

# THE MANSIONS OF IZVORU DE SUS, COUNTY ARGEȘ: UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF A COUPLE OF BUILDINGS, FADING AWAY OF SOME MEMORIES\*

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**Keywords:** Izvoru de Sus, Peticari, mansion, deterioration

**Abstract:** The two mansions of Izvoru de Sus village, known as the “large castle” and the “small castle”, are parts of the former manor that is likely to have been established in mid-17th century. The domain of Izvoru was initially owned by Știrbei family, who founded “Saint Nicholas” Church, as the manor chapel that subsequently became parish church. Close to the church, the boyars built a house too, the cellars of which can still be seen today under the “small castle”. In the 19th century, the property passed into the possession of Peticari family who set up the “big castle” and restored the old house which became the “small castle”. Nowadays, the “castles” of Izvoru de Sus have been falling in ruins with every passing day and nobody can or wants to deter this process. Some parts thereof, like the floors of the “big castle”, are widely destroyed. The moral deterioration that both mansions have been undergoing since 1947 is enhanced by the physical deterioration started 33 years ago. The present-day situation of these buildings is not only the consequence of the 1977 earthquake. On the contrary, de-allocation, lack of maintenance, and robbery are the crucial causes of the deplorable state of these heritage objectives.

**Rezumat:** Cele două conace din satul Izvoru de Sus, numite de către săteni „castelul mare” și „castelul mic”, fac parte din ansamblul curții boierești constituite aici la mijlocul secolului al XVII-lea. Domeniul satului Izvoru a aparținut inițial familiei Știrbei, familie care a fondat biserica „Sfântul Nicolae”, cu rol de capelă familială, devenită cu timpul biserică parohială. În apropierea bisericii, aceeași familie a construit conacul, ale cărui pivnițe constituie astăzi subsolul „castelului mic”. La începutul secolului al XIX-lea, domeniul ajunge în proprietatea familiei Peticari care restaurează biserica, înalță „castelul mare” și reconstruiește – din ruină – „castelul mic”. În prezent, cele două „castele” din Izvoru de Sus se află într-o stare avansată de degradare, fără ca cineva să poată sau să vrea să împiedice acest lucru. Anumite porțiuni ale celor două construcții, cum ar fi planșeele „castelul mare” sunt în mare parte distruse. Procesul de degradare morală a conacelor – proces început în anul 1947 – este agravat și de cel de degradare fizică, început în urmă cu 33 de ani. Stadiul în care se află astăzi aceste construcții nu este, însă, doar o consecință a seismului din 1977; dezafectarea, lipsa de întreținere, jaful sunt principalii factori ai stării în care se află aceste obiecte de patrimoniu. Liniștea în care odinioară aici se scriau capodopere ale teatrului românesc, vioașia cu care Elena Peticari Davila aduna copiii din sat în salonul mare, în jurul Bradului de Crăciun, zgomotul trăsurilor care purtau regi și boieri de prim rang pe aleile albe, pietruite, ale parcului, toate acestea nu mai sunt! Acum parcul este parcă prea bătrân, iazul este tulbure și nici o barcă nu mai vine la pontonul dispărut demult, aleile nu mai sunt albe, iar „castelele”, niște umbre, sunt mute!

Passing along the road one can see, looking beyond a cluster of old trees, the “Large Castle” and the “Small Castle” as locals usually refer to the two impressing buildings. About a century ago, the “Large Castle” was welcoming King Ferdinand<sup>1</sup> and Queen Mary.<sup>2</sup> It was here where Carol II<sup>3</sup> learned arms handling. In the silence of its library Alexandru Davila<sup>4</sup> wrote the poem “Vlaicu Vodă” and Liviu Rebreanu<sup>5</sup> thought out the novel “Răscoala”. Nicolae Iorga<sup>6</sup> and his wife used to spend here their summer holidays. There were members of many famous families who lived here across the years, such as Davila, Cantacuzino, and Șuțu.

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<sup>1</sup> Ferdinand I (24 August 1865, Sigmaringen, Germany – 20 July 1927, Sinaia, Romania). Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. The second King of Romania (from 10 October 1914 until death).

<sup>2</sup> Maria, Queen consort of King Ferdinand I (29 October 1875, Eastwell Park, Kent, England – 18 July 1938, Sinaia, Romania). Princess of Edinburg and Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.

<sup>3</sup> Carol II (15 October 1893 – 4 April 1953), Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. King of Romania (8 June 1930 – 6 September 1940). Carol II is the eldest son of King Ferdinand of Romania and his wife, Queen Maria.

<sup>4</sup> Alexandru Davila (12 February 1862 – 19 October 1929). Romanian playwright and theatre manager, the son of Carol Davila, a distinguished military physician. Head of the National Theatre of Bucharest (1905 – 1908 and 1912 – 1914).

<sup>5</sup> Liviu Rebreanu (27 November 1885, Târlîșua, Bistrița-Năsăud county – 1 September 1944, Valea Mare, Argeș county). Romanian novelist, playwright and member of the Romanian Academy.

<sup>6</sup> Nicolae Iorga (17 January 1871, Botoșani – 27 November 1940, Strejnic, Prahova county). Romanian historian, literary critic, memorialist, playwright, poet, encyclopaedist, minister, parliamentarian, prime minister, university professor and member of the Romanian Academy.



Fig. 1. St. Nicholas Church. North-west view. June 2009

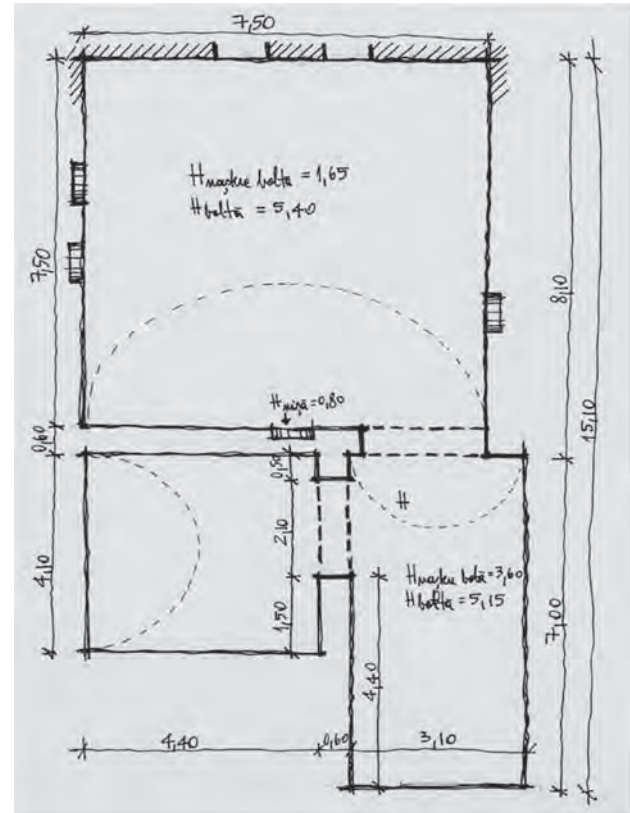


Fig. 2. The Small Castle. Draft survey of cellars, drawn up by the author along with architect Ioana Maria Petrescu. June 2009

As regards the “Small Castle”, it was built by the one who was commended to kill metropolitan bishop Antim Ivireanul.<sup>7</sup> 200 years later it was inhabited by Carol Davila’s<sup>8</sup> daughter, who used to keep an intense correspondence<sup>9</sup> with Nicolae Iorga and Horia Teodoru,<sup>10</sup> thus bringing into the attention of the Historical Monuments Committee the need to refurbish the village church, which was supposed to be built during same epoch as the mansion.

For the past 33 years nothing has happened any more. Everything is dying, collapsing and fading away. Everything is abandoned. Still, the castles obstinately keep their upright position, albeit cripple and denuded. The question is, for how long?

#### **Architectural monuments of Izvoru de Sus**

The monuments built in the village of Izvoru de Sus<sup>11</sup> belong to the former manor that is likely to

<sup>7</sup> Antim Ivireanul (ca. 1650 – assassinated in 1716). Romanian (ethnic Georgian) writer, typographer, engraver, theologian, bishop and Metropolitan. He founded the first public library in Bucharest in the 18th century.

<sup>8</sup> Carol Davila (1828, Parma, Italy – 24 August 1884, Bucharest). Prestigious Romanian physician and pharmacist of Italian ancestry. He had a crucial contribution to the medical training in Romania: he organizes the Romanian ambulance service and in 1869 he founds the Faculty of Medicine of Bucharest.

<sup>9</sup> The Historical Monuments Division (DMI), folder no. 2100.

<sup>10</sup> Horia Teodoru (28 June 1894, Ploiești – 21 June 1976, Bucharest). Romanian architect, urban planner, restorer. He studied at École des Beaux-Arts, Paris (1919 – 1925), then at Accademia di Belle Arti, Rome (1926 – 1928), where he specialized in restoration. Since 1931, he has been working within the Historical Monuments Committee.

<sup>11</sup> As shown in the List of Historic Monuments (LMI 2004), positions 585 – 589 (Annex 1).

have been established in mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. As documented, the domain of Izvoru was initially owned by the Știrbei family, who also founded the church of St. Nicholas in the same village. Apparently, this family erected a house too, close to the above-mentioned church, the cellars of which can still be seen today under the “small castle”. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the landed estate of Izvoru along with the buildings erected by the Știrbei boyars passed into the possession of the Colfescu family who subsequently transferred them to the Perticari family. The latter family commissioned both mansions (which currently undergo advanced degradation) as well as the large park surrounding them.

#### **Church of St. Nicholas**

The bulk of information gathered until now on Izvoru village refer to St. Nicholas Church (Fig. 1). Much of these data come from Elena Perticari-Davila – Carol Davila’s daughter – who closely supervised the refurbishment works of this monument in 1935-1944.

According to a report prepared by Vasile Moiescu,<sup>12</sup> the listing procedure for the church ran from 1937 to 1939.<sup>13</sup> As revealed by the correspondence carried on between Elena Perticari, the mayor of Izvoru and the chief priest M. Crânguș, on one hand, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Arts, on the other, one may come to the conclusion that in the summer of 1939, the Church of St. Nicholas had already been listed as a historical monument.<sup>14</sup> At present, this edifice has the status of a historical monument of nationwide importance.<sup>15</sup>

For over a century, the building has been a parish church. However, at the beginning it appears to have functioned as a chapel of the manor. As regards its architectural style, the church displays the broad features of worship edifices built in Wallachia during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. There are historical sources, such as the inscription on the Holy Table and the inscription above the entrance door (which was repainted in 1823),<sup>16</sup> reading that this monument was built during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; in addition, letters sent by Elena Perticari to Nicolae Iorga suggest that the church might have been constructed about two or three decades before 1700.<sup>17</sup>

#### **The park of Perticari-Davila manor**

The park surrounding the mansions of Izvoru de Sus has been included in the list of monuments in 2004. The listing procedure had been duly conducted in the 1990s, and in the summer of 1994 the inventory record had been delivered to the Direction of Historic Monuments, Ensembles and Sites Division.<sup>18</sup> The list

<sup>12</sup> Architect Vasile Moiescu was a member of the Historical Monuments Committee within the Ministry for Religious Affairs and Arts.

<sup>13</sup> The Historical Monuments Division (DMI) folder 2100: p. 5. In a note written in 1938 and included in a report on the Church of St. Nicholas in Izvoru de Sus, Vasile Moiescu recommended: “*In my opinion, the church of Izvoru de Sus should be listed under 3<sup>rd</sup> category*”.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35. The address no. 028936 / 23 June 1939, recorded at the registration office of the Ministry for Religious Affairs and Arts, mentioned for the first time that the church was listed as a historical monument.

<sup>15</sup> In 1955 the church was included in the *List of cultural monuments located on the territory of the People’s Republic of Romania*, position 1943 (List of cultural monuments LMC 1955, Annex 1). In a list drawn up in 1992 by the Historical Monuments, Ensembles and Sites Division, the church is recorded under code 03 B 316 (List of historical monuments LMI 1992, Annex 1). In the List of Historical Monuments issued in 2004, the Church of St. Nicholas is recorded under code AG-II-m-A-13708 (List of historical monuments LMI 2004, Annex 1).

<sup>16</sup> Bălan 1994, p. 338, n. 436, 437.

<sup>17</sup> The Historical Monuments Division (DMI), folder 2100: p. 35. In the address no. 028936 / 23 June 1939, recorded at the registration office of the Ministry for Religious Affairs and Arts, Elena Perticari-Davila made the following mention to Nicolae Iorga: “...*the holy church of the parish of Izvoru de Sus – Argeș, which was listed as a historical monument and built in 1680...*”; p. 36: in the letter dated 21 July 1939 sent by Elena Perticari to Nicolae Iorga, it is written that: “*Still, I was right: the church must have been erected around 1660, once there is evidence that it was secondly painted in 1702 – hence the first painting was achieved around 1680 – plus a few years needed to build up the appropriate edifice.*” This quotation makes reference to the inspections carried out by architect Horia Teodoru and painter I. Mihai from 1937 to 1939.

<sup>18</sup> Alexiu 2005. According to the author, on 18 July 1994 the Direction of Historic Monuments, Ensembles and Sites received stock-taking records for a large number of parks and gardens in County Argeș, such as the Public garden of the town of Câmpulung Muscel, Ștefănescu Park in Câmpulung Muscel, Goleșcu Park in Câmpulung Muscel, Kretzulescu Park in Câmpulung Muscel, the Park of Dragoslavele Hermitage, and the Park of Perticari-Davila manor in Izvoru.

shows that the Peticari-Davila Park has been laid out in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The photographic collection of the Library of the Romanian Academy includes a picture taken around 1915, featuring several young trees.<sup>19</sup>

The Peticari-Davila Park stretches on about 10 hectares. To the west, closely behind the “castles”, there is a nearly 10 m long downward slope. In the valley, there is a pond covering about 8,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The older local people remember that this pond, still existing nowadays, drew its water from two springs. A wooden pier was built once on its shore, but it gradually got damaged and finally disappeared. Like the mansions, the park has been abandoned, showing today overgrown vegetation simply hiding the former alleys.

#### **The mansions of Peticari-Davila family**

Near the church and north thereof, there are two mansions erected by Peticari-Davila family toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or, more likely, during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup> It is supposed that on this place, the Știrbei and Colfescu families used to have once their residence. By 1870, the only traces of the old mansion were the vaulted cellars of a ruined house, atop of which the “small castle” would be built.

#### **Historical sources and documents related to the manor of Izvoru de Sus and its mansions**

On 24 February 1707<sup>21</sup> Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu enacted a charter which has remained unpublished until today, its only form being a typewritten transcript stored in the Archive of the Historical Monuments Division within the National Institute for Heritage. Nothing is known about the original; it was last referred to by Elena Peticari Davila, who wrote a letter to Nicolae Iorga in 1939 mentioning, among others, that she was in possession of the original of the said document.<sup>22</sup>

This charter featured the request addressed by members of Știrbei family with a view to settle the boundaries of their manor in Izvoru, thus clearly delimitating it from Popești – the neighbouring manor located south. At that time, Izvoru belonged to the county of Vlașca, while Popești was part of Teleorman county. The document also read that in 1697 Izvoru manor was owned by high provost marshal (*vel armaș*) Cernica.

What matters for our inquiry is that the decree enacted in 1707 made a mention of a manor located in Izvoru: *“Isvor village, located in the county of Vlașca, on Teleorman river, neighbouring Popești village; [...] Tudor Știrbei didn’t agree to take out of his parents’ houses, gardens, orchards, and ponds [...]”*. More specifically, the document read about usher (*ceaus*) Tudor from Izvoru (dead in 1708<sup>23</sup>), son of Radu Știrbei – high equerry (*biv vel comis*) in 1679<sup>24</sup> and brother of high provost marshal (*vel armaș*) Cernica and Zoița. The latter married cupbearer Iordache Colfescu,<sup>25</sup> who was commissioned by the Ottoman sultan to kill metropolitan bishop Antim Ivireanul in 1716.<sup>26</sup>

As highlighted by the inscription above the church entrance door, in 1823 the building was refurbished and repainted by order of Ioan Peticari.<sup>27</sup> He was subsequently mentioned in 1831 as high steward<sup>28</sup> owning,

<sup>19</sup> The planting works are likely to have been carried over a fairly long period, starting before 1900 until the early decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>20</sup> List of historical monuments (LMI) 2004 – position 586, code AG-II-a-B-13709, Peticari – Davila Manor, Izvoru village, 1927; position 587, code AG-II-m-B-13709.01, Mansion, Izvoru village, 1927; position 588, code AG-II-m-B-13709.02, House, Izvoru village, 17<sup>th</sup> century. As noticed, the list features the “big castle” and the cellars which are presumably parts of the former mansion and are incorporated in the basement of the “small castle”.

<sup>21</sup> The Historical Monuments Division (DMI), folder 2100: pp. 30, 31. The typewritten pages end with the following note: *“Transcript according to the original parchment, Georges Florescu, 2 May 1933.”*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 39. Along with the letter mailed to Nicolae Iorga on 29 July 1939, Elena Peticari-Davila sent him a copy: *“I’m sending it to you in full, as transcribed by Mr. George Florescu – the original is with me”*.

<sup>23</sup> Mușeteanu 1933, p. 38.

<sup>24</sup> Filitti 1919. Family trees, *“Știrbeii (cei vechi)”*.

<sup>25</sup> Nicolescu 1903, p. 183.

<sup>26</sup> Ștefănescu 2000, p. 62.

<sup>27</sup> Bălan 1994, p. 338, note 437: *“1823: inscription in the niche atop the entrance door of the Church, ... partly covered with plaster from the last renovation; on Saint Nicholas Church of Izvoru de Sus”*. The inscription reads: *“High steward (biv vel stolnic) Ioan Perdicar(i).”*

<sup>28</sup> Filitti 1929, p. 12: Ion Perdicari, high steward, sub-prefect of Vlașca in 1829 and 1831, owns the manor of Izvoru de Sus, lives at 458, Crețulescu quarter, green district, Bucharest, and he is married to Zoița Colfescu.

together with Zinca Perticari, different parts of Izvoru de Sus manor.<sup>29</sup> The census conducted in 1831 mentioned “high steward Ioan Perdicaru” as the owner of the manor,<sup>30</sup> while in the census carried out in 1838 ranked first Ioan Perticari, aged 60, along with two of his sons in the list of inhabitants of Izvoru de Sus.<sup>31</sup>

The map drawn up by high steward Constantin Cantacuzino<sup>32</sup> and printed in Padova in 1700 set a particular sign to those villages having manors,<sup>33</sup> although Izvoru doesn’t range among these villages, it should be underlined the fact that there are other manors missing on this map, which undoubtedly existed at that time in Wallachia. Some examples deserve to be mentioned, namely Herești and Coiani-Mironești (Giurgiu county), Glogova (County Mehedinți), Piscani (County Argeș), and Săcuieni (County Dâmbovița).

The maps published toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century pointed that County Vlașca stretched east of County Teleorman. The village of Izvoru was located along the left shore of Teleorman river, that is on the very borderline between the two said counties.

In 1778, cartographer Friedrich Bauer – an Austrian general who was acting at that time under the command of the Russian tsar – was commissioned to draw up two atlases, on Moldavia and Wallachia, comprising maps accompanied by detailed clarifications and data. As for the atlas on Moldavia, he only succeeded to achieve the maps, whereas for that on Wallachia he conceived just the written section. The latter atlas featured Izvoru twice. Thus, in County Vlașca, Bauer identified “*Izvoru de Sus and Izvoru de Jos, two villages with churches and stone houses*” (author’s translation),<sup>34</sup> while in County Teleorman the author mentioned “*Recea de Sus and Izvoru de Sus, two villages with churches, along Teleorman river*” (author’s translation).<sup>35</sup> There is no doubt that both mentions simply refer to one settlement, namely Izvoru, having two components – Izvoru de Sus and Izvoru de Jos. This conclusion relies on the fact that both villages were included in Bauer’s list featuring such settlements as Strâmba, Deagu, Recea de Jos, and Negreni – in the case of County Vlașca – or Humele, Recea de Sus, and Tătărăști – in the case of Teleorman county; since nowadays Deagu, Humele, Recea de Sus and Recea de Jos are all components of Recea municipality, which borders south on Izvoru, the obvious conclusion is that both situations shown in Bauer’s atlas described a unique settlement, namely Izvoru. The villages referred to above existed at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century too, having the same location as nowadays, according to another map, drawn up concurrently with Bauer’s atlas, under the supervision of the Austrian colonel Specht<sup>36</sup> in 1790-1791, which is recognized as the most detailed map published in that epoch. On this map, the church is placed somewhat isolated from villagers’ houses, while in its close north neighbourhood there is a house which could actually be the mansion.

Considering again Bauer’s comments, there were “*two churches and stone houses*” in Izvoru de Sus and Izvoru de Jos. These churches might be those currently existing in both villages, while “*stone houses*” could mean either a multi-roomed dwelling (as widely documented during the Middle Ages in Romania) or two (or maybe more) mansions located in Izvoru. In the latter case, Bauer might refer to the construction preceding the “small castle” in Izvoru de Sus and to the presumed mansion belonging to Știrbei family located south, close to Izvoru de Jos, and mentioned by priest Th. Arjescu in “Odobescu’s questionnaire”:<sup>37</sup> “About 1000 fathoms south from this commune, along the shore of Teleorman river which also belongs to this manor, there is an old stone-made fountain as well as vestiges of an old church fallen into ruin. Human tombs are spread all around these remnants and the church is supposed to have been founded by Știrbei family in 1558. Going west, one immediately sees a small hill called “Vineyard hill”. Several types of chopped bricks are buried here

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 35: high-steward-wife Zinca Perticari owns the manor of Izvoru de Sus.

<sup>30</sup> Donat, Pătroi, Ciobotea 2000, p. 161.

<sup>31</sup> Census 1838, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Constantin Cantacuzino (ca. 1650 – 1716). Diplomat, historian and geographer.

<sup>33</sup> Giurescu 1943, pp. 15-18.

<sup>34</sup> Bauer 1778, p. 167: “*Jswora din suss, Jswora din dgoss / deux villages avec des eglises & des maisons de pierres.*”

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 169: “*Retschi din suss, Jswora din suss / deux villages avec des eglises, sur le Teleorman.*”

<sup>36</sup> Specht 1791, sheets no. 51, 52.

<sup>37</sup> Alexandru Odobescu (23 January 1834, Bucharest – 10 November 1895, Bucharest). Romanian writer, archaeologist and politician. Minister for monuments (1863-1864) and professor of archaeology at the University of Bucharest.



Fig. 3. The Small Castle. West view of the cellar entrance. June 2009.

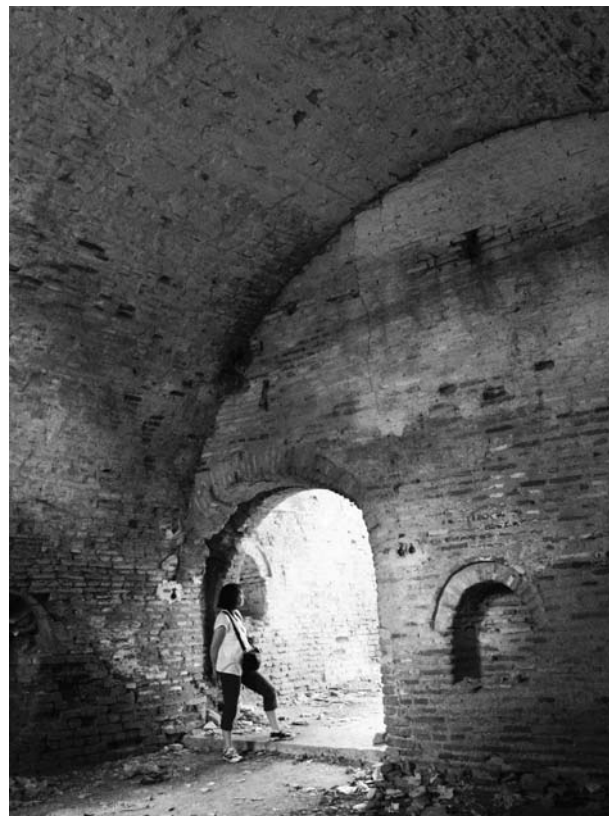


Fig. 4. The Small Castle. South-west view of the cellar main room. June 2009.

and there, giving the evidence of a former village on which neither name nor period of life one can tell”.<sup>38</sup> There is no doubt that “several types of chopped buried bricks” suggest the traces of a mansion rather than those of some common houses, since at that time the latter were definitely not brick-made.

Later information on the area under analysis is provided by Szatmary’s map,<sup>39</sup> drawn up by Austrian cartographers in 1855-1857,<sup>40</sup> which is a thorough survey. The picture of Izvoru de Sus<sup>41</sup> as displayed by this map coincides with that revealed by the survey conducted by the Romanian Army in 1905-1907.<sup>42</sup> Szatmary’s map shows a clearly defined zone standing, as the map legend reads, for the area of brick-made buildings. This zone is identical with that where the “small castle” rises today.

Conclusions on the past of the manor and the “small castle” of Izvoru de Sus:

– The manor of Izvoru was first recorded in a charter enacted in 1707. Since this used to be the residence of boyar Radu Știrbei (*biv vel comis* in 1679), the existence of the mansion in 1680 appears to be a

<sup>38</sup> Odobescu’s questionnaire 1871, p. 284. The answer sent on 24 May 1871 by teacher and priest Th. Arjescu, Izvoru de Sus, Găleşești district, County Argeș.

<sup>39</sup> Carol Popp de Szathmary (1 November 1812, Cluj – 3 July 1887, Bucharest). Romanian painter and lithographer, the first art-photographer and documentary maker of the Romanian Kingdom and among the top ten photographers in Europe.

<sup>40</sup> Popescu-Spineni 1978, p. 232: From 1855 to 1857, Marshal Fligely was commissioned by waywode Barbu Știrbei to carry out the survey of Lesser Wallachia (Oltenia) and Greater Wallachia (Muntenia). The map would be printed in Vienna in 1864, during the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, who commissioned Szatmary to copy this map. The whole collection can be found at the Romanian Academy Library, Maps Department.

<sup>41</sup> Szatmary 1864, column VII, series 7.

<sup>42</sup> The Army 1912, series XII, column F.

reasonable assumption;

– As stated by the inscription made on the Holy Table,<sup>43</sup> it was ordered by high steward Preda Știrbei Izvoranul and was built from 25 March 1714 to 25 December 1715;

– Around 1700, Colfescu family took over the manor of Izvoru, once cupbearer Iordache Colfescu married Zoița Știrbei;

– Bauer's atlas published in 1778 made a mention about the "stone houses";

– Before 1823, the Perticari family became the owners of Izvoru manor. This finding is suggested by the inscription above the church entrance door reading this is the year when high steward (*biv vel stolnic*) Ioan Perticari and his wife, Zoița Colfeasca, achieved the repair and repainting works on the church founded by Iordache Colfescu.<sup>44</sup> In this case, it makes sense supposing that Ioan Perticari and his family lived at that time in the mansion which later was replaced by the "small castle";<sup>45</sup>

– Szatmary's map, which was drawn up in 1855-1857, accurately featured the manor area in Izvoru de Sus;

– "Odobescu's questionnaire", which was issued in 1871, pointed that the mansion cellars were in good condition at that time, but the first floor (brick-made, too) was fallen in ruins.

#### *The mansions of Izvoru de Sus – overview*

Until "Odobescu's questionnaire" was published, there was no specific description of the landed estate in Izvoru, and even if some documents suggested the existence of a manor in this area, there was no straightforward evidence whether that was the place of today's "small castle". In spite of all these shortcomings, the still currently existing cellars prove undoubtedly that here is the site of a former fairly large manor including St. Nicholas Church, the building subsequently replaced by the "small castle" as well as ancillary premises which no longer exist.

The cellars incorporated in the "small castle" basement are made of three rooms (Fig. 2), each of them being covered by a barrel vault without transverse arches. The entrance area is rather long (7.00 x 3.10 m<sup>2</sup>) and has a stairway on one of its short sides – however, the assumption of a different original entrance cannot be ruled out<sup>46</sup> (Fig. 3). This first room allows the access straight to the other two rooms, which are not directly connected. The main room is a square with the side measuring 7.50 m; its height tops 5.40 m at the capstone (Fig. 4). This room is currently lighted through two holes atop the east wall, which are obviously more recent than the cellar brickwork. It is highly possible that the initial holes – now two niches on the north side, above the springing stone – were abandoned once the new building was erected atop the cellar; this new construction partly covers the north side of the vaulted basement. The third room is smaller than the main one, measuring 4.40 x 4.10 m<sup>2</sup>. Unlike the entrance and the main room, the coherence of this final room was altered by dividing it into two small rooms, separated by a horizontal concrete floor.

The cellars can be included in the category of monuments built in Wallachia during the second and the third quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; thus, they have comparable features – in terms of space covering technique – with the cellars of such houses as those built in Hagiești – County Ialomița (ca 1640), Mărgineni – County Prahova (1646), Coțofeni – County Dolj (1653). As regards their size, room arrangement and entrance positioning, the cellars under analysis look like those belonging to such houses located in County Argeș as that in Băjesti (1666) and Pitești (16, M. Kogălniceanu street and 4, 1 Mai street, both built after 1666),<sup>47</sup> albeit in all these cases the smallest room is covered with a dome. Worth to mention are two issues

<sup>43</sup> Bălan 1994, p. 338, n. 436, inscription on the frame of the altar table in St. Nicholas Church – Izvoru de Sus: "This holy altar was built by seneschal Preda, the son of high purveyor (vel slugger) Ivașco, and grandson of high seneschal (vel postelnic) Ivan Știrbei Izvoranu. And it was erected in the days of the good Christian, waywode Io Ștefan Cantacuzino".

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 338, n. 437.

<sup>45</sup> *V. Supra*, n. 20.

<sup>46</sup> Figure 3 features the relieving arch of a former door opening. This is more likely to have been the initial entrance in the cellar, since the present one penetrates the vault of the room sheltering the cellar.

<sup>47</sup> See Moisescu 2002, p. 56.



Fig. 5. The Small Castle. South-east view. June 2009

making the difference between the cellars of Izvoru de Sus and all cellars mentioned so far. First, the height at the capstone is 5.40 m, whereas in the other cases it ranges between 3.50 m and 4.80 m. Secondly, unlike the other cellars roughly equal to the main room of the basement in Izvoru, the barrel vault of the mansion has no transverse arches.

Nobody knows yet neither who made this construction, nor in which period. In an attempt of finding an answer, attention should be paid not only to the house the afore-mentioned cellars belonged to, but also to St. Nicholas Church. It seems that the construction of the latter had hardly anything to do with the villagers dwelling on this area around 1700. Although the hypothesis that the peasants built the church cannot be ruled out, a more plausible version is that the boyars were those who founded it for themselves. In other words, the building appears to have been built as a chapel of the manor supposedly ranging in its proximity,<sup>48</sup> more specifically within the park laid out later on.

For the first time, accurate information about the edifices erected in Izvoru de Sus was revealed in Priest Th. Arjescu's writings included in "Odobescu's questionnaire". Thus, one finds out that in spring 1871, *"In the mansion yard of Perticari family, who own the manor belonging to this commune, there was a very old vaulted cellar located west. It was fallen in ruins and measured about 4 fathoms in depth [...] It had walls made of small- and large-sized bricks aged over 200 years. Atop this cellar, there are signs still existing today of some large houses built by the departed Iordache Colfescu, Perticari family's ancestor"*.<sup>49</sup> Another questionnaire, drawn up five decades later, points that in 1921 a dwelling was built atop the remaining cellars. This replaced the former houses which had been *"broken down by Turks"*.<sup>50</sup> According to these documents, the "small castle" was consequently erected sometime between 1871 and 1921.

Even more accurate information on the period when both mansions were built can be collected from locals' narratives. For instance, according to the villagers born during World War I, they were erected before



Fig. 6. The Small Castle. South-west view of the cellar main room. June 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Although none of the documents analyzed so far refers to any mansion, it is impossible that Izvoru manor has no lordly residence. It is hard to believe that the boyars cited in the documents issued throughout 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, whose names were closely related to the manor under analysis, have no mansion here, at least a modest one.

<sup>49</sup> *V. supra* n. 40.

<sup>50</sup> DMI folder 2100, pp. 2, 3. "Questionnaire on historical monuments".



their birth. The even elder ones recalled that, at a certain moment, the manor had the “small castle” and a timber-made mansion (looking probably like the one located in Golești<sup>51</sup>), which would be destroyed by a firestorm.<sup>52</sup> Out of these data one can conclude that the “small castle” ought to have been constructed around 1900, while the big mansion was presumably built not long before World War I broke out. This assumption is confirmed by the architectural style of the buildings under analysis, featuring elements specific to the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the years preceding the said worldwide conflict.

A comprehensive morphological survey on the architecture of the “castles” cannot be drawn up because of either missing specific data or their deterioration which hinders a thorough visual inquiry. For the time being, the analysis can be summarized in a few ideas as follows. As the attached pictures highlight, both buildings were covered by a roof framework whose shape and steep slope are typical for north Europe. The space beneath the roof was lighted through dormers and holes made in the upper side of the splay pinions. In the case of the “small castle”, the wall surface (Fig. 5), which apparently underwent no major changes over time, has been provided with a timber network recalling a *Fachwerk* structure (Fig. 6). The collection of ornamental elements inspired from the German Romanticism can be also found at the “large castle”, albeit in a moderate fashion. Thus, the apparent wood decorations were utilized on a small scale, particularly beneath the cornice, whereas the wall decoration belonged to French eclecticism with a medieval “touch”. The romantic silhouette of the “castle” is strengthened by its south-eastern tower. Nobody knows whether the two edifices were designed by two architects or by one and the same, albeit considering the common “stylistic” features, the latter version is more likely.

As time went by, the “large castle” was subject to a few changes which altered its initial configuration. Its original look is partly known thanks to a photograph belonging to the Peticari Fund preserved at the Library of the Romanian Academy.<sup>53</sup> Although this picture has no date, the cloths worn by both children (in the foreground) and villagers (in the background) suggest it was taken the latest during World War I. In case the little girl standing on the right (aged about 7 years) was Ioana, Elena Peticari-Davila’s daughter, who was born in 1908, it follows that the approximate year of the photo is 1915. This document provides also valuable information on the time when the “castle” was built. Whereas the monuments list mentions 1927 as the year of building the Peticari ensemble, more specifically the large mansion, this picture points that the works on it ended at least one decade earlier.<sup>54</sup>

There is another photograph featuring what the monument looked like over time. It was published in a Romanian journal (“Flacăra”) in summer 1978.<sup>55</sup> A comparison made between this picture taken about three decades ago with the one dated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and with the present-day state of the castle (Fig. 9) leads to the conclusion that several noticeable changes have been brought to his edifice over the last century, as follows: (i) as regards the south-east tower, the height of its upper register – recalling the *Fachwerk* system – was diminished; (ii) the original roof was modified in terms of shortening, changing its slope and replacing the material of the roof covering;<sup>56</sup> (iii) the north-east corner was reshaped, here being visible a second tower (closing the main staircase) which appeared following the changes in the roof (Fig. 10); (iv) the wooden balconies on the east façade were removed; (v) the entrance terrace was closed thus modifying the main access; (vi) the original wall surface was covered by a layer of cement mortar plastering; (vii) the façade ornaments and bas-reliefs were totally or partially removed; (viii) the original silhouette was strongly transformed as a result

<sup>51</sup> Considering the close affinity between families Golescu and Peticari – Elena Peticari-Davila’s mother was Anica Racoviță-Golescu – it is very likely that the Peticari family have built their own mansion drawing upon the mansion located in the neighbourhood, in Golești.

<sup>52</sup> The “large castle” has been erected in place of the burned down building.

<sup>53</sup> Peticari Fund (Fig. 7).

<sup>54</sup> Let’s suppose the photo was taken in 1915. It shows that ivy covered the edifice up to the wall cornice. To reach that height, the ivy needs a few years. In short, it looks unlikely that the ivy has been planted after 1910; therefore the building had been completed by that year.

<sup>55</sup> See *Flacăra* 1978, Fig. 8.

<sup>56</sup> The initial roof covering is unlikely to have been made of ceramic ware, it was rather made of slate or, less likely, shingle.



Fig. 7. The Large Castle. North-east view. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century



Fig. 8. The Large Castle. East view. End of 1970s

of the afore-enumerated changes.

As far as one knows, the edifice underwent severe repairs following the 1940 and 1977 earthquakes. Thus, Elena Perticari wrote in a letter that the tower structure was seriously damaged by the November 1940 earthquake and was about to collapse, so that its brickwork was strengthened by introducing a reinforced-concrete ring beam.<sup>57</sup> It is possible that the revision works on the tower, entailing the dismantling

of the cornice, have required the changes in the roof. Anyway, Elena Perticari made no mention either on a virtual change in the roof covering or on the existence of a second tower. Hence, the said interventions could have been carried out after World War II, when the manor had already been taken over by the state.<sup>58</sup>

In 1948,<sup>59</sup> Elena Perticari was expelled of Izvoru manor and the mansions were nationalized. By the end of 1970s, several social or educational institutions functioned here. During this period the wood balconies (on the east façade) were likely given up for security reasons. Following the March 1977 earthquake, which damaged the floors, the building became unsafe and was abandoned. The locals remember that one of Elena Perticari's successors – a French citizen with an important position in his country of adoption – sent considerable funds with a view to restore both mansions.<sup>60</sup> There is no evidence on the use of this financial support for significant repairs.

A new church is currently under construction in Izvoru. The old one became too small for the villagers. But the same situation occurred a century ago, when the locals wanted either to cut the north and south sides of the nave in order to build side apses or to erect a new larger church! The then-Historical Monuments Committee expressed its disagreement signed by Virgil Drăghiceanu, forbidding the construction of a new

<sup>57</sup> DMI folder 2100, p. 114. The letter sent by Elena Perticari-Davila to Nicolae Iorga: "We have here skilled workers who strengthened and repaired the large house of Mrs Ioana Souza. The tower we thought it should be demolished has been consolidated by means of a reinforced-concrete ring beam, so that it remains intact." (Ioana Suțu was Elena Perticari Davila's daughter – author's note).

<sup>58</sup> From 1947 to 1977 the large mansion was the seat of various social institutions; the building was abandoned after the 1977 earthquake.

<sup>59</sup> In 1948, short time after the communist regime set up, the state began to nationalize private possessions.

<sup>60</sup> It seems that the donor not only sent funds, but also got, in early 1980s, the permit to come and see what happened with the land estate which formerly belonged to his family. In an attempt to justify the utilization of the amount received, the local authorities decided to plaster in cement mortar the big mansion outdoors and to line the walls with welded net indoors.



Fig. 9. The Large Castle. East view. June 2009



Fig. 10. The Large Castle. North-west view. June 2009



Fig. 11. The Large Castle. Interior view, detail. June 2009

church unless the old one would be restored.<sup>61</sup> Consequently, villagers invested the collected funds to consolidate their ancestors' old church and to clean the fresco, and kept worshipping in this ancient halidom. What is happening today? Is Sunday mass attended by many more people? The three-century-old church is severely damaged by earthquakes and weather conditions, while the local people of Izvoru de Sus are proudly building a new larger one, with tall steeples!

As concerns the "castles" of Izvoru de Sus, they have been falling in ruins with every passing day and nobody can or wants to prevent this. Some parts thereof, like the floors of the "large castle"<sup>62</sup> are widely destroyed. The moral deterioration that both mansions have been undergoing since 1947 is enhanced by the physical deterioration started 33 years ago. The present-day situation of these buildings is not only the consequence of the 1977 earthquake. On the contrary, de-allocation, lack of maintenance, robbery are the crucial causes of the deplorable state of these heritage objectives.

Unfortunately, nothing of the glamour belonging to the former atmosphere can be brought back today – the tranquillity so much appreciated by the authors of theatre masterpieces, the joy overwhelming the great hall whenever

<sup>61</sup> DMI folder 2100, p. 4, overleaf. Virgil Drăghiceanu's decision following the meeting of the Historical Monuments Committee on 28 July 1921: "*The request regarding the church extension is overruled.*"

<sup>62</sup> The floors of the big mansion have a mixed structure, made of beams bearing against metallic profiles (Fig. 11).

Elena Perticari-Davila was gathering peasants' children around the Christmas Tree, the noise of carriages driving kings and high-ranking boyars along the white-stone alleys of the park, the clamour made by boys accompanying Matei Ghica-Cantacuzino's car short time after the latter had landed his own plane on the mansion pond! Today, the park looks too old, the pond is muddy and there is no boat coming to the long-ago disappeared landing pier, the alleys are no longer white, and the "castles" are just deathly still shadows! The question is, for how long?

## ANNEX

Excerpt from the List of Cultural Monuments located on the territory of People's Republic of Romania, Bucharest, 1955				
No.	District	Place		Monument
		Village / Commune	Address / Village	
1943	Costești	Izvoru	Izvoru de Sus	St. Nicholas Church
Excerpt from the List of Historical Monuments (LMI) drawn up by the Historical Monuments, Ensembles and Sites Division, Argeș County, 1992				
Code LMI 1992	Place	Address	Monument/description	
03B316	IZVORU Village	Izvoru de Sus	"SAINT NICHOLAS" CHURCH, 1701, PAINTED 1829	
03B317	IZVORU Municipality	Izvoru de Sus	MANSION PERTICARI-DAVILA, 1924-1927	
Excerpt from the List of Historical Monuments, 2004, Argeș county				
No.	Code LMI 2004	Name	Address	Date
585	AG-II-m-A-13708	"Saint Nicholas" Church	IZVORU village; IZVORU Municipality	1701
586	AG-II-a-B-13709	Mansion site Perticari-Davila	IZVORU village; IZVORU Municipality	1927
587	AG-II-m-B-13709.01	Mansion	IZVORU village; IZVORU Municipality	1927
588	AG-II-m-B-13709.02	House	IZVORU village; IZVORU Municipality	17 <sup>th</sup> century
589	AG-II-m-B-13709.03	Park	IZVORU village; IZVORU Municipality	19 <sup>th</sup> century

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