OBJECTS FROM ROŞIA MONTANĂ (ROMANIA)

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**Keywords:** Roşia Montană, Romania, Roman grave, 19th century memorial monument, socialist blocks, industrial machines and quarries, vernacular house, modern refuse dumps and craters.

**Abstract:** During the debates concerning the Roşia Montană case (Romania), representatives of the Roşia Montană Gold Corporation, the media, politicians and even “experts” have understood materiality and, implicitly, the cultural heritage as being something actually collateral with respect to the social, economic and political aspects, considered as truly important. At the same time, even though the topic of the cultural heritage of Roşia Montană was fiercely debated, both within the discipline of archaeology as well as in the public space, paradoxically, the objects composing this heritage were ignored, in favour of aspects related to heritage policies. In this paper I undertake to bring forth the objects in Roşia Montană and their stories. I militate to go to the heritage issue and study the materiality of Roşia Montană – past and present.

**Rezumat:** În timpul debaterilor privind cazul Roşia Montană (România), reprezentanţii Roşia Montană Gold Corporation, media, politicienii şi chiar „specialiştii” au înţeles materialitatea şi, implicit, patrimoniul cultural ca fiind ceva absolut secundar în comparaţie cu aspectele sociale, economice şi politice, considerate cu adevărat importante. Totodată, deşi tema patrimoniului cultural de la Roşia Montană a fost apărută discutată, atât în cadrul disciplinei arheologice, cât şi în spaţiul public, în mod paradoxal, obiectele propriu-zise care compun acest patrimoniu au fost ignorate, în favoarea aspectelor legate de politicile de patrimoniu. În textul de faţă mi-am pus să aduc în prim-plan obiectele de la Roşia Montană şi povestile lor. Miliţez pentru a trece dîncolo de problema patrimoniului şi a studia materialitatea Roşiei Montane – trecut şi prezent.

**Introduction**

In 1999, Roşia Montană (Alba County, Transylvania) ([Fig. 1]), a community from the Apuseni Mountains where, even since ancient times, mining was the main activity of the inhabitants, turned into the main objective of a large-scale mining project initiated by Euro Gold Resources SA, renamed SC Roşia Montană Gold Corporation SA (RMGC) a year later. For this purpose, the company started to acquire the inhabitants’ buildings and land, located both within the area which was to be affected and outside it. Also, the company financed a national research programme, established and coordinated by the Ministry of Culture, with the special purpose of verifying the area for the future mining exploitation of RMGC, namely the *Alburnus Maior* National Research Programme. Therefore, between 2001 and 2004 large-scale preventive archaeological excavations were carried out at Roşia Montană, to which various national institutions in the field contributed (The National Museum of Romanian History from Bucharest, The National Institute of Historical Monuments from Bucharest, The Bucharest and Cluj Archaeological Institutes of the Romanian Academy, The National Museum of Transylvanian History from Cluj, The National Museum of the Union from Alba Iulia and The Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilisation from Deva), as well as a team specialized in mining archaeology from the University of Toulouse, France; in 2001, ethnographic research was also carried out at Roşia Montană by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant of Bucharest.

The historic centre of the town and a series of individual buildings have been placed under legal protection by being listed as historic monuments. The company undertook to fully promote this cultural heritage while developing the mining project. RMGC claims to have invested $11 million by 2011 in research and conservation of the cultural heritage of Roşia Montană and to have planned a further $35 million investment if the project gets started. According to the company’s discourse, the enhancement of cultural heritage would contribute in its turn to the prosperity of the community, becoming a material element for the development of a more efficient tourism. As a sign of complying with the promises made, the company even started restoring several buildings. The first house to be restored and inaugurated was House no. 325, in the Piata Veche (Old Square), where an exhibition dedicated to the mining history of Roşia Montană, to which various national institutions in the field contributed (The National Museum of Romanian History from Bucharest, The National Museum of the Union from Alba Iulia, The National Museum of Transylvanian History from Cluj, The National Museum of the Union from Alba Iulia and The National Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilisation from Deva), as well as a team specialized in mining archaeology from the University of Toulouse, France; in 2001, ethnographic research was also carried out at Roşia Montană by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant of Bucharest.

Together with an entire series of other buildings, the exhibition is to become part of a Mining Museum, should the mining project be

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1 Damian 2003, 2008; Simion et alii 2010.
2 Popoiu 2010.
4 Ibidem, p. 32.
5 Ibidem, p. 68.
6 Ibidem, p. 68.
7 See also the brochure published by RMGC – *Punem în valoare Roşia Montană* (“We promote Roşia Montană”).

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