

CORBII DE PIATRĂ. CONCLUSIONS OF A RESEARCH

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Abstract: The aim of the research undertaken during 2008-2010 at Corbii de Piatră church in the rock was to provide the scientific background needed for an adequate approach of conserving the medieval site, especially the valuable mural painting ensemble. Starting from cross-disciplinary approach of conserving mural paintings inside the rock-hewn church, our project created a *research-monitoring-intervention model on a historical monument in the wider background of a historical and natural site at Corbii de Piatră*. Including the conservation of mural paintings as part of a site conservation strategy was aimed to go along the following major directions: a permanent monitoring of the historical and natural site where the rock-hewn church is placed; a permanent monitoring of the conservation of mural paintings, before, during and after the conservation; an emergency intervention at the natural site including the rock where the church was dug out together with its annexes; an emergency intervention for the interior mural paintings; elaborating a complex project for the conservation of Corbii de Piatră historical and natural site; implementing the complex project.

Rezumat: Scopul cercetării desfăşurate în intervalul 2008-2010 la biserica săpată în stâncă de la Corbii de Piatră era acela de a oferi fundamentul ştiinţific necesar unei abordări adecvate a conservării sitului medieval şi îndeosebi a valorosului ansamblu de pictură murală. Având ca premiză abordarea interdisciplinară a conservării picturilor murale din interiorul bisericii rupestre, proiectul nostru a creat *un model de cercetare – monitorizare – intervenţie asupra monumentului istoric în contextul mai vast al sitului istoric şi natural Corbii de Piatră*. Incluziunea conservării picturilor murale în interiorul unei strategii de conservare a sitului a fost propusă a se desfăşura pe următoarele direcţii majore: monitorizarea permanentă a sitului istoric şi natural în care se află biserica rupestră; monitorizarea permanentă a stării de conservare a picturilor murale, înainte, pe parcursul şi după intervenţia de conservare; intervenţia de urgenţă la nivelul sitului natural ce cuprinde stâncă în care a fost săpată biserica împreună cu anexele sale; intervenţia urgentă la nivelul picturilor murale interioare; realizarea unui proiect complex privind conservarea sitului istoric şi natural Corbii de Piatră; punerea în practică a proiectului complex.

The initial aim of the research undertaken between 2008-2010 at the rock-hewn church of Corbii de Piatră (Fig. 1) was to provide the scientific foundation required for an adequate approach of the conservation of the medieval site, and particularly of the valuable mural painting ensemble. These mural paintings – with a problem range unprecedented in scope and complexity, especially concerning the biodegradation process – were the major objective leading to the development of the research project.¹

Key issues for the SICBR project

An attempt to provide herein an abbreviated form of the entire course of the research seems useful to understand the source, the meaning and the significance of proposing the complex project emerging from the conclusions of this research.

The project carried out under the SICBR acronym went along a few major directions, able to allow an extension of the research to the same aim: the protection of a major monument of the Romanian Middle Ages in its own natural environment.

1. A first direction of research was placing the rock-hewn church at Corbii de Piatră in the history of arts.² Reassessing the identity of the place was so much more necessary as the conservation in extremely precarious conditions concerned a monastic ensemble of overwhelming importance, whose dating was oscillating between the early Romanian state formation – the 14th century – to the mature era of late Middle Ages – the 16th century. The iconographic and stylistic survey led to placing more firmly the monument together with its painting ensemble in the first decades of the 14th century. The undeniable value of the mural paintings stand for, along the uniqueness of the revered space – a single nave with geminate apses – the core

¹ *An integrated research strategy of the conservation of some rock-hewn churches, to restore and value them. Corbii de Piatră Study case*, under the SICBR acronym, a PC project, contract nr. 91-001, under programme 4, Partnerships in priority areas. The team included the following partners: National University of Arts, Bucharest, Conservation-Restoration Department, University of Bucharest, Faculty of Geology and Geophysics, National Technical University of Athens, S.C. CEPROCIM S.A., Bucharest Institute of Biology, Ecology, Taxonomy and Nature Conservation Department, National History Museum of Romania, Centre for Physical, Chemical and Biological Research and Investigations.

² Cincheza-Buculei 2010, pp. 11-56.