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THE MINING TOWN OF THE METALIFERI MOUNTAINS.
A HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PERSPECTIVE: 1747-1948

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Research topic

Walking through the streets of the small mining towns scattered in the Metaliferi Mountains, one's sight can be caught by a particular set of buildings, encountered all around historical urban landscapes, and, at the same time, displaying certain place-specific features. They do not belong to the "great Architecture" that usually represents the focus of art history studies, nor to the industrial heritage so common in mining environs, but rather to a different category – the "urban vernacular". (Urban) vernacular architecture is characterized by the employment of traditional resources and techniques, and also by the overlaying of different influences, which may have originated here from the peasant repertoire or may have been derived from the vocabulary of Western European styles.

In order to understand how this distinct expression has developed, I have set out with the presumption of a synthesis between traditional forms, belonging to the so-called popular architecture, and those of cultured styles, be they Baroque, Classicist, Historicist or Modernist. Certainly, this process is universal and is to be seen in other regions as well, while its particular traits can only be explained considering the historical and geographical context in which they have emerged.

Although my study initially included all the mining towns in the Metaliferi Mountains, I have restricted the research area to Roșia Montană and Abrud, the two neighboring boroughs still showcasing 18th and 19th Century heritage. To this end, I have resorted to a delimitation borrowed from ethnography that most conveniently outlines the micro zone of interest and accurately describes the relationships between settlements.

In terms of choosing the timeframe, the interval 1747-1948 overlaps with the development of the two localities' vernacular architecture and is established conventionally, as in the case of many other artistic or cultural phenomena, that most often cannot be confined within exact temporal limits.

Scope

Beyond personal motivation, related to understanding how the built environment evolves and transforms, the aims of the present approach reach further than filling a historiographical gap (from the perspective of historical studies and art history), detailing a fragile and endangered heritage, and producing a body of research that could prove itself useful for future restoration projects, intending to acquaint specialists and the general public with this type of architecture.

Research questions and objectives

- ▶ **What is the relationship between the different economic, social, and political processes and the architectural landscape of the mining towns in the Metaliferi Mountains between 1747-1948?**
- ▶ What phenomena have played a significant part in the transformation of the urban image?
- ▶ How did the relationship between traditional expressions and polite styles evolve in the architecture of mining towns in the years 1747-1948?
- ▶ What are the distinctive features of the architecture of mining towns in the researched period?
- ▶ How does Abrud's built environment illustrate the architectural synthesis and its conditions?

The issue can be better formulated with the help of the research questions, which have divided the study into two separate sections – the first one, pertaining to the historical context, and the second, regarding the architecture itself.

At the outset, I wanted to understand how this architecture had emerged, respectively which had been the relevant historical phenomena for its becoming. Thus, I have used the case study of Abrud, considered in relation to its surrounding settlements, to highlight the connections between urban and architectural transformations and the political-administrative, socio-economic, and cultural context, between 1747-1948.

In the second section of the paper, I aimed to identify the specific features of mining town architecture, through a comparative analysis of the built environment of Roșia Montană and Abrud. The short monuments inventory (topography) of Abrud answers the last research question, regarding the way in which the town's existing constructions illustrate the synthesis between different stylistic influences.

State of research

Since the topic is situated at the boundary between several fields, its exploration implied conducting the historiographical analysis on multiple levels. In terms of architectural studies and art history, research covering the mining towns in the Metaliferi Mountains has been limited and has focused until now mostly on Roșia Montană. Assuming that in the German tradition, the pursuit of the architecture of the mining settlements resulted before long in various volumes, among which we mention here that of Hans Günther Griep, *Das Bürgerliche Wohnhaus der Oberharzer Bergstädte* (Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, Tübingen, 1975), in the Romanian space, the first such approach belonged to Kós Károly and Furu Árpád in

Torockói népművészet (Kriterion Könyvkiadó, Cluj, 2002), being followed, in the case of Roșia Montana, by the urban analysis carried out by Virgil Pop¹, the topographic inventory of Adriana Stroe, Adrian Stroe and Iozefina Postăvaru² and the surveys drafted during the Association A.R.A. - Architecture. Restoration. Archeology Summer schools of 2007-2010, edited by Virgil Apostol and Ștefan Bâlici³. Although several edifices in Abrud have sparked the curiosity of researchers since the 19th century⁴, one cannot talk about an exhaustive investigation of the subject.

However, in terms of local history, a wider bibliography balances with specific studies (in ecclesiastical history, history of education, history of social movements) the lack of monographs dedicated to the two boroughs. The first known history of Abrud, published serially in: *Hesperus, encyclopädische Zeitschrift für gebildete Leser*, in 1815, belongs to Ludwig von Arkosi, a state employee on the Zlatna Mining Domain. In 1895, Iosif Sterca-Șuluțiu produced a monographic sketch, chapters on the town's past being published in other more general or specialized works, with authors such as Gergely Benczédi, David Prodan, Romulus Felea, Paul Binder etc. In-between a history synthesis and a study in the history of mining, Tóth Zoltán's book, *Mișcările țăărănești din Munții Apuseni până la 1848* (Ed. Academiei R.P.R., București, 1955), stands out especially through its reliance on numerous unedited sources – a substantial foray into the world of peasant mining in the Apuseni Mountains.

Furthermore, most research concerning the mining towns' past can be found in the field of economic and mining history, impressing with their rich and accurate information. While some are broader in scope, such as *Az erdélyi bányászat ismertetése nemzeti-gazdasági, köz és magánjogi*, Cluj, 1841, by Zsigmond Szentkirályi, or *Din istoria mineritului în România* (Editura Științifică, Bucharest, 1970), by Ștefan Olteanu and Nicolae Maghiar, others, such as those in the series of studies published by Iosif Marin Balog on the Golden

1 Virgil Pop, Die städtebauliche Struktur von Roșia Montană, in: Ion Dordea, Rainer Slotta, Volker Wollmann, (ed.), Silber und Salz in Siebenbürgen, Vol. IV, Deutsches Bergbau Museum, Bochum, 2002, pp. 167-180.

2 Adriana Stroe, Aurelian Stroe, Ioan George Andron, Ina Postăvaru, *Roșia Montană. Inventarierea patrimoniului construit*, in: *Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice*, XX, nr. 1-2, 2009, pp. 69-107.

3 Virgil Apostol, Ștefan Bâlici, (eds.), *Roșia Montană. Documente de arhitectură*, books I and II, A.R.A., București, 2010, 2012.

4 Otto Benndorf, Otto Hirschfeld, *Vorläufiger Bericht über eine archaeologisch-epigraphische Reise in Dacien*, in: *Mittheilungen der k.k. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale*, XVIII, 1873, p. 330; Ferencz Flóris Rómer, *Régi falképek Magyarországon*, Hoffmann és Molnár, Budapest, 1874, pp. 97-98; Vasile Moga, Victor Mesaroș, *Cercetările arheologice de la Abrud (județ. Alba)*, in: *Apulum*, XVIII, 1980, pp. 141-149; Lorand Kiss, Research conducted at the Roman Catholic church of Abrud, <http://www.monumenta.ro/hu/component/adsmanager/felhasznalo/563-lori.html>, retrieved 4.05.2018; Gheorghe Fleșer, *Biserici românești din zid din județul Alba*, Altip, Alba-Iulia, 2001, pp. 37-39.

Quadrangle of the Apuseni Mountains⁵, address the topics in detail. In *Mirajul aurului. Economie și societate în „Cadrilaterul aurifer” al Apusenilor 1750-1914*, (Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2016), the author exposes the course taken by industrialization in the region between 1750-1914, examining the effects of the transformations it entailed on the local mining communities.

Ethnographic studies, belonging to authors such as Gergely Moldován, Teofil Frâncu and George Cândrea, Romulus Vuia, Valeriu Butură, Nicolae Dunăre, Lucia Apolzan or Radu Octavian Maier, encompass the studied area, albeit not specific.

Methodology

For the same reason, respectively the topic's position at the confluence of several fields (art history, urban history, social history, architectural research), this paper required its adapted methodology, combining several approaches.

From the perspective of architectural studies, I employed an interpretive-historical strategy, qualitative research, and case study. As to art history, I used comparative analysis, *in situ* examination, iconographic analysis, and topographic inventory. Regarding the methods belonging to history and its auxiliary sciences, I utilized content analysis, statistics, unstructured interviews, and morphological analysis (for historical geography – in the tradition of M. Conzen).

In the first section of the research, which focuses on the history of Abrud, I tried to identify the conditions which have had a lasting impact on the development of the town, using specialized literature and secondary sources. I examined how politico-administrative changes, industrialization and economic development, demographic changes, the dissemination of architectural styles, and the crystallization of folk architectural expressions were reflected in the landscape. At the same time, I tried to reconstruct the town's appearance and its atmosphere, with the help of written testimonies and vintage images.

In the second section, the comparative study of the two settlements (Abrud and Roșia Montană) originated with the morphological analysis, from the macro scale (street network, islands, plot patterns) to that of the architectural typology (types of dwellings), to that of

5 Iosif Marin Balog, *The Price of Gold. The Regional Economy, Society and Modernization of the „Auriferous Quadrilateral” in the Apuseni Mountains 1800-1914*, in: Iosif Marin Balog and Rudolf Gräf, (eds.), *Regional Economy and Community Development in Transylvania, Highland Banat and Bucovina, in the 19th Century. A Collection of Studies*, Argonaut Publishing, Cluj-Napoca – Symphologic Publishing, Gatineau, 2015, pp. 47-138; Idem, *Efectele socio-economice ale mineritului în „Patrulaterul aurifer al Apusenilor” în perioada 1850-1914*, in: *AIICN*, LII, 2014, pp. 151-170; Idem, *Regionalitate și modernizare. Cazul zonei aurifere a Munților Apuseni în secolul al XIX-lea*, in: Cornel Sigmirean, Corina Teodor, (coord.), *In honorem Vasile Dobrescu. Societate și cultură în epoca modernă*, Astra Museum, Sibiu, 2013, pp. 59-74.

interior design or construction details and techniques, using plan analysis and information obtained from secondary sources. Also drawing on documents, we followed those who were involved in the construction process: craftsmen, merchants, architects.

The topographic inventory relied on the stylistic criterion and involved the selection of about 76 historic buildings, recorded and analyzed from the point of view of style elements and architectural expression.

Sources

The sources were remarkably diverse and dictated, in fact, the methodological path. The unpublished ones come from a variety of fonds belonging to the Romanian and Hungarian national archives. The challenges varied from discontinuities of the periods for which they were preserved, to the existence of unprocessed fonds, the poor condition of some papers, and problems encountered when translating. Among the interesting documents that were brought to light on this occasion, some are worth mentioning: the survey of the inhabitants of Abrud from 1733; the conscriptions of Abrud and the surrounding villages from 1818, 1830, and 1831; the recordings of the magistrate's meetings in Abrud for the years 1862-1864, 1866 and 1903-1935; the construction permit inventory of Abrud for 1908-1931; the books of the Construction Directorate from Transylvania; various separate documents issued by the Abrud Town Hall or the Technical Department of Alba de Jos County. Edited documents refer to the Middle Ages and the 18th century and were published in collections such as *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen* (ed. Franz Zimmermann, Carl Werner, Gustav Gündisch, volumes I-IV, 1892-1937) or *Silber und Salz in Siebenbürgen* (ed. Ion Dordea, Rainer Slotta, Volker Wollmann, volumes IX, 1999-2010).

As primary sources from the perspective of architectural research, but secondary from that of history studies, *in situ* constructions were another important category. The information they provided was structured through drawings, photographs, descriptions, and brought along some specific challenges, be it documentation and access to interior spaces, or the drastic transformations some buildings underwent in the elapsed time.

Secondary sources were also quite diverse: administrative and staff yearbooks (*Schematismus Dicasteriorum et Officialium Magni Principatus Transylvaniae*, for 1767-1847, *Magyarország tiszti cím- és névtára*, for 1873-1918), government gazettes (*Alsó Fehér Vármegye Hivatalos Lapja*, for the years 1905-1911), legislation, press (local periodicals: *Glasul Moșilor*, for the years 1927-1928, *Graiu Moșilor*, for the years 1932-1936; regional ones: *Tribuna poporului*, for the years 1897-1911; national ones: *Societatea de*

mâine, for the years 1924-1942, with general themes – *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, for the years 1858-1915 or specialized topics – *Építő Ipar*, for the years 1877-1913), product catalogs and repertoires, travel descriptions, images (postcard collections, historical photographs or printings), general maps and more precise representations of the city (two from the 18th century⁶, two from the 19th century⁷, and a more recent one⁸). Interviews and discussions with locals have introduced me to the universe of the small mountain town and provided valuable details in reconstructing the place and atmosphere.

Summary

The *Introduction* advances the current state of research and the methodological approach, elaborating on the rationale behind the geographic and time constraints and the terminology. One of the conclusions of the historiographical analysis was the fact that in Romanian specialized literature there is no consensus regarding the meaning of terms such as “town” or “borough”. Along with these designations, other expressions belonging to different fields, such as “mining town”, “style” or “vernacular architecture”, had to be clarified before defining the methodology. The idea of a mining town introduces the issue of privileges, while the “town” is related to the theme of urbanization, centrality, and relationship with the hinterland, and both “style” and “vernacular” entail parallelisms with language, either through the “elements” of style – as components of a vocabulary, or by the regional character of the vernacular – reminding of dialects.

Although the historical period we focused on begins only in 1747, *Chapter 1. Introduction to the history of Abrud*, delivers necessary clarifications, being dedicated to the time span in which the mining character of the mentioned localities was defined. Thus, beginning with the subject matters of the privileges granted to mining cities, we followed their influence on the development of relations between settlements, their direct effects on gold extraction and processing from the 13th century onward, as well as the way in which the needs

6 *Original-Aufnahmskarte des Grossfürstenthums Siebenbürgen. Geometrisch aufgenommen und bearbeitet in den Jahren 1769 bis 1773 unter der Direction des Obristen von Fabris, theils durch Officiere des grossen Feld-Generalstabes, theils auch von verschiedenen aus dem in Siebenbürgen bequartierten Regimentern zu diesem Geschäfte beigezogenen Individuen*, 1:28000, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv, B IX 715, digitized, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Josephinische_Landaufnahme_pg136.jpg, retrieved 1.06.2018; Franz Kompoti, *Vöröspatak*, 1:14000, in: Ferenc József Müller von Reichenstein, *Mineralgeschichte der Goldbergwerke bey Abrudbánya im Großfürstenthume Siebenbürgen nebst einer Chartre*, in: Ignaz von Born, Friedrich Wilhelm Heinrich von Trebra, *Bergbaukunde*, vol. I, Georg Joachim Geoschen, Leipzig, 1789, p. 43.

7 Plan cadastral al oraşului Abrud, sc. 1:50, circa 1870-1887, in use: Biroul de Cadastru și Publicitate Imobiliară Câmpeni; *Abrudbánya város vízvezetéke. Csőhálózat / Distribution d'eau de la ville. Réseau de distribution de la ville de Abrudbánya*, sc. 1: 50, 1893, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, Fond S80: Térképek (18.sz.-20.sz.), nr. 66, f. 1 v°, digitized, <https://maps.hungaricana.hu/en/MOLTerkeptar/29596/>, retrieved 1.06.2018.

8 Abrud. Schiță de sistematizare, sc. 1:5000, 1974, Serviciul Arhive Naționale Istorice Centrale, Fond 3280: Comitetul pentru Problemele Consiliilor Populare – Direcția sistematizare, proiectare și construcții, dosar 7/1973, f. 1-6 r°;

of the mining economy were reflected in the occupational structure and the ethnic and religious diversity of Abrud's population. We have therefore established the relevant preconditions for the urban and architectural evolution of the small town in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, highlighting the forces that have had a continuous and prolonged impact on the economic and social context of the area.

After its emancipation from the control of the Alba Iulia Chapter, Abrud – recorded in documents as early as 1271, had established itself in the urban hierarchy, participating, in the 15th century, together with other mining communities of the Apuseni Mountains, in an alliance inspired by the leagues of the more important centers of Upper Hungary. At the same time, as part of the regional urban network, Abrud maintained economic and cultural ties with Cluj and Sibiu, whose influence was reflected both in the organization of mining and in political and cultural life. From the second half of the 17th century, the town lost its importance, at a time when the mining economy was also dwindling. Thus, in the absence of conditions favoring impressive architectural evolutions, similar to the ones of the Hungarian or German space, the transformation of the mountain borough was taking place within the limits set by the first *hospites'* construction activity. Confining itself to the performance of small administrative and commercial functions, especially for the surrounding settlements, Abrud was endowed during this period with several important buildings, such as the Roman Catholic church, the Reformed church, or the town hall, scattered among the houses that populated the main square.

Chapter 2. Habsburg Abrud: 1747-1854, captures the beginning of the synthesis process of vernacular architecture against the backdrop of the exercising of mercantilist principles in economic life and the application of Enlightenment ideas in administration. We follow, therefore, the changes that occurred in mining legislation – starting with the *Novellar Articles* of 1747, the restructuring of responsible institutions, as well as the functioning of those in control of construction supervision. The state of mining in the Metaliferi Mountains indicates the maintenance of a slow pace of development and the domination of gold extraction among the other less developed branches of the economy. A section through the social stratification and the occupational distribution of the community helps us evaluate the resources that the inhabitants had at their disposal for the completion of different buildings, and how they participated in the transformation of the borough. We are interested in the town's response to demographic pressures, but also the relationship with the population of neighboring villages. In as much as architectural progress, we begin by observing the effects of human activity on the landscape. The presentation of Baroque and Classicist achievements

at the provincial and regional levels, which coincided with the dispersion of the features of peasant architecture in the Apuseni Mountains, opposes for the first time the two essential components of the synthesis process – the external influences and the local tradition.

Thus, Abrud appears to us as a proper borough, sharing the path pursued by other small Transylvanian towns, both in terms of social and economic life and urban image. Following the fashions set in the second half of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century by the large surrounding municipalities, the urban transformation of this small town takes place on several levels, while the various stylistic influences spread through diverse architecture programs. Assuming that from a planning perspective, the urban atmosphere is created through elementary steps, such as expanding infrastructure and paving public space, construction sites like the one belonging to the Unitarian church, to other administrative buildings or houses of wealthy citizens become some of the first contacts with the fashionable architectural styles of the epoch.

Chapter 3. Abrud before and after the Gold Fever: 1854-1918, investigates how the rise of the extractive sector and construction materials industry of the *Gründerzeit* years, paralleled with the expansion of road and rail infrastructure and the diversification of the town's economy, created the premises for a new architectural expressivity, marked by the wide use of prefabricated decorative elements. The legislative changes related to mining and administration remain in the foreground, with emphasis on their impact on the regional economy, the persistence of some mining law practices from the Middle Ages to the interwar period, but also the increment of land use regulation. Next, we follow the main developments in the extractive industry, how Abrud came to be incorporated in the communication network of the Austrian Empire / Double Monarchy, and the evolution of the relationship between crafts and trade at the local level. The new economic context also bolstered the advancement of elites, active in cultural and administrative life. Evoking the historical townscape, we bear in mind both urban strategies and urban development projects, as well as the different styles present in the European architectural landscape of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Unlike in the previous period, 19th, and early 20th-century Abrud manifests itself much more like a place of contradictions and contrasts: after a short economic boom without a corresponding urban development, put to a halt with the loss of medieval privileges, the town reimagines itself from an urban perspective, in the context of a demographic decline that also resonates in the extractive industry, despite a hitherto unknown effervescence of the domain. The years before the Great War are marked by a slowdown of the Gold Rush, which coincides

with the consolidation of the city's function as a small regional center, directed towards trade and services. Emblematically, Monday's fair most clearly emphasizes Abrud's role as a liminal space, mediating between village life and the world of the two capitals – Budapest and Vienna.

Chapter 4. Abrud: changing? 1918-1948, ends our journey into the historical ambiance of the small town. The first subchapter is dedicated to the administrative reorganizations and the new mining laws. In direct relation to the legal provisions, the characteristics of the mining economy can be outlined, focusing on their encompassment in the broader issue of the Moți Problem. A glance at the society of interwar Abrud also indicates a continuity of tradition. On the other hand, in terms of urban modernization, mention should be made not only of the challenges posed by the management of the town's assets in times of crisis but also of the architectural solutions required by the new economic and political conditions.

The Abrud we evoke between the two wars is a place trying to find itself. In a period marked by drastic changes and an unfavorable economic context, the community always relates to past successes, using this call to nostalgia as a means to mobilize necessary resources. Given that the financial efforts for urban renewal are considerable, the goal is being followed with small steps. On the contrary, at the individual level, that of households, the process is easier, driven by contemporary functional requirements, modern materials and techniques now clothing the traditional structures in the city.

The second section of the paper refers precisely to the concrete manifestations of the synthesis between the erudite styles and the traditional architecture in Abrud and Roșia Montană. Its first chapter, *Chapter 5. Vernacular architecture in Abrud and Roșia Montană*, deals with the identification of models and typologies, the classification of style elements according to the materials and the techniques employed. Here, we also mention those who were directly involved in the construction process: craftsmen, contractors, architects, or engineers, and the types of suppliers they turned to – specialized producers or traders.

The major watercourses played a significant role in the development of the two settlements, both from an economic perspective and in terms of the configuration of the built areas, while springs and streams structured, in the first phase, the street network. The regular plot patterns in Abrud, harkening back to the Middle Ages, underwent processes of joining and division but did not drastically change their contours, dictating a certain organization of the household, specific to the morphological area it belonged to. The two towns' squares and streetscapes, similar, but still different, mirror their diverging paths, having been shaped in

their respective moments of maximum urban development. The common denominator is the dwelling – in its many iterations, folding urban influences over a rural structure. The materials and techniques mirror the same process, in which the persistence of tradition always encounters new and diverse elements, disseminated either with the help of merchants and traders, or with that of designers and builders active in the area.

The section's second chapter, Chapter 6. *A short topographic inventory of the architecture of Abrud*, charts 76 of the town's buildings, analyzed separately, illustrating various facets of the synthesis process described in the previous chapter.

As expected, the *Conclusions* are numerous and bring together various points: answers to the research questions, a short epilogue on the development of Abrud after 1948, and some remarks on the purpose and implications of the present exercise.

The *Annexes* are a consistent component of the study, revealing the essential statistical arguments for Chapters 1-4. The appendix also includes the urban analyses that served as support for Chapter 5, and a short review of the activity of craftsmen and merchants who worked in Abrud and Roșia Montană in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Keywords:

mining town, vernacular architecture, architectural style, urban image, industrialization, urbanization