THE BALNEOClimatic RESort STÂNA DE VALE - PAST, PRESENT, PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: Stâna de Vale balneoclimatic resort, located in the Apuseni Mountains, is very little valorised. The special natural setting, with the picturesque landscapes, the tourist trails of various difficulty degrees, the oligomineral waters, the numerous waterfalls, the fresh air intensely ionized, without pollutants and allergens, generated by the deciduous and coniferous forests, the exciting-soliciting bioclimate etc. recommend Stâna de Vale as a resort having a remarkable touristic potential, but very little harnessed and this is why it is necessary to identify solutions for its touristic valorisation. This paper highlights the periods of development and of decline of this resort which used to be emblematic for the Apuseni Mountains and for Bihor County and in the end, it suggests some simple solutions to revitalise the resort.

Key words: resort, Apuseni Mountains, development, decline, perspectives

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METHODOLOGY

The results have been obtained by using the geographical research methods: the method of bibliographic documentation (Cocean, 2005), followed by the on-the-ground research, with the help of the adequate techniques - the observation and the description (Iañoș, 2000; Armaș, 2006); the method of the analysis - the collected information and data are used in the profile processing (Cocean, 2005), the cartographic method - the information is turned into cartographic representations through the GIS software (Petrea, 2005) and the method of synthesis, whereby the conclusions were drawn regarding the balneoclimatic resort Stâna de Vale.

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http://istgeorelint.uoradea.ro/Reviste/Anale/anale.htm
INTRODUCTION

The balneoclimatic resorts of Bihor County are well-known on a national and European level due to the natural treatment factors represented by the air and the water with remarkable therapeutic qualities, to the leisure opportunities and also to the wonderful sights offered by the natural setting they are located in (Ilieș & Josan, 2009; Ilieș et al., 2011; Ilieș et al., 2014; Herman & Tătar, 2015; Ilieș et al., 2015). In this regard, Stâna de Vale resort stands out, a resort situated in the Apuseni Mountains, which offer to the tourists a wide range of activities (Linc et al., 2011; Gozner, 2014, 2015).

Figure 1. The connection of leveling surfaces surrounding the Stâna de Vale depression
(Source: Processing by Vlaicu & Gaceu, 2009 after Aurora Posea, 1977)

Figure 2. The leveling surfaces map of the Stâna de Vale depression and its neighbouring areas
(Source: Processing by Vlaicu & Gaceu, 2009 after Aurora Posea, 1977)
The balneoclimatic resort Stâna de Vale is located in the homonymous depression, at an altitude of 1100 meters, at the border between the calcareous sedimentary characteristic to the forest Pădurea Craiului and Bihor Mountains and the magmatic rocks characteristic to the Vlădeasa Mountains. In the middle of these three mountain units a depression has come into shape, as a result of the process of augmentation of these mountains that led to the apparition in this sector of several long narrow openings that subsequently created the hydrographical web (the Iad river and its tributaries) that shaped the present depression that is now considered of tectonic-erosive origin. Thus, the depression was shaped at an altitude of 1100 m, it has a reduced size (2 km long and 1.5 km wide) and is surrounded on all sides by peaks that are 200-400 m taller: Laia Mare (1346 m), Cârgilaţi (1399 m), Piatra Calului (1421 m), Munceilor (1411 m), Poieni (1627 m), Custurilor (1381 m), Dealu Mare (1210 m), Dealu Ilia (1007 m).

The geographical position, between the three different mountain units, determined the presence of a variety of rocks: volcanic (rhyolites, tuffite), sedimentary (limestone, dolomite, marl, shale, breccia, conglomerate, sandstone) and metamorphic (crystalline schists), all representing the basis of the evolved relief. Thus, the faulted rocks, the rocks less resistant to erosion, were removed by the rivers (the Iad valley and its tributaries) and allowed the formation of the Stâna de Vale depression, while the most resistant rocks made their mark and later generated high ridges over 1300-1600 m that were shaped afterwards by the external agents (rain, wind, frost-thaw) into leveling surfaces, respectively Fârcaşa-Cârligaţi, called by Aurora Posea (1977) the Muncelul surface, extended to the ridges enclosing the depression at 1200-1400 m and the Vişagului surface at 1100-1200 m (figure 1, figure 2).

In conclusion, the geographical position, the morphology of the relief, the elevation and orientation of the slopes (about 40% are shaded), plus the climatic, bioclimatic and balneary potential, allowed the shaping and the development of the Stâna de Vale depression into a resort nearly 100 years ago. Unfortunately, nowadays the tourist flow and the recreational or treatment opportunities are reduced, far below those existent in the 1930s, which is why in this article we try to bring scientific evidence to revitalize the resort that could become again the Romanian “Davos”, as it was called in the interwar period.

HISTORY OF THE RESORT

The emergence of the Stâna de Vale balneoclimatic resort was due to the presence of cold water with a temperature of 4 - 5 °C and of the Izvorul Minunilor spring which had healing powers. Therefore, many people with health problems once came here for treatment but in those times there was only a shepherd’s sheepfold used as shelter, which leads us to the origins of the name of the resort “Stâna” which means sheepfold.

In 1882, the Greek-Catholic Bishop Mihai Pavel arrived at this sheepfold as he was traveling from Padiş and he was very impressed by the beauty of this depression surrounded with high, well wooded hills, sheltered from the winds and fed with the water of a river that purled through the stones, which is why he decided to build here a modest building with only one room and a kitchen located at 50 m from the present barrack of the gendarmerie. In the following years, also due to his initiative, were built: the Siberia Hotel (figure 16) in 1883 (with 9 rooms, corridor and balcony), the Elizabeth restaurant in 1884 (dining room and six rooms), the chapel and the Arcadia, Döri, Zona, Aurora villas in 1886, the bishop’s residence, the Academia villa designed for the teachers’ recreation, villa Terezia, the post office, the doctor’s bathroom and house and then the Pavel and Țăran villas that were really modern buildings.

The construction of these buildings was led in parallel with the construction of the access road from Budureasa to Stâna de Vale “which had a cost of 40,000 working days” (Papp, 1936), the project being conducted by the engineer Francisc Csapó.

A particularly important role in the development and popularization of Stâna de Vale resort had Iuliu Țăran, a lawyer born in 1847 in Șepreș (Arad County) who was not attracted to agriculture and therefore he leased the huge estate received from his father and rented a villa at
Moneasa where he eventually settled permanently. He used to spend the winters at Moneasa, reading or listening to music with his friends, while from spring until autumn he wandered through the Bihor Mountains. He described all the beautiful landscapes in several books like “Călăuză excursiunistilor la Stâna de Vale. Cu o scurtă orientare asupra altor frumuseți naturale ale Munților Bihorului” (The traveller’s guide in Stâna de Vale. With a short presentation of other natural beauties from the Bihor Mountains), printed in 1903 and containing 33 tourist routes, “Legendele Stănei de Vale” (The legends from Stâna de Vale) and numerous articles published in “Foata turistilor”: “Imprejurimile Stănei”, “Bazarul Someșului”, “Leviat hanopolis” etc (”The tourist’s paper”: “The Stâna surroundings”, “The Someș Bazaar”, “Leviat hanopolis” etc.)

He also built tourist roads, bridges, barriers, stairs, lookout and guidance points in many places from Stâna de Vale or Padiș, Iuliu Țăran being thus closely linked to these places. Unfortunately, nobody immortalized his memory in an honourable way neither at Stâna de Vale, or Padiș. Since 1930 the infrastructure of the Stâna de Vale resort is experiencing a new phase of development as a result of the efforts showed by the Greek Catholic Bishop Valeriu Traian Frentiu.

Therefore, a 42 km long railway (Valea Iadului -Stâna de Vale) was built, with a 98 cm gauge, then the electric light appeared, the water supply system, the tennis court, a bowling track, skating rink, ski slope, trampoline, alleys, parks, hydroelectric power plant, sawmill, new buildings: The Shelter House (figure 14) of the Bihor Tourist Club (30 beds, dining room, terrace, observation tower), the episcopal residence (chapel and 20 rooms), the Excelsior Hotel (56 rooms, restaurant for 150 persons, lounge, modern facilities, central heating, constant hot and cold water, apartments with bathroom, flooring, electric light), the Pavel Hotel (47 rooms, tiled stoves, electric light and water in each room) open all year, while seasonally, from May to September, the villas Terezia, Țăran, Hovanyi, Maria, the post office, the doctor’s home and other seven villas were available. In addition, in the 30’ in the Stâna de Vale resort functioned the P.T.T. workers’ ward, a church, a bazaar, a hairdresser’s salon, a photography workshop, a gendarmerie, the post office, telephone, telegraph, and medical services (a doctor present in the hot season from May to September), while the University of Cluj installed here a weather station and a centre for biological and climatological experimentation managed by the Botanical Garden of Cluj (figure 3, figure 4).

Therefore, during the 30° Stâna de Vale had a modern infrastructure, with numerous luxury villas, access routes (road and railway), electric power, sports and recreation spaces, trails, ski slopes, etc. and earned its status of balneoclimatic resort due to the healing water of the Izvorul Minunilor spring, to the fir tree leaves baths (obtained by scalding fresh fir branches), as well as to the clean, free of allergens air generated by the fir forests, to the ultraviolet radiation, to the radium emanations of the springs, to the ionized air near waterfalls, to the lack of strong winds which offers a sheltering mountain climate, highly desirable for a variety of diseases: anemia, asthma, goiter, Basedow’s disease, neurosis, fatigue, overwork, fatigue, mild depression, reason for which it was called the “Romanian Davos”.

After the Second World War, the balneary resort Stâna de Vale enters a period of regression which is increasing during the communist period, with the nationalization of land and buildings, all private before. The electrification plan of the country reached here at the expense of the former hydroelectric power plant of which we can see nowadays only the windows, the new electricity pylons creating clearing couloirs through the secular forest.

In addition, the former Hotel Excelsior, the bishop’s ward (figure 15) that became Ward 1 and Ward 2, the latter being used as a camp for pioneers, were passed in the State’s possession.

The only investment at Stâna de Vale was the construction of the Iadolina Hotel (figure 11) in the early 70’, when the first secretary Traian Blajovici decided to restore the resort which came into obscurity by building a new road between Budureasa and Stâna de Vale, accessible during winter, and by opening a road in the Iad valley in place of the old narrow-gauge railway that connected Stâna de Vale with Bulz.
Figure 3. Map of the Stâna de Vale resort in 1936  
(Source: Processing after Papp, 1936)
Moreover, in the same period were constructed other touristic structures like: the Gaudeamus Chalet (figure 5) which belonged for three years to the Pedagogical Institute from Oradea, which later became the University of Oradea, the army villa, the 10 wooden houses camping (figure 6), the IREC chalet, the Sintzea villa (figure 7), the Forest Canton, the Roads and Bridges Enterprise chalet (figure 8), the Criş waters Board chalet (figure 9), which still exist at the present, with minor aesthetic and comfort changes. In addition, the meteorological and hydrological stations were established at Stâna de Vale (figure 9) in order to continue, with modern means, the specialized activities previously carried out under the auspices of the University of Cluj, activities meant to forecast the meteorological, hydrological conditions and to characterize the climate specific to this depression.

During the communist period a food supply unit also operated at Stâna de Vale, belonging to UICOP and being composed of a brasserie and a grocery.

The degradation of the Stâna de Vale resort continued even after the Revolution of 1989, so much that even the bus line that connected it with Oradea during the communist period is no longer working. It is also the case of the connections with the direct omnibus lines Oradea-Stâna de Vale (doubled during winter, when the road was impracticable, by the horse drawn sleigh transport between Budureasa and Stâna de Vale) and with the railway from Bulz. This is why the tourists had to access this place on their own, on the Beiuş-Stâna de Vale road (25 km) which is degraded, bumpy, with potholes, or on the forest road from Bulz (50 km), also full of potholes. In addition, the resort’s accommodation capacity decreased to less than 50% as compared to the interwar period, the only accommodation spaces being those held by S.C. Iadolina S.A. (figures 12 and 13), the hotel (100 seats, restaurant, day bar, treatment and wellness centre, conference hall) (figure 11) and the villas (28 beds, bathroom, kitchen), the Gaudeamus Chalet (60 seats, kitchen, dining room, conference hall), the army villas (70 seats,
kitchen, dining room), the camping (10 wooden houses with 2 and 3 beds), the RENEL Chalet (IREC) (10 seats, kitchen, dining room, terrace), the Criş Waters Board chalet (8 seats, kitchen, dining room).

Currently, on the former location of UJCOP, S.C. REPCON S.A, a modern tourist centre is under construction (figure 10).
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The conducted analysis shows that the balneary resort Stâna de Vale could be given a new start because it has a huge balneoclimatic potential present in:

- dozens of cold oligomineral waters (4-5°C), of which the best known is Izvorul Minunilor (Orășanu, 2010) (figure 17);
- radium emanations from springs;
- the waterfalls Săritoarea leduțului (figure 18), Iadolina (figure 19), Vâlul Miresei etc.;
- the Iad Valley and its tributaries with hydro-energetic, spa (fir leaves baths) and pisciculture (the rainbow trout) potential;
- clean air, free of allergens, generated by forests of spruce and fir (figure 20) with 1,600 cm³ negative ions in the air (Teodoreanu et al., 1984), which ranks the resort on the second place among the balneary resorts in Romania after Băile Herculane;
- ionized air near waterfalls;
- stunning landscapes full of forests and shrubs: hungarian lilac (Syringa josikaea) (figure 21), mountain pine (Pinus mugo) (figure 22), shaded valleys rounded ridges (figure 23), leveling surfaces (figure 24) etc.
- the significant number of days with snow (184 days), the duration and thickness of the snow layer (190 days, 86 cm), the frequency of the atmospheric calmness (70% of cases) (Gaceu, 1998, 2010, 2012; Gaceu & Vlaicu 2001; Gaceu et al., 2005; Vlaicu, 2005; Vlaicu & Gaceu, 2010);
- UV radiation;
- the solicitant - exciting bioclimate, the most favourable among our mountain resorts that could be used in the treatment of many diseases, such as nervousness, fatigue, overwork, asthenia, mild depression, anemia, asthma, goiter, Basedow’s disease (Papp, 1936; Teodoreanu et al., 1984; Măhăra, 1994, 1996; Teleki & Munteanu, 2012; Teodoreanu & Gaceu, 2013).

The following measures should be taken into account in order to achieve the wanted results:

- upgrading the access roads from Beiuș and Bulz;
- reintroducing regular bus routes from Beiuș and Bulz;
- practicing reasonable accommodation prices;
- developing the accommodation structures by building modern hotels;
- upgrading the Măgarul and Nina ski slopes and developing others for bob and sled;
- improvement of the treatment centres with specialized equipment and facilities;
- construction of sports spaces (soccer, tennis, volleyball, basketball, handball, bowling, skating);
- providing medical services, mountain rescue, tourist guide;
- restoring the tourist markings;
- developing tourist guides and maps;
- providing information panels in the lookout points;
- establishing tourist information points;
- attracting local and foreign tourists through advertising campaigns;
- establishing contracts with the National House of Pensions to facilitate access to pensioners;
- putting the spotlight on sponges (boletus, chanterelle mushrooms) and berries (blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, cranberries).
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