

## Experiences and Perspectives of Jewish Heritage Conservation and Promotion in Oradea and Timișoara, Western Romania

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**Abstract :** The historical and geographical regions of Banat and Crișana in Western Romania have long been characterized by a high degree of ethnic diversity. However, this traditionally complex cultural, linguistic, and religious mosaic has undergone a progressive simplification during the past century due to deportations, emigration, and assimilation, and both regions now have a large Romanian-speaking majority population. This contribution focuses on Jewish heritage in the two largest cities of these two regions, Timișoara (Banat) and Oradea (Crișana). The two cities shared some historical events but also went through different experiences, despite their relative geographic proximity. The Jewish community of Timișoara survived the Holocaust basically intact, an almost unique case in Central-Eastern Europe, but largely left the city after the war. Instead, the Jewish community of Oradea was almost completely deported and killed in Auschwitz, and a renewed post-war community gradually emigrated abroad in the following decades. The two Jewish communities are now very small in size but inherited a vast tangible and intangible heritage (synagogues, cemeteries, community buildings, characteristic architecture, memories, local traditions, and histories), partially restored and recovered in recent years. The author's fieldwork shows that local Jewish stakeholders are aware of the potential of this heritage in terms of cultural and economic benefits, but significant weaknesses and concerns exist, as the small dimension of these communities, and their financial constraints, challenge their future role in the eventual promotion and management of this heritage, which is now basically in the hands of the non-Jewish public and private stakeholders. Projects, experiences, and views related to Jewish heritage conservation and promotion in these two contexts will be portrayed and analysed in order to contribute to a broader discussion on representations and narratives of minority heritage within cultural tourism development dynamics.

**Keywords :** Jewish heritage, ethnic minorities, heritage tourism, Romania

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