

The Great Synagogue

Country or territory:

ROMANIA

Name of organisation

compiling the information:

National Institute for Historical Monuments
Bucharest, Ienăchiță Văcărescu str. 16,
sector IV

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Name and address of building(s) or site :

THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE
Sinagogilor Str., IAȘI
MUNICIPALITY, Iasi county

Inventory reference number(s):

Position 24B 377 of Historical
Monuments List / 1992

Bulding type(s):

Sacral building, Synagogue

Main date(s):

1671 – 1682

Current use(s):

religious

Significance:

The building is located on Sinagogilor Street, where at the beginning of the 20th century there were eight synagogues.

The current planimetric and volumetric form is a result of successive transformations, starting with a simple construction of rectangular single nave layout, to which a porch was added, probably only at the ground floor level initially, and only later other storeys were added.

The roof's cupola, built above the interior brick cupola, transforms the edifice of cult into an atypical one. In 1761, the initial building, probably dating from 1671 – 1682, is fitted with a wooden cupola above the brick one on the eastern side. In 1900, the women's gallery is heightened adding a volume covered by a semi-cylindrical wooden transversal arch, visible and plastered on the inside.

Although the building suffered from many fires and earthquakes, its structure was preserved and it allows us to observe its stages of evolution in time. From a functional point of view, the edifice had only one destination in time: the celebration of Mosaic religion. The building's supporting structure consists of stone walls, the first floor, which is made of brick, the brick arch and cupola, the wooden floors above the porch, the balcony and the roof in the wooden women's gallery. The framework covering the nave is made of wood and covered in zinc plate, as is the roof's cupola. The foundations, made of stone and mortar, have the same width as the exterior walls.

Under the present plaster layers there are traces of the 1944 painting, as well of the older, traditional painting. On the outside, on the façade facing the street, the building still preserves framings and cornices, in a rather good state of conservation, as well as a decorative frieze with plaster palmettos in relief, only on the southern façade.

The edifice is important for its architectural, town-planning and memorial value, as it intrinsically contributes to the spatial definition of the historic area of Târgul Cucului, a former Jewish quarter. The building is a conspicuous element of the constructed frame of the city of IAȘI and, at the same time, represents a valuable element of the Jewish cultural heritage.

Categories of significance:

Of regional or local interest

Categories of ownership or interest :

Of particular interest to the Jewish Community of Iași.

Documentation and bibliographic references:

The preliminary studies and researches, the Technical Expertise and the Feasability Study, all of these being elaborated by a private firm – *CRIN DECO PREST* – arch. Sorin Minghiat

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3. Paul Cernovodeanu – *Jewish in the fanariot period*, Magazin istoric, februarie 1997
4. N.A. Bogdan – *City of Iasi. Monograph*, Iași, 1913
5. D. Bădărău, I. Caprosu – *Iasii vechilor zidiri. Până la 1821*, Ed. Junimea, Iasi, 1974
6. Alfred Grunspan – *Două monumente istorice iesene: Sinagoga Mare din cartierul Târgul Cucului si Cimitirul vechi din cartierul Ciurchi*, Iasi, 1950
7. I. Kara – *Unele date istorice cu privire la Sinagoga Mare din Iasi*, Revista cultului mozaic, iunie, 1961
8. Moses Gaster – *History of the Ancient Synagogue of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews*
9. M.A. Halevy – *Comunitățile evreilor din Iasi si Bucuresti, până la 1821 cu un apendice prevăzând: inscripțiile mai importante din vechile cimitire precum si numeroase ilustratii*, Institutul de istorie evreo-română, Bucuresti, 1931
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12. Ioan Dafin – *Iasul cultural si social. Amintiri si însemnări*, Iasi, 1928
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Condition:

Poor: deteriorating structure and general internal deterioration.

Today, the edifice shows serious structural damages: cracks and fissures in the walls and the arching system, decay (putrefaction) of the framework and structure of the wooden cupola, exfoliation of the stone in the foundation and walls, decay of the finishing elements.

Risk:

Condition risk:

Slow decay; solution agreed but not implemented.

Technical assessments and costing:

Consolidation works are necessary for the walls and foundation, the arching system, as well as for reconstruction of the floors and the framework and replacement of the zinc plate cover. The restoration proposed by the project aims to maintain the synagogue's image, which has become a symbol of the urban scenery. The solution adopted is oriented towards the authentic and the return to the original image.

The estimated value according to the Feasibility Study is about 375,000 EUR.

Ownership:

Jewish religious community.

Occupation:

Fully occupied in regular use

Management:

The Jewish Community of Iași is responsible for the general management of the building. The National Office for Historical Monuments is responsible for administering funds and supervising works.

Summary:

The edifice is important for its architectural, town-planning and memorial value, as it intrinsically contributes to the spatial definition of the historic area of Târgul Cucului, a former Jewish quarter. The building is a conspicuous element of the constructed frame of the city of IAȘI and, at the same time, represents a valuable element of the Jewish cultural heritage.

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The potential priority level for intervention is *medium*.

Sign. and date:

Ph.D.Arch. Sorin Minghiat
09.03.2004