

ROȘIA MONTANĂ. AN OVERVIEW ON THE QUESTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE.*

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Abstract: Roșia Montană (County Alba, Romania) is a gold mining site known and exploited since Roman or even pre-Roman times until the recent past. Traditional, family- or small group-operated mining has been going on for roughly two millennia, with even farther precedents, and lasted until the 1948 Communist nationalization, making of this place one of the most long-lived traditional mining centres known today. This particular endurance translates into a systematic and profound interrelation between natural setting and cultural phenomena – from deep down into the mountains, all the way to the surface, from topography to fauna and flora and to the human communities of the area, which produced one of the richest and most spectacular cultural landscapes of Romania and possibly of Europe.

In this paper, an overview of the cultural heritage of the site is presented, based on acknowledged or emerging multidisciplinary research and evaluations. Consequently, two currently confronting visions for the development of the site are presented, a large-scale short-term open-cast mining project with already felt damaging effect on the cultural heritage, and the long-term sustainable development based on the rich cultural and natural resources, with a vision for the inscription of the site in the World Heritage List.

Rezumat: Roșia Montană (jud. Alba) este un sit minier aurifer cunoscut și exploatat încă din antichitatea romană sau chiar preromană și până în trecutul recent. Mineritul tradițional la scară mică, familială sau de grup, s-a desfășurat de-a lungul a circa două milenii, cu precedente chiar mai îndepărtate și a durat până la naționalizarea comunistă din 1948, această istorie îndelungată făcând din Roșia Montană unul dintre cele mai longevive centre miniere cunoscute astăzi. Această duranță se traduce într-o interrelaționare sistematică și profundă a cadrului natural și a fenomenelor culturale – pornind din adâncurile munților până la suprafață, de la topografie la faună și floră și la comunitățile umane din zonă – care a generat unul dintre cele mai spectaculoase peisaje culturale ale României și, posibil, ale Europei.

În contribuția de față este prezentată o privire de ansamblu asupra patrimoniului cultural al sitului, bazată pe cercetări și evaluări multidisciplinare consacrate sau emergente. În continuare sunt prezentate două viziuni contradictorii privitoare la dezvoltarea sitului. Una promovează un proiect minier de mari dimensiuni, pe termen scurt, în carieră deschisă, care și-a făcut deja simțite efectele distructive asupra patrimoniului cultural. A doua propune o cale de dezvoltare pe termen lung, durabilă, pornind de la resursele bogate constituite de patrimoniul cultural și natural, susținută și prin inițiativa de a înscrie situl în Lista Patrimoniului Mondial.

Sixteen years after the granting of a mining concession for the area of Roșia Montană and no less than thirteen years after the first discussions on the fate of the cultural heritage of the site faced with contemporary open-cast mining,¹ we are still in an uncertain position on this matter. Despite strong and continuous pressure from the professional milieu and the public, exerted both nationally and internationally, the decision to protect and enhance instead of destroy and erase has not yet been reached, notwithstanding clear legal provisions which demand the protection of those buildings and areas which are listed as historic monuments and of their relevant surroundings.²

Context: Roșia Montană is situated in the Metalliferous Mountains, a division of the Apuseni Mountains, the western section of Romania's Carpathians, in an area called the Auriferous Quadrilateral,³ well-known since Antiquity for its rich deposits of precious metals. The entire area has been mined intensively since

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¹ Since 2000, when the project first came to the attention of the National Commission for Historic Monuments. See also *infra*, "The heritage scenario".

² Law 422-2001 on the protection of historic monuments, art. 11 (2), which reads: "The suppression, partial or total destruction, profanation, as well as the degradation of historic monuments are forbidden and are sanctioned according to the law." or Law 85-2003 on mining, art. 11, which reads: "Mining activities on plots of land where there are historic, cultural or religious monuments, archaeological sites of special interest, nature reserves [...] are strictly forbidden." To these, add many other provisions and international commitments relevant in the case of Roșia Montană, such as the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised, ratified by Law 150-1997), the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (ratified by Law 157-1997) or the European Landscape Convention (ratified by Law 451-2002).

³ Rom. *Patrulaterul Aurifer*, a region covering some 2 500 sq. km, stretching from Baia de Arieș to the north, to Zlatna to the south-east, on River Ampoi, and to Certej and Săcărâmb to the south, close to Deva and Mureș Valley.