

**Identification**

<u>Nomination</u>	The monastery of Horezu
<u>Location</u>	Little Wallachia, Department of Vilcea
<u>State Party</u>	Romania
<u>Date</u>	28 September 1990

**Justification by State Party**

The Monastery of Horezu represents a masterpiece of Brancovan style, which is remarkable for its architectural purity and balance, the richness of its sculpted detail, its treatment of religious compositions, its votive portraits, and its painted decorative elements (criterion i).

It represents an important centre for the diffusion of culture. The Horezu school of painting was pre-eminent throughout the region in the 18th century (criterion ii).

Through its architecture, sculpture, and painting the Monastery of Horezu is one of the most representative monuments of the culturally influential Brancovan period (criterion iv).

**History and Description**History

Wallachia was a Romanian principality that was recognized as an independent state in the 14th century. It was never part of the Ottoman Empire and so it was able to undergo a post-Byzantine cultural evolution that distinguishes it from the artistic Balkan family to which it belongs.

The only artistic centre in this region in the 17th century was Mount Athos (Greece), which prospered as a result of the patronage of sovereigns and nobility in the Romanian principalities and Russia. The Athonite tradition was fostered in Wallachia by its rich and cultured Cantacuzene rulers and gave rise to the flowering of Wallachian art.

The Monastery of Horezu was founded in 1690 and richly endowed by the Cantacuzene Prince Constantin Brancovan. He and his family were responsible for the creation of many monastic ensembles and churches in Wallachia, richly adorned with wall paintings, sumptuous iconostases, and other decorations. This artistic effort was followed by many other noblemen and church dignitaries, giving rise to the remarkable artistic flowering known as Brancovan art.

The catholicon of the Monastery, dedicated to Saints Constantine and Helena, was built in 1690-92 and the interior decoration was completed two years later, the work of the Greek artist Constantinos, who founded the celebrated school of mural and icon painters of Horezu. Other buildings constructed at the same period included the prince's residence, ranges of two-storey monks' cells, kitchens, and other monastic offices. The entrance was originally in the centre of the western wall of the enclosure, where the paraklesion was located, but this was shortly afterwards converted to a refectory, access being provided beneath the bell-tower on the south wall.

The church of Bolnica, which is a sub-group of the main Monastery, was founded by Princess Maria, wife of Constantin Brancovan. Other contemporary foundations by members of the princely family include the skites of the Holy Apostles and St Stephen. The Church of the Holy Angels at the former skite of Tigania was founded by the Horezu community in the first decade of the 18th century.

The Monastery suffered badly in the Turko-Austrian and Turko-Russian wars of 1716-18 and 1787-1789 respectively, all the buildings lying outside the enclosure being destroyed.

### Description

The Monastery is situated in a picturesque landscape of wooded hills. It is laid out according to the precepts of the Athonite Order around the catholicon, which is enclosed by a wall and surrounded by a series of skites. The overall layout is symmetrical on an east-west axis, the skites forming a cruciform plan.

The catholicon is three-aisled with a very large narthex, following the pattern laid down by the church of the Monastery of Arges (1512-17). Inside the narthex the lower tier of the walls is entirely filled with votive pictures of Constantin Brancovan, his wife, and their eleven children. The east wall of the exonarthex is entirely occupied by a large Last Judgment. The carved wooden iconostasis is of exceptionally high quality.

The paraklesion over the refectory is rectangular in plan and surmounted by a turret over the naos, with an open exonarthex. Its mural paintings and iconostasis are original.

The princely residence, on the south side of the enceinte, is a two-storey rectangular building with important architectural features. The Church of Bolnica has an unusual mural in its exonarthex, on the subject of the life of the good monk. Each of the smaller components of the ensemble (the skites of the Holy Apostles and St Stephen, the foisor of Dionysus Balacescu, and the Church of the Holy Angels) contains contemporary votive paintings and other liturgical elements of high quality.

## **Management and Protection**

### Legal status

Ownership of the ensemble is vested in the Monastic Community of Horezu, which comes under the authority of the Bishop of Rimnic.

### Management

Management of the property is the responsibility of the Community, working in association with the national Directorate of Historic Monuments, Ensembles, and Sites (Ministry of Culture), the Departmental Commission for Historic Monuments, Ensembles, and Sites of Oltenie, and the Vilcea Departmental Office of Monuments. Conservation and restoration work is supervised by these organizations, under the general control of the national Directorate, as provided for in Decree No. 91/5 of February 1990. Funding comes from central and local government bodies.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### Conservation history

The Monastery of Horezu has undergone a number of repairs and restorations since its foundation. Its roof was replaced in 1827 and a series of repairs were carried out in 1872. General restoration works were carried out by the national Historic Monuments Commission in 1907-12. The cells of the skite of the Holy Apostles were restored in 1952-53, and the abandoned skite of St Stephen in 1952.

Following repair of the water system in 1957-59, a major restoration project began in 1960 under the care of the national Directorate. Detailed research was followed by restoration of the catholicon (including the exterior wall paintings), the princely residence, and most of the other buildings within the enceinte.

### Authenticity

The level of authenticity in the Monastery of Horezu is high. The restoration work carried out since 1960 has in effect increased the overall authenticity, by revealing previously hidden elements and removing later accretions.

## **Evaluation**

### Qualities

The complex of the Monastery of Horezu is without doubt the finest expression of the Brancovan style of religious architecture and art. This remarkable flowering of post-Byzantine culture in the early 18th century played a highly significant

role in the artistic evolution of the Balkan region in the 18th and 19th centuries.

#### Additional comments

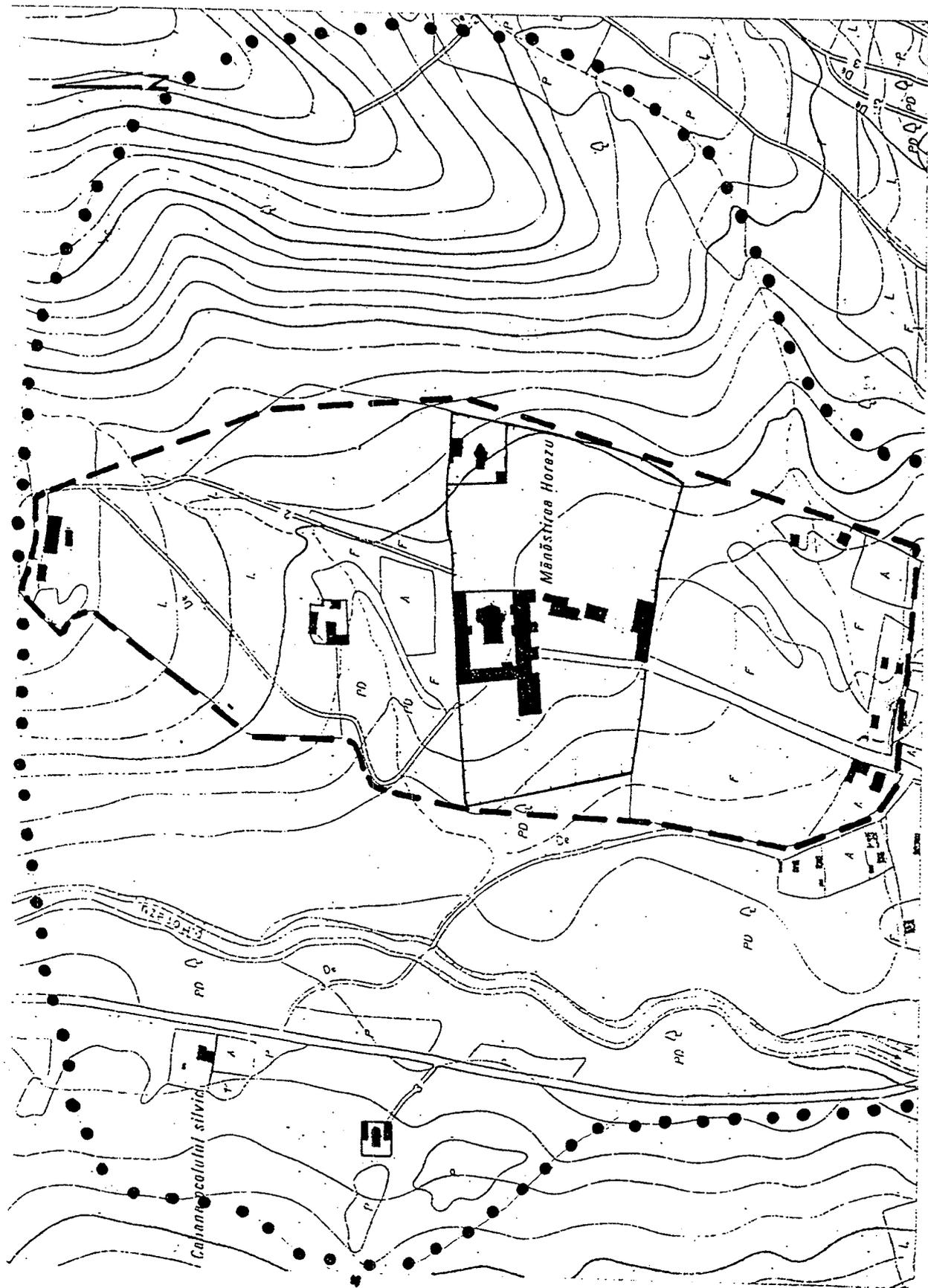
At the 15th Session of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee, held in Paris in June 1991, examination of this nomination was deferred, since the Bureau felt that it was necessary for it to be afforded satisfactory legal protection, particularly with regard to the proposed protective perimeters. An ICOMOS mission visited the property in the autumn of 1993 and reported that adequate protective measures are in place.

#### **Recommendation**

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria i and ii:

- Criterion i The ensemble of the Monastery of Horezu is a masterpiece of the Brancovan style of art.
- Criterion ii The artistic school, especially of mural and icon painting, established at the Monastery of Horezu in the early 18th century had a profound influence on religious art and architecture in the Balkan region, spreading from Wallachia into neighbouring countries such as Bulgaria and Moldavia and beyond.

ICOMOS, October 1993



Horezu : zone proposée pour inscription et zone tampon /  
nominated area and buffer zone