

# ALL IS OLD AND ALL IS NEW<sup>1</sup> THE UDRIȘTE NĂSTUREL STONE HOUSE IN HERĂȘTI

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**Summary:** Due to outstanding features, some buildings become milestones for both the history of architecture and the preservation of cultural heritage. At the same time, however, the same special qualities that give such edifices the status and aura of landmarks have overshadowed (at least in the past) other meanings, sometimes leading even to the elimination of some of the layers resulting from the historical evolution that the present (after the Venice Charter with its respect for the “valid contributions of the various ages”) would consider at least as important. In most cases, those significances and historical strata are lost forever. Sometimes, however, the very interventions of the past that saved but also impoverished these buildings offer the chance of a complete recovery of the meanings previously sacrificed in favour of the most remarkable ones. The “Stone House” in Herăști is one of these buildings, its rich denotations and connotations being acquired along the three major “moments” owed to the family Năsturel, to the prince Miloš Obrenović and to the Stolojan family. In a future article, the three projects from the 20<sup>th</sup> century will be addressed, as well as the works executed then, works that, in the current conception, are not scientifically founded (anymore) but which, paradoxically, currently constitute the basis on which it is possible to elaborate an intervention that allows the effective *in situ* recovery of the meanings due to the more recent stages of the historical evolution of the ensemble.

**Rezumat:** Grație unor trăsături excepționale, unele clădiri devin repere, atât pentru istoria arhitecturii cât și pentru prezervarea patrimoniului cultural. În același timp însă, aceleași calități deosebite care conferă acestor edificii statutul și aura unor jaloane au umbrat (cel puțin în trecut) alte semnificații, uneori chiar până la eliminarea unor straturi rezultate din evoluția istorică pe care prezentul (ulterior Cartei de la Veneția cu al său respect față de „contribuțiile valabile ale diverselor epoci”) le-ar considera cel puțin la fel de remarcabile. De cele mai multe ori înțelesurile și etapele istorice respective rămân pierdute pentru totdeauna. Alteori însă, tocmai intervențiile de odinioară care au salvat dar au și sărăcit clădirile respective oferă azi șansa unei recuperări complete a sensurilor sacrificate anterior în favoarea celor mai eclatante înțelesuri. „Casa de Piatră” din Herăști se află în această situație măcar prin bogăția de semnificații cumulată prin succesiunea celor trei „momente” pe care le-a cunoscut prin familia Năsturel, prin principele Miloš Obrenović și prin familia Stolojan. Într-un articol viitor urmează să fie abordate cele trei proiecte de restaurare din veacul al 20-lea precum și lucrările executate atunci, lucrări care, în viziunea actuală, nu (mai) sînt fondate științific dar care, paradoxal, constituie în prezent baza pe care este posibilă elaborarea unei intervenții ce permite efectivă recuperare *in situ* a sensurilor datorate etapelor mai recente din evoluția istorică a ansamblului.

## The boyar court of the Năsturel family: 16<sup>th</sup> century (?) / 17<sup>th</sup> century – 1830

“The Stone House ... (Udriște) Năsturel” (Fig. 1) from Herăști commune, currently located in Giurgiu County in contemporary Romania, was not (and still is not) a plain home. Most likely, originally, the building was the main dwelling within an ensemble having the role of boyar court, i.e., an administrative, economic, and military unit that the owner established on one of his most important estates, most often other than that of his birth.<sup>2</sup> From this last point of view, through its own commemorative monument made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Năsturel family mentions that Herăști came into its possession since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, namely through purchase,<sup>3</sup> without this information being certainly denied so far. On the other hand, in the scholarly literature, the defensive-offensive function of the residence was disputed, which, of course, calls into question its qualification as a boyar court. Perceived by some authors as completely devoid of defensive means,<sup>4</sup> (strictly)

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<sup>1</sup> Romanian „Toate-s vechi și nouă toate”, quote from Glossa by Mihai Eminescu as translated by Adrian Săhlean.

<sup>2</sup> The boyar court (therefore) differed from the so-called houses of the same family which, at least in the documents of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, are mentioned as being located in the place of origin of that boyar, a place of origin which was not necessarily chosen as place of the court (according to Nicolescu 1979, pp. 14-15).

<sup>3</sup> Memorial originally located in the church of Sfânta Vineri in Bucharest and moved, after its demolition, in 1987, in the porch of the church in Herăști (according to Glăvan 2009b) where it is still today. The mention regarding the purchase of the Herăști estate can be found on the currently south-facing side of the commemorative monument in question. In its entirety, the text refers to events between 1370 and 1804.

<sup>4</sup> Greceanu 1958, pp. 131-132 and Băzu 1971, p. 53.