

# Proposal and Implementation of the Agrotourist Route "Salt Road" on the Mures River

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## Abstract

Reinventing the route "salt road" has the purpose to promote through cultural tourism, ecotourism, rural tourism and agrotourism, natural and anthropic resources on the navigable part of Mures River between the localities Bulci and Igris with possibilities for cross-border expansion until this river flows into Tisa and upstream to Alba Iulia, because the historical sources make reference to this occupation regarding salt trade since the time of Ahtum, the master of Urbs Morisena, and the existence of some traces of Christian life of Eastern rite at Cenad, Igris and Bulci. The most significant and accurate news about the Romanians living in the Western Region of Romania (Timis and Arad) in the Middle Age, of Turkish and Austro-Hungarian oppression are included in the Hungarian chronicles and other large works, which attest the transport of salt on Mures, even since the year 1138.

**Keywords:** Romania, Banat, tourism, salt road.

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## 1. Introduction

In tourism, the authenticity of some routes for both tourists and locals is susceptible to change, because the expectations changes and traditions are invented and reinvented, because authenticity in cultural tourism and other forms of niche tourism refers to:[ 1,2,3]

- travel with value-added;
- live some experiences of quality;
- the discovery or rediscovery of places untouched by modernity;
- rediscovering old ancient lifestyles;
- the desire to make the experience of a different way of existence;
- manifesting the identity of a people;
- cultural traditions and customs, gastronomy;

The authentic nature of a destination is an extraordinary resource also for tourists to benefit from it, it is sufficient to be put in value the history and culture of the destination:[4,5,6]

- contemplation of seasons colors;
- the use of regional ingredients in the preparation of gastronomic products;
- admiring bird migration;
- participation at the prayer or kirwey of the local community;
- tasting traditional products;
- the purchase of handicraft items as souvenirs;
- participation in tours organized with local tour guides, at different tourist attraction, listening to local stories and legends;
- trips with local boat, floating on rivers.

Although it is considered quite difficult to distinguish between authentic and non-intense tourist products in their elaboration, it must be taken into account about:

- what is considered authentic as a tourist product is postulated as being true, legitimate, ethical, moral, material;
- which is considered inauthentic, is postulated to be false.

Tourism is suspected by the fact that induce inauthenticity because it causes dramatic changes in the environment through tourist and population flows because the tourist product originally

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considered inauthentic due to the high demand can be recognized as authentic, the tourist is interested in hearing, seeing how an area is presented to him [7,8,9].

Since the past has always been the prelude of the future, the analysis of the past of some social and economic phenomena, the reinventing of some tourist routes, helps us to improve the tourism activity and to prefigure the future of this field of tourism, a phenomenon mainly understood as free leisure time, has a considerable impact on the economies of societies and cultures. Its action is manifested by a multitude of plans, from stimulating economic development to improving social structures, from the superior capitalization of natural and anthropic resources, in order to improving living conditions. Regarding the national economy, regional tourism is acting:

- as a dynamic element of the global economic system;
- as a means of diversifying the structure of the economy;
- labor force insurer;
- a lever to mitigate inter-regional imbalances;
- means of education, raising the level of training;
- means of culture and civilization of people;
- tool for using the leisure time of the population.

## **2. Materials and methods**

In this scientific approach, on the basis of the studying the historical and secular documents, attesting the practice of salt transport on the Mures River, we have put in value the resources existing in this area for practicing niche forms of tourism, agrotourism, ecotourism, reinventing a new touristic route which contributes to the sustainable development of the localities along the river bank and at close distances, which have natural and anthropic tourism resources.

## **3. Results and discussion**

The research has as purpose to reinvent the "salt road" on the Mures River, after a judicious consultation of historical sources, which refers to this occupation, in order to provide an objective character of the study, with possibilities for immediate implementation, since the salt trade is remembered from the time of Ahtum, who was the

ruler of Urbs Morisena. The studies show the presence of the indigenous people in Mures Flood and the continuity of the ties with the Romanians from Transylvania and Muntenia. Significant traces of "Christian life of Eastern rite" were found at Bulci, Bata Commune, Arad County, and Cenad, Timis County, located on the Mures River and near the Natural Park of Mures Flood.

The most significant and accurate news about the living, occupation and commerce of the Romanians from Banat in the Middle Ages, the Ottoman and Austrian oppression are contained in Hungarian chronicles and other historical works. It is remarkable the presentation made by Anonymous in the *Gesta Hungarorum* and the Legend of the Sancti Gerhardi Bishops, from where we find out that "Ahtum despised the power of King Stephen of Hungary" allowing him to tax the rafts that transported on Mures the salt with destination Hungary. According to a tradition established for centuries, the rulers of Alba Iulia were subject to the obligation to send salt with rafts on Mures to the nominal lord of Pannonia, whether they were the parsimonious ruler (7th - 8th century) or the Hungarian duke (the 10th century) or the Bulgarian countries (the 14th century).

Being an ancient occupation, transporting the salt on Mures, we believe we can reinvent a historical cultural route, because the documents highlight this activity even since 1138, with ports in Lipova, Periam Port, Igris and Cenad. Because from the Lipova area the Mures area is navigable with boats that ensure the safety of the tourists without using the rudimentary forms of moving on the water "the rafts", the monoxiles, we believe that the route can be implemented on the Lipova-Szeged, where the river Mures flows into the Tisa River in the area there are enough resources with tourist vocation.

The main localities that can be included in this historic cultural route "salt road" even if in the first phase of the implementation the movement is made on the road are:

1. **Bulci** from Bata Commune. Where there is significant evidence of the existence of a Benedictine abbacy, from the twelfth century, dedicated to the Mother of God. The last ruins of this great place, one of the Cenad's most important dioceses, were used in the construction of the current church dating back to 1871. The medieval bell engraved Gothic, cast in Bulci or nearby in

the year 1468, was found in the tower of the Seminary School Church from Timisoara. In 1873, due to the fact that the medieval bell did not harmonize with the other bells, it was taken to Budapest, where it can still be admired today at the National Museum.

2. **Lipova** is documentary attested as a citadel from 1245 in a document of the Royal Hungarian Chancellery, where it speaks about the restoration of the fortifications destroyed by the migrants in 1241. The years 1402-1404 are full of military events, because a rebellion of the nobles against Sigismund of Luxembourg also reaches the Banat region. At that time, the king named Filippo Scolari (1369-1426) as ruler for Timis, Arad, Cenad, Caras, and Torontal committees, which helped to raise the region by leading with iron hand the "Banat committees, salts and mines". The fortress of Lipova was conquered by the Ottomans in 1551, soon returned to the rule of the Transylvanian Voivode, that in the period 1613-

1716 to be in Turkish possession. From this period, is preserved the Turkish bazaar with the decorative façade with a triangular frontage and with reliefs, arches and pillars, behind which there is a passage covered with tile for circulation, is preserved. In 1763 it was mentioned that the manor of the **salt pantry**, von Neuman, although this pantry of the salt is mentioned in other sources much earlier. Other tourist objectives that can be visited on the "salt road" route at Lipova and Radna are:

- The Basilica Minor, Maria Radna, dating back to 1325, the first Franciscan chapel, being built in 1520. The rebuilding of the monastery after the destructions caused by Turkey was made in the year 1626, the stone with the horseshoe of pasha's horse is in the monastery near the second altar. The interior decoration of the Franciscan Monastery from Radna keeps the Rococo and Baroque marks lately classified through the three altars preserved from the eighteenth century;



Figure 1. Turkish bazaar Lipova

- The Lipova Orthodox Church, documentary attested in 1338, rebuilt in the rural Baroque

style in the 18th century, is distinguished by its very well realized tower in rococo style.

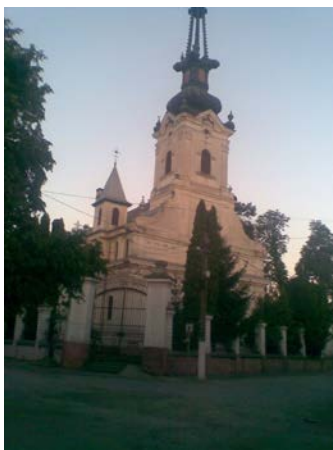
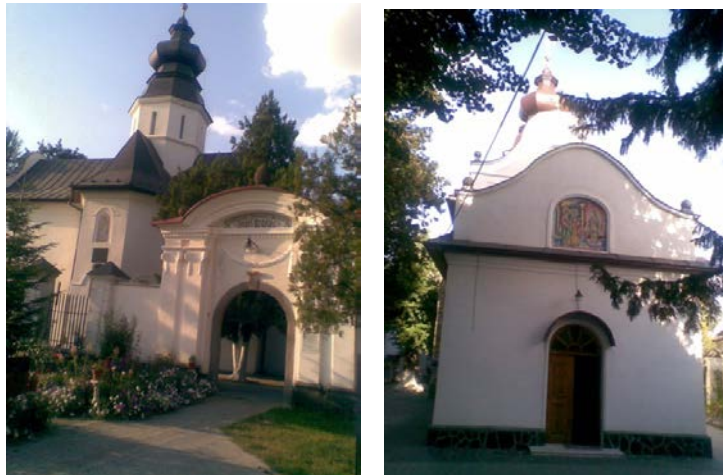


Figure 2. The Orthodox Church of Lipova

3. The Bodrogul Nou is located in the area of the Natural Park Mures Flood, covering an area of 17,455 hectares along the Mures River. Besides the ecological tourism it can visit Hodos-Bodrog Monastery, a special architectural objective being considered one of the oldest monasteries. The first documentary attestation of the monastery dates back to 1177 and the information of local historians speak about the

existence of Greek monks at Hodos-Bodrog in the 11th century. The current church dates back to the second half of the 14th century, being built in Byzantine style, made of Roman stone and brick, inside painted in frescoes, the exterior being plastered on three sides and the northern wall is intact. On the wall of the monastery can be seen a tombstone in the shape of a heart and a tomb on the surface of a monk.



**Figure 3.** The entrance and church of Hodos-Bodrog Monastery

4. The Monar locality from the Natural Park Mures Flood is distinguished through the Bezdin Monastery, whose name comes from the Bezdin brook which forms a series of marshes with much reed in the western part of the Orthodox Serbian Orthodox Church. The construction of the monastery began in 1539 with the contribution of Iovan Iaksici from Nadlac and was done with the help of the monks and faithful's from the area as is recorded on a psaltery tab at the Episcopate of Varset. The monastery was burned by the Turks during the

Ottoman occupation of Banat but was not abandoned by monks who built a wooden church in which they served until the building of the brick in 1690 in the Byzantine style in the form of a three with three apses. After 1740 there is a period of development when, besides valuable objects of worship, the icon of the Virgin Mary was brought from Mount Athos, so in 1774 the monastery had important dimensions, 52 rooms, chapel, anteroom, trapeze and 16 monks, nearly 1,000 hectares of land and forest, as the existing documents at the monastery say.



**Figure 4.** The Cellars Building and the Bezdin Monastery Church

5. **Periam Port** - about 2 km from Periam, a documentary attested even since 1333, having as owner of Bechey I as Priamus. During the Ottoman occupation, the locality is a sandgiac residence, and after the liberation in the period 1723-1765 there are several settlements with families brought from Germany, as evidenced by the documents existing at the Roman Catholic Church. On April 3, 1724, the Congregation of St. John Nepomuk was set up following the model of Vienna and Prague, with the aim of defending the good reputation of the fortresses, of good morals and helping the poor ones. In this sense, the Cenad administration requires Catholic priests to sanctify the Periam because

colonists will come here. Also during this period, we find the existence of some village complaints, which shows that they cannot get the value of the **allocated salt**, and that for the **2000 centenarians of salt** they have to go with the carts to Lipova.

In the typology of the monuments of John Nepomuk at Periam, we find the existence of a statue that follows a serpentine line that suggests a slight footstool having a putto and a crucifix supported on the right shoulder. The entire composition is placed on a profiled socket similar to the statue of the Saint found in front of the Millennium Church from Timisoara, the saint having pluvial and camilaphs on his head.



**Figure 5.** The Roman Catholic Church of Periam

6. Igris - In the year 1233 king Andrei the second granted important quantities of **salt to the monasteries on the Mures bank**. Cenadul receives 5000 boulders (timini), the abbey of Igris 3 timini and the church from Szoreg 1000 boulders. At Igris there was a Cistercian Abbey at the end of the 12th century, a branch of Pontigny Abbey from France. At his turn, the Cistercian abbey from Igris (1179) had a filth at Carta, whose chorus, and certain parts of the masonry can still be seen even today. The Abbey dedicated to the Holy Virgin Mary will actively engage in the life of the Cenad diocese, its importance being given also by the fact that here were buried the son of King Bela III, Andrew II and his wife Yolanda de Courtenay [10,11]

7. Cenad - Urbs Morisena - a documented locality in the 13th century, with the name Zanad. In 1241

the fortress of Cenad is conquered and demolished by the Tartars, that in 1491 to be documented **the existence of the royal salt poultry**, much older, we believe, since the decree of the salt was given in 1138. The German traveler Hand Dernschwam in 1521 says that Cenad is a fair, a castle, **a pantry of salt** and a bishop. The chronicles of time show that Duke Glad rule in Banat from the Mures River to Horum Fortress. The battles between Ahtum and the Hungarian troops are crowned by the victories then obtained by Chanadinus until the final defeat and death of the duke who will be buried at Cenad. In this period is mentioned Urbs Morisena as the capital of Ahtum's voivode, the existence of a monastery of Greek rite (orthodox) after 1054 with the border of Saint John the Baptist and according to the Annals of Bratislava The diocese of Cenad was founded

in 1030. The Greek monastery from Cenad will be moved to Maidan here bringing Latin monks, including Gerardo, and the formation of the first Latin Rite Bishops, as it is shown in the great legend of Gerard of Sagredo.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The proposal and the implementation of some tourist routes help us to improve the tourism activity, by developing some forms of historical cultural tourism and to prefigure the future of this field of activity, with a considerable impact on the sustainable development of societies and cultures. Being an ancient occupation, the transport of salt on Mures, a historical cultural route can be reinvigorated, since documents have been highlighting this activity since 1138, with ports and salt pantries in Lipova, Periam Port, Igris and Cenad.

Due to the fact that from the Lipova area the Mures is navigable with boats that ensure the safety of the tourists without the use of rudimentary forms of water displacement, rafts or monoxiles, the proposed route can be implemented on the Lipova-Szeged route, in the area being enough tourist resources, which can also be put in value by traveling tourists by road, on the old "salt road".

Significant traces of Christian life of Eastern rite were found in Bulci, Lipova, Bodrog, Bezdini, Igris and Cenad, localities found in the Mures Flood Park area, on the so-called "salt road", Ahtum disregarding the power of King Stephen of Hungary, allowing them to tax the rafts carrying

salt on Mures, which can be put in value by implementing this tourist route.

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