Tourism based on vegetal element in the UNESCO patrimony Romanian monasteries frescoes

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Abstract: - Spiritual tourism is conducted by a significant contingent in terms of number heading towards the monasteries throughout the world. In the case of monasteries churches, as is the case in this study, which are unique for their frescoes painted on the exterior walls and which are part of UNESCO heritage, religious tourism is completed and elevated to high levels by the tourism focusing on culture. This study aims to highlight not only the cultural richness of the pictorial art technically, otherwise admirable, but to separate and bring forth the detail of a certain source of that is insufficiently explored. It is a part of the mural painting/fresco depicting vegetation in various colours, forms, species, type of association, distribution. It also seeks to identify features of the local environmental ambiance that may also be found in these paintings. The most important part of the study aims to empower the attention of tourists / tourists interested in sacred art that may be guided in a personalized way towards new experiences of additional tourism knowledge through the contact with generic art of the living vegetal part.

Key words: - monasteries, Romania, UNESCO patrimony, frescoes, painted vegetation, touristic interest

1 Introduction
Some monasteries have a cultural heritage strongly marked by the formation of the art inside and outside these establishments that recognition comes not only from tourists, but also from established organizations such as UNESCO. This is the case of certain monasteries in Romania which by the exceptional value of exterior
Fresco paintings of their churches have been included the UNESCO World Heritage [22], [26], [16]. This is because the form and the interior and exterior content of a church, monasteries and the related church, having an organic connection between them anywhere in the world, are the measure of the customized combination of architecture, theology and historical context [19].

Fresco painting by Encyclopædia Britannica [25], involves in synthesis a dyeing process (powder pigments in pure water) of some areas on a layer base of specially prepared plaster (plus sand and marble dust) or lime soaked plaster layers where colours form a surface film.

There are scientific studies that address the multi-criterion way monasteries and the tourism developed on their account, plus special eye on the frescoes; frescoes are not a distinct subject as touristic offer, and the detail element, that is the vegetal element in frescoes is slightly present. Religious tourism is done on the basis of places with religious expression force, but here there are aggregated some conditions derived from the artistic and historical wealth of the places [15].

What matters in some studies (and it may be the case of monasteries as well), and taking into account the tourism products consumer’s experiences [24], is the importance of spirituality by culture, as established formula of spiritual welfare [7]. It may be noticed or developed an art of dialogue between the individual’s religious faith and the eternal cultural message, especially when media resources are involved [5]. Other research heads towards the experiences lived by tourists while travelling and how it is influenced their consciousness marked by geographical knowledge, geography of places influencing the same tourists’ experiences [12]. Other research deals with tourists’ perception regarding the quality of the touristic site and the tourists’ relationship with the objective as part of their cultural heritage [17].

Interest is also aroused by the moment of touristic production and cultural transfer, without speaking of acculturation [4], tourism is art when in front of the tourist it is conjugated image and text, between coordinates from symbolic up to imagination [21]. A serious academic effort is related to the study of the frescoes, with or without regard to tourism. The frescoes are reviewed in scientific articles representing something else than vegetation: rituals, women and the invocation of divinity in the case of Akrotiri [3], scenes with subjects or religious-biblical stories [11], [2], including burial topic [10], social and religious practices of the Aegean islands with emphasis on the textiles worn by the inhabitants [6]. It is also interesting the subject of frescos / mural paintings present in other places than in the monasteries: public American buildings [18] headquarters of some Christian missions as the one in Fiji Islands [14], Italian palaces and aristocratic homes [1], Burmese Buddhist temples [13]. There emerge studies which highlight the demand for art and shift towards the supply of culture by art due to some touristic objectives, art being the centre of touristic initiatives or may become peripheral subject [9]. This happens with publishing initiatives that relate to the presence of the vegetal element as a large variety of floral frescoes in some religious sites in the Holy Land [20] or Coptic Rite Christian Egypt [8].

2 Purpose of the study

There are proposed for understanding and interpretation in a new multidisciplinary and epistemological manner, the mural church interior and exterior paintings on the basis of new elements. Tourists or any pilgrim-visitor may take a new dimension of knowledge of the pictorial art of past centuries’ Romanian territory, of the value of expression of some medieval artists of Byzantine influence by the vegetal element, from species of flowers, grass and shrub formations to trees, and the association of all this in a lively painting of local or essentially imaginative paradise biodiversity. Ultimately, the study results are designed to meet the tourists’ or
visitors’ need for culture on account of things as easy to interpret, starting from logical schemes to become integrated into tourism programs including monasteries or churches with murals or frescoes.

3 Localizing study units
The monasteries studied herein (Fig. 1), Horezu, Sucevița and Voroneț belong to two major ethno-geo-historical areas of Romania: Horezu Monastery (Hurezi) in the North-Eastern part of Oltenia, Sucevița and Voroneț in the North-Western part of Moldova. The studied monasteries have relatively well-individualized positions between vigorous hills built at the foot of some branches of the Romanian Carpathians, on the broad valleys with meadows bordered by forests with easy access. They belong to some specific sub-Carpathians environmental ambience, good for living, meditation and balanced networking of people and nature.

4 Methodology
In summary, the methods used relate to: a) study of the natural components of monasteries’ neighbourhoods in order to outline the relevance of environmental conditions on the choice of certain vegetal species and the transposition of these species in frescoes, b) analysis of vegetal species identified by the examination of three relevant frescoes c) studying the features of the same frescoes artistically and environmentally d) finding the right formulae to relate to vegetation in frescoes - cultural and religious tourism - tourists.

5 Results
5.1 Floral elements – reflection in frescoes/mural painting creation
An attempt to identify the plants present in the frescoes is a challenge in terms of knowing the biodiversity in the periods when murals were made and how it was translated by the artists. It should be noted that some painters were persons among the people with a good artistic education so they knew how to incorporate in the biblical or unbiblical scenes the reality of the immediate environment they originated or created in. 

Monastery Horezu church, typical objective for Brancovan art [23], has a floral representation in mural painting on the outside of the small porch (Fig. 2) but partially within the large church, in three dominant vegetal registers, inspired especially from local flora. The first one comprises the cone-shaped crown trees, particularly characteristic habitus to conifers (cypress - *Cupressus sp.* according to [17]), but in our view voluntarily undersized fir - *Abies*, spruce - *Picea*). The second register is represented by exotic trees, like palm trees [17], but rather a stylized representation of acanthus or bear's foot or (*Acanthus sp.*) - exotic species, which is not present in the Romanian flora, but which is very common in iconographic representations. In the remote plan it is present another species of hardwood, probably the hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) or an unknown species of shrub. Between the trees there are in the form of tufts *Poa* grass species, and intermediate in height it is inserted (at the top of the stage) groups of shrubs, possibly blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*). The third register is given by the plant decorative stripes on white background from the base of the arches, with floral motifs that might explain the palmettes and leaves painted alternatively in turquoise blue, purple, ocher and deep red (possibly grape-leaves living with sprouts).

For Sucevița Monastery church, the diversity of flora element of the scene painted on the inside (Fig. 3) is much greater, in addition to woody species there are more flowers here, some of them with spiritual significance as the lily (*Lilium sp.*) present in the right corner down. On the same row there are placed white tufts of William (*Dianthus sp.*) and 'Yellow with Orange throat' (*Silene alba*) and red *Melandrium rubrum*. At
the same time, the colour diversity is high, for flowers there may occur roses – stylized (Rosa sp.) or on the lower part yellow Great Yellow Gentian (Gentiana lutea). Diversity may represent either: a) different seasons (as the same representation of the canopy is shown both in red and green), b) either different species, in the centre of the fresco the one with red canopy may be yew (Taxus baccata), red wood species known and frequently used for church doors and the furniture, while the green canopy species may be beech (Fagus sylvatica). The reddish canopy species may also be oak (Quercus robur) whose foliage turns red in autumn. The presence of the trinity in the floristic element is very well highlighted by the fact that there is either a three-branch tree or a three-grouping of trees, or flowers either an arrangement on three levels (bottom left fern Dryopteris filix-mas).

For Voroneț Monastery church fresco (Fig. 4), colours are more varied and vivid and the representations of the floral element are fairly uniform, repeating the "umbrella tree" pattern. This is probably an imaginary, heavenly species especially since the scenes are images of Adam and Eve in Paradise, but at the same time they can represent trees (according to their crown they could be pear - Pyrus communis). In the top right box, which represents the banishment from heaven, the floristic element is no longer the same, acanthus leaves appear here (Acanthus sp.), that is the representation of earthly elements. Fresco scenes are framed in the upper part by a floral belt with arrangement in elegant volutes of the species of local grassland, respectively daisies (Chrysanthemum leucanthemum).

5.2 Thematic integration through cultural tourism of art and religious message in frescoes

In the church frescoes analyzed characters are in a natural environment with real or imaginary plants and animals. The potential "customers" of such mural paintings on the inside or outside walls of the Romanian monasteries churches will access a visual model to bring forward the artistic act of the paintings cantered on vegetation. For UNESCO-ranking Romanian monasteries or other places, tourists or any visitor interested in a particular segment of religious art (in this case vegetation) is granted a legitimate right to thematic information and they participate in the flow of ideas in the fluid field of spirituality, enhancing the fertile and palpable field of personal or public knowledge. In addition, it ensures the "right" of the touristic objective to display the power of expression of the painted image in the context of trans-religious artistic wealth. The tourist participates to an act of cultural heritage where: sacred and artistry intermingling; assists the richness of material culture whose identity is given by the fresco technique; historical tradition of places; insertion of vivid or sober and varied colours (warm or cold colours); integration of consecrated biblical characters (Jesus in Sucevița fresco, Adam and Eve in Voroneț), found in a local inspiration environment (influence of the surrounding forests and meadows) or appealing to the the imaginary dictated by the aspiration to edenian paradise.
Information specialization can count for carrying out a type of cultural tourism at the expense of Romanian monasteries or elsewhere. The information that synthetically satisfies all three monasteries, may be found in the clear splitting in the form of a 14-step proposed thematic program, working ways and orientations (Table 1).

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious objective</th>
<th>Monastery</th>
<th>Targeted group</th>
<th>Group size</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Subject frescoes</th>
<th>Vegetation scenes</th>
<th>Religious message</th>
<th>Cultural message (on vegetation)</th>
<th>Stylistic direction</th>
<th>Transmission of information</th>
<th>Specialization of the speech</th>
<th>Level of difficulty of transmitted information</th>
<th>Duration of presentation</th>
<th>Effect of information acquisition</th>
<th>Benefits for tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horezu</td>
<td>Tourists who know the artistic phenomenon, religious secondary</td>
<td>Up to 20 persons</td>
<td>Focused and in-depth or only informational knowledge of local or imaginary vegetation specificity in frescoes/mural paintings</td>
<td>Picture and artistic representation of vegetation in religious context</td>
<td>Disparate presence – flowers, herbs, shrubs, trees; associated species – advanced complexity vegetal environment (in vegetal plans or horizons)</td>
<td>Spiritual contact; echo of painted religious image where biblical characters interpose</td>
<td>Art and touristic knowledge; tangibility of religious objective and artistic scene; decorative and figurative; increase of moralizing role of vegetation theme expressed artistically and religiously; subscription of particular artistic element to the universality of culture</td>
<td>coherent discourse; sober and balanced style with clear rhythm of vegetal participation; unity in processing; decorative structure in generally free style to regular; diverse repertoire</td>
<td>special monastic staff / guides specializing in art and religion; frontal exposure</td>
<td>focus on vegetation</td>
<td>moderate to moderate-high</td>
<td>15-25 min/presented scene</td>
<td>Dynamism; living consciousness; positive and active attitude’ reflexive knowledge; personal and group representation; capacity of understanding the phenomenology focuses on vegetation</td>
<td>understanding religion in illustrated manner; understanding and frontal confrontation with a local nature or with a glimpse of our heavenly aspiration; detailed knowledge; emphasis of memory of places and of the &quot;specialty &quot; of pictorial art with an emphasis on the vegetal element</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sucevița</td>
<td>Tourists who know the artistic phenomenon, religious secondary</td>
<td>Up to 20 persons</td>
<td>Focused and in-depth or only informational knowledge of local or imaginary vegetation specificity in frescoes/mural paintings</td>
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### 6 Conclusions

The religious art of the Romanian monasteries in this study translates and transmits at the same time important spiritual and cultural information about the diversity of Biblical places and events. Three monasteries with their churches with outside and inside fresco painting with geometric scenes or floral girdles, provides valuable information only religiously but also artistically. The vegetal elements as flowers, herbs, shrubs and trees of frescoes depict fairly close the local environment influence. Scenes are dominated by undersized deciduous or coniferous trees (Horezu and Sucevița), but it is also noticed the participation of the imaginary in choosing the trees (all the monasteries). Flowers and herbs are mostly local consisting grassland. There is an order of the vegetable element within the meaning of single disposition or associated in plans or horizons or vivid or sober colours. Compositional aspects, painting technique, vegetal species diversity and appeal to the religious background of Byzantine influence are elements that convince of the need to specialize an offer or cultural and religious tourism program in the Romanian Orthodox ecumenical space.
References:


[26] [http://www.patrimoniuromanesc.ro/](http://www.patrimoniuromanesc.ro/)