Ἐξε ἐμοί εἰπεῖν, ὥσκρατες, ἄρα διὰ διὰ κτέν ἢ ἀρετή; ἢ οὔ διὰ διὰ κτέν ἀλλ' ἀσκητόν; ἢ οὔτε ἀσκητόν οὔτε μαθητόν, ἄλλα φύσει παραγινεταί τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἢ ἀλλὰ τίνι ἑρᾷ πρὸ
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The Greek Presence in Transylvania through the Historical Monuments

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Abstract
The Greek presence in the territory of Romania in the field of architecture varies by period. However, an important monumental reserve is connected with the commercial and business activities of the Greek people during the last centuries. This reserve has been located and studied in the past and only recently it has been subject of scientific research and recorded under a bilateral (Greece-Romania) inter-scientific research collaboration. In Romania today the protection, management and enhancement of the natural and cultural environment is of paramount importance not only as a value but also as a critical tool towards the sustainable development of the country. On the other hand Romania, in the latter years, represents a major tourist destination due to its rich and varied cultural heritage. The present article deals with the influence of the Greek merchants in the region of Transylvania during the 18th and 19th as it results through the monumental reserve and especially through buildings with a religious character recorded and characterized as Historical Monuments.

Keywords: Historical Monuments, Romania, Greek presence, Greek Church

1. The multicultural nature of Romania
"All buildings carry meanings". In time all buildings acquire layers of a significance that addresses to a collective memory (Broadbent 1977).
In many regions of the Balkan area there is an accumulation of ethnic and national minorities of various cultural expressions (Broadbent 1977). Romania has such a rich cultural heritage that one can unite the past with the present, but at the same time it proves the multicultural nature of the country.
In Romania it is recognised that the protection of cultural values is extremely important for local, regional and national communities, not only in economic and aesthetic terms, but also because the cultural heritage represents their basic identity (Ilieșcu 1986).
The importance of the richness and diversity of the cultural reserve in the territory of Romania is demonstrated by the large number of monuments and sites that have been characterized by Unesco until today as monuments of global interest (Gavra 2011). The architectural heritage, as part of the cultural reserve of a human unit or a geographical area includes monuments, architectural ensembles and sites of historical, archaeological, artistic, social, scientific and technological interest (Gavra 2007).
The Greek presence in Transylvania is remarkable during the 18th and 19th century. The majority of the Greek emigrants were merchants who came from Macedonia, Ipiros and Thessalia and settled in the continental part of the country while the Greeks from the islands settled in the Danube regions. Many Greeks from Macedonia immigrated to Transylvania -mostly to the cities of Sibiu and Brasov, where the first commercial societies of the SE Europe had been created- during the years 1718-1738 while the region was under the Habsburg Monarchy (Fuves 1965: 26). The Habsburgs conceded to the Greek merchants -who achieved to monopolize the import and transport of “oriental” goods in Western Europe- a series of privileges among which was the right to build churches, schools, charity institutes, commercial houses e.t.c. Especially after Maria Teresa conceded a series of privileges to them (1777) we can observe a blooming constructing activity of buildings most of them of public character (Karathanasis 2003, Tsourka-Papastathi 1994).

The three examined buildings that are characterized as Historical Monuments are “The Holy Trinity Orthodox Church” in the city of Cluj-Napoca, the Orthodox Cathedral of the “Assumption of Virgin Mary” in the city of Oradea and the “Orthodox Church of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary” in Alba Iulia.

According P. Derer (Gavra 2011) the influence of the greek world in the architectural and spatial organization in contemporary Romania is connected with its culture and spirit. The order, the financial support, the design and the needs that the church was going to cover are strongly related with the members of the greek communities and in all three cases with concrete members.

The choice of the described monuments, namely The Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Cluj-Napoca, the Orthodox Cathedral of the “Assumption of Virgin Mary” in Oradea and the “Orthodox Church of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary” in Alba Iulia, is based on the need to promote the history of the buildings in combination with an experiential approach of the reference area. Besides, the built heritage has also an identity function. “Our monuments have value because we built them. They are subjects of a generic representation of ourselves” (Choay 1998:185).

The three described buildings were visited during the summer of 2011 and the historic information is result of a bibliographic research in combination with information retrieved from the National Archives of the three cities and from personal interviews with the priests of the churches.

Cluj-Napoca is located in the NE part of Romania and it is one of the biggest cities of the country. During the 18th and 19th century, it was the capital of the principality of Transylvania and at the same time an important commercial center. Therefore, many Greek merchants settled in the city, where they engaged in commercial business. Names like Singuli Stratu, Georgio Cristoph, Iani Cociu, Gheorghe Trandafir, Iancu Constantin

1The second author visited cities of Transylvania among which the three presented in this article in the summer of 2011 after having obtained an ERASMUS scholarship in order to collect the material for her master thesis, Matraki Eleni, 2012
Cecherdechi, Dimitrie Dimitriu, Similache Stati Simeli and Ienache Mavrodin (Cicanci 1981: 125, Limona 1959: 241) are only some of the Greek merchants that are mentioned in the relevant bibliography and had an intense activity in the local commerce. The need of these Greek people and generally of the orthodox people of the city to exercise their religious duties—in 1770 there were about 500 orthodox persons in Cluj-Napoca (Pascu et al. 1957: 61) led three wealthy Greek merchants, namely, Ienache Mavrodin Ioan Constantin and Gheorghe Trandafir to apply to the Government of Transylvania and finally obtain the permission to build an Orthodox Church. The Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, known as the “Hill Church”\(^2\), was built between 1795 and 1796 and until 1932 was the only orthodox church that existed in the capital of Transylvania\(^3\).

It is situated in the street Bisericii Ortodoxe number 12\(^4\) and it is a basilica with Baroque and Renaissance elements, built from stone and bricks. Its length is 18.68 meters and it has a steeple of 18.95 meters height.

The main entrance of the temple is situated at the west and is decorated with stone. Inside, the vestibule is separated from the nave by three arches. The columns supporting the arches are lined with stone and have a simple decorative cornice. The roof of the portico and the main temple is made of stone slabs. All the windows of the church are semicircular and adorned with stained glass. Under the east window is situated the pontifical throne. The chancel is semicircular, and the images are works of the Greek painter Konstantinos or Constantin Zugravu, deacon of the Greek Church of Brașov dated from 1796 (Mureșan 1942: 138).

The icons of the north are: image of St. John the Baptist with the greek inscription “Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΙΩΑΝΗΣ Ο ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ”, image of the Archangel Michael, image of Virgin Mary, the image of Jesus Christ with his initials written in Greek characters and gold letters, the image of Archangel Gabriel and finally the image of the Holy Trinity with the Greek inscription “Η ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΙΑΣ”. In the church are preserved some old religious objects. Among them a small silver tray with the inscription “Gift of George Trantafrirou (Georgiu Trandafiru) and Paraskea Zamfirou (Paraschiva Zamfiru)1824” in the greek language (Mureșan 1942: 47). According to the current priest Ioan Jeler, most of the sacred objects were lost during the Second World War.

Outside of the church there is a small cemetery, where were buried the priests who served in it. Examples include: Ilie Fulea (Fuliavici 1795-1828), Grigore Gal (1830-1851), Vasile Rosescu (1851-1888), Tuliu Rosescu (1888-1924), Nicolae Vasiu (1925-1940), Ioan Costea (1940 - 1946),) and the scholar Florea Mureșan.

Among them are saved the graves of the Greeks Trandafi Janos and Trandafir Gyorgy with the following inscriptions:
- TRANDAFI JANOS year of death 1808 (MDCCCVIII) and
- TRANDAFIR GYORGY

\(^2\) In romanian the name of the church is Biserica Ortodoxa Romana “Sfanta Treime” and it is known as “Biserica din Deal”.

\(^3\) The main part of the description and the information concerning the church is based on the fieldwork and visits of the second author in the month of July 2011 and on interviews with the priest Ioan Jeler as well as on the book: Mureșan Florea, 1942.

\(^4\) The name of the street was until 1919 Ulița Biserici Grecesti (Greek Churches street) and before that Ulița Greclor (street of the Greeks)
The church has been repaired several times: in 1823, 1877, 1919, and 1937, 1944-45, 1951-58, 1982-83, 2003-2010.

It has been characterized a Historical Monument listed in 2004 with serial number 736 and registration code CJ-II-mB-07276 (Institutul Național al Patrimoniului, http://www.inmi.ro/lmi/cluj.pdf).

The second city, strongly connected with the greek commerce was Oradea. It is situated in the western part of Transylvania near the borders with Hungary. It is also possible that there has been a Greek Commericial Society in the city during the period of George Rákóczi Hegemony (1630-1648) (Tsourka-Papastathis 1994: 79-80). In the bibliography are mentioned many greek names connected to the city during the examined period: Püspoki Mihai, Kristoff Mihai, Petru Hristofor, George Costa, Dimitrie Vasu, Nicolae Jiga, Alexandru Gavra, Emanuil Godju and the families of Gjeorghe Papp, Takacs, Paphazi, Csavdary, Papanastasiu (Lucian 1980, Pacuraiu 1980, Firu 1934, Neş 1937).

The orthodox people of the city (Greeks, Serbs and Romanians) struggled together and succeeded to build an Orthodox Church for their religious needs. The above mentioned Greeks, Püspoki Mihai and Kristoff Mihai presented to the Emperor of the Austrian Court a report asking for the permission to build the church. The permission was issued on 27-9-1784 and on the 9-11-1784 begun the construction of the Orthodox Cathedral of the “Assumption of Virgin Mary”, known as the “Moon Church” finished in 1790 (Borcea & Gorun 1995: 435).

The church is situated in the square Piața Uniri number 10. It was designed by the architect Iacob Eder and is a baroque style basilica with a semicircular sanctuary and a tall bell tower 55 meters high. The overall length of the church is 37.70 meters and the exterior height 16 meters. The dimensions of the inside are 34.75 meters length, 11.10 meters width and 19 meters height. The steeple rises above the west side of the narrow vestibule on four large columns. Above the vestibule there is a balcony for the choir, which leads to a spiral staircase located to the left of the main entrance. The nave is separated from the altar with a semicircular chancel. On the east side of the altar, two walls are forming an enclosed hallway.

At that time the church of the “Assumption” was the only church with a spire in the city. The three bells were placed in 1792 and in 1917 two of them, were removed and replaced by others in 1925. On the largest bell weighing 1303 kg there is the following inscription: “The bell was constructed in the year 1803, month of August for the sacred temple of “the Assumption” of Oradea-Mare, with the expenses of the Greek and Romanian population, among which, Püspöki Mihai and Dimitrie Driva. Ad die gloriam fusa sum per Franciscum Millner, Buda, Anno 1803. The second and third bell bear the inscription: “The bell was constructed in the year 1804 with the expenses of the Greek, Serbian and Romanian population, Francisc Millner, Buda” (Firu 1934: 67).

In 1793 a clock was placed on the bell tower as well as a two-color sphere (half black and half yellow) that represents the Moon and rotates around a shaft connected to the mechanism of the clock, depending on the phases of the moon, hence the name “Church

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5 The church is called in romanian Catedrala Ortodoxa “Adormirea Maicii Domnului” and it is known as “Biserica cu Luna”. The main part of the description and the information concerning the church is based on the fieldwork and visits of the second author in the month of July 2011 and on interviews with the priest of the church Cristea Teodor – Dinu as well as on the book: Firu Nicolae 1934.
on the Moon”. Both the clock and the sphere is work of the watchmaker Georg Rueppe. The painting of the church was made by the brothers Alexandru and Arsenie Teodorovici from Novisad and the assistance of Paul Murgu (Lucian 1980: 257).

Under the church in the crypt are kept the relics of the Greek founders of the church, Mihai Kristoff and Mihai Püspöky. At the entrance of the crypt is carved the following text dated from 1788 in Greek, Slavic and Latin language: “SEPULTURA NOBLIS FAMILI MIHALIS KRISTOFF” (burial of the noble family of Michael Kristof) (Firu 1934: 97).

Among the religious objects that are preserved we can mention a silver gilt Holy Grail and the Holy Cross. According to information of the priest Cristina Teodor - Dinu the Holy Cross was donated by Greek merchants.

The church has been repaired until nowadays in the years, 1909, 1929, 1934, 1974, 1976-1977 and 1978.


Finally, the third Transylvanian city, where is saved until nowadays a church characterized as Historical Monument connected with the greek presence is Alba Iulia. It is a city situated in western Transylvania and the capital or Alba Prefecture. During the 18th and 19th century many Greek merchants had action in the city related to the selling and melting of silver coins in the local mint (Limona 1959: 237). Furthermore, members of the administration of the Commercial Society of Sibiu came from Alba Iulia (Cicanci 1981: 101).

Names as Dimitrache de la Balgrad or Dimitrie Caranton de la Balgrad, Dimitrie Panaioti Steriu, Zaharia de la Barlgrad, Constantin Constantin and leanache Panu as well as Ioan Caranton (Limona 1959) are often mentioned in the relevant bibliography.

Once again the Greeks that settled in the city were the ones that helped the local orthodox people to build their own church. It is the “Orthodox Church of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary”, known as the “Greek Church”, built in 1783 by the Greek merchants’ community. According to the great historian Nicolae Iorga (1977: 138-139) “the church was built with the expenses of the Greeks of the Commercial Society”.

The church situated in the centre of the city in the street Avram Iancu number 7, is a single-aisled basilica without side arches and belongs to the typology of the Byzantine churches of the 18th century. The sanctuary consists of a semicircular auditorium. In front of the church, in the west side, rises the bell tower of 24 meters heigth, which appears to have been built later, but this information is not confirmed by the existing bibliography. The access to the church is possible from the west side. The nave is simple, without special ornamentation. The altar is carved and the icons from the North to the South are: Icon of St. Nicholas, icon of Virgin Mary holding Jesus, icon of Christ Pantokrator, icon of St. John the Baptist. On the north gate features St. Stephen and St. Lawrence and on the southern gate the Holy Trinity framed by the figures of the Twelve

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6 In the bibliography it is often mentioned with the Slavic name Balgrad.
7 The name of the church is in the romanian language Biserica Greaca “Bunavestire”. The description of the church is based on fieldwork and visits of the second author during the month of August 2011, on interviews with the priest of the church Pr. Dumitru Vancsa as well as the book of Gheorghe Fleșer (2001).
Apostles. At the top of the altar there are scenes from the Old and New Testament and especially from the lives of the sants. Apart from some religious books (greek donations of 1793), other indicative objects related to the greek element, that have survived until today, are three silver (gold-plated) candlesticks engraved with the name of the greek family Karantoni (Karanton) and the year 1768, a silver tablet with engraved greek letters and the silk embroidered handmade fabric that covers the epitaph the day of Good Friday.

In the yard of the church there is a small cemetery but no greek graves are saved. The church has been repaired in the years 1901, 1938, 1956 and 1970 without having changed its original aspect.

It has been characterized a Historical Monument listed in 2004 with serial number 231 and registration code AB-II-m-B-00116.01 (Institutul Naţional al Patrimoniului, http://www.inmi.ro/lmi/alba.pdf).

4. The protection of cultural heritage in Romania

Monument preservation is a determinant feature of contemporary culture. Romania as a quite recent member of the EU had to adopt in the principles of the strategy of accession to the European Union in the field of the territorial development, a long-term approach which would exploit the natural, economic, social, cultural and historical potential of the country. The approach to the development of the national territory is based on a series of fundamental principles. According to this approach a prerequisite of integration into the European territorial policies, was on one hand, to exploit the country’s potential, and on the other hand, to diminish the internal unbalances and disparities on the regional and local level. The National Physical Development Plan (NPDP) provides the conceptual framework and the perspective for the strategy of territorial development (Popescu 1998).

The National Physical Development Plan (NPDP), as the main policy instrument on the national level, has a guiding character and comprises integrated sections – dedicated to the problems of the national territory (Dumitru 1998) namely the Transportation Networks Section, the Water’s Management, the Settlements Network and the Section for the Natural and Cultural Heritage of National Importance. The latter one identifies the main areas of outstanding natural and cultural value, establishing a hierarchy as a basis for the involvement of public authorities (central, regional and local) in their preservation (Gavra et al 2006).

The guidance and control of the architectural heritage is the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and the National Commission for the Historical Ensembles. In Romania the first law of protection of historical Monuments was created in 1892 (Opriş 1994). Law no. 56/1998 is the specific legal framework concerning the National Cultural Patrimony Protection. Complementary to this legal framework, we can also mention Law no.151/1998 of the Regional Development and Law no 50/1991 for urban and spatial development planning drawn up in Romania (Alexandru 1998: 92) as important instruments for spatial development planning (central, regional or local). As already...
observed, on all the levels of spatial planning mentioned above (central, regional or local) in Romania, the protection and upgrading of the natural and cultural reserve-environment is faced as a main importance value – an instrument for the sustainable development of the country and each particular region.

Regarding the legal framework, Romania’s legal frame for its cultural patrimony falls into three domains: laws on historical monuments, laws on archeology and other legislation. In the domain of historical monuments that are subject of the present the most typical are (Council of Europe 2008):

- Law 5/2000 on the approval of protected areas of national interest
- Law 422/2001 on the protection of historical monuments as it has been completed and amended by Law no. 259/2006.

Among other relevant laws the most characteristic is:


At the same time there are more than (43) other laws, regulations, decisions and guidelines for the protection of cultural heritage in Romania today (Grigore et al. 1994). Regarding the institutions and the planning and political implementation organizations, especially for the culture in Romania, within the framework of European integration, we can mention the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs. It is a specialized body of the central public administration of Romania and has the mission of applying the governmental policies in the sector of arts, culture and religious matters. There are many cultural organisms collaborating with the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs: the National Theaters, the National Library, the National Museum, and the institute for the cultural memory (CIMEC) (European Commission 2006, http://ec.europa.eu/culture/portal/sites/candidate/romania).

The agencies dealing with the management of anthropogenic (urban and cultural), as well as with the natural reserve at national level, apart from the Ministry of Culture, are the Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Housing as well as the Ministry of Tourism, along with a number of associations of National Planning and Programming. The latter belong to some ministries or the Academy of Romania (Kaukalas 2000). As a characteristic example we can mention the National Society of Regional Development, the National Institute for Research and Urban Development and Spatial Planning (URBANPROIECT), the National Commission of Historical Monuments and the Institute of Geography (Gavra 2007).

The process of decision making, approval and spatial planning occurs at different levels. Except from spatial planning governmental and public agencies, scientific and research agencies subordinates of some Ministries or the Romanian Academy, we could mention
the National Commission for Historical Monuments. Its role is to formulate strategies for urban and spatial development planning, to draw up plans and maps at the national level, to identify monuments, to define natural and built up protected areas of national or greater –international- importance (Gavra 2006).

Alois Riegl first pointed out the relationship between Monument and Historical Monument. While monuments are made from the very beginning to fulfill their memorial function, historical monuments acquire in time this quality as a result of a complicated cultural process (Brandi 1996: 53).

The list of Historical Monuments in Romania includes major sites from the National Register of Historical Monuments in Romania which was created in 2004–2005. The National Register contains 29,540 historical monuments entered in the National Cultural Heritage of Romania and it is maintained by the Romanian National Institute of Historical Monuments, part of the Ministry of Culture and National Patrimony in Romania. As mentioned above, according to the. 2.361/2010 decree the Catalog of Historical Monuments that was approved with the decree 2.314/2004 has been reviewed and it also the Historical monuments that are not saved until today (Ministerul Culturii și Patrimoniului Național, http://www.cultura.ro/page/17).

5. Conclusions

Through the study of the Greeks in the cities of Romania and especially in the region of Transylvania, it is obvious that after the concession of privileges to them, they tend to construct buildings of public character. Among them, the most characteristic is the building of religious character. The church represents and functions as a source of identity for the orthodox Greek. The Greek people as a minority validated their identity through the building of churches that until today are representative of their remarkable presence during the examined period.

Nowadays, in Romania, the protection and upgrading of the natural and cultural reserve-environment, at all the levels of spatial planning (central, regional or local), is described as a main importance value – instrument for the sustainable development of the country or every region.

One of the main assets of Romania at this stage is its cultural and architectural heritage. This heritage could be the solid basis for the development of the Romanian tourist sector. However this endeavour entails a number of tasks both managerial and financial. The restoration and reuse of the cultural reserve could constitute important revenue for the tourist industry, which demonstrates an increasing interest in special forms of tourism (cultural tourism), in the SE European countries, Romania is one of these. The problem that existed regarding the promotion of the cultural heritage, and especially the Historical Monuments apart from the inadequate financial capacity for maintenance and thus, for utilization, was the lack of devolved administration. The National Committee of Historical Monuments was until recently directly dependent from the Ministry of Culture of the country, which is based in Bucharest and decides for the entire geographical territory (Gavra 2007).

However, according to the decree Nr. 2126/07.03.12, the Ministry of Culture approved the establishment of local Committees for the Historical Monuments that are departments of the National Committee of Historical Monuments (http://www.cultura.ro/uploads/files/OMCPN_nr.2126_2012_CNMI.doc).
On the other hand, a small number of historical monuments are actually listed; one of the reasons for this is the lack of proper legislation for their management. The local communities can foster their cultural and economic development through an appropriate management of their natural, built and intangible heritage. International cooperation programs and projects bring the benefit of different European experiences concerning heritage, understanding and adapting in the mean time these experiences to local contexts, realities and needs (Gavra 2008). Within this framework, since the greek memory/presence is still very intense in the country, the promotion of bilateral between Greece and Romania cooperation regarding protection, enhancement and management of cultural – architectural heritage and especially of the buildings built by Greek people and characterized as Historical Monuments through supportive joint projects is considered absolutely necessary.

References


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