rural settlements, of the traditions connected to old occupations (e.g. those related to sheep breeding), pottery (in Vama), unique customs, and traditional costumes. This region was well known due to its original ethnographic features as seen in people's clothes, in their songs and dances, in their handicrafts and distinct architecture of laic and religious wooden edifices. The Museum of the Land of Oaș exhibited a synthesis of these features presenting ceramics, household tools, traditional costumes, etc.

*The Land of the Moți* was recognised as the region where people used the rich wood resources in order to build churches, horns, two-handled tubs, etc. The region was unique especially due to its position: all the other Romanian “lands” “privileged” the depression space, but this one laid on mountaintops and plateaus. Therefore, it had the name “The Land of Rocks” Moreover, its name was not a name of a place but came from the name of the people inhabiting it: the “moți”. Its past ensured this “land” a special place in Romanian history due to people's fight for political, social, and economic rights. Beside this, one surely noticed people's adaptation to the environment through activities such as wood processing (e.g. two-handled tubs, furniture, handicraft and art objects) and mining (in full development during the Roman period, but much older than that).

*The Land of Maramureș* underlined the complex wood civilisation revealed through sculptured gates with traditional models, wooden churches, and handicraft products: counterpanes (Săpânța) and ceramics (Săcel). Its name sent to wooden households, churches, and gates, ancestral traditions and old costumes, all of them well preserved and touristically exploited, especially the rural area looking like an open-air museum.

*The Land of Lăpuș* was well known for the wooden church in Șurdești, having a 54 m spire – one of the tallest wooden churches in Europe. An old activity individualising the “land” was mining. Nevertheless, traditional occupations included animal breeding, wood exploitation, bees breeding for honey, pottery, wood processing (thus the many churches and other wooden buildings), and eggs painting. The traditional costumes were very colourful.

*The Land of Beiuș* revealed the main features of Bihor and it was an ethnographical area consisting of villages specialised in certain handicrafts: pottery (Leheceni), wood processing (hope chests in Budureasa), traditional woven materials (representative were the villages Valea de Jos and Pietroasa), Orthodox wooden churches (in Rieni, Copăceni, Sebiș, Petreasa, Ceișoara, and in Tarcaia).

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*The Land of Năsăud* sent to a traditional ethnographic region, to a mental space. That “land” was recognised in Romania mainly because of the characteristic features of man’s traditional costume: the hat with peacock feathers and the breastplate with tassels, as well as because of the presence of certain architectural elements in the rural area: wooden bridges with roofs, households, together with customs characteristic of an old activity: sheep breeding. Although the polarising centre, the town of Năsăud, had the statute of “the academicians’ town”, the Land of Năsăud functioned as a traditional rural region where people preserved traditional customs, both laic and religious, and the ones in the life cycle. Proud of their statute of descendents of those in the Military Border District, most of them free men and owners of woods, pastures, and of agricultural land, the people in the region developed an original mentality and a feeling of regional pride.

The landmarks of the identity in *the Land of Chioar*, similar to those of the identity in the Land of Năsăud, consisted of the disciplined character built during the Military Border District and reflected nowadays in the folklore abundant in war songs and outlaw ballads. Besides that, the people of the region were aware of their old statute as free and noble men and were proud of it. Landmarks of a wood civilisation were present in this “land”, too: the gates as first visual impact element, but the entire traditional household in the region (e.g. other buildings, agricultural tools, village technical installations, etc.) stood under the sign of wood. Characteristic and picturesque features were also those related to customs related to diverse agricultural practices and to handicrafts, as well as those dedicated to varied religious feasts during the whole year or to those highlighting significant moments in people’s life cycle (e.g. Christianisings, weddings, and funerals).

*The Land of Hațeg* was a mainly rural region as the only urban centre was Hațeg. Therefore, its lifestyle was a traditional one where local resources exploitation was a strength of the people that were especially occupied in agriculture. Its unique character consisted of the features of several settlements with a symbolic value for the entire Romania: Sarmizegetusa (Roman vestiges) and Densuș (Medieval church testifying for people’s old spirituality). Beside these, customs, traditions, handicrafts, and traditional costumes were among the very well preserved elements. Therefore, the rural and agricultural features of the “land” combined with Dacian, Roman, and Medieval vestiges, creating a unique mental space.

*The Land of Silvania* was significant at the regional level due to the role that the woods had for both people and settlements. The role of woods was both of protection and of underlining the uniformity of the natural component. The interference between the Romanian and Hungarian cultures was obvious in many areas of this “land”, as the village art and its characteristic manifestations included elements pertaining of both ethnicities, besides tolerance especially in what religion was concerned.

*The Land of Zărand*, not so well known as the other “lands” hosted by the Romanian Tisa Basin, preserved both the old Romanian customs and the belief in God due to the mentality of those who considered themselves Avram Iancu’s descendants. Wood had favoured and still favoured their existence, as they were well known for manufacturing two-handled tubs, wooden pails, and pitchforks that they sold in the entire Romania. Poor soils oriented economic activities from a little successful plant growing to exploiting and processing wood, thus conferring certain characteristic features to this “land” and to its regional identity.

*The Land of Făgăraș* also called the Land of the Olt River had its centre in the Medieval fortress of Făgăraș. It is only partially included in the region (several settlements). Its features related to political-administrative changes, ethnicity, and geography ensured its unity over time and an ethnographic profile easily recognised also in people’s present regional pride.

*The Land of Amlaș* situated in the periphery of Transylvania and of the Tisa region disappeared and little was known about its history and present traces of a certain regional identity in comparison with the other “lands” of Romania. Situated in Sibiu County, it shares many of its features with the ones of Mărginimea Sibiului region. In much of its history, this “land” shared its development and ruling with the Land of Făgăraș situated nearby.

## CONCLUSIONS

*This synthesis of the built patrimony in the Romanian Tisa Basin highlighted the following issues:* the region had high density of historical monuments out of which one third had national and universal cultural significance; the quantitative and the qualitative features of the built patrimony ensured enough resources in order to realise certain strategies for territorial arrangement where the built patrimony had an important role for the sustainable development of the Tisa region; according to the main features of the built patrimony authorities and other interested parties could develop touristic activities characteristic of cultural, religious, and rural tourism; the region hosted monuments on the list of the UNESCO patrimony and those monuments had a symbol function for their hosting counties and for Transylvania, synthesising from an architectural, historical, or cultural point of view other tens of constructions; there were four monument categories included on the world heritage list with high potential for scientific and touristic capitalisation; from the perspective of the standard conservation degree of historical monuments, the monuments of the region were in one of the following categories: very good, good, average, before collapse, and collapse state; a high number of monuments needed rehabilitation, but they were lacking it as a result of poor or inexistent financial resources; the region hosted many aggrsed monuments but those were not included in the inventory because of inappropriate financial and human resources.

In addition, we noticed the important social and cultural role of the many wooden monuments testifying for the existence of a wood civilisation in a region hosting many “land” type units, for which this resource was vital and determining for people’s settling of the territory and for the development of the human communities. Moreover, the many constructions having an ecclesiastical function revealed the religious feelings of the traditional, conservatory communities.

Finally, we were able to conclude that the importance of the built patrimony in the Romanian Tisa Basin revealed possible directions for touristic capitalising: cultural tourism; rural tourism; scientific tourism, and their development was closely related to economic sustainability (through tourism) and especially to social and cultural sustainability. Realising thematic routes according to the type of objectives characterised by certain features or age (e.g. features of the “lands” in Tisa region; culture and civilisation characteristic of the village life; Dacian fortresses; wooden churches; the Middle Ages in the Tisa Region; urban architecture in the Modern and contemporary ages; castles and lordly houses – a historical perspective; representative archaeological sites, etc.) could contribute to increasing people’s interest for the built patrimony, as well as for the immaterial, spiritual one in the Romanian Tisa Basin.

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