

# The Monastery of Curtea de Argeș and Romanian Architectural Heritage in the Late 19th Century

**Cosmin Minea**

PhD student, University of Birmingham  
ctm570@bham.ac.uk

**KEYWORDS:** Curtea de Argeș; Byzantine architecture; Romanian architecture; “National Style”; André Lecomte du Noüy

## Introduction\*

In December 2012, a celebrated exhibition opened at the National Museum of Art of Romania in Bucharest. Under the name “Testimonials. The Frescoes from the Argeș Monastery” the remaining original frescoes of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Curtea de Argeș Monastery were presented for the first time to the public after a lengthy process of restoration. Built in the homonymous town in Northern Wallachia, and some 100 km south of the Habsburg city of Hermannstadt (today’s Sibiu), the monastery with its unique aspect and rich exterior decorations has always been described and praised for its aesthetic qualities by foreign travellers and local intellectuals alike (Fig. 1). Now its lost frescoes were presented in a spectacular fashion, with 3D reconstructions and complex installations that aimed to show what was presented as “less than 5% of the original mural painting decoration (...) the only testimonies of the paintings of this iconic monument for the Romanian culture.”<sup>1</sup>

The short curatorial text about the exhibition concept is both a praise for the remaining frescoes and even more so a lamentation for the lost ones. It parallels a well-established view of the Romanian art by local intellectuals who have perceived it in terms of destruction and survival, placing a great emphasis on the absence of art works that often had greater national symbolism than the surviving ones. The case of Curtea de Argeș’s frescoes is an obvious example. The lost frescoes were at least as much the subject of the above mentioned exhibitions as were the remaining ones. But contrary to other art works lost or destroyed in the past, in this case the frescoes have been lost only in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, during the restoration carried out by the French André Lecomte du Noüy, in 1875-1886.<sup>2</sup> A closer look at the intellectual milieu of the time reveals different attitudes towards the frescoes and a radical different symbolism associated with them, enough to explain their destruction and a reason to question the contemporary views on them. One can read for instance the opinions of Ludwig Reissenberger (1819-1895), the German-speaking native of Sibiu (Hermannstadt), who published a first architectural study of the monastery in 1860. In his influential *Die bischöfliche Klosterkirche bei Kurtea d’Argyisch in der Walachei* [The church of the Episcopal monastery from Curtea de Argeș in Wallachia], the work that awakened the modern interest in the church, one can read that “Everything [is] flat and almost without any structure, the walls are rising from the ground cladded in tiles that are

---

The research that made this article possible has been generously supported by the Department of History at Central European University, Budapest, by the Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training Partnership, UK, and by the Department of Art History, Curating and Visual Studies at the University of Birmingham. I also thank the reviewers for valuable advices and The National Museum of Art of Romania for the permission to use their illustrations.

1 Official press release, July 11, 2013: “...o parte dintre frescele care decorau interiorul lăcașului — reprezentând mai puțin de 5% din suprafața picturii murale originare — au fost extrase pentru a fi salvate și păstrate în muzeu, fiind singurele mărturii ale picturii acestui monument emblematic pentru cultura românească” URL: <http://www.agerpres.ro/cultura/2013/07/11/expozitia-marturii-frescele-manastirii-Argesului-de-la-mnar-castigatoare-a-premiului-comitetului-national-roman-icom-17-48-08>, accessed on 3.06.2016.

2 The architect added later “du Noüy” as his last name, a variant of his mother’s last name, Dunouy. The established spelling in Romanian archival record and in the works of some scholars, notably Carmen Popescu, has been du Nouÿ. However, the architect signed himself as du Noüy and it is this spelling I shall use.



Fig. 1: Curtea de Argeș as recently restored (around 1886)

hardly decorated by pale sketches”<sup>3</sup> and the “overfill of paintings in the interior of the church produces already by itself a more oppressive, almost frightening impression for the visitor.”<sup>4</sup> Epithets like “oppressive” and “frightening” directly point to a larger perception towards the Byzantine and Oriental world largely held in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, that of a cruel autocracy, oppressed people and bloody feuds. It was at the same time the powerful contrast between the luxurious exterior architecture of the church and the rather obscure, badly preserved interior. However in spite of these criticisms, the study became for a long time a reference work in Romanian art historiography.<sup>5</sup> The prestige of the scholarly work in the Habsburg Empire, the qualities and absolute novelty of his work in a country that had not yet developed the discipline of art history, made the above mentioned negative opinions to be passed under silence and the

3 Ludwig Reissenberger, “Die bischöfliche Klosterkirche bei Kurtea d’Argyisch in der Walachei” [The Church of the Episcopal Monastery from Curtea de Argeș in Wallachia], *Jahrbuch der Kaiserl. Königl. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale* Vienna IV (1860), 175-224: 182.

4 “Glatt und beinahe ohne alle Gliederung erheben sich die Wände der Kirche über dem mit Quadersteinen belegten Fussboden, nur matt belebt durch die in schematischer Weise entworfenen Malereien auf denselben.”; “Leider hat aber diese Überfüllung des inneren Raumes der Kirche, die schon an und für sich einen mehr erdrückenden, ja beinahe beängstigenden Eindruck auf den Eintretenden mach,” Reissenberger, “Die bischöfliche”, 182 and 189.

5 Even as late as 1930s Reissenberger is quoted in the influential work of Gheorghe Balș, where also the front cover uses one of the illustrations from Reissenberger’s work. Gheorghe Balș, *Influences arméniennes et géorgiennes sur l’architecture roumaine* [Armenian and Georgian Influences on Romanian Architecture] (Vălenii de Munte, 1931).

work to contribute to what Curtea de Argeș stands for even today, a symbol of the national state. However, it was the French restorer Lecomte du Noüy who did not overlook the critiques of Reissenberger and referred to it as the main documentary source for restoring the monastery, chiefly in his decision of remaking the interior.

But if the developments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that led to replacing the old frescoes could be followed in a rather logical succession, the 2012 exhibition takes a more recent perspective, to which Curtea de Argeș is already a symbolic monument for Romania. However, by shedding some light on the beginnings of Curtea de Argeș as a key monument for the new Romanian state, the study aims to bridge the gap between today's perceptions and past intentions. Moreover, a more complex understanding of how our contemporary perceptions came to be formed can pave the way for new and equally more complex ways of preserving and promoting the cultural heritage.

The contemporary exhibition held in Bucharest is a proof of the interest and relevance the monument still has today in society; the analysis of Ludwig Reissenberger, which brings a totally different opinion, illustrates the same relevance of the monument but at the same time speaks about the different status the monument had in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. What follows is a study of the emergence of Curtea de Argeș Monastery and at the same time of Romanian architectural heritage into the public sphere of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Romania. It focuses on issues from different domains, historiography, for one, as the basis for the monument's fame; and then the artistic practices concerning the monument, its display in world exhibitions and its restoration. The study aims to describe several elements, seen as a basis for the creation of architectural heritage so naturally that it left other publications or events aside. The larger and influential European context has been only briefly sketched but hopefully this shortcoming is compensated with an increased focus on Ludwig Reissenberger's influence as well as with that of the 1867 World Exhibition. Thus the study aims to prove the critical influence of outside scholars and events that provided the decisive stimuli and often even the first examples of heritage protection, restoration and promotion.

### Curtea de Argeș until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century

The early 16<sup>th</sup> century Curtea de Argeș Monastery is mostly famous for its peculiar architecture. The origin of the architect, his sources of inspiration, the masons, have long been debated and are very much as unclear today as they were in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the basis of inscriptions in the monastery and of two medieval chronicles, we know that building started in the first year of Prince Neagoe Basarab's reign (1512-1521).<sup>6</sup> It was finished relatively quickly, consecrated in 1517 and painted later on the inside, during the reign of Radu of Afumați (1522-1529) by the painter known as Dobromir and his team in 1526-1527.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Curtea de Argeș is closely connected to one of the most known legends in Romania, that of Master Mason Manole (Meșterul Manole). The legend goes that Master Manole was commissioned to build the monastery by Prince Negru Vodă, no other than the mythical founder of Wallachia. But for that, he had to sacrifice his wife by walling her in so that the walls would not crumble and the monastery be very beautiful. Similar stories can be found in the neighboring Balkan countries and elsewhere, but the legend was nevertheless turned into a reason for national pride. After it was first published in Romania in 1852 by the poet and politician Vasile Alecsandri, it was quickly translated into French and German in 1855 and 1857, respectively.<sup>8</sup> In 1858 a first study

6 Paul of Aleppo, *The Travels of Macarius Patriarch of Antioch written by his attendant Archdeacon Paul of Aleppo in Arabic*, translated by F. C. Belfour (London: 1836). The first partial Romanian translation was done by Constantin Negruzzi, (Iași, 1841) and also partially by George T. Calinescu (Arhiva Istorică a României, 1865). The second chronicle has been published as Tit Simeedrea, *Viața și traiul sfântului Nifon, patriarhul Constantinopolului* [*The Life and Living of Saint Nifon, the Patriarch of Constantinople*] (Bucharest, 1937).

7 Little is known about Dobromir but exceptionally for the period his name appears as the painter of several monuments including the monasteries of Târgoviște, Dealu and Tismana.

8 Vasile Alecsandri, *Balade adunate si indreptate* [*Ballads collected and amended*], (Iași, 1852); V. Alecsandri, *Ballades et chants populaires de la Roumanie* [*Ballads and Popular Songs of Romania*], (Paris, 1855) and Wilhelm von Kotzebue, *Rumänische Volkspoesie Gesammelt und geordnet von B. Alexandri* [*Ballads*





Fig. 2: Henri Trenk, *Curtea de Argeș*, watercolour, 1860

dedicated to the legend was also published in the Habsburg Empire, in Hermannstadt (Sibiu).<sup>9</sup> Thus, the Romanian public together with foreign intellectuals with interest in the region first found out about the monastery Curtea de Argeș by way of the legend of Master Manole. In this way Reissenberger's architectural study of 1860 came after the monastery had been known in some circles due to its legend. The borders between legend and historical truth were anyway not clear-cut at the time and historical research often followed literature and legend and not the other way around. In the case of Curtea de Argeș, the legend was particularly important. The subsequent French translation of Ludwig Reissenberger as well as a sumptuous monograph on the monument published in 1886, after its restoration, contain the legend of Master Manole as a complement to the historical and architectural study.<sup>10</sup>

In the tradition of the legend, until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the monastery was seen in Romantic terms, with descriptions that focused more on the subjective feelings of the authors.<sup>11</sup> Henri Trenk's watercolour is a good visual illustration of how the architectural features of Curtea de Argeș were largely ignored and the landscape was at least as important, more suitable as the backdrop for legends and romantic histories (Fig. 2). Also the painter Gheorghe Tattarescu made eleven drawings representing liturgical objects and frescoes of the rulers in Curtea de Argeș but

*Collected and Amended by B. Alexandri*, (Berlin, 1857). A famous study that connected the story with the Romanian "national character" is Mircea Eliade, *Comentarii la legenda Meșterului Manole* [Commentaries on the Legend of Master Manole], (Bucharest: Publicom, 1943).

9 K. Schuller, *Kloster Argisch eine romanische Volkssage* [Argeș Monastery, a Romanian Folk Tale], (Sibiu, 1858).

10 Grigore Tocilescu, *Biserica Episcopală a Mănăstirii Curtea de Argeș, restaurată în zilele M. S. Regelui Carol I și sfințită din nou în ziua de 12 octomvrie 1886* [The Episcopal Church of Curtea de Argeș Restored during the Days of HRH King Carol I and Consecrated again in the Day of October 12, 1886], (Bucharest, 1886).

11 It is the case of the writer Alexandru Pelimon and his *Impresiuni de călătorie în România* [Impressions from Travels in Romania], (Bucharest, 1858), 71-74; but also of the first mission organised by the new Romanian state to study "the archeological, archival and bibliographic treasures" (Aurel Sarcedoțianu, *Cercetări istorice și pitorești prin mănăstirile noastre acum optzeci de ani* [Picturesque and Historical Research in our Monasteries Eighty Years Ago] (Bucharest, 1941), 2. So the architectural monuments are not mentioned even in official instructions. More on romantic travellers in relation to architectural heritage in Ada Hajdu, "În căutarea patrimoniului. Excursiile patriotice și arhitectura națională românească în secolul al XIX-lea" [In Search of the Heritage. Patriotic Excursions and the National Romanian Architecture in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century], *Călători și călătorii. A vedea, a descoperi* [Travelers and Travels. To See, to Discover], ed. Cristina Bogdan and Silvia Marin-Barutcieff, (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2016).

only one drawing that showed the actual building, proving that rulers, legends connected to the monastery, various artefacts and old manuscripts were seen as more important than the history of the building itself.<sup>12</sup>

When it comes to circumscribe Curtea de Argeş to a particular architectural style or draw visual comparisons, the romantic travellers make conflicting and rather odd remarks. Pelimon called the two twisted towers as being in “Moorish style,” while the British traveller William Wilkinson from early 19<sup>th</sup> century saw its exterior as being similar to Saint Stephen in Vienna, which reveals both a lack of interest and of expertise in describing the architecture of the monastery.<sup>13</sup>

### Ludwig Reissenberger and his

#### *Die bischöfliche Klosterkirche bei Kurtea d'Argyisch in der Walachei*

Against the background described above, the architectural study of Ludwig Reissenberger would prove truly innovative. It will lead to a gradual change of attitude towards architecture in Romania and would quickly trigger the first architectural studies in the country. In 1860, when the Romanian state was focusing on the study of “the archaeological, archival and bibliographic treasures” of Curtea de Argeş, a comprehensive study dedicated almost exclusively to the architecture of Curtea de Argeş monastery appeared in Vienna. Ludwig Reissenberger published “The church of the episcopal monastery from Curtea de Argeş in Wallachia” in the 4<sup>th</sup> volume of the *Yearbook of the Central Commission for the Study and Preservation of Historic Monuments*.<sup>14</sup> The work was an extensive study of 50 pages, with 25 wooden engravings and 4 metal engravings, with detailed descriptions, plans, the history of the monument and art history analysis. These characteristics of a modern scientific publication made it immediately popular in Romania, stimulated the Romanian intellectuals to pursue similar endeavors and thus marked an unofficial start for studies on architecture in Romania.

The work of Ludwig Reissenberger was the fortunate result of one year and a half Austrian occupation of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, from June 1854 to December 1856, following the defeat of Russia in the Balkans during the Crimean War. Chief Commander of the Austrian troops in the Principalities, Count Johann von Coronini-Cronberg, was made aware of the peculiar architecture of Curtea de Argeş Monastery and ordered pictures of the monument to be sent to the new *Central Commission for the Investigation and Conservation of Architectural Monument in Vienna*.<sup>15</sup> The Commission had as object of study only the Habsburg provinces but apparently it quickly decided to make an exception with Curtea de Argeş, since in March 1857 Reissenberger was already in Wallachia studying the monastery. By then the territory had been already passed under the collective guarantee of the Great Powers, including Austria, and Reissenberger was chosen as he was conveniently located in the nearby Hermannstadt (Sibiu) and as he already finished another study on a medieval church, the small Romanesque church of Michelsberg (Cisnădioara) near Hermannstadt.<sup>16</sup> Reissenberger wasn't foremost an art historian. He studied theology and natural sciences at the University of Berlin before taking a position as a teacher at the Brukenthal Gymnasium in Hermannstadt in 1850. He is mostly known for

12 Gheorghe M. Tattarescu, *Album National, 1860*, catalogue exhibit in Emanuela Cernea, Oliviu Boldura, et al., *Măturii. Frescele Mănăstirii Argeşului, [Testimonies. Frescoes from the Argeş Monastery]*, Exhibition catalogue (Bucharest: MNAR, 2013), 176.

13 Pelimon, *Impresiuni*, 73; William Wilkinson, *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia: with Various Political Observations Relating to Them*, (London, 1820), 16.

14 Reissenberger, “Die bischöfliche,” 175-224.

15 The commission was established in 1850. Reissenberger himself tells the story of how he was chosen in Reissenberger, *L'Eglise*, 1. See also Maximilian Hartmuth, *Vienna and the Art Historical discovery of the Balkans in Orientalism in Ostmitteleuropa: Diskurse, Akteure und Disziplinen*, ed. Robert Born and Sarah Lemmen, (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014).

16 Ludwig Reissenberger, “Die Kirche des heil. Michael zu Michelsberg in Siebenbürgen” [The Saint Michael Church from Cisnădioara in Transylvania], *Mittheilungen der k.k. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale*, Vienna 2 (1857): 63–68.

his work done as a meteorologist at the station in Hermannstadt, where he surveyed several Carpathian peaks, and as collaborator at the Central Institute for Meteorology and Geodynamics in Vienna since its foundation in 1851. He nevertheless did some research on antiquities in Transylvania and after his work on Curtea de Argeș also took a position as curator and librarian at Brukenthal Museum in Hermannstadt.<sup>17</sup> So, Reissenberger had some expertise on the medieval architecture of the Saxons in Transylvania but probably did not know much about Wallachia. He used as secondary literature the few studies on the region done by Habsburg scholars, to which he added the visual impressions and a detailed description of the monastery.<sup>18</sup>

Even if not a historian by training, Reissenberger was aware of the expectations from a scientific study in the Habsburg Empire. He described the monastery and its surrounding buildings in detail, drew the plan, elevation and published accurate drawings of it. He also circumscribed for the first time the monument to the stylistic category of “Byzantine”, made a brief account of the history of the monument based loosely on historic sources and published all the inscriptions that were found. These elements of modern historic scholarship produced a profound and long-lasting impression on Romanian intellectuals that saw European techniques and methods of historic studies applied for the first time on one of their own monuments. So, Habsburg scholarly methods, opinions and perceptions were directly transposed on a Romanian monument and in the intellectual milieu of Romania. As we shall see below, Reissenberger’s work did not go unnoticed in Romania; on the contrary, it was translated, commented upon and used for new architectural studies. This is how it provides a clear illustration of a main argument in this study, *i.e.*, that intellectuals and publications from outside Romania provided the essential stimuli for research inside the country.

Reissenberger’s *The church of the Episcopal Monastery of Curtea de Argeș* soon prompted a Romanian translation done two years later, in 1862, by one of the few trained Romanian architects active at the time, Dimitrie Berindei who also added as a response his own analysis of architecture in Romania. In 1867 the study of Reissenberger received a complete French translation, ordered by the Romanian Government, to be shown at the World Exhibition in Paris.<sup>19</sup> It further remained the reference work for other studies of the monastery such as the one from 1886 by Grigore Tocilescu or from 1905 by the young architect and proponent of a national style George Mandrea.<sup>20</sup> The study of Reissenberger became quickly a reason of pride for Romanians and, what is more, a model of scientific study in art history, in a young country where the discipline was not yet formed, and where the first complete study of world art appeared only in 1898.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, Curtea de Argeș Monastery, the object of Reissenberger’s study, paralleled its fame and was turned quickly into the leading example of Romanian architectural heritage.

In spite of its popularity in Romania, where it was used including for representing the country at the Paris World Exhibition, Reissenberger is strikingly critical towards the monument. He expressed with accuracy the negative view that Western Europe had towards the former Byzantine Empire in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. With roots in the works of the Enlightenment such as Gibbon’s

17 A brief biography of Ludwig Reissenberger with a list of his works as well as references is given in *Österreichische Biographische Lexikon 1815–1950*, (Rákus Martin–Savić Šarko), Wien, 9 (1988): 62. URL: [http://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1\\_9/62.pdf](http://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1_9/62.pdf), accessed on 25.05.2016.

18 His main historic source on the region was Johann Christian von Engel’s *History of Moldavia and Wallachia* (Geschichte der Moldau und Wallachey). It appeared in *Geschichte des ungarischen Reiches und seiner Nebenländer* (1797–1804), (Halle, 1804); it was also a secondary work on the larger region of Hungary in the very same way his own study would be a secondary work in a collection of articles focused on the Habsburg lands.

19 Ludwig Reissenberger, *L’Eglise Du Monastere Episcopal de Kurtea D’Argis En Valachie* (Vienna, 1867).

20 Tocilescu, *Biserica*; G. Mandrea, *Biserica domnească din Curtea de Argeș*, [The Princely Church from Curtea de Argeș], (Bucharest, 1905).

21 Written by a high-school teacher, Nicolae Idieru, *Istoria artelor frumoase* [The History of Fine Arts], 1898. Peter Derer remarks how archeology was a more advanced discipline at the time: Peter Derer, “Cazul «Lecomte du Noüy». Demers analitic privind intervențiile sale asupra monumentelor” [The ‘Lecomte du Noüy’ Case. Analytic Undertaking on His Interventions on Historical Monuments], *Revista Monumentelor Istorie* 2 (1992): 69.

*History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Byzantinism was a synonym to corruption, authoritarianism, decline and lifeless art that accordingly produced only sterile imitations since the time of emperor Justinian.<sup>22</sup> The connection between the Byzantine world and the former Ottoman border province of Wallachia, in which Curtea de Argeş Monastery was located, was rather loosely made in several works written in the German-speaking lands. Mostly on the basis of the same religious rite historians like Johann Christian von Engel or art historians like Franz Kugler looked at Wallachia as an outcome of Byzantine cultural influence. Kugler, for example, the author of the *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1842), one of the first global studies of art history that is quoted by Ludwig Reissenberger, writes in a widely translated work only two sentences on Wallachia (none on Moldavia) and gives the apparently random example of Târgovişte monastery: "Not only Bulgaria but the other countries on the Lower Danube adopted the Byzantine style. In the great monastery above Tergovist, a place held nationally sacred by the Wallachians, the walls of the church are painted with saints and figures of the old Waiwodes in a more than Grecian taste."<sup>23</sup>

Besides his very brief considerations on Wallachia, Kugler provides a more minute and bleak picture of Byzantium that appeared to have had a clear influence on Reissenberger's work. Kugler calls the Byzantine times "the period of the deepest decline in art," representative for a society ruled by "despots," "monkish austerity or cruel intolerance."<sup>24</sup> The so portrayed accelerating decline is even more obvious when Kugler talks about the "Slavonic North," Bulgarian and then Romanian lands, where Byzantine art was "transplanted into a savage soil."<sup>25</sup>

A similar negative view was held even by a more visible scholar, the leading historian of the Vienna School of Art History, Rudolf Eitelberger. He tried to differentiate between Byzantine and Romanesque architecture, the first being viewed as Eastern and backward, the other as European and the sign of a new era in architectural history.<sup>26</sup> This is turned into a sort of antiquarian interest. Backward cultures on the fringes of the Habsburg Empire were worth exploring because they provided interesting samples from a distant past, long superseded in Europe.<sup>27</sup> On top of this, Byzantium is often mixed with the Oriental and the Arab world, from where a large part of the negative stereotypes are being drawn. Reissenberger relies on articles like "Die Baukunst der Kirchen und Klöster im Orient," from *Allgemeine Bauzeitung*, the leading architectural journal in the Habsburg Monarchy, quoted several times in the work on the Wallachian monument.<sup>28</sup>

So one can take Reissenberger's brief description of Byzantine art, with which he opens the study on Curtea de Argeş to notice not only a similar opinion but the use of the same epithets and general tone to other Habsburg scholars. According to Reissenberger, since the rule of Justinian (527-565), Byzantine art and architecture "felt more and more and so fast into a stiff convention, an empty formalism and a pure mechanism, devoid of any creative energy and scrupulously committed to the primitive tradition."<sup>29</sup> In a similar fashion, Franz Kugler uses attributes like "mechanical art," "traditionalist," "no creativity" to convey the image of Byzantine art, "mechanical art (...) [with] rigid adherence to a flatness of representation [and that] sunk into the mere outward form of a lifeless tradition."<sup>30</sup>

22 Only towards the end of the century with the increasing popularity of Oriental architectural decorations, Byzantine art was slowly revaluated. See J.P. Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered* (London: Phaidon Press, 2003), 64-65.

23 Franz Kugler, *Handbook of Painting. The Italian Schools* (London, 1874), 81-82.

24 Kugler, *Handbook*, 43-45.

25 Ibid., 81-82.

26 Matthew Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History. Empire and the Politics of Scholarship* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013), 170.

27 Ibid., 179.

28 He quotes two times the article "Die Baukunst der Kirchen und Klöster im Orient" [The Architecture of the Churches and Monasteries in the Orient], III (1857): 343-402 and 139-154.

29 Reissenberger, "Die bischöfliche," 177.

30 Kugler, *Handbook*, 81.

On the other hand it is also true that Reissenberger tried to balance the very negative view on Byzantine art, with the example of Curtea de Argeş architecture, praised more than once in his works, which he saw as “an attempt that seems to give a new direction, a new evolution to religious architecture.”<sup>31</sup> Still the general view on Byzantine Art in the Habsburg Empire and indeed in Europe at the time, can clearly be noticed all over Reissenberger’s text, and above all when he criticises the interior of the church and the frescoes, opinions that were at least one of the causes for their total replacement during the 1880s restoration. He criticises for instance the interior columns, that “are far from satisfying the observer, more, they make an impression disagreeable by the oddness of their form and their decoration.”<sup>32</sup> What may mostly surprise today’s readers is Reissenberger’s critique of the architectural plan of the church. He is extremely confused and does not like what would become the most famous feature of the plan: the enlarged rectangular narthex. He sees that “at the entrance, the eye is troubled by the impression that is produced by viewing the two main parts [the enlarged narthex and the smaller main nave], and the spirit feels a disagreement which opposes the peace and free development of the soul towards the upper world” and the whole “lacks the idea of unity that must reign in architecture.”<sup>33</sup>

Reissenberger’s criticisms reproduced to a large extent the stereotypes of the time associated with the non-Europeans, including the people from the Balkan states.<sup>34</sup> But more importantly he provided the stimulus for the Romanian intellectuals to argue against, to transform, nuance or offer alternatives to this opinions. His work prompted the first attempts at constructing a history of Romanian architecture and at proving that Byzantine art, the basis of the Romanian art, had indeed a history with a traceable stylistic evolution. As analyzed in the next chapter, architects like Dimitrie Berindei or historians like Alexandru Odobescu tried to further include Byzantine art in the grand narrative of Western Art, and thus to get rid of stereotypes like backward or Oriental.

Reissenberger’s work was nevertheless more appreciated than contradicted in Romania. The basis for this were the so perceived scholarly methods of studying art history that he used and that probably were also inspired by scholars like Franz Kugler. The latter relied on close visual analysis, detailed drawings and prints to break away from the predecessors’ picturesque and romantic analysis.<sup>35</sup> It is the same method applied by Reissenberger who relies in great measure in his study on detailed description of the monastery, accompanied by many engravings on the most interesting architectural forms. All these were still given as a model for the new generation of architects at the turn of the century, in their own journal who would publish the work in 1890.<sup>36</sup>

### The first Romanian reactions

The first Romanian author to react to Reissenberger’s work was the young architect Dimitrie Berindei (1831-1884). In 1862 he published a Romanian translation of the study and also wrote an extensive preface, one of the first attempted research of the local architecture, called “A Quick Glance at the Byzantine Architecture” (Răpidă ochire asupra architecturei bizantine).<sup>37</sup> He announced from the start that the main goal of the preface was to contextualize Curtea de Argeş monastery by placing it in a historical narrative of Byzantine architecture in Romania. Or,

31 Reissenberger, “Die bischöfliche,” 177.

32 Reissenberger, “Die bischöfliche,” 185.

33 Ibid.

34 Maria Todorova famously describes these stereotypes in *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), especially in 89-116.

35 Johannes Rössler, “Franz Kugler als Architekturhistoriker” [Franz Kugler as Art Historian], in *Franz Theodor Kugler. Deutscher Kunsthistoriker und Berliner Dichter*, ed. Michel Espagne et al. (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010).

36 *Analele arhitecturii și ale Artelor cu care se leagă* [Annals of Architecture and its Related Arts], No. 10-12, 1890.

37 Dimitrie Berindei, “Răpidă ochire asupra Architecturei Bizantine” [Quick Glance at Byzantine Architecture], *Revista Română, pentru științe, litere și arte* 2 (1862): 822-868.



in other words, to make the monument appear less as “a peculiar example of Byzantine style,” as Reissenberger viewed it, but more as a natural product of the particular development of Byzantine art in Romania. Berindei considered that the main merit of such an endeavour is that it makes the work of interest also for the Romanian public:

“Unfortunately, the German author, interested in the general history of arts, considers this edifice only as a precious example of influences of the Oriental style, and does not touch upon any of the matters related to the development of architecture in the Romanian country. The lack of this natural framework somehow cancels part of the interest it could have had for us.”<sup>38</sup>

At the same time, Berindei appreciated the work of Reissenberger very much, called it a “conscientious writing,” and even partly contradicted himself in considering that it deserved “all the attention and the thanks of Romanians.”<sup>39</sup> The fact that the work was published in *Revista Română* [Romanian Magazine] is furthermore significant since it was the only study by a foreign scholar published in what was essentially a nationalist magazine.<sup>40</sup> Berindei surely considered that no matter how critical or negative it was at times, the work of Reissenberger is nevertheless a priceless study of an unexplored territory. He in fact launches a passionate appeal to fellow Romanians for the study of “the remains” from the past: “Let’s study then these remains, let’s research the traditions and chronicles, let’s grasp their spirit and it will be impossible not to foresee an outset of culture and what is more, the existence of a people full of life.”<sup>41</sup> The appeal is very similar to the one made by Berindei’s good friend and fellow editor of *Revista Română*, Alexandru Odobescu who also addressed the young scholars and artists urging them to “Study the remains, no matter how small, of the artistic production from the past, and make from them the origin of a great art.”<sup>42</sup>

Odobescu and Berindei, both former Parisian students, would be in the first line for the defence of the then largely elusive concept of “Romanian” art. In fact, they appeal exactly for studies that would form a solid notion of national art, paralleling the similar concepts in more established nations from Central and Western Europe. In his preface, Berindei employed several tactics for creating a sense of an individual “Romanian” art. Firstly, in his brief sketch on the history of Byzantine architecture, he drew a strong connection between Byzantine, Roman Empire and Christianity. Accordingly, the Byzantine style spread also in Western Europe. In places like Aachen, the Rhine Valley or in Perigueux, Byzantine architecture provided the sources of inspiration for the new styles that would follow.<sup>43</sup> So Berindei, even if not explicitly, draws a parallel between the evolution of Byzantine style with that of the Romanians themselves, a Christian nation that was also believed to have Roman origins. He also emphasized the Byzantine elements in Western European architecture, thus placing the Byzantine style and implicitly the architecture produced in Romania in the broader European mainstream. Berindei was at the same time keeping with a main idea in the French intellectual

38 “Din nefericire inse, autorul german, preocupat de istoria generala a artelor, considera acest edificiu numai ca un exemplu precios de iniriurile stylului oriental, si nu atinge nici una din cestiunile privitoare la desvoltarea arhitecturii in terra Romaneasca. Lipsa acestui cadru natural ii ridica ore-cum, parte din interesul ce ar fi putut ave pentru noi”. Berindei, “Răpidă ochire,” 841. The writing is in the transitional manner of the time, specific for the period after the spelling changed from Cyrillic to Latin characters.

39 In the summary it is mentioned “as introduction to the translation of the writing of Reissenberger on the Episcopal Church of Curtea de Argeș”; Berindei, “Răpidă ochire,” 841.

40 Famous works that later became the pillar for the national history of Romania were published like most famously, Nicolae Bălcescu, *Romanians under the Rule of Michael the Brave*, 1860.

41 “Să studiem ăse aceste remășiți, să cercetăm tradițiile și cronicile, să ne petrunдем de spiritul lor și ne va fi cu neputință a nu presimți un început de cultură, și, ceia ce e mai mult, existența unui popor plin de vieță...”, Berindei, “Răpidă ochire,” 823.

42 First discourse on Romanian Arts was held in Paris in 1851; He then repeated the main ides in his 1872 address: “Studiați rămășițele, oricât ar fi de mărunte, ale producțiunii artistice din trecut, și faceți dintr-însele sorginea unei arte mărețe” (“Artele din România, în periodul preistoric. Conferință rostită la Ateneul român, la 17 decembrie 1872” [Arts in Romania in the prehistoric period. Conference held at the Romania Athenaeum on 17 December 1872], in *Opere complete* [Complete works], vol III, (Bucharest: 1908), 173-174.

43 Berindei, “Răpidă ochire,” 831.

milieu, where still in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the medieval architecture before Gothic was considered Byzantine or Romano-Byzantine.<sup>44</sup>

Berindei, like Odobescu after him, started from the obvious observation that compared to other European countries, Romania did not have much to offer in terms of historic architecture and affirmed from the beginning that “the country seems empty, we can say, of arts”. But he quickly turned this into an advantage and the perceived lack of monuments actually ends up by symbolising something even more important. Accordingly, Romania lacks artistic production because it “still wears the imprints of the invasions that haunted her” that in turn happened because “Fighting for their independence, our parents were fighting at the same time for the religion and the civilization of Europe.”<sup>45</sup> This reasoning would be picked up by others and often the supposed vanished material traces from the past would become a more important part of the national heritage.

Berindei integrated the monastery of Curtea de Argeș into a local artistic tradition by simply stating that there are no such things as individual monuments and in every case a larger group must be discovered, a larger (national) artistic tradition that explains the architecture of that particular monument. He affirms that “art is produced by groups that permit us to follow an artistic tradition” and thus “if the Romanians raised this monument, how can it be unique in his way?”<sup>46</sup> But then how could Berindei explain a highly original monument like Curtea de Argeș? He did this precisely by turning away from the architectural and decorative features and focusing on the plan of the church. The answer was to be found not in the highly original architectural features of the church that are hard to be connected to other similar examples on the territory of Romania but in the “construction shapes” and the “general type.” He referred mostly to the triconch plan of the majority of Wallachian and Moldavian churches, including Curtea de Argeș.<sup>47</sup> In this way he contradicts Ludwig Reissenberger or what he believes is his “thesis of foreign imports and without relation to the local traditions.”<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, Berindei also overlooked the highly original nature of the plan of Curtea de Argeș, that even if triconch, it has an enlarged narthex made initially to host the grave of Neagoe Basarab’s family, and that was much bigger than the central core.<sup>49</sup>

Berindei further argues that Dealu Monastery, another Wallachian monument built almost two decades before, is the missing link between Curtea de Argeș and the larger local artistic production.<sup>50</sup> Dealu has some similar characteristics with Curtea de Argeș in terms of plan and the way the exterior is divided but for Berindei in the past “should have had great similarities with it.”<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the workers in this case must have built also other similar monuments, mostly considering, as Berindei states, that in the times of Neagoe Basarab chronicles mention a lot of churches built there.<sup>52</sup>

So Berindei, in defense of the local artistic practices, introduces new theories including the indigenous nature of the triconch plan or the school of workers trained under the Rule of Prince Neagoe Basarab. This is why in many ways it is a pioneering work. He puts the Monastery of Curtea de Argeș in the centre of his study and thus makes a breakthrough in the way old buildings are looked at and sets the elements for the new science, as were already proven by

44 Bullen, *Byzantium*, 56-68.

45 Berindei, “Răpidă ochire,” 823.

46 “Dacă Romanii au ridicat acest monument, cum pote fi unicu in felul seu? Arta procede prin grupe, care ne permitu a urma o traditie artistica.” *Ibid.*, 843.

47 *Ibid.*, 844.

48 *Ibid.*, 843.

49 Later the enlarged narthex came to be seen as a main feature of the church, one that inspired the plan of other later important monasteries like Radu Voda monastery in Bucharest. See Tereza Sinigalia, “Modèles byzantines et interprétations originales dans la structure du narthex de l’église du monastère d’Argeș”, *The XVth International Congress of Byzantine Studies* 3 (1996), 464-484.

50 Built between 1499-1501, at the orders of the voivode Radu cel Mare.

51 Berindei, “Răpidă ochire,” 843.

52 *Ibid.*

Reissenberger. Furthermore, for the first time architecture is presented as having the potential to support the national narrative or what he calls the “national interest”. In Berindei’s own prophetic words: “The plans, profiles, details of sculpture especially, shed often on a building more light than the remarks of the chroniclers without artistic knowledge and little interest to describe and to mention the date and their character.”<sup>53</sup> It was a start in support of architectural heritage, one that would become truly important for the new state at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Berindei further mentions the two main goals of the majority of intellectual works in 19<sup>th</sup> century Romania. The “national interest” and the “general interest,” the former being the relevance inside Romania, the latter being addressed to the “cultivated world,” namely Europe, that legitimized everything done in the country. The work of Reissenberger fulfilled only the second goal. But Berindei, with his own study, completes the entire work by bringing also the “national interest” and thus making it satisfactory for mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Romanian intellectuals. This would be once more confirmed a few years later when both the works of Berindei and Reissenberger were translated into French and published as part of the Romanian exhibition at the 1867 Paris World Fair.

### Curtea de Argeș at the Paris World Exhibition of 1867

After the works of Reissenberger and Berindei, more and more events that focused on the architecture of Curtea de Argeș followed. One pertinent example is the project of the official photographer of Prince Carol, Karol Popp de Szathmári, who offered as an welcome gift in 1866 to the new Prince a photographic album of Curtea de Argeș.<sup>54</sup> Compared to the earlier visual representations, this time the photographs emphasized the architecture of the church in great detail. The most interesting architectural details like the towers, the round decorations or the windows were carefully recorded.<sup>55</sup> (Fig. 3)

The church of Curtea de Argeș had its status as the most representative monument for the new Romanian state reinforced with the 1867 World Exhibition. It was at the forefront of a complex strategy that included the exhibit of the monument in four different ways.<sup>56</sup> Foremost, the national pavilion, designed by the French architect Ambroise Baudry, was directly inspired by Curtea de Argeș. In the main building of the World Exhibition in Paris, the *Machines Gallery*, Curtea de Argeș again served as source for the decoration of the Romanian section and was also displayed as a precise wooden replica. The monument was finally presented in three works: a French translation of Ludwig Reissenberger; and in two publications written by Alexandru Odobescu (1834-1895), a pioneer Romanian archaeologist and one of the most important early figures in the studies of old Romanian art.<sup>57</sup>

In 1867, Romania took part for the first time in a World Exhibition with its own stand and pavilion, and also for the first time used the name “Romania” in an official capacity.<sup>58</sup> These were rather bold moves for a country still under the formal control of the Ottoman Empire, to

53 Ibid., 844.

54 Official photographer of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza and since 1866, of the future King Carol I.

55 Carol Popp de Szathmári, *Episcopie de Curtea de Argeș*, (Bucharest, 1866) in Cernea, *Mărturie*, 184-187.

56 The Romanian publications that present the country’s participation at 1867 World Exhibition are Alexandru Odobescu, *Petre Aurelian, Notice sur la Roumanie: principalement au point de vue de son économie rurale, industrielle et commerciale* (Paris, 1868); Alexandru Odobescu, *Notice sur les antiquités de la Roumanie*, (Paris, 1868).

57 He founded in 1861 together with Berindei *Revista română pentru științe, litere și arte* [*The Romanian Journal for Science, Literature and Arts*], where several key national works were published in history, literature and arts. Among them, the first partial translation of Ludwig Reissenberger in Romanian and the first study on old Romanian architecture by Berindei. He published both romantic accounts of monuments in his early period such as *Câteva ore la Snagov* [A Few Hours in Snagov], (Bucharest, 1862), but also later more extensive, scholarly studies like his 3 volume monograph on the Pietroasa Horde, *Le Trésor de Pétrossa. Étude sur l’orfèvrerie antique* [The Treasure of Pietroasa. Study on the Antique Gold Work], 1-3 (Paris: 1887-1900).

58 According to the first Constitution of the country just passed in 1866 under Prince Carol, The United Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia was from then called Romania.



Fig. 3: Carol Popp de Szathmáry, *Episcopie de Curtea de Argeș*, (Bucharest, 1866)

which it had to pay an annual toll. But especially because of this, the country had to present itself as a “nation” with all the attributes required for a modern, European nation-state, including history, art, literature and a “national” architecture. The architecture was naturally a particularly visible display as it was embodied in the national pavilion, the building that hosted most of the Romanian exhibition. This is how the young Romanian state, that since its autonomy from the Ottoman Empire had been satisfied with employing Western architectural styles in the new state buildings, suddenly faced the task of displaying a unique, “national” architecture for the World exhibitions. It was one of the biggest dilemmas faced by the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexandru Odobescu, when he started working in his newest position, as organizer of the Romanian section at the 1867 World Exhibition in Paris. In his country there were few trained architects, most of the new buildings were built by foreigners, and there were no schools of architecture. Thus, Odobescu had to actually pick a foreigner to build the “national” Romanian style and the most convenient was for him to be French. So, in 1866 he decided on a young French architect, Ambroise Baudry, who had done some archaeological surveys in Romania just the year before, occasion with which they had met.<sup>59</sup>

Baudry was not of course left alone to decide on the architectural features of the pavilion. Odobescu and other local intellectuals decided on the main sources of inspiration and Baudry probably was left to combine them in a new building. So Odobescu sent him the photographs of Curtea de Argeș taken one year before by Szathmáry, accompanied by the work of Reissenberger, along with few pictures of another monument, Stavropoleos Monastery from Bucharest.<sup>60</sup> Out of all this Baudry managed in a short span of time to design a peculiar construction that had as prominent shapes the two twisted towers of Curtea de Argeș and also the portico inspired by the Stavropoleos Monastery (Fig. 4).

<sup>59</sup> Only 28 years of age, Baudry spent around 6 months at different sites in Romania. The story is told by Odobescu himself in Alexandru Odobescu, *Opere complete* [Complete Works], 2, (Bucharest, 1906), 319. See also M.-L. Crosnier-Leconte et M. Volait, *L'Égypte d'un architecte: Ambroise Baudry 1838-1906* (Paris: Somogy, 1998).

<sup>60</sup> Laurențiu Vlad, *Imagini ale identității naționale. România și expozițiile universale de la Paris* [Images of National Identities. Romania and the Paris World Exhibitions], 1867-1937 (Iași: Institutul European, 2007), 68. The 18<sup>th</sup> century monastery of Stavropoleos, founded during the time of Nicolae Mavrocordat (1680-1730), along with other handful of monuments would become only later, at the turn of the century, representative for the Romanian architectural heritage and examples of the “Brâncovenesc” style.





Fig. 4: Ambroise Baudry, Romanian Pavilion, Paris, 1866

Curtea de Argeș was also displayed in the *Machines Gallery* (Galerie des Machines) as a two and a half meter tall, wooden replica made by the Romanian sculptor of German origin Karl Storck. Finally, the monument was presented in three written works: a French translation of Ludwig Reissenberger, one translation of Berindei's work and one of the medieval account of Paul of Aleppo.<sup>61</sup>

The translations were published in two brochures authored by Alexandru Odobescu, in which he also added his own contribution to the study of Curtea de Argeș, by briefly describing the liturgical objects he found in the monastery but also elsewhere in the country. He refers to this part as a survey of "the different branches of industry and ancient commerce of Romania."<sup>62</sup> In this way Odobescu connects Curtea de Argeș with all the other liturgical objects found in the country and thus directly relates it to the artistic productions from across the country. In fact, this was an older plan. Berindei himself announced at the end of his work in 1862 the future publication of Odobescu's travel notes taken in the study trip of 1860, but the plans would not follow through, since the magazine would cease to be published in the following year.

The World exhibitions, in which only the one of 1867 is briefly described, had a determining role in defining an architectural heritage and a national architecture. Firstly, they created the need for it, as an attribute of a modern nation-state. At the same time, they established the representational role of architecture, one that had to be appreciated and recognised outside the country. In our case the first example of a future national style, the pavilion designed by Ambroise Baudry to combine architectural motifs from Curtea de Argeș and Stavropoleos monasteries was from the start made to

61 Ludwig Reissenberger, *Eglise*; Odobescu, Aurelian, *Notice*. Odobescu, *Notice*.

62 Odobescu, *Notice*, 418.

represent Romania among other European nation-states.<sup>63</sup> The work of Reissenberger fulfilled to a great extent this latter goal, it proved that architectural monuments in Romania can be the object of interest from more established European states. That was what captured in the first place the attention of Romanian intellectuals and provided them with the conviction that Curtea de Argeș was a monument suitable to represent the country at World exhibitions. A further confirmation is that the monastery was at the forefront of the architectural display in World exhibitions throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including at the Parisian ones of 1889 and 1900.

### André Lecomte du Noüy and the restoration of Curtea de Argeș

It was probably its restoration that made Curtea de Argeș beyond doubt the most important ancient monument for the state and the intellectuals of the time. The monastery was at the centre of the first, vastest and longest restoration project in the history of modern Romania. Its intricate history starts in 1863 and officially finishes in 1886 with the church being reconsecrated. Its importance for the modern Romanian architecture as well as that of its restorer, the French Emile-André Lecomte du Noüy (1844-1914), has been accurately assessed in recent studies that managed to a great extent to shed a new light on the French architect,<sup>64</sup> previously seen as a destroyer of Romanian heritage in pre- and post-World War II literature.<sup>65</sup> He is nowadays mostly appreciated for his informed and diligent way of studying the monuments, and for the innovations he brought in the practice of restoring and researching old architecture, including keeping a detailed sketchbook, among the earliest attempts to construct typologies and analyse in depth the old constructions of the country.<sup>66</sup> In the following part the aim is to enrich those studies by directly connecting the restoration activity of André Lecomte du Noüy with the already mentioned 19<sup>th</sup> century studies on Curtea de Argeș. In this way Lecomte du Noüy and his work appear as emerging to a great extent from the local context and this casts some doubts on the more common view that he was a foreigner that either brought major innovation either major destructions to the Romanian architectural heritage.

The first initiative to restore Curtea de Argeș dated from 1863, but the work, decisions, opinions and debates on the restoration of Curtea de Argeș would last almost 30 years and involve the major architects in the country,<sup>67</sup> many key politicians<sup>68</sup> and a new generation of architects that decried the whole project.<sup>69</sup> What resulted was that Curtea de Argeș was stripped of its surrounding buildings, was polished and embellished on the outside and its interior was completely reworked to become in this way of prime importance not only as a symbol, place of memory or monument of architecture but also for the profession and practice of researching and restoring old architecture.

63 For the Romanian national pavilion at 1867 World Fair as a predecessor for the future national style see Carmen Popescu, *Le Style National Roumain. Construire une Nation a travers l'Architecture 1881 – 1945*, (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes/ Simetria, 2004), 40-43 and Marie Laure Crosnier Leconte, "Du savoir archéologique à la reconstruction de fantaisie: Ambroise Baudry a Troesmis e à l'Exposition universelle de 1867 à Paris," in *Genius loci: national et regional en architecture; entre histoire et pratique = national and regional in architecture; between history and practice*, edited by Carmen Popescu, Ioana Teodorescu, (Bucharest: Simetria, 2002), mostly 127.

64 Carmen Popescu, "André Lecomte du Noüy (1844 – 1914) et la restauration des monuments historiques en Roumanie" in *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français* (1998), 287-308; Horia Moldovan, *Arhitectura bisericii lui Neagoe Basarab [The Architecture of the Church of Neagoe Basarab]*, in Cernea, *Mărturii*, 18-38.

65 His restoration was virulently contested in 1889 and 1890, shortly after it was finished by a group of young Romanian architects who accused du Noüy of being far too intrusive and of destroying the monument. See among others George Sterian, *Despre restaurarea monumentelor istorice în străinătate și în România [On Restoring the Historical Monuments Abroad and in Romania]* (Iași, 1889).

66 "L'étranger: Lecomte du Noüy" in Carmen Popescu, *Le Style*, 68-77; Shona Kallestrup, *Art and Design in Romania, 1866-1927, Local and International Aspects of the Search for National Expression* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 70-74.

67 Alexandru Orăscu, Dimitrie Berindei, Paul Gottereau, Gaetano Bureilly.

68 Alexandru Odobescu, Titu Maiorescu.

69 George Sterian, Constantin Baicoianu, Ion Mincu, Ion Socolescu, Stefan Ciocarlan.

In 1874, a commission that included the first Romanian architect trained abroad, Alexandru Orăscu (1817-1894), together with Alexandru Odobescu and Dimitrie Berindei, decided that the works were advancing too slow and put a stop on the existing contract of Filip Montoreanu.<sup>70</sup> The same commission decided to appeal to the world-renowned Eugène Viollet-le-Duc to study the restoration of Curtea de Argeș. Le-Duc sent one of his main collaborators, the architect Anatole de Baudot, to see the church; together they presented a complete report along with estimated costs and Lecomte du Noüy, one of Viollet-le-Duc's pupils, was recommended for the job.<sup>71</sup> Although it is tempting to see a direct relationship between the more famous romantic methods of restoring the monuments of Viollet-le-Duc and the works of du Nouÿ, it is worth noticing that Viollet-le-Duc in his report proposed, contrary to his well-known methods of restoration, quite minor interventions, that would later be considered only methods of "preservation."<sup>72</sup> He proposed for instance that the frescoes be restored and not repainted as they were believed to be still in good shape.<sup>73</sup>

André Lecomte du Noüy, therefore, began his work in Curtea de Argeș in 1875 and throughout his years in Romania was held in high esteem by many politicians and intellectuals. He even became acquainted with the close circle of friends of the royal family and soon opened his own bureau of architecture called "The special service for restorations" (Serviciul special de restaurări).<sup>74</sup> This speaks a lot of the perceived importance of his activity. His work had the permanent approval of the Romanian officials, including the Minister of Culture, Titu Maiorescu, the architect Dimitrie Berindei and Alexandru Odobescu, who were in charge of supervising the restoration. In fact, soon after Lecomte du Noüy finished restoring the exterior of the church, in June 1879, he received lavish praises from Alexandru Odobescu in a speech that was to be delivered at the Romanian Academy.<sup>75</sup> Odobescu even went as far as to compare Lecomte du Noüy with the mythical builder of the Church, Master Manole, and praised the modifications brought to the original monument, seen as "rediscoveries".<sup>76</sup> He would also try several times to take full credit for the initiative of bringing the French architect to Romania as well as for the restoration method. A newspaper article from 1887 mentions that it was he who called Viollet-le-Duc to recommend an architect and he again, together with Dimitrie Berindei, conceived the method of restoration, although only on the outside.<sup>77</sup> In his published speech on the monastery that appeared in the same year it is once again stated that the restoration "was executed by Mr. A. Lecomte du Noüy according with the findings and advice from a report written for a special

70 Alexandra Chiliman-Juvara, *Restaurări în Tara Românească în perioada Regelui Carol I*, [Restorations in Walachia during the King Carol I], (Iasi: Monumentul, 2006). URL: <http://www.monumentul.ro/pdfs/Alexandra%20Chiliman-Juvara%2008.pdf>, accessed on 10.06.2016.

71 *Restaurarea monumentelor istorice 1865-1890. Acte și Rapoarte Oficiale* [Restoration of Historical Monuments, 1865-1890. Official Acts and Reports], (Bucharest, 1890), 44-53.

72 According to Henri Revoil in his rapport on the restoration of Curtea de Argeș. *Restaurarea Monumentelor*, 246.

73 *Restaurarea Monumentelor*, 44-53.

74 For a brief account of the activity of André Lecomte du Noüy and of King Carol on Romanian architectural heritage Florentina Manuela Tăbăcilă and Cornelia Stoica, "Carol I - activitatea legislativă în domeniul protejării monumentelor publice și politica sa edilitară" [Carol I – Activity in the Legislative Domain of the Protection of Public Monuments and his Urban Policies], *Monumentul* 10 (2008).

75 The speech was cancelled because of King Carol's absence. It was eventually published in 1887 as "Biserica dela Curtea de Argeș și Legenda Mesterului Manole" [The Church from Curtea de Argeș and the Legends of Master Manole], in Alexandru Odobescu, *Scrieri literare și istorice* [Literary and Historical Writings] (Bucharest, 1887).

76 "Mesterul Manole al acestei maiestrete refaceri, junele artist plin de talent și de perseverența cu care Franța ne a împrumutat, dl architect Andrei Lecomte du Nouÿ, ne a calauzit pe toți în examinarea atator minunate amănunte, pe care dăna sa le a urmărit, ba, ce dic! le-a redescoperit, și le-a reproduș cu acea pasionată iubire care lega în tot-d-a-una pe artiștii adevărați de opera lor predilectă." Alexandru Odobescu, *Opere Alese* [Selected Works] (Bucharest, 1941), 286.

77 Alexandru Odobescu in *Epoca*, 13 Septembrie 1887 quoted by Ștefan Ciocarlan in *Analele arhitecturii* 1 (1890): 5.





Fig. 5: Coronation of the two twisted towers, before and after the restoration

commission by Mr. A. Odobescu<sup>78</sup>. The commission is probably the one constituted in 1874 but the report that guided or should have guided the restoration was according to official documents the one written by Viollet-le-Duc and Anatole de Baudot and made specifically for this purpose.<sup>79</sup> So, we are left wondering who actually wrote the more influential report that decided on the restoration of Curtea de Argeș. The question, which might not have an answer, points nevertheless against an all French conception, driven by the methods of Viollet-le-Duc, and to a wider range of influences on André Lecomte du Noüy, who was certainly driven in his work also by the advice and observations of the Romanians. We may also notice the huge prestige attributed to the restoration work that made Odobescu insist he was directly responsible for it. Indeed in 1887, when Odobescu's comments were published, the restoration was seen as a great success, lavishly praised in an equally lavish work by Grigore Tocilescu<sup>80</sup> and consequently Lecomte du Noüy received several other important commissions.<sup>81</sup>

In light of all these, the critiques that the subsequent generation of architects directed at the French architect should have at least taken into account the immense support he received. As well, they should have looked also at the local context that influenced to a great extent the Frenchman's work. On his side, Lecomte du Noüy also paid a great deal of attention to the local context, advice and publications. He listened to the Romanian intellectuals, read the works by Reissenberger, Berindei and Odobescu and developed friendly relations with the most important

<sup>78</sup> Comments appeared in a footnote made probably by the editor of the book, Vasile Urechia (1834-1901). Alexandru Odobescu, "Biserica," 516: "ea s'a executat de dl A. Lecomte du Noüy, conform cu constatările și cu poveștele date într'un raport foarte amănunțit ce s'a elaborat și s'a redactat în numele unei comisii speciale de către dl A. Odobescu" [it was executed by Mr. A. Lecomte du Noüy according to the findings and advice given in a very detailed report that was elaborated in the name of a special commission by Mr. A. Odobescu].

<sup>79</sup> *Restaurarea Monumentelor*, 44-54. See also Derer, "Cazul «Lecomte du Noüy»," 69.

<sup>80</sup> Tocilescu, *Biserica*.

<sup>81</sup> He completely demolished and built anew the metropolitan church in Târgoviște and the Saint Dimitry Church in Craiova and heavily modified the architecture and exterior decoration of the church Saint Nicholas and the monastery Three Hierarchs in Iași.



decision-makers, like the minister Titu Maiorescu.<sup>82</sup> One can even argue that the writing so appreciated in Romania of Ludwig Reissenberger played a determining role in the restoration. Almost all the critiques given by Reissenberger can be seen as having a direct result in the work of du Noüy. For instance, on the exterior of the church one of the most visible modifications brought by du Noüy that was much criticized later was the replacement of the coronation of the two twisted towers with a much richer one, identical with the coronation of the main towers (Fig. 5). But 20 years earlier Reissenberger was complaining that “we don’t find here [on the twisted towers] anymore the magnificent coronation that distinguish the cylinder of the two other cupolas”, opinion also expressed by the commission of 1874, formed by Orăscu, Odobescu and Berindei, which noticed that “also the small towers, those from the front, require to have this gracious decorative element.”<sup>83</sup> The same, Reissenberger mentioned the missing doves on top of the stone discs on the upper part of the façade and told about the “sweet harmony” produced by the birds “in the old times,” when the wind was blowing through them.<sup>84</sup> Accordingly, du Noüy made new bronze doves in the same place. The same bronze birds had been mentioned by Paul of Aleppo in his chronicle that also talked about a stone fence that surrounded the monastery.<sup>85</sup> Lecomte du Noüy searched and apparently found traces of the fence and then rebuilt it around the monastery. Other new elements brought by Lecomte du Noüy on the exterior façade of the church are the new marble semi-columns between the windows in the lower register. The old ones are harshly criticized by Reissenberger who finds them “of a type scarcely artistic and not at all in harmony with the rest of the decoration.”<sup>86</sup>

By far the interior of the church was the one most criticized by Reissenberger. He saw it as “deprived of variety from an architectural and decorative point of view”, with walls that are “all plain and almost without any details (...), are barely animated by frescoes that decorate them with their pale sketches.”<sup>87</sup> He is disappointed not to find “the grandiose effect produced in the former Byzantine churches by the cupolas imitating the celestial dome” because the dim light and the abuse of painting that covers all the walls and the smallest corners of the church diminish greatly the general impression of the monument. In this obscure half-lit interior one feels more oppressed than free...<sup>88</sup> Lecomte du Noüy responded accordingly by remaking the whole interior of the church. He employed French painters to make the most important scenes in much brighter colours, designed to reflect the dim light inside the church, the one so much criticized by Reissenberger. (Fig. 6).<sup>89</sup> At the same time the vivid colours and the strong contrasts together with an Art-Nouveau rendering of the objects is visibly informed by the Western European fashion. As is the mosaic technique for the icon above the main entrance door and in the project for the floor of the church (Fig. 7).<sup>90</sup> Mosaic was maybe the main technique associated with the Byzantine art in Europe, in direct connection with the churches of Ravenna, Saint Marco in Venice or Hagia Sophia, which all displayed examples of mosaic, very popular among 19<sup>th</sup> century artists and historians alike.<sup>91</sup>

In the autumn of 1886 the newly restored church was consecrated again with a magnificent ceremony, attended by the Royal Family and all the important Romanian politicians. Its architecture was almost unchanged but at the same time it looked very differently. It was a church

82 See the letters sent by Lecomte to Titu Maiorescu and now kept in the Library of the Romanian Academy, Correspondence Section, Fond Lecomte du Noüy.

83 Reissenberger, “Die bischöfliche,” 203; *Restaurarea Monumentelor*, 24: “...reclamă și turlele cele mici din fața bisericii, acest grațios element decorativ, care a dispărut negreșit cu timpul.

84 Reissenberger, “Die bischöfliche,” 197.

85 Moldovan, *Arhitectura*, 30.

86 Reissenberger, “Die bischöfliche,” 195.

87 Ibid., 182.

88 Ibid., 181.

89 Gabriel Badea Păun, “Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte du Noüy la curtea regală a României” [Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte du Noüy at the Royal Court of Romania], in Cernea, *Măturii*, 13.

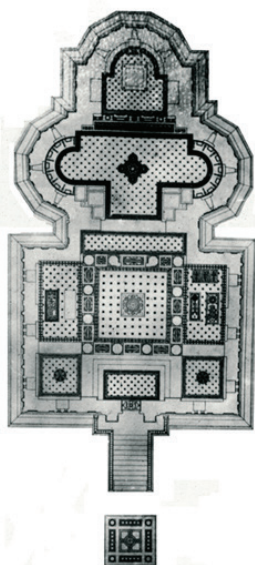
90 Horia Moldovan, *Măturii...*, 27.

91 Bullen, *Byzantium*, 27.



Fig. 6: Votive painting at Curtea de Argeș, cca. 1885

Fig. 7: Mosaic project for the floor of the church and the icon above the main entrance door, Curtea de Argeș



and not a monastery, all the surrounding buildings being demolished, and thus the monument could be now seen unobstructed, from far away and singularised from its original context of a monastery. Curtea de Argeş was exhibited in a modern, museum-like fashion for the whole “nation.” The architectural heritage was thus emphatically put on display. It was a vision informed by the emerging institution of museum and by the immensely popular and national exhibitions. André Lecomte du Noüy was very familiar with this practice as himself exhibited in Paris, in the Palace of Industry, the iconostasis of the church, with the support of Vasile Alecsandri, then Romanian ambassador in Paris.<sup>92</sup>

The restoration of Curtea de Argeş produced both exuberant praises and virulent critiques. It was one of the most highly regarded accomplishments of an older generation of architects and art historians like Berindei, Odobescu, Lecomte du Noüy and at the same time one of their last. They were soon to be replaced by a new generation of architects who would give a new direction to the writings of art history, and to the restoration of architectural heritage and who would create even a new national style. For them Curtea de Argeş would not be anymore the main historical monument of the country. Especially after the turn of the century it found itself in a much diverse architectural landscape, where sources for the national heritage were primarily drawn from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Wallachian architecture of the times of Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu.

### Conclusions

The discovery and promotion of Curtea de Argeş as the most representative monument for Romanian architectural heritage firstly reveals the direct way in which foreign actors, in this case a German-speaking scholar (Reissenberger) and two French architects (Baudry and Lecomte du Noüy), interpreted and created *the* “Romanian” architecture; there is also a relation in the way the cultural traditions are often constructed in the case of new nation-states, driven foremost by the need for confirmation from the bigger European nations; in this respect, foreign scholars are seen as a guarantee for this; the 19<sup>th</sup> century history of Curtea de Argeş stands also for the history of Romanian architecture that gradually came to embody the national aspirations of the state; and finally with the rediscovery of the monastery the first art history works were written. In this light one can look at the writings of Reissenberger, Berindei and Odobescu, almost ignored so far in the scholarly literature.

The paper shows how Curtea de Argeş was the first monument in Romania to be studied in a modern way by a foreign scholar and afterwards by the few Romanian architects and art historians. It was the first to be displayed outside the country, at world exhibitions and the first to be restored under King Carol I, who made the church his royal tomb. The famous restoration of Curtea de Argeş represented in many ways also its final moment of glory. Soon afterwards, a new generation of architects created a whole new institutional framework and focused on other sources for promoting a Romanian architectural heritage and a national architectural style. Through a new school of architecture, a society of architects, several journals and a newly established commission on historic monuments, the sources for a Romanian architectural heritage were much diversified and the focal point became the Wallachian constructions of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, built under Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu and in what is known as Brâncovenesc style. The churches and palaces from that period would be the basis for a modern national architectural style, very popular since early 20<sup>th</sup> century. But in 19<sup>th</sup> century Romania, Curtea de Argeş was the central and to a great extent the only monument representing Romanian architectural heritage. It became the pretext to study the Romanian architecture, it visually represented “the nation” and the Royal House. It was a product of both Romanian and foreign actors and was very much informed by transnational European ideas about the Balkan region and the Byzantine style. First and foremost, Curtea de Argeş became the foundation for a Romanian cultural heritage and for the much celebrated history of Romanian architecture.

<sup>92</sup> Cernea, “Destine artistice,” in Cernea, *Mărturie*, 14.

## ILLUSTRATION CREDITS:

- Fig. 1: Emanuela Cernea, Oliviu Boldura, et al., *Mărturii. Frescele Mănăstirii Argeşului*, Exhibition catalogue (Bucharest: MNAR, 2013), 191
- Fig. 2: Emanuela Cernea, Oliviu Boldura, et al., *Mărturii. Frescele Mănăstirii Argeşului*, Exhibition catalogue (Bucharest: MNAR, 2013), 172.
- Fig. 3: Emanuela Cernea, Oliviu Boldura, et al., *Mărturii. Frescele Mănăstirii Argeşului*, Exhibition catalogue (Bucharest: MNAR, 2013), 186.
- Fig. 4: Orsay Museum, Documentation de la conservation [Documentation section], *Exposition universelle 1867 Paris*, Photographic Album.
- Fig. 5: Emanuela Cernea, Oliviu Boldura, et al., *Mărturii. Frescele Mănăstirii Argeşului*, Exhibition catalogue (Bucharest: MNAR, 2013), 34.
- Fig. 6: Personal collection of the author
- Fig. 7: Emanuela Cernea, Oliviu Boldura, et al., *Mărturii. Frescele Mănăstirii Argeşului*, Exhibition catalogue (Bucharest: MNAR, 2013), 35.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Alecsandri, Vasile. *Balade adunate şi îndreptate* [Ballads Collected and Amended], Iaşi: 1852.
- Alecsandri, V. *Ballades et chants populaires de la Roumanie* [Ballads and Popular Songs of Romania]. Paris: 1855.
- Badea Păun, Gabriel. "Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte du Noüy la curtea regală a României" [Jean-Jules-Antoine Lecomte du Noüy at the Royal Court of Romania]. In *Mecena şi Comanditari. Artă şi mesaj politic*. Bucharest: Noi Media Print, 2010.
- Balş Gheorghe. *Influences arméniennes et géorgiennes sur l'architecture roumaine* [Armenian and Georgian Influences on Romanian Architecture]. Vălenii de Munte, 1931.
- Berindeiu, Dimitrie. "Răpidă ochire asupra Arhitecturii Bizantine" [Quick Glance at Byzantine Architecture]. *Revista Română pentru ştiinţe, litere şi arte* 2 (1862): 822-868.
- Bressani, Martin. *Architecture and the Historical Imagination: Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, 1814-1879*. London and New York: Routledge, 2014.
- Bullen, J.P. *Byzantium Rediscovered*. London: Phaidon Press, 2003.
- Cernea, Emanuela, Oliviu Boldura, et al. *Mărturii. Frescele Mănăstirii Argeşului* [Testimonies. Frescoes from the Argeş Monastery]. Exhibition catalogue, Bucharest: MNAR, 2013.
- Chiliman-Juvara, Alexandra. *Restaurări în țara Românească în perioada Regelui Carol I* [Restorations in Walachia during the King Carol I]. Iaşi: Monumentul, 2006. URL: <http://www.monumentul.ro/pdfs/Alexandra%20Chiliman-Juvara%2008.pdf>, last accessed 10.06.2016
- Derer, Peter. "Cazul 'Lecomte du Noüy'. Demers analitic privind intervențiile sale asupra monumentelor" [The 'Lecomte du Noüy' Case. Analytic Undertaking on His Interventions on Historical Monuments]. *Revista Monumentelor Istorice* 2 (1992): 68-71.
- Eliade, Mircea. *Comentarii la legenda Meşterului Manole* [Commentaries on the Legend of Master Manole]. Bucharest: Publicom, 1943.
- Engel, Johann Christian von. *Geschichte des ungarischen Reiches und seiner Nebenländer (1797-1804)*. Halle, 1804.
- Hajdu, Ada. "În căutarea patrimoniului. Excursiile patriotice şi arhitectura naţională românească în secolul al XIX-lea" [In Search of the Heritage. Patriotic Excursions and the National Romanian Architecture in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century]. In *Călători şi călătorii. A vedea, a descoperi* [Travelers and Travels. To See, to Discover], edited by Cristina Bogdan and Silvia Marin-Barutchieff, forthcoming. Bucharest: Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2016.
- Hartmuth, Maximilian. "Vienna and the Art Historical discovery of the Balkans." In *Orientalism in Ostmitteleuropa: Diskurse, Akteure und Disziplinen*, edited by Robert Born and Sarah Lemmen. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014.
- Idieru, Nicolae. *Istoria artelor frumoase* [The History of Fine Arts], 1898.
- Kallestrup, Shona. *Art and Design in Romania, 1866-1927. Local and International Aspects of the Search for National Expression*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Kotzebue, Wilhelm von. *Rumänische Volkspoesie Gesammelt und geordnet von B. Alexandri* [Ballads Collected and Amended by B. Alexandri]. Berlin, 1857.
- Kugler, Franz. *Handbook of Painting. The Italian Schools*. London, 1874.
- Leconte, Marie Laure Crosnier and M. Volait. *L'Égypte d'un architecte: Ambroise Baudry 1838-1906*. Paris: Somogy, 1998.
- Leconte, Marie Laure Crosnier. "Du savoir archéologique à la reconstruction de fantaisie : Ambroise Baudry a Troesmis e à l'Exposition universelle de 1867 à Paris." In *Genius loci: national et regional en archi-*



- ecture; entre histoire et pratique = national and regional in architecture; between history and practice, edited by Carmen Popescu, Ioana Teodorescu. Bucharest: Simetria, 2002.
- Mandrea, G. *Biserica domnească din Curtea de Argeș* [The Princely Church from Curtea de Argeș]. Bucharest, 1905.
- Odobescu, Alexandru, *Opere Alese* [Selected Works]. Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1941.
- Odobescu, Alexandru, *Opere Complete* [Complete Works]. Bucharest: Minerva, 1906.
- Odobescu, Alexandru, *Petre Aurelian, Notice sur la Roumanie: principalement au point de vue de son économie rurale, industrielle et commerciale*. Paris: A. Franck, 1868.
- Odobescu, Alexandru. *Notice sur les antiquités de la Roumanie*. A. Franck, 1868.
- Odobescu, Alexandru. *Scrieri literare și istorice* [Literary and Historical Writings]. Bucharest, 1887.
- Österreichische Biographische Lexikon 1815–1950, (Rázus Martin–Savič Šarko) 9 (1988). URL: [http://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1\\_9/62.pdf](http://www.biographien.ac.at/oeb1_9/62.pdf), accessed 25.05.2016.
- Paul of Aleppo. *The Travels of Macarius Patriarch of Antioch written by his attendant Archdeacon Paul of Aleppo in Arabic*. translated by F. C. Belfour. London, 1836.
- Pelimon, Alexandru. *Impresiuni de călătorie în România* [Impressions from Travels in Romania]. Bucharest, 1858.
- Popescu, Carmen. "André Lecomte du Noüy (1844 – 1914) et la restauration des monuments historiques en Roumanie." *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français* (1998): 287-308.
- Popescu, Carmen. *Le Style National Roumain. Construire une Nation a travers l'Architecture 1881 – 1945*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes/ Simetria, 2004.
- Rampléy, Matthew. *The Vienna School of Art History. Empire and the Politics of Scholarship*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013.
- Reissenberger, Ludwig. *L'Eglise Du Monastere Episcopal de Curtea D'Argis En Valachie*, Vienna, 1867.
- Reissenberger, Ludwig. "Die bischöfliche Klosterkirche bei Curtea d'Argyisch in der Walachei" [The church of the episcopal monastery from Curtea de Argeș in Wallachia]. *Jahrbuch der Kaiserl. Königl. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale* Vienna, IV (1860): 175-224.
- Reissenberger, Ludwig. "Die Kirche des heil. Michael zu Michelsberg in Siebenbürgen" [The Saint Michael Church from Cisnadioara in Transylvania]. *Mittheilungen der k.k. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale* Vienna, 2 (1857): 63–68.
- Restaurarea monumentelor istorice 1865-1890. Acte și Rapoarte Oficiale* [Restoration of Historical Monuments, 1865-1890. Official Acts and Reports]. Bucharest, 1890.
- Rössler, Johannes. "Franz Kugler als Architekturhistoriker" [Franz Kugler as Art Historian]. In *Franz Theodor Kugler. Deutscher Kunsthistoriker und Berliner Dichter*, edited by Michel Espagne, Bénédicte Savoy, Céline Trautmann-Waller. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010.
- Sarcedoțianu, Aurel. *Cercetări istorice și pitorești prin mănăstirile noastre acum optzeci de ani* [Picturesque and Historical Research in our Monasteries Eighty Years Ago]. Bucharest: 1941.
- Schuller, K. *Kloster Argisch eine romänische Volkssage* [Argeș Monastery, a Romanian Folk Tale]. Sibiu: 1858.
- Simeadrea, Tit. *Viața și traiul sfântului Nifon, patriarhul Constantinopolului* [The life and living of Saint Nifon, the Patriarch of Constantinople]. Bucharest: 1937.
- Sinigalia, Tereza. "Modèles byzantines et interpretations originales dans la structure du narthex de l' église du monastère d'Argeș." *The XVIIIth International Congress of Byzantine Studies* 3 (1996): 464-484.
- Sterian, George. *Despre restaurarea monumentelor istorice în străinătate și în România* [On Restoring the Historical Monuments Abroad and in Romania]. Iași: 1889.
- Szathmáry, Carol Popp de. *Episcopie de Curtea de Argeș*. Bucharest: 1866.
- Tăbăcilă, Florentina Manuela and Cornelia Stoica. "Carol I - activitatea legislativă în domeniul protejării monumentelor publice și politica sa edilitară" [Carol I – Activity in the Legislative Domain of the Protection of Public Monuments and his Urban Policies]. *Monumentul* 10 (2008).
- Tocilescu, Grigore. *Biserica Episcopală a Mănăstirii Curtea de Argeș, restaurata în zilele M. S. Regelui Carol I și sfântita din nou în ziua de 12 octomvrie 1886* [The Episcopal Church of Curtea de Argeș Restored during the Days of HRH King Carol I and Consecrated again in the Day of October 12, 1886]. Bucharest: 1886.
- Todorova, Maria. *Imagining the Balkans*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Vlad, Laurențiu. *Imagini ale identității naționale. România și expozițiile universale de la Paris, 1867-1937* [Images of National Identities. Romania and the Paris World Exhibitions]. Iași: Institutul European, 2007.
- Wilkinson, William. *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia: with Various Political Observations Relating to Them*. London, 1820.
- <http://www.agerpres.ro/cultura/2013/07/11/expozitia-marturii-frescele-manastirii-Argeșului-de-la-mnar-castigatoare-a-premiului-comitetului-national-roman-icom-17-48-08>, last accessed 3.06.2016