

ROMANIAN RURAL TOURISM BETWEEN AUTHENTIC/TRADITIONAL AND MODERN/CONTEMPORARY. THE CASE OF CRIȘANA AND MARAMUREȘ AREAS (I)¹

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Abstract: *Romanian Rural Tourism between Authentic/Traditional and Modern/Contemporary. The case of Crișana and Maramureș Areas.* The integration of the Romanian political area in the European Union involves both the revaluation and the promotion of the traditional and authentic patrimony as an essential resource for developing the tourism in Romania. The identification, evaluation, quantification, mapping, integration and the promotion of the authentic and traditional patrimony, natural and anthropic, as part of a sustainable development strategy which has an international characteristic, it represents a necessary intercession by all means within this new context which is favourable to the „cultural equalization” and being strongly placed under the incidence of the globalization’s advantages. Against the european integrator background of the Romanian area where the elements of the authentic cutural patrimony include priceless values, hard to be quantified, these elements’ stocktaking, their qualitative revaluation, mapping, and the creation of some in situ preserving patterns are precautionary measures necessary to prevent their disappearance or their transforming process under the pressure of the kitsch import. The Romanian rural territory is still one filled with authenticity and tradition, and the peasant has to be responsibilized and motivated in order to preserve the customs and the civilization specific, on the background of an adequate natural environment. A scientific incession

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focused on such a direction will be materialized through a quantitative, qualitative and cartographic knowledge of authentic, traditional and representative meanings within Romanian rural environment and especially within those ethnographical areas recognized as traditions and authentic values preservers as for instance the „lands” of Maramureș, Crișana, Transylvania and sub-Carpathian areas.

Key words: authentic, traditional, patrimony, tourism, rural environment

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The European Union’s motto “*unity in diversity*” represents an important starting point concerning our intercession for revaluating the cultural inheritance of the Romanian area at the millennium balance and of the elements that identifies our own culture and actually their existence into a context in which the globalization “enforces” identity’s uniformity and loss. The scientific intercession takes part also in the UNESCO’s initiative to settle a new list which includes mankind’s oral and intangible patrimony, particularly the cultural one under the influence of a high risk of transformation and loss of the characteristic elements because of the excessive globalization, hard to oversee.

The anthropological concept of “*cultural environment*” which combines the architectural patrimony and intangible elements with a particular area, promotes the integrated stage in order to preserve and protect the authentic patrimony. We propose the promoting and the use of a common language able to “*translate*”, to make sense the contiguous domains, which are the anthropic impact effects in general, and economic impact effects in particular, towards cultural inheritance. From the scientific point of view, excepting some local or regional museums, the work’s theme hasn’t represented a major interest for the authorized institutions (universities, scientific research institutes, local and county councils, governments, ministries and so on). The quick rhythm recorded in the deterioration of the authentic resources within the Romanian area, especially after 1990, assigns such an intercession which implies the revaluation, the identification, the quantification, the mapping and integration of those authentic resources which still exists particularly within the rural environment, through measures that refer to: allotment of financial resources, accurate protection rules, awareness through promoting and stimulating at the community local-host of the danger of loosing them as well as the advantages that can issue from keeping and consolidating them at the level of own goods and also to the regional and world level.

The large variety of the physic-geographical conditions, the multitude of the depressions situated around the mountains or those inside these areas, the important resources of the land and underground, have individualized the “*lands*” within the framework of these units (Ilieș M, 1997, Cocean P., 1997, 2004), similar to some “*natural fortresses*” which had offered since the earliest ages some of the most propitious conditions for human settlement and steadiness. In this respect, on Crișana² and Maramureș³ territories, around or inside the mountains, lies for centuries: The Land of

² The denomination of *Crișana* province is very ancient and it comes from that „realm” situated on the three Criș rivers (Alb, translated „White”; Negru, translated „Black” and Repede, translated „Fast”), whence the denomination of „*The Land of Criș Rivers*”. Its geographical limits are: Hungarian border to the west, the higher line of Apuseni Mountains to the east, which is continued with Meseș Mountains and Someș river to the nord-east, and the southern limit is represented by the watershed of Zarand Mountains, continued towards the plain region on the alignment of Pâncota, Sântana and Macea localities.

³ *Maramureș* is mentioned in documents beginning with 1199, although its name goes way back to history. In the ancient latin documents it appears with the following denimations: Maramoros, Maramorisius, Maramurus. Until 1920, the historical Maramureș region had as borders the Sylvan (Păduroși) Carpathians in Ukraine, Rodnei Mountains, Lăpușului Mountains, Oașului Mountains, Gutâiului Mountains and Bârjavei Mountains, reaching Teceu locality in Tisa Plain to the west, having a surface about over 10 000 km². After the Second

Zarand, The Land of Beiuș, The Land of Oaș, The Land of Maramureș, The Land of Lăpuș and The Land of Chioar (figure 1). Although ever since the first centuries of the second millenium, these lands were transformed into regions, their individuality is still preserved nowadays. At the very moment everybody is aware of the respectively territorial grouping, places to which people is strangely attached and which don't agree with any impartial division marked nowadays. So, after centuries, the attachement feeling endures for generations and the territorial unity is a mental construction. There are other areas having the same patrimonial value as Crișul Repede Valley, Ier Valley, The Land of Sylvania, Codru Area, Crișurilor Plain, Someș Plain and so on (figure 1).

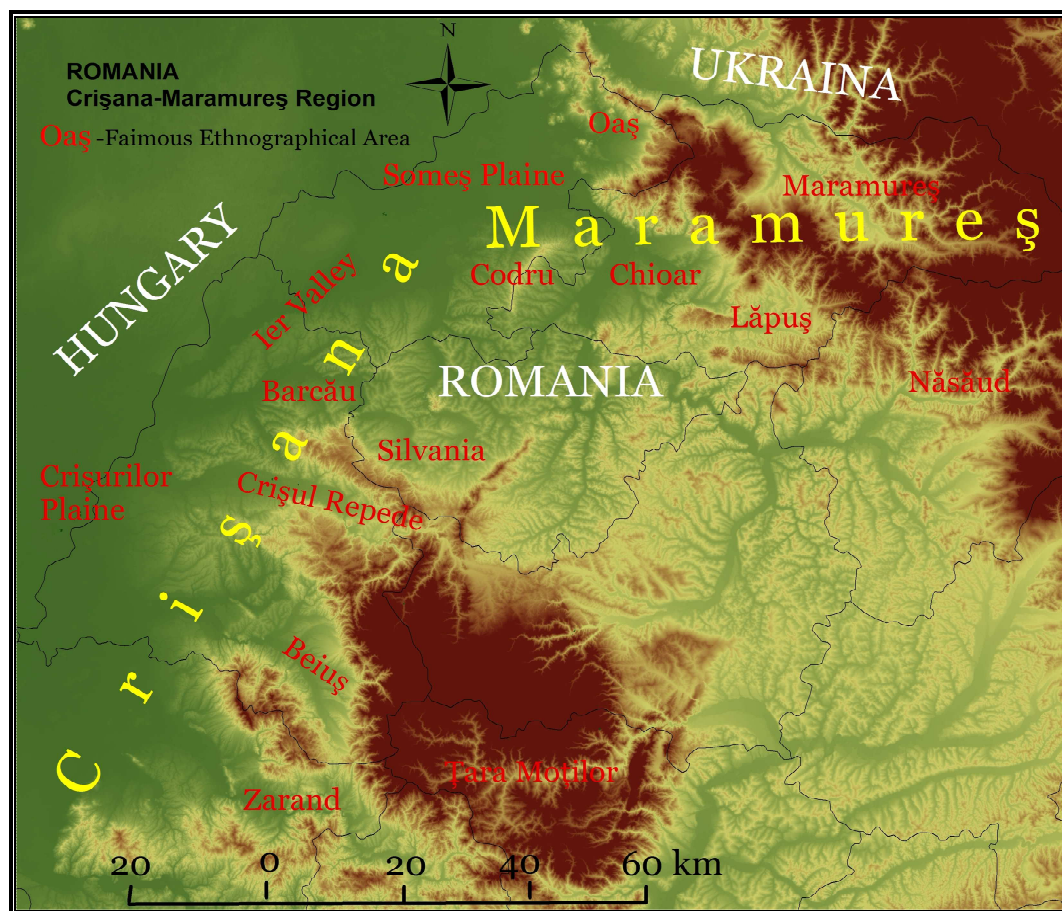


Figure 1. Romania. Crisana-Maramureș region and its famous ethnographical area

Inhabitants' permanence and continuity in Crișana and Maramureș areas are very well reflected in what concerns traditions and folklore customs' preserve and that of material and spiritual values nearly unmingled. The inhabitants living in these areas had built their houses, the church, the school, but also a large variety of wood objects necessary for living, wood architecture hoarding up testimonies of a great value concerning material and spiritual autochthonous culture. Having a patrimony hard to be estimated, both historical provinces are menaced by the indifference of those who must

World War, the southern area of Tisa river remained between Romanian borders, while the *Maramureș* region situated on the northern area was integrated into the ex-Soviet territory, the contemporary Ukraine

create and consolidate protection framework and by the ignorance of those who promote and implement the kitsch and the non-authentic, the latter being a result of globalization process and others too. Under these circumstances, villages' quick transforming moots the question of saving wooden, stone and rush architectonical patrimony or other specific materials by identifying, stocktaking, mapping and promoting a larger number of elements having a local cultural identity.

Temporal guide marks. An important aspect, from the point of view of the territorial identification with the traditional and the authentic is the temporal period taken into account. In this way we can point out very ancient structures and elements able to represent the background and the temporal cultural guide mark, without being integrated in an active manner into the touristic circuit. Therefore, from the methodological point of view and on the basis of territorial reality and bibliographical resources, since the beginning, for each territorial structure included in the research area it is necessary a temporal positioning depending on the historical thresholds which had strikingly left their marks on the architectural style of the households within the Romanian rural environment (figure 2a and 2b).

In this way, we can identify four temporal areas: before the First World War, interwar period, socialist period and post-socialist period. The scientific substantiation of these four temporal areas is imposed to be accomplished as a result of an extensive activity field for the purpose of identifying, mapping, stocktaking, reevaluating and quantifying of the specific structures and elements within the investigated areas from the quantitative and qualitative point of view. In a parallel direction with this temporal scale it is imposed another one, that of the return of a certain traditional style, which is stylistically reimproved in most of the cases, and which may represent a tendency for the contemporary period.

Planning models imported and implemented without fitting to specific. The recent concerning issued from the specialized literature points out a preexistent touristic potential, and which in most of the cases had been transformed without a concordance regarding the qualitative/quantitative aspect of the acquainted descriptions. Also, it is imposed a more active involvement of the interdisciplinary teams for "rethinking the concepts of tourism planning and of the appliance ways with the models from the foreign developed states". The last method could represent a danger for the Romanian environment, which in many areas can be considered "a living museum" impossible to associate with the pre-existent models. Unfortunately, the experiments after 1990 promoted and implemented by ANTREC and the ministerial structures involved in the Romanian tourism, even through some European programmes (SAPARD case), had contributed less to the authentic patrimony preservation, succeeding particularly the emphasis of it, the deterioration into non-authentic and "a kitsch" generated by the lack of knowledge on a side and by the lack of an optimum institutional framework of authenticity's protection in this respect, on the other side (figure 3).

A realistic measure on this direction would have felt the need for the touristic or agrotouristic pensions' division into two categories: a lower category (1-3 stars; figure 4b and 4d.) which would include those individual farms as part of the touristic programme, but which are not representative for the architectural style of the region, and a higher category (4-5 stars) for those buildings that respects the traditional architectural style (figure 4a and 4c). The first category, with minimum of investments, would allow the owner to obtain some complementary incomes by including them into the touristic circuit, and the second category, more expensive, representing the basis attractiveness, would gain a financial support (a sort of financial grant form) in comparison with the authenticity and the reflection of the specific area degree.



Figure 2a. Old and modern houses in Oaș “Land”-Boinesti village. Alternatives for ancient and new. Solutions for traditional preserving on the background of building some new dwellings as a symbol of contemporary flourishing.



Figura 2b. Old and modern houses and churches in Maramureș “Country” – Botiza village.



Figure 3. Băile Felix Spa. Project financed through SAPARD programme for the rural environment development and the preserving of the farm as an agrotouristic pension. An illustrative example of an absolute lack of professionalism and territorial reality ignorance of those who proposed to finance a project entitled „an agrotouristic pension” which , in the territorial reality, it is compared rather to an accommodation structure, pretty much like a hotel.

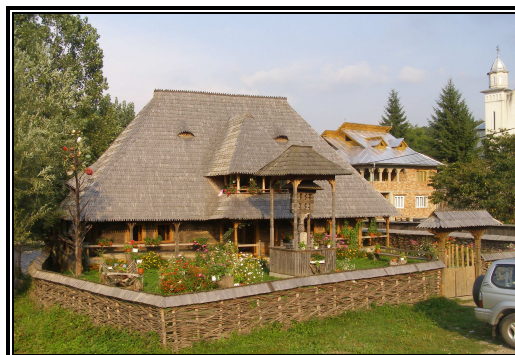


Figure 4a. Rural pension who respect regional architectural style (Botiza Village – Maramureș)



Figure 4b. Touristic pension in modern house (Ferești Village, Maramureș)



Figure 4c. Traditional Farm (Budești Village, Maramureș)



Figure 4d. Modern Farm (Botiza Village, Maramureș)



Figure 5. Church in traditional architectural style from Bihor region: Borsă village;
Source: Godea I., 1996



Figure 6. Wooden Church in “Maramureș” architectural style rebuilt in other region (Bihor – Băile Felix Spa)

Our scientific approach enrolls on this direction, within the framework of whom we propose, for example, that the definite elements and the identity of a rural and cultural tourism to mix with the reality of the area and also with the authenticity of the inherited traditions. Otherwise, we risk ending up in situations like the developed states from the Central and Western Europe where for example an agrotouristic farm is nothing but “*a scene where the modern actors play a scenario which was wrote many years ago based on the registers and daily life*”. For Romania and for the studied area, the identification and the registration of the authentic potential can represent an advantage that not even the ex-socialists states from Central and Eastern Europe can afford. It would be ideal the implementation of some models, why not original, which to preserve in situ the authentic resources, but in the same time not to enclose the Romanian villager access to modern and to an easier life.

Revaluation, promotion and re-branding. A winning way. One of the development modalities of some territories, uppermost rural, with approved regional identity, is increasing their attractiveness for nonpolluting investments and especially a transformation in touristic brands. Promoting the image and the services by performing materials in the printed and digital forms is one of the main concerns on the entire continent. Great research centers on the cartography domain try to increase the performances of the digital and printed products. Specialists in marketing and branding proved that a touristic destination becomes more attractive according to the way it is presented and less of the touristic attractions. Any small progress recorded on touristic plan creates multiple special positive effects, also from the point of view of the economic, cultural, educational, social, standard of living, environment and regional identity and so on.

In the actual social and economic context, elaborating a revitalization strategy of the Romanian rural area plays an important role in developing economy programs. In this context, the development and the integration of rural tourism and not only, in the local development strategies, regional and national by creating adjusted models for the local specific and by involving the determination factors of all the levels, is looming as main objectives for the research activity in the domain.

Many elaborated works by the specialists from various domains and also by interdisciplinary teams, pointed out during the time the geographical peculiarities of one of the most “*preserved and authentic*” territorial systems, among them the “*lands*” were included first and foremost. The variety of the ethno-cultural resources involves interdisciplinarity and collaboration at the level of some domains as: ethnography, folklore, art, museography and so on.

The confronting of the gathered information in the office stage with the reality, updating them and filling in the documents with new characteristics, these are absolutely necessary steps for conceiving again the idea of an authentic tourism based on the territorial realities, reaching in this way the knowledge of the real situation, of what had left from “*traditional and authentic*”, to measure the non-authentic heaviness built in comparison with the destroyed authentic, that which should be preserved in situ respectively. As a starting point for reaching some objectives required by such a scientific approach it is necessary to select, estimate, quantify and to form the gathered pieces of information on the hierarchical system, such a situation being determined also by the fact that the largest part of the existing information in the specialty literatures, with references to natural and anthropic resources and especially to those cartographic ones specific for the tourism, are out-of-date and overtaken by the present realities.

By synthesizing the information one can create specific models, comparable with those who already exist in the specialty literature, but suited to the local specific. The Oaș,

Chioar, Codru, Lăpuș, Maramureș, Ier, Plopiș, Beiuș or the Zarand may be the main revaluated areas and hierarchically classified as models of territorial structures representative for the ethno-cultural Romanian tourism. In order not to introduce and promote allochthonous elements within the working traditional mechanism, as a necessity, it is imposed the study of the “*globalization*” effects over the authentic, being part of the touristic potential, and the identification of the main ways and means able to endanger the authentic traditional resources. It is a hard purpose, but not impossible to reach and it implies mainly a large awareness campaign of the local values and then, on vertical, of the international ones. One can observe that the deterioration of the authentic patrimony dues largely to the local actors and to non-involving of the specialists in taking the decisions regarding the preservation, planning and administration of some rural wealth which becomes poorer.

Traditional versus modern, authentic versus unworthiness. The traditional and the authentic are attributes frequently associated to the Romanian rural touristic potential. In this respect, “*the lands*” within the Romanian ethnographical area are still nothing better than animated museums where the environment and the way of life become strikingly differentiated from the western European “*civilization*”. This “*lagging behind*” may be an extreme valuable advantage for the Romanian tourism. Unfortunately, during the pre-adhering stage to the UE and while being a member state, it hadn't been proved the wish for preserving these values in Romania, due to the omission or to the lack of involvement of the specialists on the field.

Unfortunately, the European programmes already unfolded or which take place at this time hadn't supported such an approach but rather, by directing and managing the reserve funds, they endured the modern and the kitsch to the prejudice of traditional and authentic. We all attend to reality's misrepresentation by promoting some mercantile tags which don't have a real support in the territory in most of the cases.

In this respect, the case of Maramureș as an area of traditions and authentical values is very relevant. It is imposed as a necessity the inclusion into the national programmes, especially, of some components regarding “*the granting of traditional and authentic maintaining*” during the struggle against the kitsch on a support similar to the agricultural activities. In this way, in a few years, similar to the western rural tourism, within the tendency of restoring what had been left, we will be constrained to stage ancient plays with modern actors.

Allochthonous versus autochthonous. Another problem is that related to the transfer of some traditional architecture elements from the origin area and their appliance into areas with different ethnographical characteristics. We don't talk here about the regional open-air museums (from Bucharest, Sibiu, Cluj-Napoca and so on) who group together original elements representative for the Romanian territory, it is about some institutions and physical persons who implement some allochthonous elements to the prejudice of the autochthonous tradition and authentic. The effects of such approaches will be disastrous regarding the specific of the area, misrepresenting the reality and making impossible that the young generations could distinguish the specific particularities of the area where they were born or live. It is a process with effects similar to cultural globalization and uniformity by: interest's diminishing for the source areas existing thus the possibility to admire a church of Maramureș area, misrepresented from the architectural point of view right in the middle of Bucharest. An illustrative example in this respect is the case of Băile Felix spa, where after 1990 there had been built two wooden churches in Maramureș style (figure 6; Orthodox Church and Unite church), Bihor being in the position of having included in its patrimonial and ethnographical dowry

specific wooden churches and of a great architectural value (figure 5). The question is who did wrong in this case? Did the local authorities who granted the notification for construction? Did the inhabitants who gave the consent for an implant “alien” to the local area? Or did those from the church’s origin area (Maramureș people) who didn’t objected to this kind of “export” of the patrimonial ideas and elements whom we shouldn’t identify unless in their origin area. We consider that in such cases the legislation concerning the architectural, ethnographical and cultural patrimony’s protection shall be more severe, accurate and not so permissive. In this respect there is a major risk with immediate effects referenced to: the cultural identity’s loss of an area by importing allochthonous elements; the implementation of some elements that import the idea of an area more than that of the architectural style; cultural leveling as a globalization consequence and so on.

As a **conclusion** one can assert the fact that the rural environment corresponding to Crișana and Maramureș is still well preserved and it is, in the same time, the preserver of an invaluable thesaurus of historical and architectural monuments, monuments of art, historical vestiges, as well as that of an authentic patrimony of ethno-folklore of an incomparable value and pureness. In parallels, the power of creating the new is superior, in most of the cases, to that of preserving and promoting the existing architectural patrimony, unfortunately, this fact encourages the destruction of the valuable elements, representative for a certain area from the cultural inheritance point of view.

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