

THE HISTORICAL RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE UNDER TOTALITARIAN REGIMES AND AFTER. THE ROMANIAN CASE

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Almost any new approach to the residential architecture in the historical provinces of Romania has to deal with the effects of the decisions taken by the authoritarian or totalitarian political regimes installed after 1938. Of all, the ones from the 50s had the most dramatic impact on the built heritage which was in the property of the political, cultural and financial elites of the era – palaces, castles, courts (*curiae*), fortresses, manors or houses,¹ – with consequences that are still visible today. All residences that were still standing, regardless of their age, historical and artistic value, status among historical monuments, province or owner, shared a similar fate.²

On March 6th, 1945, the government headed by Petru Groza was installed and thus began, under Communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the process of Stalinisation in Romania, with reforms in all vital domains, with dissolutions and establishments of institutions and various forms of repression (arrest, detention, etc.) towards both real and virtual opponents. In the name of the “class fight”, of the imperious need to liquidate the “exploiting classes” (according to the official propaganda), major social and economic measures were taken, declared as favouring the peasantry and the work class. One of these measures was the agrarian reform adopted in March 23rd, 1945, by which estates were limited to 50 ha and, consequently, 900,000 peasants became land owners (fig. 1). Next, the forced abdication of King Michael I of Romania was followed, on May 27th, 1948, by the confiscation of all goods belonging to the Royal House. At the same time, the Ministry of Internal Affairs began inventorying the agricultural properties which hadn't been confiscated in 1945 and started making lists of the

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¹ There is no attempt in these pages to evaluate their terminology – a rather complicated problem, which would require further evaluation. Generic or conventional designations will be used, as they are known in the literature or in the List of Historical Monuments.

² General sketches which are somewhat similar to the present one, regarding the fate of the Romanian residences, can also be found in Narcis Dorin Ion, “Destinul unor reședințe aristocratice în primul deceniu al regimului comunist” (paper presented at the International Symposium Monumentul, Iași, Romania, 2009, www.monumentul.ro/pdfs/Narcis%20Dorin%20Ion%202009.pdf, accessed on 12.07.2017): 269-296; András Kovács, “Kastélyrekonstrukciók Erdélyben,” *Korunk* 6, 3 (2013): 3-13 (http://epa.oszk.hu/00400/00458/00593/pdf/EPA00458_korunk_2013_06.pdf, accessed on 15.04.2017). For an overview on monument protection during the Communist regime in Romania, see: Dinu C. Giurescu, *Razing of Romania's Past* (New York: World Monuments Fund, 1989).

rich, sorted according to the administrative unit.

Thus, the land was set for the adoption of Decree 83/1949 during the night of 1st-2nd March regarding the confiscation of estates “along with their entire inventory, living, dead, and buildings.”³ The former owners were imposed house arrest or were even arrested, while on their departure they were only allowed to keep a limited number of goods for personal use.⁴ Later, the former members of the elite (and not only) all over the country were forced to dwell in compulsory residences (in Romanian: Domiciliu Obligatoriu, D.O.) in different places and to keep various jobs for living (figs. 3, 4).



Fig. 1. The distribution of the properties following the agrarian reform. Turnu Măgurele, 1946 (*Comunismul în România*, The National History Museum of Romania, <http://www.comunismulinromania.ro>, accessed on 20.04.2017).

³ According to Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, for example, since there were no compensations whatsoever, this needs to be considered a “confiscation” and not an “expropriation”. The same author remarks that this measure, similar to the one in Russia, on October 26th/November 8th, 1917, had been anti-constitutional. Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *Dimensiunea represiunii din România în regimul comunist. Dislocări de persoane și fixări de domiciliu obligatoriu* (București: Corint, 2010), 15-16. The 1949 Decree was the first step made by the Romanian Labourer’s Party to collectivize agriculture after a Soviet model, which had been declared completed in 1962. For the whole context, see Keith Hitchins, *România: 1866-1947* (București: Humanitas, 2013); Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *Stalinizarea României* (București: BIC ALL, 2005); Denis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1999).

⁴ Clothing, shoes, lingerie, and bed sheets. Moreover, the permitted goods were listed in an official table.

After liquidation of the large private properties, on May 4th, 1949 followed the circular through which the inventoried agricultural goods are distributed firstly to the Agricultural Collective Farm (in Romanian: Gospodăriile Agricole de Stat – GAS). The most valuable mobile assets – furniture, paintings, carpets, musical instruments, etc. which decorated the residences of the elites – were allocated, with the prior notification of the Ministry of Arts, to schools, museums, city halls, libraries. The money, gold, silverware and precious stones were given to the State Bank. Some of the more valuable works of art were sent, through the Ministry of Arts which constituted a deposit, to the newly created National Gallery by the Museum of Arts of the Popular Republic (1950). Some goods that were considered less valuable were put up for sale. In the autumn of 1949, after being inventoried, the time came for the 6,317 buildings to be distributed to ministries and other state institutions. Their majority became property of the Ministry of Agriculture – over 5,000 buildings, of which most were turned at first into headquarters for Provisional Committees and mass organisations, community centres, schools, kindergartens and nurseries, maternity wards, human and veterinarian dispensaries, rest houses, hospitals and sanatoriums for tuberculosis, psychiatric, and disabled patients.⁵

By simply consulting the official documents one might get the impression that the passing of the estates from the private to the public sector had been made in a well-organised albeit abusive and unconstitutional manner, with a clear mode of keeping track and proper control of distribution of the built areas and with the centralisation of the most valuable mobile heritage for museum capitalisation. However, when delving deeper into the texts that only started to become available during recent years, one can notice a dysfunctional on-site organisation, havoc and theft, irrecoverable loss of inventory, along with various human abuses. The people involved in the application of the decree and the new administrators have proven to have been unprepared for the on-site situations.⁶

The history of post-1949 residences can only be revealed by compiling thousands of case studies, which requires a thorough study while also considering the general context. Some of the estates were left waiting for too long for their new roles or at least for repairs (already being in a bad condition), subjected to looting by the locals, reaching a state of collapse; others were adapted to their new – and improper – functions, which resulted in interventions completed with materials which were inadequate for old structures, partial demolitions or reconstructions. Others were perpetually redistributed, passing from one incompatible destination to another. Neither the status of historical monument

⁵ Ionescu-Gură, *Stalinizarea*, 495-500.

⁶ Dumitru Şandru, “Decretul 83/1949,” *Arhivele Totalitarismului* 1 (1993): 142; Ionescu-Gură, *Stalinizarea*, 492-494; Ionescu-Gură, *Dimensiunea represiunii*, 19.

which some of them had previously gained,⁷ nor the inclusion in the monuments list adopted in 1955 guaranteed a complete, long-time protection for their majority. Obviously, the exceptional artistic, architectural or documentary value of the residences and their collections, which many specialists have tried to present to the authorities, didn't matter either. A very relevant case for this topic, documented in the archives and reported by Narcis Dorin Ion, is that of the manor in Ciocănești (Dolj County) (fig. 5), which belonged to the important Ghika-Cantacuzino families. The manor, the interior inventory and the park have been devastated and looted, then fell to ruin.⁸

Nevertheless, one must not exaggerate the destructive effects of the liquidation of private property over the estates. A series of problems which caused the degradation or the disappearance of the buildings originated in the past and were tied to the previous agrarian reforms (1921, 1945), to their owner's financial and organisational possibilities regarding reconstructions or estate sales as in the case of Racoșu de Jos/Alsórákos (Brașov County) (fig. 6)⁹ or even building demolitions for exploitation of building materials (e. g. Vlaha/Magyarfenes, Cluj County, figs. 7-8)¹⁰, to seismic activity (the previous devastating earthquake had been in 1940) and other natural causes, fire, but also by requisitions, bombings and other war related interventions (fig. 9).¹¹ However, it cannot be stated that

⁷ Being afraid of certain negative consequences of the expropriations imposed by the agrarian reform in 1945, several landlords asked for the ranking of their buildings and parks (Ion, "Destinul unor reședințe," 285).

⁸ Ion, "Destinul unor reședințe," 276-292.

⁹ For example, the noble residence in Racoșu de Jos built during the 16th-17th centuries had become the property of the local community from 1903. All estate slowly entered into a degradation process and the Knights Hall or some other parts near the street have been demolished. Over time, various parts of the ensemble had different improper functions (e. g. stable and granary, fire station, and others). Furthermore, the earthquake of 1977 had a major impact on the castle. See the history of the castle in András Kovács, *Késő reneszánsz építészet Erdélyben. 1541-1720* (Budapest-Kolozsvár: Polis Könyvkiadó, 2003), 122-124; <http://monumenteuitate.org/en/monument/36/Racos-Suekoesd-Bethlen>, accessed on 21.05.2017.

¹⁰ The locals bought the castle, dismantled it and used the retrieved material to build their own houses. The marble statues were burned into lime, the park was destroyed, and the land was split between the villagers. E. Balogh, *Íratlan történelem* (Kolozsvár: Grafica Ny., 1939), 4.

¹¹ The case of the castle in Treznea (Sălaj County) is more complex, connected with the possible role played by Ferenc Bay in the Horthyst massacre from 1940. The family have left the estate in 1944 (reported by Maria Bucur, "Remembering Wartime Violence in Twentieth-Century Transylvania: A Few Thoughts on Comparative History," *Hungarian Studies* 21, 1-2 (2007): 105) and the local attitude to the continuously looted remnants of the castle seems to be a form of punishment against Bay family. The Cantacuzino Palace in Florești (Prahova County) ("The Little Trianon Palace") was twice destroyed by the German troops (in both World Wars), and by the earthquake in 1940 (Ion, "Destinul unor reședințe," 282-284). In revenge for Miklós Bánffy's actions in Bucharest, German troops plundered and devastated the castle in Bonțida/Bonchida at the end of the Second World War (Kovács, "Kastélyrekonstrukciók," 7). A similar fate was shared by other valuable monuments such as

there was generally a major interest of the competent authorities to protect these estates as historical monuments.¹²



Fig. 2. László Barcsay of Bârcea Mare/Nagybarcsa (Hunedoara County), Prefect /supreme commit and his wife, Antónia Bruckenthal (19th c.) (Attila Molnár collection).



Fig. 3. Forced residence (D. O.) in 1976. Basement home for count Haller's family (the last landlords of the Castle of Sânpaul/Kerelószentpál in Târgu Mureș. Gábor Margittai, *Tiltott kastély* (Budapest: Külső Magyarok Kiadó, 2017, 197).

Lónyai Castle in Medieșu Aurit/Aranyosmeggyes (Satu Mare County), <http://www.castleintransylvania.ro/lonyai-castle-mediesu-aurit-.html>, accessed on 21.05.2017.

¹² For example, in the *Inventory of Public and Historical Monuments in Romania*, 1903, published by the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction, even the courts of Constantin Brâncoveanu, prince of Wallachia (1688-1714), are missing.



Fig. 4. Count Jenő Haller, the last lord of the Castle in Cetatea de Baltă/Küküllővár as a worker (in first standing row, first from right) of ILEFOR company (Count Béla Haller's private collection, via Gábor Margittai).

In the year 1955 a new law of protection and a list of monuments (printed, but for limited use) were submitted, in which some of the former estates appeared with their new functions. Thus we can find a swinery of the People's Council assigned next to the boyar manor in Coșoveni (Dolj County), a storehouse and grain stall at the Banffy Castle in Urmeniș/Mezőörményes/Ermeden (Bistrița-Năsăud County) and the House Alexe Breazovay in Peșteana/Nagypestény (Hunedoara County), a "piglet maternity" at the Radian Cula in Radomiru, etc.¹³ Previously, the Commission for Historical Monuments (that functioned since 1892) was disbanded, which caused plenty of institutional dysfunctions and loss of archival material (surveys, photos). And the subsequent transfer of activities of conservation and restoration from the Department of Cults (1954) to the State Committee for Construction, Architecture and Systematisation (1959), and then to the State Committee and Council for Culture and Socialist Education (1971) brought new fractures of activity and replacement of personnel. Everything culminated with the disbanding of the Direction for Historical Monuments in 1977 (as a result of the 1977 earthquake and in the context of a major urban reorganisation) and its replacement with the Direction for National Heritage, under the Council for Socialist Culture and Education,

¹³ *Lista Monumentelor Istorice de cultură de pe teritoriul R.P.R* (București: Editura Academiei Populare Romîne, 1956).

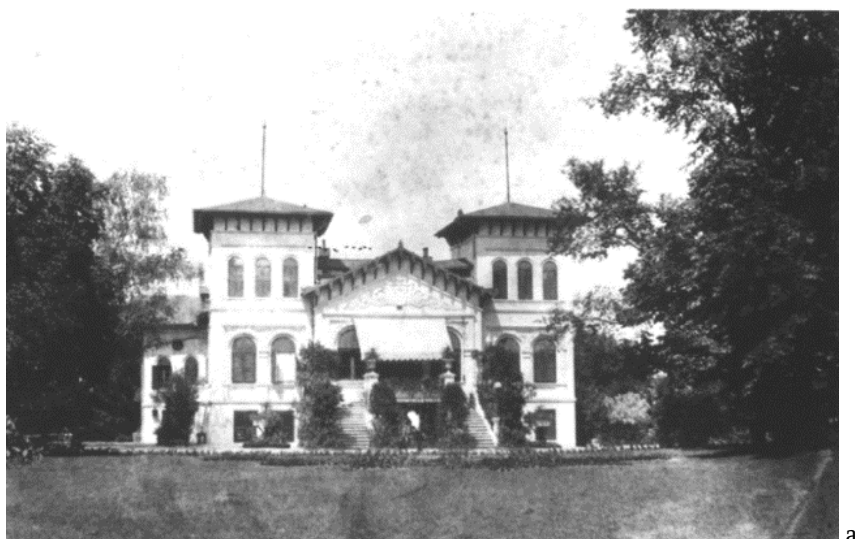
which had a negative impact as well (maybe the worst in 1950-1989).¹⁴ Many projects of research and restoration which had begun all over the country were stopped, a scenario to which the lack of funding also contributed.

The efforts to inventory the former residences or to research and protect them did exist during the Communist era, but their character wasn't systematic, as they encountered financial, organisational problems and various incoherencies, and depended on the good will, training and influence of the specialists who attempted to continue the tradition of documentation, and to impose the monuments that were more valuable or in a state of pre-collapse as subjects of research or of projects of salvaging and restoration.¹⁵ András Kovács considers the case of the castle in Criș/Keresd/Kreisch (Mureș County) (fig. 10) to be very relevant for the fate of the civil architecture monument in the 20th century and beyond. After it was looted for three days at the end of the Second World War, the Bethlen family continued to inhabit it until 1948. In those days all chambers were still furnished with historic furniture, tapestries, carpets, books, as well as porcelain, glass, crystal, and silver wares. In 1949, large trucks entered the courtyard and the valuable objects were hauled for days. What had not been taken out of the castle was burnt in the courtyard. Until 1976, it hosted the headquarters of the Agricultural Production Cooperative (in Romanian: Cooperativa Agricolă de Producție – CAP), after which there began works of consolidation (with removal of the renderings) and an archaeological investigation (published with errors). When the Direction of Historical Monuments was disbanded in 1977, the restoration works were so advanced that

¹⁴ Virgil Vătășianu, Târgu Mureș report, 1980, in Corina Simion, *Artă și identitate națională în opera lui Virgil Vătășianu* (Cluj-Napoca: Nereamie Napocae, 2002), 191-194; Giurescu, *Razing of Romania's Past*; Oliver Velescu, "Remember: demolările. Reflecții la centenar," *Buletinul Comisiei Monumentelor Istorice* 3, 4 (1992): 16-20; Cristian Vasile, "Proiecte de reorganizare a Direcției Monumentelor Istorice în anii 1960," *Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei. Artă Plastică*, SN, 3 (47) (2013): 151-155.

¹⁵ The Archive of the National Heritage Institute (in Romanian: Institutul Național al Patrimoniului) hosts a large part of the documents on the restorations in the Communist era, and about 700 surveys and sketches from the archive of the Ion Mincu University in Bucharest, partially published over time, and more recently digitized and gathered in "The Survey Room" (in Romanian: "Camera cu relevee") (<https://relevee.uauim.ro/despre/>), along with specialised publications such as: *Monumente și Muze* (1950), *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice* (1970-1973), *Monumente istorice. Studii și lucrări de restaurare*, I-III (București: Editura Tehnică, 1964-1967), *Revista Monumentelor Istorice. Monumente Istorice și de Artă* (1974-1989), *Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei* (1954-), confess about of all these efforts to save and protect the architectural heritage, that sometimes included the former princely, noble and boyar residences. The lists of restoration works from 1959 to 1969 were published in "Principalele lucrări de restaurare a monumentelor istorice din Republica Socialistă România," *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice* XXXIX, 1 (1970): 73-78. Compared to the first stage of the Communist regime, we can see in this list an increased number of monuments such as houses, mansions, castles and fortifications or fortified churches in Transylvania which benefited from works of restoration. Even so, the religious monuments represent the majority.

only a door with inlays and some exterior renderings were missing. However, left without security, the monument and the park around it turned again into a target for destruction, becoming a ruin. The roofs mostly collapsed, and the artistic components were dislodged and stolen. A new series of consolidations and roof assembly followed, but after a lengthy process of retrocession the castle returned to the Bethlen heirs (2007).¹⁶



a



b



c

Fig. 5. The manor Ghika-Cantacuzino from Ciocănești (Dâmbovița County) in the 1950s (Ion, "Destinul unor reședințe," 294) and 2013 (Photos by Bogdan Costea, <http://www.monumenteuitate.org/en/monument/755/Ciocanesti-Ghika-Cantacuzino>, accessed on 30.07.2017).

¹⁶ Kovács, "Kastélyrekonstrukciók," 8; Radu Oltean, "Castelul de la Criș-Mureș," in <http://art-historia.blogspot.com/2011/03/castelul-de-la-cris-mures.html>, accessed on 12.04.2017. From 2007 the castle is under the administration of Pro Castrum Bethlen.



a



b

Fig. 6. The castle in Racoșu de Jos/Alsórákos (Brașov County) in 2018
(Photos by Ileana Burnichioiu).



Fig. 7. Vlaha/Magyarfenes (Cluj County).Jósika Castle in 1929 (<http://www.kepkonyvtar.hu/?docId=19804>, accessed on 30.05.2017).



Fig. 8. Vlaha/Magyarfenes. Jósika Castle in 1936 (<http://www.kepkonyvtar.hu/?docId=19647>, accessed on 30.05.2017).



a



b



c

Fig. 9. a-c. The Bay Castle in Treznea/Ördögkút at the beginning of the 20th c. (<http://www.fortepan.hu>, Treznea; <http://www.castelintransilvania.ro/castelul-bay-treznea-.html>, accessed on 27.04.2017) and in 2013 (Photo by Mirel Matyas).

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a

b



c

Fig. 10. The castle of Criș/Keresd/Kreisch (Mureș County). a-b. Details from the interior before 1949 (<http://art-historia.blogspot.com/2011/03/castelul-de-la-cris-mures.html>, accessed on 12.05.2017) and in 2015 (Photo by Ileana Burnichioiu); c. General view of the donjon and loggia in 1991(Photo by Radu Oltean).

Some residences as many other important monuments (e. g. Oradea Nagy-Várad/Großwardein, Alba Iulia/Gyulafehérvár/Karlsburg, and Arad fortresses, Collegium Bethlen in Alba Iulia) such as those that had hosted military facilities – like the Princely Palace in Alba Iulia, were as good as inexistent for the official research or protection, the buildings being inaccessible,¹⁷ and the repairs always made by the owners. In 1950, the castle of Făgăraș/Fogaras/Fogarasch (Brașov County) was taken over by the General Directorate of Prisons, becoming a political prison until 1960 when it was turned into a museum.¹⁸ Another very important monument, the castle of Gherla, housed a prison from 1780 until today.¹⁹ Moreover, other estates suffered important destructions during film making (e.g. Bonțida/Bonchida in 1964, Cantacuzino Palace in Florești on several occasions).²⁰

However, certain subjects or archaeological sites related to elite residences have been included in the official research plans, with multiannual funding, according to directions set by the authority and the Academy. This was the case with the 1967 program requested by the Institute of Archaeology, for the systematic inventory of lordly residences in the Seat Fortresses of Wallachia and Moldavia,²¹ or with the syntheses required for various chapters of the history of “Romanian civilisation,” such as the work of Corina Niculescu on “old Romanian houses, manors and palaces.”²²

Simultaneously with the activity coordinated from Bucharest, with the help of specialists, there were also other attempts of inventorying in counties, initiated by the party, including medieval residences (archaeological sites) or pre-modern residences. Such was the case in Hunedoara County in 1975 – an action that probably wasn’t singular –, where the research of the archives revealed, in 2014, a document comprising 26 buildings, sent by the local authorities to the

¹⁷ It is about the two eastern courtyards used as military units over three centuries, from the Habsburgs to the Romanian Army in 2006. Ileana Burnichioiu, “The Princely Palace of Alba Iulia. The beginnings of research,” *Caiete ARA* 8 (2017): 185-186.

¹⁸ Ioan Ciupea, “Făgăraș. Cetatea închisoare (1950-1960),” *ASTRA* 1-2 (2012); Kovács, “Kastélyrekonstrukciók,” 3-4.

¹⁹ Klára P. Kovács, “Cetatea din Gherla, azi penitenciarul Gherla,” <http://enciclopediavirtuala.ro/monument.php?id=367>, accessed on 17.05.2017.

²⁰ See the National Report on built heritage: *Raportul Comisiei Prezidențiale pentru Patrimoniul Construit, Siturile Istorice și Naturale, Administrația Prezidențială* (București, 2009), 18, <http://old.presidency.ro/static/rapoarte/Raport%20CPPCSINR.pdf>, accessed on 18.07.2017; Ion, “Destinul unor reședințe,” 284.

²¹ Tereza Sinigalia, *Arhitectura civilă de zid din Țara Românească în secolele XIV-XVIII* (București: Vreamea), 29.

²² The author fell in the trap of autochthonism and generally accomplished much less than the generous title suggests. However, her book was influent since it stimulated the interest in this subject, especially for Wallachia and Moldavia.

Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party.²³

Regarding the scientific research, apart from the writings of Corina Nicolescu, other published works dedicated especially to the elite residences were limited geographically, chronologically (to a single reign, era, style) or thematically (to a single category of residential architecture, a single site or monument).²⁴ Some works present unilateral approaches from the point of view of the sources used. Among the most notable ones, still appreciated for their scientific value, are those by Gheorghe Sebestyén and Victor Sebestyén,²⁵ Marianna H. Takács,²⁶ and Margit B. Nagy,²⁷ Géza Entz²⁸ – all about buildings of the medieval and Early Modern Age Transylvanian elite (continuing an older direction of research recorded in Budapest or Transylvania partially connected with the activity of the Monuments Commission until 1918, with the inventory of monuments and the county monographs). All these are rather well reflected by the critical historiographical chapters or by the state of research presented in the post-1989 publications by Tereza Sinigalia²⁹ and Anca Brătuleanu³⁰ (for Wallachia), of Cristian Nicolae Apetrei (for Moldavia and Wallachia),³¹ András

²³ The document named “Note de prezentare a obiectivelor foste conace și castele” refers to 26 residences of the elite of Hunedoara County; their state of conservation was also noted. The inventory has been made in order to familiarise with the elements of the building fund, which through their construction have a particular character, and for this purpose a numerous team was deployed on site, comprising activists, engineers, gymnasium teachers, pedagogues and priests. Dorin Petresc, <http://zhd.ro/istorii/documente-regasite-comunistii-hunedoreni-au-facut-inventarul-palatelor-de-grofi/>, accessed on 28.09.2017.

²⁴ At the same time, studies on the elite of the Romanian provinces, especially in Transylvania, Banat and Crișana, decreased in number after 1945.

²⁵ Gheorghe Sebestyén and Victor Sebestyén, *Arhitectura Renașterii în Transilvania* (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1963) followed by Gheorghe Sebestyén, “Castelele și curiile Renașterii în Transilvania,” *Acta Musei Napocensis* 22-23 (1985-1986) and the book about Renaissance architecture: *O pagină din istoria arhitecturii din România. Renașterea* (București: Editura Tehnică, 1987).

²⁶ *Magyarországi udvarházak és kastélyok (XVI-XVII. század)* (Budapest: Akadémia Kiadó, 1970).

²⁷ *Várak, kastélyok, udvarházak, ahogy a régiek látták. XVII-XVIII. századi erdélyi összeírások és leltárak* (Bukarest: Kriterion, 1973).

²⁸ Géza Entz, “Mittelalterliche Edelhöfe in Siebenbürgen,” *Forschungen über Siebenbürgen und seine Nachbarn. Festschrift für Attila T. Szabó und Zsigmond Jakó*, eds. Kálmán Benda et al., *Studia Hungarica. Schriften des Ungarischen Instituts München* 31 (München, 1987): 241-252. The data was then included in the later volumes about medieval Transylvanian architecture: *Erdély építészete a 11-13. században* (Kolozsvár: Az Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület Kiadása, 1994); *Erdély építészete a 14-16. században* (Kolozsvár: Az Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület Kiadása, 1996).

²⁹ *Arhitectura civilă*.

³⁰ *Curți domnești și boierești în România. Valahia veacurilor al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea* (București, Simetria, 1997).

³¹ *Reședințe boierești din Țara Românească și Moldova în secolele XIV-XVI* (Brăila: Istros, 2009).

Kovács,³² Adrian A. Rusu,³³ Elek Benkő and Attila Székely³⁴ (for Transylvania), etc.

On the other hand, when the investigations (especially the archaeological ones) were planned, the researchers failed to receive the necessary funding, which was mostly directed to prehistoric, Dacian, Roman, or (more rarely) medieval sites, connected to the most ancient, heroic history of Romanian territories, serving the ideology of the age. Some of the obsessions of the national discourse were the demonstration of the earliest ancestors and the continuity of settlement between the Danube, the Black Sea and the Carpathians (if possible, even since prehistory), emphasising anything possibly connected to the heroic past of the Romanians and identifying as many ancient relations of unity between the former historical provinces that made up Romania as possible. It was a legitimating discourse specific to totalitarian regimes, directed towards the surrounding countries (especially Hungary and the Soviet Union), but also towards the citizens. Since the mid-1980s, this propagandistic discourse fuelled by a historiography influenced by party activists, alongside the cult of personality, took on the most aberrant forms.³⁵

The post-1989 period brought more than critical reviews of older documentation and especially new conditions for the former residences that had survived on site. Older problems, many of them inherited from Communist times, had increasingly tumbled and aggravated, while the central and local authorities continued to be unable to guarantee and organise their protection (figs. 11-17). The feeling of “looting”, all the way to the total compromise of any notion of individual property, persisted as long as it has transformed into a feature also of the social-economic “freedom” after 1989. After 1989, the activity of the

³² Kovács, *Késő reneszánsz*, published after a PhD thesis focused on buildings commissioned by Gábor Bethlen Prince of Transylvania (1613-1629).

³³ *Castelarea carpatică. Fortificații și cetăți din Transilvania și teritoriile învecinate (sec. XIII-XIV)* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2005), published after a PhD thesis about medieval fortifications and castles, articles as “Donjoane din Transilvania,” *Acta Musei Napocensis* 17 (1980): 177-197 and a bibliographic volume: *Bibliografia fortificațiilor medievale și premoderne din Transilvania și Banat* (Reșița: Banatica, 1996). Next, the author provided a list accompanied by bibliography of the medieval noble courts in Hațeg and Transylvania during the 14th-15th centuries in “Biserica Sfântului Nicolae și curtea nobiliară a Arceștilor de la Densuș (jud. Hunedoara),” *Arheologia Medievală* VII (2008): 170-173. Another book of the author is forthcoming: *Castelul și spada. Cultura materială a elitelor din Transilvania Evului Mediu tardiv*. Some chapters of the volume (7-11) are dealing with residential architecture of the Late Medieval elite (castles, manors houses, donjons, etc.) and its material inventory as reflected by written and archaeological evidence.

³⁴ *Középkori udvarház és nemesség a Székelyföldön* (Budapest: Pap Kiadó), 2008.

³⁵ Robert King, *Minorities under communism: nationalities as a source of tension among Balkan communist states* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1991); Alexandru Zub, *Orizont închis. Istoriografia română sub comunism* (Iași: Institutul European, 2000); Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001).

newly recreated national and regional structures of heritage protection started with a great enthusiasm.³⁶ But in two or three years the specialists and the authorities observed that the budget was not sufficient for all open sites and the initial plans had to be let go of. Many historical residential buildings and ensembles were never included in the List of Historical Monuments; some are still unknown in the field. So, at this moment, there is no well-defined strategy for the former residences that have been confiscated, the larger measures always being formal, remaining at a bureaucratic and declarative level, while the onsite control of conservation, restoration, and–rehabilitation is only partial and largely inefficient.³⁷

Important steps have been made in the last two decades regarding research and inventory, thanks to the specialists and young professionals in various institutions (universities, research centres, museums),³⁸ PhD theses,³⁹ NGOs and foundations,⁴⁰ current owners and administrators. A major impact of the on-going projects is directed rather towards popularisation and raising

³⁶ Cezara Mucenic, “Istoria CNMASI-DMASI. 1989-1993,” *Revista Monumentelor Istorice* LXIX, 1-2 (2000): 69-78.

³⁷ Two reports in 2009 and 2014 show the weaknesses of the national protection of culture heritage in Romania: see *Raportul Comisiei Prezidențiale and Strategia de dezvoltare. 20. Protecția monumentelor – Strategia de dezvoltare teritorială a României. Studii de fundamentare. Servicii elaborare studii în vederea implementării activităților proiectului cu titlul „Dezvoltarea de instrumente și modele de planificare strategică teritorială pentru sprijinirea viitoarei perioade de programare post 2013”. Studiul 20. Protecția monumentelor istorice și a patrimoniului construit* (București, 2014), http://sdtr.ro/upload/STUDII/20.%20Raport_Protectia%20monumentelor%20istorice%20si%20a%20Patrimoniului%20construit_.pdf, accessed on 2.10.2018.

³⁸ E. g. “The Survey Room,” <https://relevee.uauim.ro>, and *Documente de arhitectură din România. 2. Curți, mănăstiri și casele lor – Țara Românească*, eds. Irina Calotă, Alexandra Teodor, and Horia Moldovan (București: Editura Universitară Ion Mincu, 2015); *INVENTARIUM*, coordinated by Virgil Pop, Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism in Cluj (<https://fau.utcluj.ro/inventarium.html>), accessed on 07.09.2017.

³⁹ In Romania (Cluj, București) or in Hungary, e. g. Marta Berke, with a PhD thesis about Transylvanian noble residence during 17th-18th (*Erdélyi kastélyok, kúriák és udvarházak nyilászárói a 17-18. században*, Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, 2010); Andreea Milea about the historical gardens of Transylvania (*Grădini istorice în Transilvania*, Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj, 2011); Letiția Cosnean dealing with Early Modern Noble Residences (*Reședințe nobiliare din Podișul Târnavelor în perioada secolelor XVI-XVII*, National University of Arts, București, 2014), Anca Raluca Majaru about residences in Banat during 19th (*Reședințele nobiliare extraurbane din Banat în secolul al XIX-lea*, Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, București, 2016), Máté Sárospataki dealing with dendrological gardens in the 19th century (*Dendrológiai kertek a 19. századi magyarországi kertépítészetben*, Corvinus University of Budapest, 2014), Zsuzsanna Kopeczny studying the Late Medieval noble residences (University of Szeged, work in progress), and many others coordinated in Cluj by András Kovács and Nicolae Sabău.

⁴⁰ E. g. Mihai Eminescu Trust for the Apafi manor house in Mălâncrav, Transylvania Trust for Bontida Castle, Kalnoky Conservation Trust for Micșoara Castle.

awareness of their touristic potential.⁴¹ In fact, this effort should be calibrated to its importance and scale, with multiannual coordinated programmes, in which the data on monuments should be correlated with the archaeological data, undertaken by larger teams which should include archaeologists, architects, historians, art historians, topographers, etc., using modern means of documentation and archiving.



a



b

Fig. 11. The ruins of the medieval court of Căndești (later Kendeffy) in Râu de Mori (Hunedoara County), 2017 (Photo by Ileana Burnichioiu).

⁴¹ See more about new projects here: the <http://monumenteuitate.org/ro> and <http://www.castleintransylvania.ro/>.



Fig. 12. Neglected ruins of medieval noble court of Mara family in Sălașu de Sus/ Felsőszálláspatak (Hunedoara County), 2009 (Photo by Ileana Burnichioiu).



Fig. 13. Hardly known: Eszterházy manor house with Renaissance window frames in Șard/Kothmarkt (Alba County), 2008 (Photos from “Monumente Uitate,” <http://www.monumenteuitate.org/ro/monument/92/Sard-Eszterhazy>, accessed on 23.05.2017).



a



b

Fig. 14. Hardly known: medieval manor house in Vălenii de Mureș/Disznajó (Mureș County) in 2007 (Photo by Ileana Burnichioiu).

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a



b



c

Fig. 15. The Bethlen-Țopa Castle (17th-19th c.) in Boiu (Mureș County) in the 1960s, 2009, and 2016, while the building material was retrieved (Photo by Adrian A. Rusu; <http://monumenteuitate.blogspot.com/2011/12/reconstituim-virtual-un-monumenteuitat.html#.XABJNmgaUk>, accessed on 30.07.2017).



a

Fig. 16. The mansion Cantacuzino-Paşcanu Ceplenița (Iași County) (17th, 19th c.) in the interwar period (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Conacul_din_Cepleni%C5%A3a0.jpg, accessed on 30.08.2017).



b

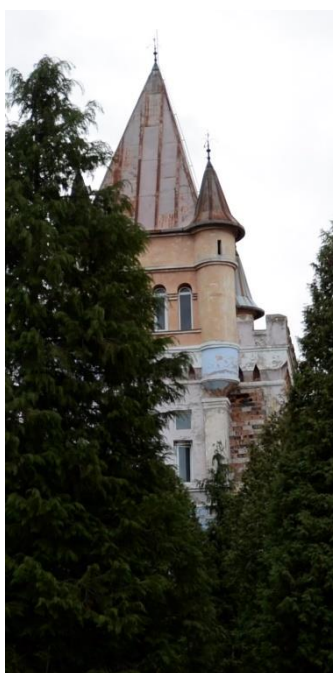
Fig. 17. The mansion Cantacuzino-Paşcanu Ceplenița burnt by fire in 1984 and robbed by the locals after 1989. Photo by Cezar Suceveanu, 2009 (https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conacul_Cantacuzino-Pa%C8%99canu_de_la_Cepleni%C8%9Ba#/media/File:Conacul_din_Cepleni%C5%A3a1.jpg, accessed on 30.08.2017).



a



b

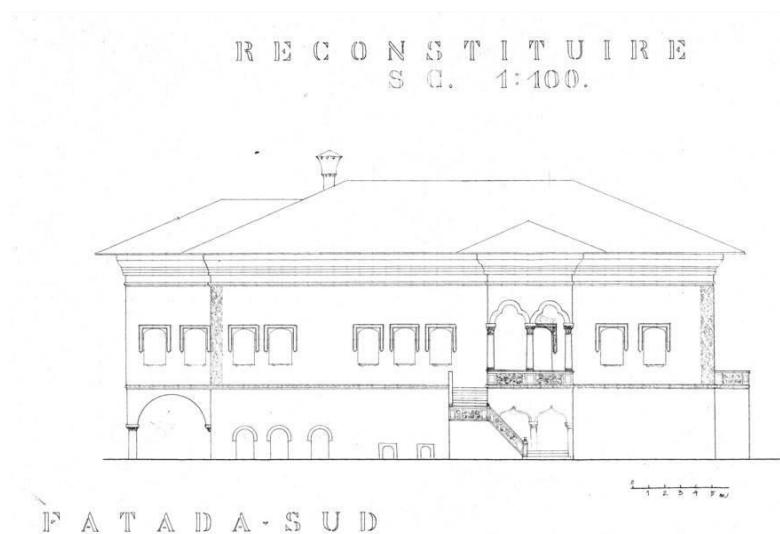


c

Fig. 18. The Kendeffy castle in Sântămărie Orlea/Óraljaboldogfalva (18th c.) (Hunedoara County) in 2007 and 2018. After an inadequate renovation, nowadays the castle is closed by the owner. The facade and the roofs show very serious degradation) (Photos by Ileana Burnichioiu).



a



b



c

Fig. 19. The ruins of the princely court in Potlogi (17thC., Dâmbovița County):
a. In the archival images from the beginning of the 20th c.; b. Graphical reconstruction of the palace in 1947 (<https://relevee.uauim.ro/m522/>, accessed on 30.07.2017);
c. Images during and after the last restoration works, made with European funds (2014-2015) (Moldovan, “Curtea domnească de la Potlogi”).



a



b

Fig. 20. The medieval castle of Mălăiești/Malajesd (Hunedoara County) before (2010) and after the restoration project (2017) (Photos by Ileana Burnichioiu and Sebastian Manolescu).



a



b



c

Fig. 21. The Károlyi castle in Ardud/Erdőd (Satu Mare County) before (2008, <http://monumenteuitate.org/ro/monument/208/Ardud-Karolyi>, accessed on 20.04.2017) and after the restoration project (<http://www.castelintransilvania.ro/castelul-karolyi-ardud-.html>, accessed on 20.04.2017).



a



b



c

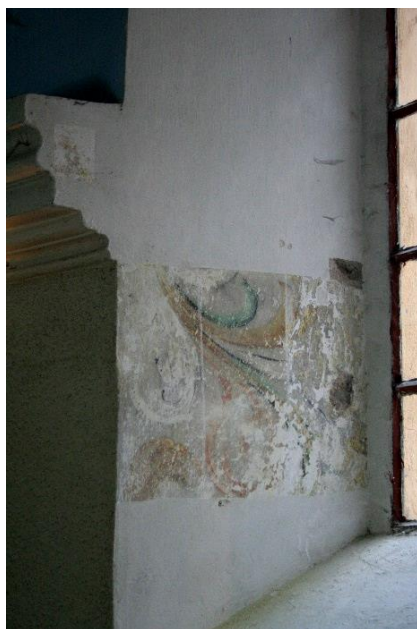
Fig. 22. Castle in Ozd/Magyarózd (Mureş County). General view from 2012 (by Ileana Burnichioiu) and photos during wall research (by Lóránd Kiss).



a



b



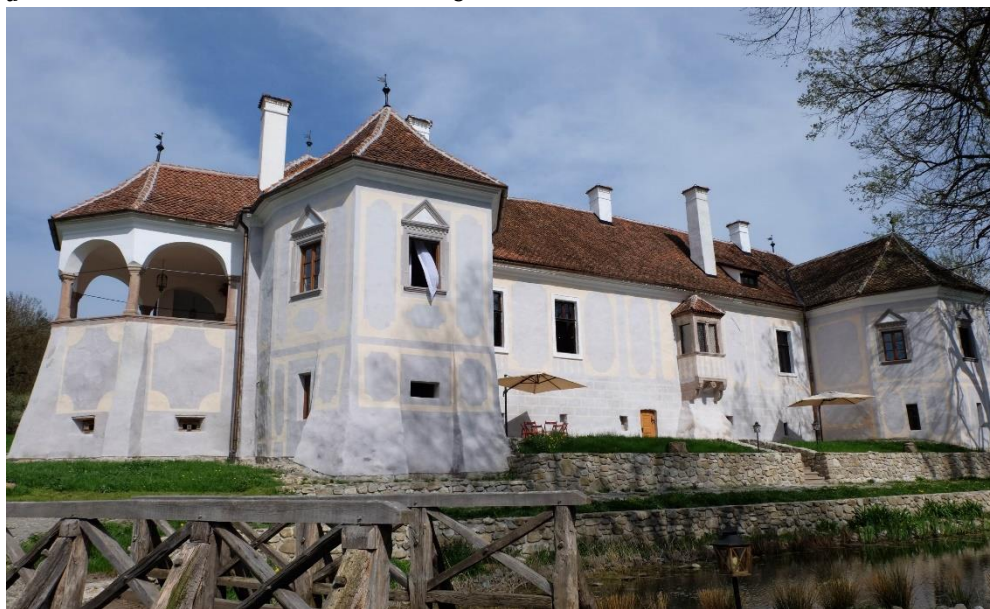
c

Fig. 23. Bornemisza Castle in Gurguiu/Görgényszentimre/Görgen (Mureş County).
Photos during wall research (by Lóránd Kiss).



a

b

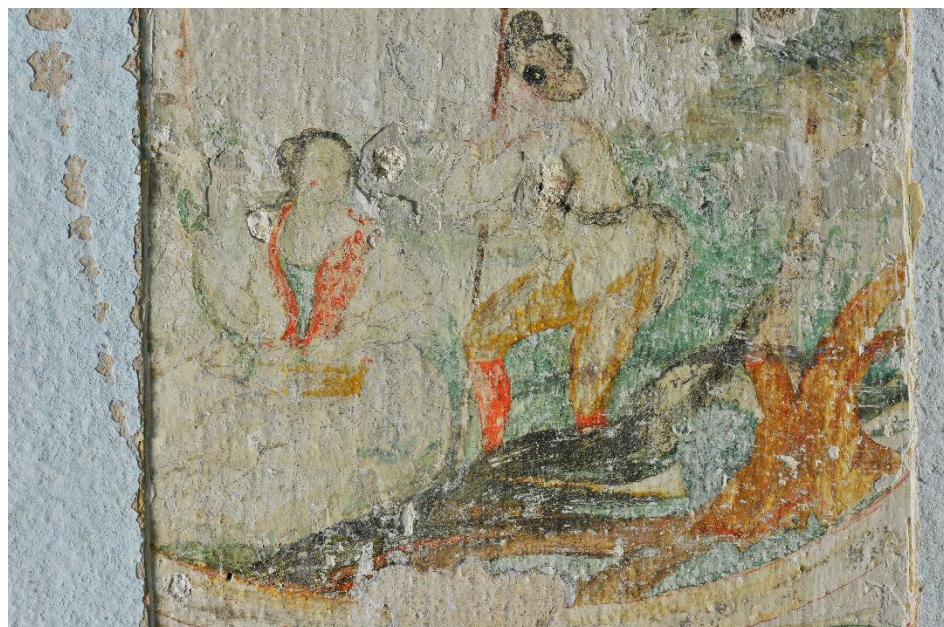


c

Fig. 24. Count Kalnoky castle from Micloșoara/Miklósvár (Baraolt, Covasna County) before (a-b) and after wall research and restoration works (c) (Photos by Lóránd Kiss, and Ileana Burnichioiu).



a



b

Fig. 25. a. The Gate of the Princely Palace in Alba Iulia (Arthur Bach Collection, 1935);
b. Wall research discovery in 2014 by Lóránd Kiss and his team (Photo by Călin Șuteu).

In addition, largely unprepared to deal with a very rich built heritage, both present day authorities and private owners register major failures (with European or private funds, with projects drafted by architects or just occasional workforce), which revolts the few specialists and every now and then surface to the mass-media, . g. the princely court in Potlogi (Dâmbovița County),⁴² the Transylvanian fortresses of Râșnov/Rozsnyó/Rosenau,⁴³ Rupea/Kőhalom/Reps,⁴⁴ Feldioara/Földvár/Marienburg (Brașov County), Deva/Déva/Diemrich, Mălăiești/Malajesd (Hunedoara County) (fig. 20) or the Károlyi castle in Ardud/Erdőd (Satu Mare County) (fig. 21).⁴⁵ The reconstruction of these monuments can be classified as very aggressive; they annihilated the authenticity and the quality of the ruins as historical evidence. Meanwhile, some of this built heritage is the target for real estate businesses on which the authorities exert no rights (of control or pre-emption) (e. g. the Haller manor house in Saschiz/Szászkézd/Keisd, Mureș County, the unique stone manor of Udriște Năsturel in Herăști, Giurgiu County,⁴⁶ can be found on Artmark) or is simply left to decay, only the land being considered valuable.

The onsite research and the protection of this important heritage are largely problematic, both for the retroceded ones (fig. 18) and for those that are still in administration of the local authorities or objects of lengthy processes of property restitution.⁴⁷

At the same time, the number of specialists in the country that are properly trained for historical building research is very small compared to the needs. This also reflects the manner in which the new discoveries enter the

⁴² Horia Moldovan, "Curtea domnească de la Potlogi," *Arhitectura*, September 12 (2016), http://arhitectura-1906.ro/2016/09/curtea-domneasca-de-la-potlogi/?fbclid=IwAR2n0-Ttqp3aSYbqwCddhPHXvD8zARdJCKNxxkubinljc-cD67_2a0DhCsig, accessed on 21.08.2017).

⁴³ "Cetatea din Râșnov din nou în pericol," *Gazeta de Râșnov* March 9, 2009, <http://www.primaria.rasnov.ro/portal/images/pdf/gazeta/gazeta66.pdf>, accessed on 28.04.2017.

⁴⁴ Zoltan Maroși, "Representations of local identity through landmarks: the rehabilitation of Rupea fortress, Romania, territorial identity and development," 2, 1 (Spring 2017): 31-46, http://territorial-identity.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/3_Marosi_TID_1_2017.pdf, accessed on 23.07.2017.

⁴⁵ Vladimir Agrigoroaei, "About the Recent Death of Mălăiești Castle," *Think Outside the Box*, 2014, <https://www.totb.ro/monumentul-manea-despremoartea-recenta-a-cetatii-de-la-malaiesti/>, accessed on 22.07.2017.

⁴⁶ Sebestyén, *O pagină*, 138-143; <http://www.monumenteuitate.org/en/monument/627/Herasti-Nasturel-Herescu>, accessed on 20.05.2017.

⁴⁷ About a general framework of property restitution in Romania, see for example Lavinia Stan, "The Roof over Our Heads: Property Restitution in Romania," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 22, 2 (2006):180-205. The process of restitution of the former residences and estates to the heirs is a very slow process during which nobody can do maintenance works. Meantime, the buildings are falling into ruin (or even disappear), and the restoration costs are growing too much. In other cases, the heirs do not have the ability to properly use and maintain the properties obtained. See various other cases after the fall of communism in "Castle in Transylvania – Strategy and Development Models," 17-35, http://www.castelintransilvania.ro/pdf/STRATEGIA_CIT_EN.pdf, accessed on 21.03.2017).

scientific circuit or the archives, with delay or not at all, data which in the case of Transylvania is especially frequent. For example, the list in the following Annex shows the wall research completed just by a single team of painters from Târgu-Mureş, in the period 2003-2018.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, it is poorly understood that the continuous removal of identity and memory of these residences, which reflects the lifestyle of a significant part from a former society, can only be compensated through detailed research of the monuments – many of them requiring urgent interventions –, of the archives (which in their turn have to be maintained and completed, not only exploited), and of the archaeological sites.

Annex

The following list of Transylvanian estates (palaces, castles, princely and noble courts) where wall research was conducted in the period 2003-2018, was kindly offered to the author by the painting-restorer Lóránd Kiss, who has coordinated his team.⁴⁹ Some of these investigations brought to light paintings and decorative renderings from the 15th to the 18th centuries and were followed by works of conservation-restoration (some of which continue today), others were only verification surveys made at the request of the owners or of the project coordinators, for their emergency rescue or revitalisation interventions.

- The castle in Buia/Bolya/Bell (Sibiu County). Wall research with the discovery of mural paintings from the 15th c. in the chapel and Renaissance paintings from the 17th c. in various areas of the castle;

- Bethlen Castle in Ilia/Marosillye/Elienmarkt – “The Red Bastion” (Hunedoara County). Research and conservation of 16thc. mural paintings fragments;

- Bethlen Castle in Criş/Keresd/Kreisch (Mureş County). Continuation of older wall research and conservation/restoration of Renaissance paintings (medallions) and mural structure;

- Apafi Castle in Mălâncrav/Almakerék/Malmkrog (Sibiu County). Wall research with discoveries of stone fragments and mural paintings from the 17th-19th c.;

- The Castle of Gilău/Gyalu (Cluj County). Wall research with discoveries of mural paintings and architectural fragments originating from the 16th-17th c.;

- Bornemisza Castle in Gurghiu/Görgényszentimre/Görgen (Mureş County). Wall survey, followed by surface stripping with discoveries of medallions of allegorical representations inspired from 16th-17th c. engravings and of mural paintings from the 18th-19th c.; partial conservation;

⁴⁸ While for the Romanian archaeology there is a functional (regulated) tradition that all research is authorised and the authors must present short reports to be published in *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice* (and thus one can easily learn about the newer investigations, for building research or projects of conservation/restoration these obligations are non-existent.

⁴⁹ Our special thanks to Lóránd Kiss who always shares, with exceptional generosity, the novel information discovered in his research, in order to reveal them as soon as possible to the scientific community. The above is ordered by the time of discovery, and the chronological attributions belong to the painting restorer.

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- Castle in Ozd/Magyarózd (Mureş County) (fig. 22). Survey and surface selective layer(s) stripping with the discovery of stucco decorations from the end of the 17th c. and of decorative paintings from the 18th -19th centuries; conservation works;

- Bethlen Castle in Bahnea/Szászbonyha/Bahnen (Mureş County) (fig. 23). Wall survey resulting in the discovery of several medallions with 17th century representations;

- Kornis Castle in Mănăstireni/Magyargyerőmonostor/Klosterdorf (Cluj County). Wall survey resulting in identification of fragments of 17th c. mural painting;

- Kemény noble court in Bichiş/Magyarbükkös (Mureş County). Wall research followed by surface selective layer(s) stripping and discovery of Late Renaissance paintings (with inscriptions from the 17th c.) and others datable to the 18th-19th c.; conservation-restoration works;

- Noble court in Turia/Torja/Torian (Covasna County). Discoveries of mural paintings and stucco decorations from the Late Renaissance (17th c.) followed by works of conservation-restoration;

- Kálnoky Castle in Micloşoara/Miklósvár (Covasna County) (fig. 24). Discovery and conservation of stucco decorations from the 17th c. and of decorative paintings from the 19th c.;

- Princely Palace in Alba Iulia Alba Iulia/Gyulafehérvár/Karlsburg (Alba County) (fig. 25). Research of Renaissance decorative renders from the 16th-17th centuries, and 18th-19th c. paintings;

- Princely Palace in Oradea/Nagyvárad/Großwardein (Bihar County). Research, conservation, and restoration of Renaissance paintings and stucco decorations, 18thC.

Other wall investigations are completed or on-going at more recent castles and manors, which are known to have been built in the 18th-20th c., such as: Toldalagi Castle in Corunca/Coronka (Mureş County) (18th-19th c.), Wesselenyi Castle in Comlod/Komlód (Bistriţa County) (18th c.), Degenfeld Castle in Hodod/Kriegsdorf (Sălaj County) (18th-19th centuries), Haller Castle in Sânpaul/Kerelószentpál/Paulsdorf (Mureş County) (18th c.), Haller Castle in Ogra/Marosugra/Ugern (Mureş County) (18th c.), Bethlen Castle in Arcalia (Bistriţa County) (18th-19th c.), Mikó Castle in Olteni/Oltzem (Covasna County) (18th-19th c.), Máriaffy Castle in Sângeorgiu de Mureş/Marosszentgyörgy (Mureş County) (19th c.), Teleki-Mikó Castle in Ocna Mureş/Marosújvár/Miereschhall (Alba County) (18th-19th c.), Teleki Castle in Gorneşti/Gernyeszeg/Kertzing (Mureş County) (18th c.), Ugron Castle in Filiaşi/Fiatfalva (Harghita County) (18th-19th c.), Ugron Castle in Zau de Câmpie/Mezőzáh/Sannendorf (Mureş County) (beginning of the 20th c.).