

“The complexity of protecting archaeological sites: The Ada Kaleh Fortress-Simian Island”

**Failed Practices with regard to
Management of Heritage in Rural Areas**

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A special cultural heritage lies on Simian Island on the Danube, representing the remains of Ada-Kaleh Ottoman fortress. The Ada-Kaleh fortress was built by the Austrians after the peace of Karlowitz (1718). Occupying much of the island's territory, the fortress was one of the most important fortifications of its kind in Europe. Soon after its completion, the fortress fell to the Turks, remaining a Muslim oasis on the Danube, owned by the Sultan, but under Austro-Hungarian administration, with a special status.

Many people came here by boat for the goodies made by the Turks: the famous Turkish walnut delight, the Turkish Lokum hazelnuts, the cigarettes, the sling and the halva made after a secret recipe.

With the construction of the hydropower and navigation system, the Iron Gates I, part of the fortress called Ada-Kaleh was rebuilt in Simian Island. Some funerary monuments from the old cemetery, as well as the tomb of Mischin Baba, have been relocated.

Nowadays, the island and the fortress are swallowed by vegetation and are continually depreciated, due to legal mismatches and poor management of the cultural heritage.

As a result of the legal situation, which could not be clarified at the local level, although there were meetings between the involved factors, respectively Mehedinți County Council, Șimian City Hall, ABA Jiu, private owners, including public debates, the project "Feasibility Study and Technical Project for improving the tourist infrastructure in the area of Șimian Island" under Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Program 2007-2013 was not finalized, the indicators were not reached, thus, the European funding was lost, by terminating the financing contract in December 2015.

This had consequences both directly, by not realizing the technical documentation resulting from the implementation of the project, but also in the medium and long term, by reducing the opportunities of tourism development both at county level and national level. The vestiges, located on the Șimian Island, are included in the updated List of national historical monuments from Mehedinți county. These monuments, known at European level, are in a state of advanced degradation and risk the total destruction, if no intervention will be done.

Also, there was a decrease of the surface of Simian Island, as a result of the Danube waters action, by erosion, in the absence of some works of protection and defense of the shore. We should mention that ABA Jiu - Craiova did not take any action to maintain and recover the degraded portions of the shore defense made in the 60s.

Even though the situation is well known at national level, by Ministry of Culture, Government, Ministry of Waters and Forests there are no specific steps made in order to solve the legal status of the island, mandatory to be able to rehabilitate and develop the island as a tourist product.

Thank you!

