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Alexandru, Babos

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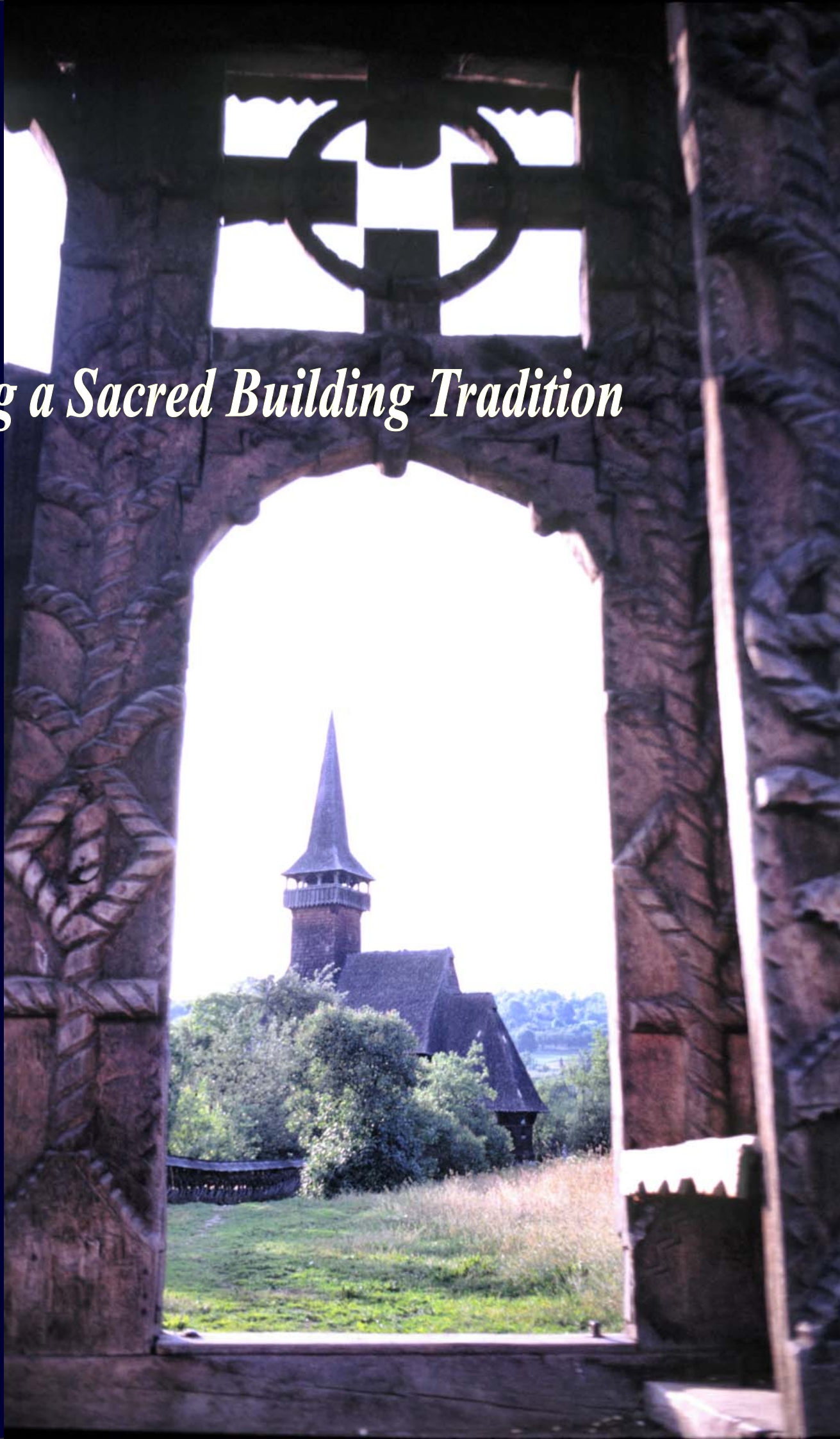
Alexandru Baboș

Tracing a Sacred Building Tradition

Wooden Churches, Carpenters and Founders in Maramureș until the turn of the 18th Century



to You

Tracing a Sacred Building Tradition

Wooden Churches, Carpenters and Founders in Maramureş until the turn of the 18th Century

by
Alexandru Baboş

Department of Architectural History, School of Architecture
Lund Institute of Technology, Lund University, Sweden
2004

Keywords: European log building, vernacular architecture in Maramureş, church carpenters, founders, wooden churches, sacred building tradition and regional identity.

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Tracing a Sacred Building Tradition.
Wooden Churches, Carpenters and Founders in Maramureş until the turn of the 18th Century

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Front Cover: The wooden church from Sat Şugătag, dated from around 1700. Photo: June 1993
Inner cover: The portal from 1639 with the Byzantine calendar in Sârbi Susani. Photo: Spring 1995.

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Norrköping, April 2004
Alexandru Baboş

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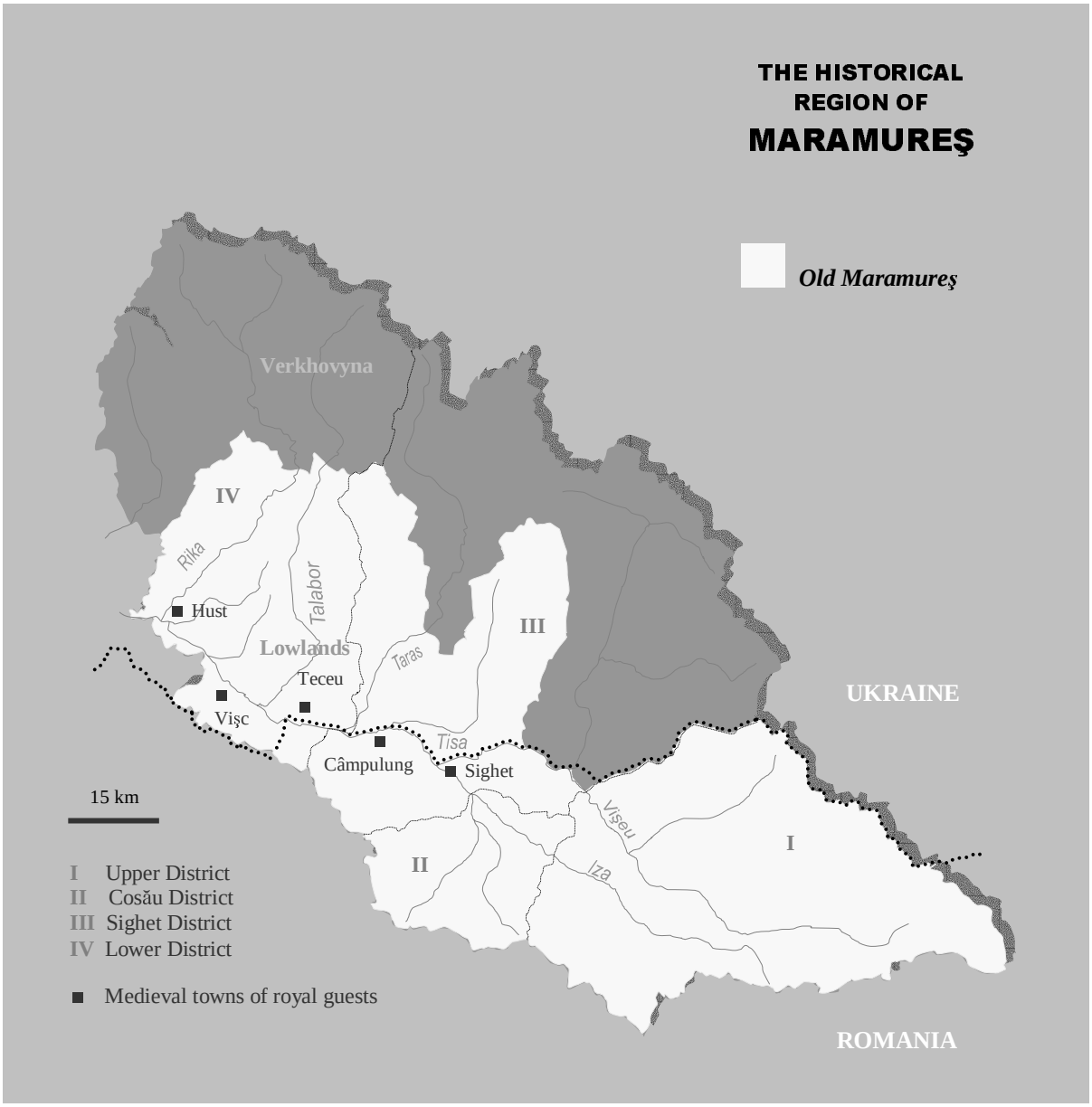
Log building
in Europe

Ukraine
Romania
Maramureş


THE HISTORICAL
REGION OF
MARAMUREŞ
Old Maramureş
Verkhovyna
IV
Rika
Talabor
Hust
Lowlands
Teceu
Taras
III
Vişc
Tisa
Câmpulung
Sighet
UKRAINE
15 km
Vişeu
I
II
Iza
I Upper District
II Cosău District
III Sighet District
IV Lower District
Medieval towns of royal guests
ROMANIA

Introduction

Into our modern times, log building dominated in the coldest parts of the continent, from Scandinavia in the north to beyond the Bosporus and from the Alps and the Carpathian ranges to the wide Russian plain at the feet of the Ural Mountains. This building technique, known for its good thermal imperviousness, was a consistent response to the climatic conditions from the North-Eastern side of the continent. Along the centuries it was continually refined to reach high technical performances and artistic elegance. Although the basic technical principles remained the same everywhere, the diverse local conditions and traditions led to notable variation and regional originality. The log buildings surviving today bring, from one region to another, distinctive contributions to the European heritage. From this perspective, a general understanding of the log architecture as a common heritage inevitably depends on the regional studies.

Maramureş is a historical region in the Northern Carpathian Mountains with a long and still living tradition in log building, renowned for amazing performances in sacred wooden architecture and a great diversity of utilitarian wooden constructions. These are enough arguments to draw the region in the focus of the European research of wooden architecture. To give support to this general research, the present work brings together the extant wooden churches from Maramureş.

The construction of traditional wooden churches in Maramureş came to an end for two centuries ago. Since then, the rural life of the region went through profound changes and with it, almost everywhere, even the living building tradition. The links to the constructive traditions of the past have been continually weakened by the decrease in the number of craftsmen trained in the old traditional school and the loss of old constructions. In these conditions what can we learn about the wooden churches beyond their sole appearances? How can we recover the almost lost bridge to their past? Are there enough traces to lead us back to a comprehensive understanding of the former building traditions?

The purpose of this work is to trace for the first time the tradition of building wooden churches in Maramureş from a period of roughly three centuries, from the beginning of the 16th century to the turn of the 18th century. In order to come as close as possible the process of building wooden churches and the humans involved in it, I propose an intimate reading of the extant wooden churches. The central questions to ask them are: What were the means to differentiate the churches from dwellings? Who built them? What were their contributions and intentions? And what relevance do they have in a European perspective? The present work is arranged in a triangle with the intention to approach the wooden churches from the following three perspectives: the local vernacular architecture, the builders and the commissioners.

The first chapter is primarily concerned with the individuality of the wooden churches within the local vernacular building tradition. For the first time I brake with the earlier conception of a uniform old building tradition in wood lifting forward the former differences between lay and sacred constructions in Maramureş. This radical decision brings the wooden churches of Maramureş in a hierarchical relation with the regional vernacular dwellings and at the same time opens necessary connections with similar performances in the European wooden architecture.

Since the local tradition to erect wooden churches depended on those who built and used, it is fundamental to identify the local builders and founders. The earlier blurred distinction between them veiled their separate roles in shaping the wooden churches and hindered us from a clear understanding of the results. For this reason the following two chapters are concerned with the church carpenters

and founders of churches as well as their general contribution to the local wooden churches. In order to identify some particular church carpenters, in the second chapter I search for the constructive features that have relevance for their activity. Based on these features it is possible to establish certain itineraries. These itineraries are, in fact, the key to draw the first general profile of the church carpenters engaged and nevertheless of the founders involved. The third chapter further search for the known founders and their role in modelling the local churches. Certain changes are clearly identified in the 18th and 17th centuries, but the search for sources of inspiration and intentions requires exploration before the early 16th century, long in the Middle Ages.

The state of research

The research of the European log architecture has been at all times irregular from one region to another, yet the progresses in one part has had great significance for the entire subject. From the middle of the 17th century[1] and especially after the middle of the 19th century[2] to post-World War I period we should note the first steps, from capturing the picturesque charm of the ancient wooden buildings to recognizing their historical and cultural value.[3] About this time, in certain countries with strong rural traditions the foremost wooden churches became national symbols. The published works were however mainly selective with few reliable depths. After great losses, the needs for comprehensible repertoires were born, especially after the World War I, sometimes inconsistently, sometimes too late, but this course was and still is necessary. The first general perspectives were made already at the turn of the 19th century[4] and put up to date by ambitious scholars in 1981.[5] Their main concerns were descriptive, stylistic and comparative.

During the last decades the leading research shifted focus to new aims. From the technically attracted German school it recently came forward an inciting work concerning the timber joints and the governing conditions leading to their development, with a remarkable comparison with the Japanese case.[6] In Scandinavia, instead, there has been a long preoccupation for appropriate methods of documentation for wooden constructions.[7] During the last decades, with the improvements in documentation it increased the quantity and the quality of the

[1] The earliest efforts to record the ancient log constructions, especially the churches, can be dated back to the 17th century, when travellers, artists and scholars with interest in antiquities began to draw among others old curious wooden buildings along their routes across Europe. We should remark here the contributions of J. Peringskiöld (1671) and J. Hadorph (1669-1671) in Sweden (Lagerlöf 1985, 12, 262), Olearius (c. 1635), A. Meyerberg (1661-1662), Beauplan (1650), Palmqvist (1674) in Russia and Ukraine (Buxton 1981, ill. 9, 24, 84-85, 91, 203; Sičyńskyj 1940, 33).

[2] In Sweden, the land where the study of the wooden architecture was seemingly a step before the rest of the continent, it was made in 1828-1830 a general inventory at the Royal Command. A special mention should have the Swedish artist and antiquary Nils Månsson Mandelgren who travelled in 1846-48 throughout the country documenting many log churches at the request of the Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (Ullén 1983, 14; Lagerlöf 1985, 13-14). Similar attempts in varying extent were made in Ukraine in 1845-46 by the artist Taras Sevchenko at the command of the Archaeological Commission from Kiev (Sičyńskyj 1940, 34) and in Poland by Józef Łepkowsky, head of the Department of Architecture at the Krakow University, beginning with 1866 (Brykowsky 1981, 297).

[3] After World War I, a new generation of scholars remarked themselves. Among them the leading figure was Josef Strzygowski, professor at First Art-Historical Institute in Vienna, who lifted the log churches in the East from their dormant charm to intensive debates and more serious research (Buxton 1981, 37 and 188).

[4] The first general perspectives were sketched by Paul Lehfeldt in 1880, L. Dietrichson in 1892 and Rudolf Wesser in 1903. In their limited overviews there were distinguished 5 main zones of distinct log building: the Nordic, the Russian, Western Slavic, the Alps and Hungary.

[5] Buxton 1981; Claus Ahrens, "Frühe Holzkirchen im nördlichen Europa", *Veröffent-lichungen des Helms-Musseums*, 39, Hamburg 1981.

[6] Zwerger 1997.

[7] Sjömar 1988, 13-28; Sjömar et al 2000.

recorded data and with it the need for competence in traditional crafts. A consequence of this development is a fruitful collaboration between architectural historians and carpenters with good knowledge of and skills in the traditional carpentry.[8] This is a surprising but welcomed return to the earlier nature of this craftsmanship, with importance for the quality of and the awareness in the future conservation works. The main hinder for the innovating Scandinavian research to reach larger recognition is the reduced knowledge of the Scandinavian languages on the continent. However, by applying the Scandinavian experience of research in regions with rich wooden architecture and living traditional carpentry there is a great potential for future research. In the past decades, dendrochronology has grown into an indispensable tool for the historians of the wooden architecture, enabling the first chronological approaches and assisting new paths of research. In conclusion, the latest researches opened several perspectives to the past and new threads for future studies.[9]

The research of the traditional wooden architecture from Maramureş, especially of the wooden churches, follows, in general lines, the European pattern. The first records of the local vernacular constructions come from accounts of the Royal Domains in the first half of the 18th century. Entire villages with houses, mills and parish churches were then depicted with approximate relation to realities on the place (**1**-**2**).[10] Until 1850, there were just a few notes written in the central press, referring with admiration to the wooden churches from Maramureş, like in *Honderü* in 1847.[11]

A promising initiative for the research of the historical monuments from the Habsburg Empire, in which Maramureş formed a county, was taken in 1850 when the Emperor Franz Joseph gave his consent for the establishment of "*k.k. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale*" in Vienna. The president of the Central-Commission made in 26 January 1857 an appeal to the church leaders to provoke the clerics serving in historically valuable churches to send reports to the Central-Commission for future conservation proposals.[12] Thus, in a first stage, the historical value of a monument was left to the judgement and the implication of the local clerics. I do not know if some responses from Maramureş reached Vienna or not, in exchange, the Uniate Church assumed from then on the role of keeping up to date an inventory of the surviving old parish churches, adding in their periodical books (*Schematismus*) very short historical notes regarding their age and material.[13] Some of the pioneers in the study of ancient monuments from Maramureş were the Hungarian scholars Imre Henszlmann, Ferencz Schulcz and Florian Rómer, who travelled in a team

[8] It should be especially mentioned the efforts of the Swedish architect and scholar Peter Sjömar and the school in traditional crafts (*Hantverksskolan Dacapo*) he grounded in Mariestad, Sweden.

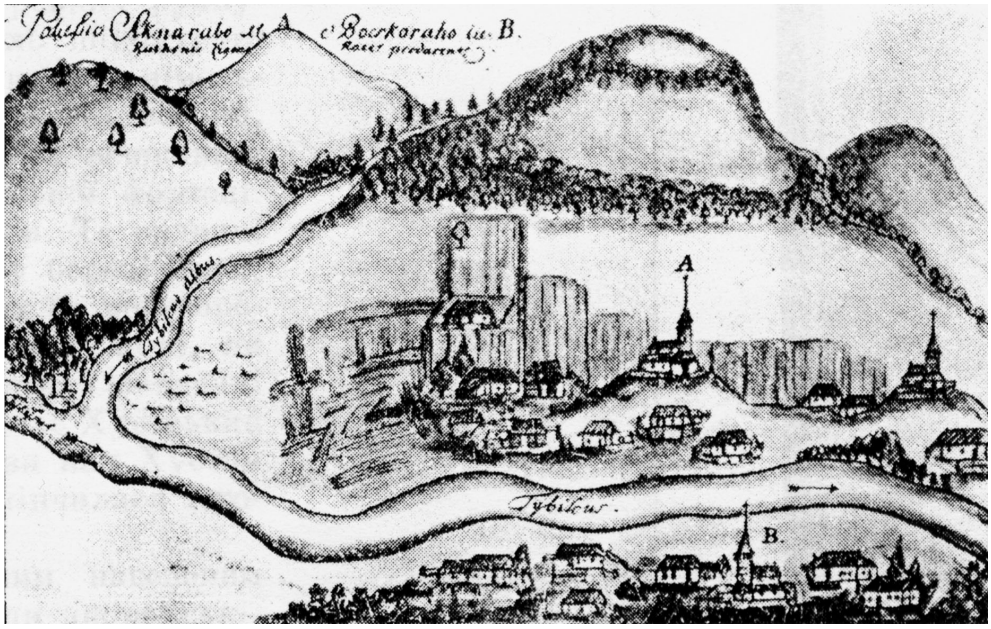
[9] A future priority should be, for instance, the development of an effective, homogeneous method of computer-add documentation with high definition in order to build up a pan-European bank of data. That would certainly spare time, resources and save at least in a digital form the fragile wooden constructions for the next generations. If we want to learn something from the previous losses and pains, before it would inevitably happen again.

[10] There are at least two domanial accounts illustrated, one possibly from 1711 of the Bocicoi Domain (*Istorija myst i sil Ukrainskoi RSR, Zakarpatska Oblast*, 3, 493, Kyiv 1969) and the other one of the Hust Domain from 1744 (MOL, U et C, fasc. 220, 22).

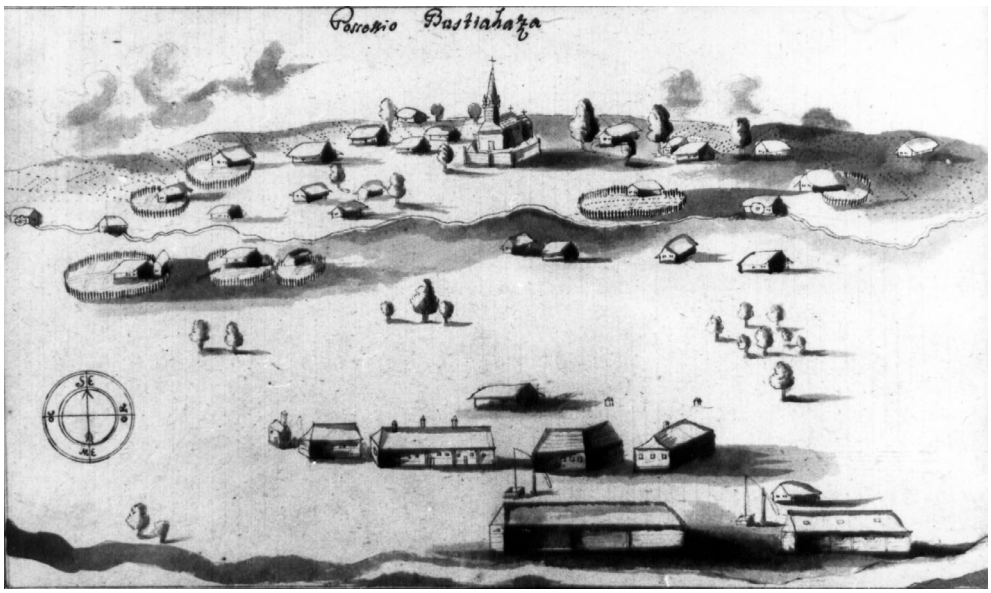
[11] K[ároly]-Házy 1847, 494-495. The author seems to make confusion between Budeşti and Petrova. The only places to see Ocna Şugătag with Pop Ivan behind is from the old country roads linking Baia Sprie with Crăceşti (Mara) or Cavnic with Budeşti. An even earlier mentioning was indicated for the wooden church from Lipceni in another central journal from 1826 (Gerecze 1906, 499).

[12] ASC, 149, 463/1857. The request was further communicated to the priest from the Gherla Diocese in 5 March 1857.

[13] Siematismulu 1867, Schematismus 1886, Schematismus 1900, Şematismul 1932.



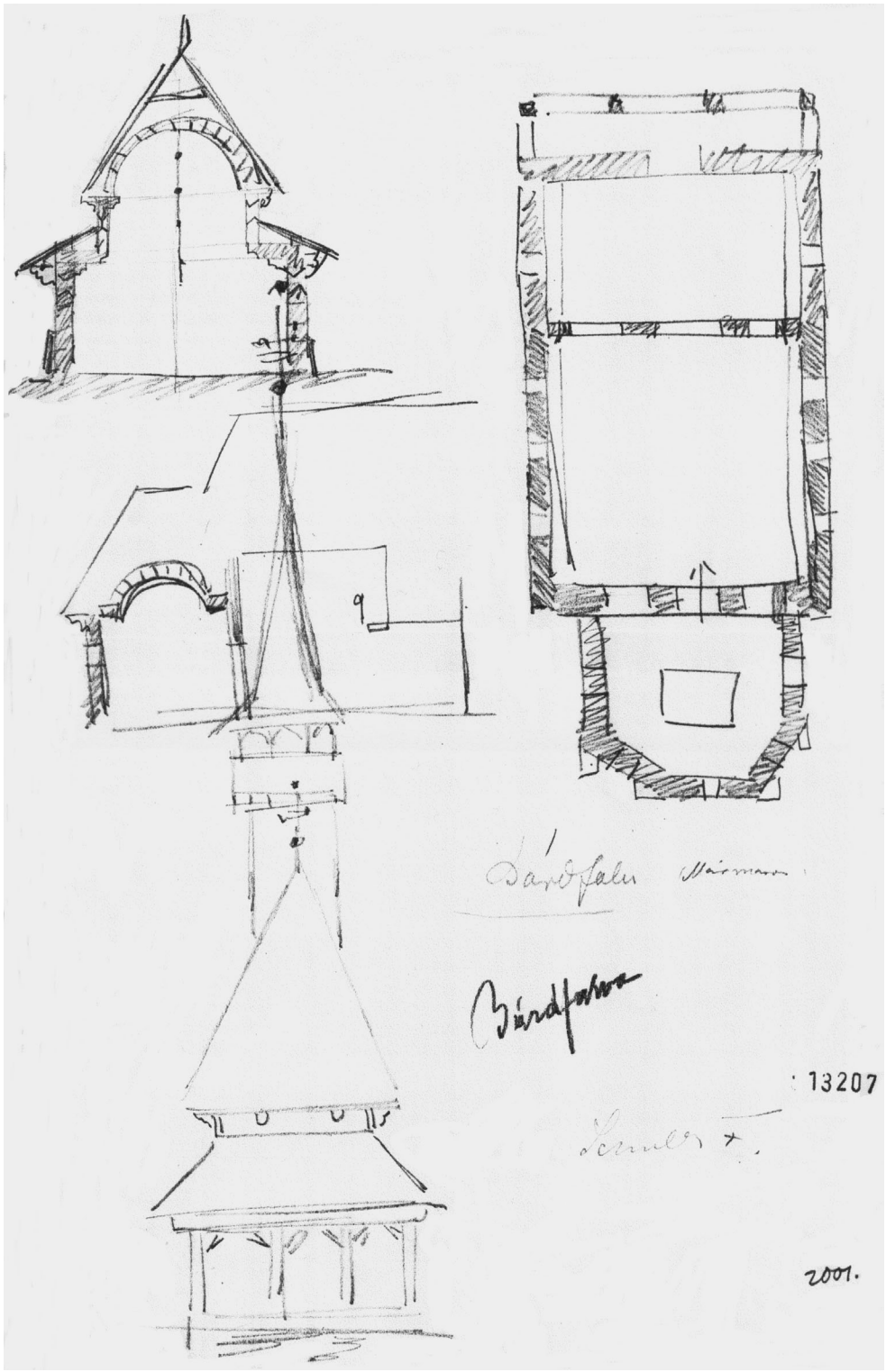
1 *Rakhiv*. A picture probably from 1711 depicts the wooden dwellings and churches from Bocsko Raho (B), in the foreground, and from Akna Raho (A), across the river (*Istorija myst i sil Ukrainskoi RSR, Zakarpatska Oblast*, 3, 493, Kyiv 1969).



2 *Bushtyno*. The village in the background with its farms, mills and church was pictured in 1744. The domanial depository (*Handal*) appears in the foreground, close to the Tisa River (MOL, U et C, fasc. 220, 22, 548).

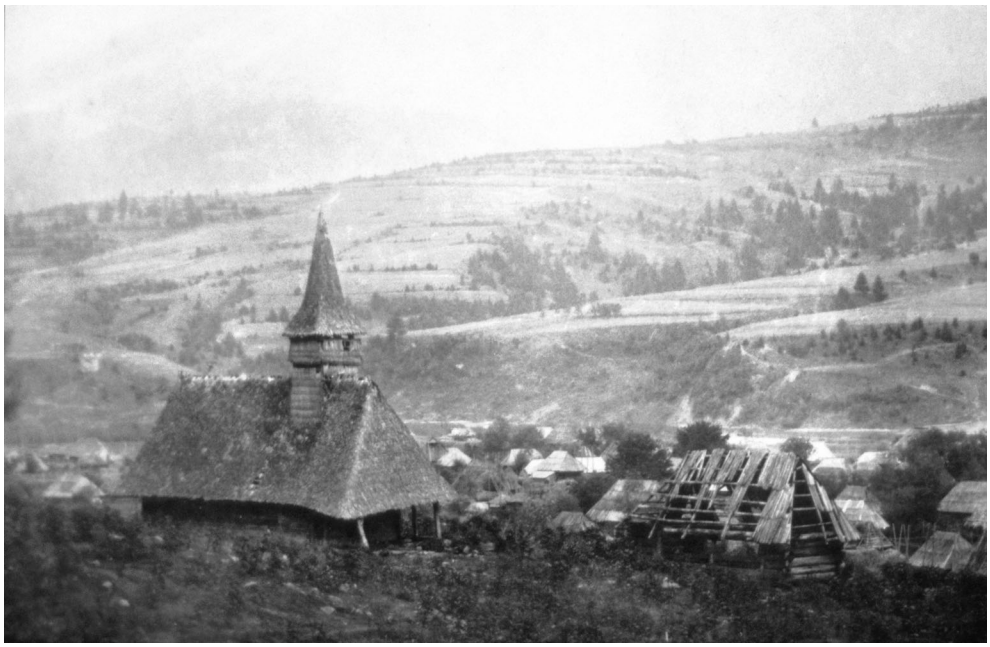
throughout Northern Hungary in 1862.[14] Along the route from one standing medieval stone church to another they seem to have made short stops to see some wooden churches. Among others they visited the parish wooden church in Berbeşti. The rapid drawings and few measurements made then in Berbeşti (**3**) were never published and the wooden church was only shortly mentioned as representative for Maramureş in a study of Imre Henszlmann from in 1864.[15] In exchange, the publication in the annual journal of the Central-Commission from 1866 of several scale drawings representing a similar wooden church from Seini (Szinér-Váralyja),[16] situated in the neighbouring county of Sătmar, produced echoes in Europe, being compared with the already famous Norwegian stave

[14] They visited several locations in between Satu Mare and Sighet in Northern Hungary. In Maramureş they visited Hust, Vişc, Teceu, Câmpulung, Sighet and Giuleşti (Henszlmann 1864, 128, 132-133; KÖH, Tervtár, Visk, Hust, Sziget, Bárdfalva; Gerecze 1906, 496-503).
[15] Henszlmann 1864, 140.
[16] Schulcz 1866, 7-14, taf. 1, fig. 1-25. The figure 20, however, seems to display a post of the porch from Berbești.



3 *Berbești.* Sketches signed by Ferencz Schulcz in 1862 representing a cross section through the nave, a partial longitudinal section through the sanctuary and nave, the plan and the western front. The value of these sketches increased after the demolition of the church in the summer of 1932. KÖH, Tervtár, K 2001.

4 *Giuleşti Monastery and Berbeşti*. The Hungarian artist Cserna Károly made this impressionistic drawing of two wooden churches from Maramureş for the richly illustrated volume about Northern Hungary published in 1898 in a series dedicated to the Austria-Hungary Monarchy (*Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia irásban és képben*, I rész, Felsö-Magyarország, 111, Budapest 1898).



5 *Moisei Susani*. This was one of the first pictures illustrating a wooden church from Maramureş, seemingly taken around 1880 and processed in a studio from Budapest (Várady 1901, 291). The wooden church vanished soon thereafter.

churches.[17]

This modest but still internationally appreciated debut did not interrupt the series of losses, especially due to long-awaited replacements. We should note in 1872 the establishment of the Hungarian Commission of Historical Monuments in Budapest, where, unfortunately, the status of the wooden churches was very low until World War I.[18] Despite this attitude we have to thank a few passionate Hungarian artists and pioneers in photography for some fine drawings of wooden churches in different publications and for the first pictures (**4**-**6**). In 1917, while numerous bells were collected from the churches for the war, the Hungarian

[17] Schulcz 1866, 7-14; Lehfeldt 1880, 220-225, fig. 64-68; Dietrichson 1892, 119-125, fig. 59-69, Wesser 1903, fig. 108, 186.
[18] Petranu 1924, 3; Petranu 1936, 8-12.

Commission made its own call to the priesthood to send reports concerning the valuable churches. The archpriest from the Vişeu District communicated then to its vicar in Sighet the survival of only two old wooden churches which should be protected.[19]

From the turn of the 19th century we can record the first signs of interest from the local elites for the wooden churches. Their main contribution was to lift the wooden churches to a status of national identification and pride, in a time they were damned to disappear. In 1900, the renown local scholar Ioan Mihalyi de Apşa wrote: "*These churches, often with two roofs, with galleries supported by posts, with high and slender towers, with four small turrets and other attractive details, are of great architectural beauty and artistic value, produced through the natural genius of the peasants.*"[20] In the same year the Ukrainian cleric Iosyf Rubia published a series of articles about "*our wooden churches*" in the Ukrainian journal *Lystok*. In the lowlands of Maramureş, along the Tisa River, he differentiated a Transylvanian type of wooden churches distinctive from the familiar Ukrainian ones, marked outside by a slender tower mounted above the porch and inside by a barrel vault.[21] From a Transylvanian perspective, the wooden churches were seen as familiar yet distinct. Vasile Moldovan, a professor in theology who followed the bishop of Gherla during his canonical visitation in Maramureş in 1913, made plain the Transylvanian admiring perspective. Describing the wooden church from Săcel, now vanished, he stated: "*This church, like all the other wooden churches from Maramureş, is more beautiful than those of wood from Transylvania. … They are tall, vaulted, with two eaves, with windows over the first eaves letting more light inside. At the entrance they display a large porch. Inside, they are usually entirely painted, … the iconostasis and the altar canopies are carved in wood in an artistic way. One can see how in the old days, in contrast to ours, the boyars of Maramureş were much concerned with the house of God.*"[22]

6 *Bushtyno*. The outline of the large wooden church dating from 1776 and the belfry were vaguely captured in a large picture from 1880 (Várady 1901). The church burned 10 years later.

These are some of the first descriptions that, together with the earlier published drawings and pictures, popularised here and there the wooden churches from Maramureş outside the region illustrating some of their unmistakable features. Nevertheless it surprises the admiration and distinction with which they were surrounded from the very beginning.

After the First World War and the division of the province among Romania and Czechoslovakia, the research of the wooden churches on both sides of the border was continued by a new generation of passionate art historians and photographers. Due to their efforts there were made the first practical steps to save the wooden churches.[23] On the Czechoslovakian side, where the Northern Maramureş was incorporated, the Ukrainian historian Wolodymyr Zaloziecky and the Czech photographers Florian Zapletal and Bohumil Vavroušek made long trips in the isolated villages to picture and study the wooden churches, publishing some albums and studies of great documentary value.[24] On the brink of World War II, in 1940, the architect Vladimír Sičyńskyj succeeded to publish a comprehensive coverage of the research in the Ukrainian log architecture, including the Northern Maramureş.

For the fate of the wooden churches from the southern side of Maramureş, pertaining to Romania, we should note the important establishment in Cluj of the

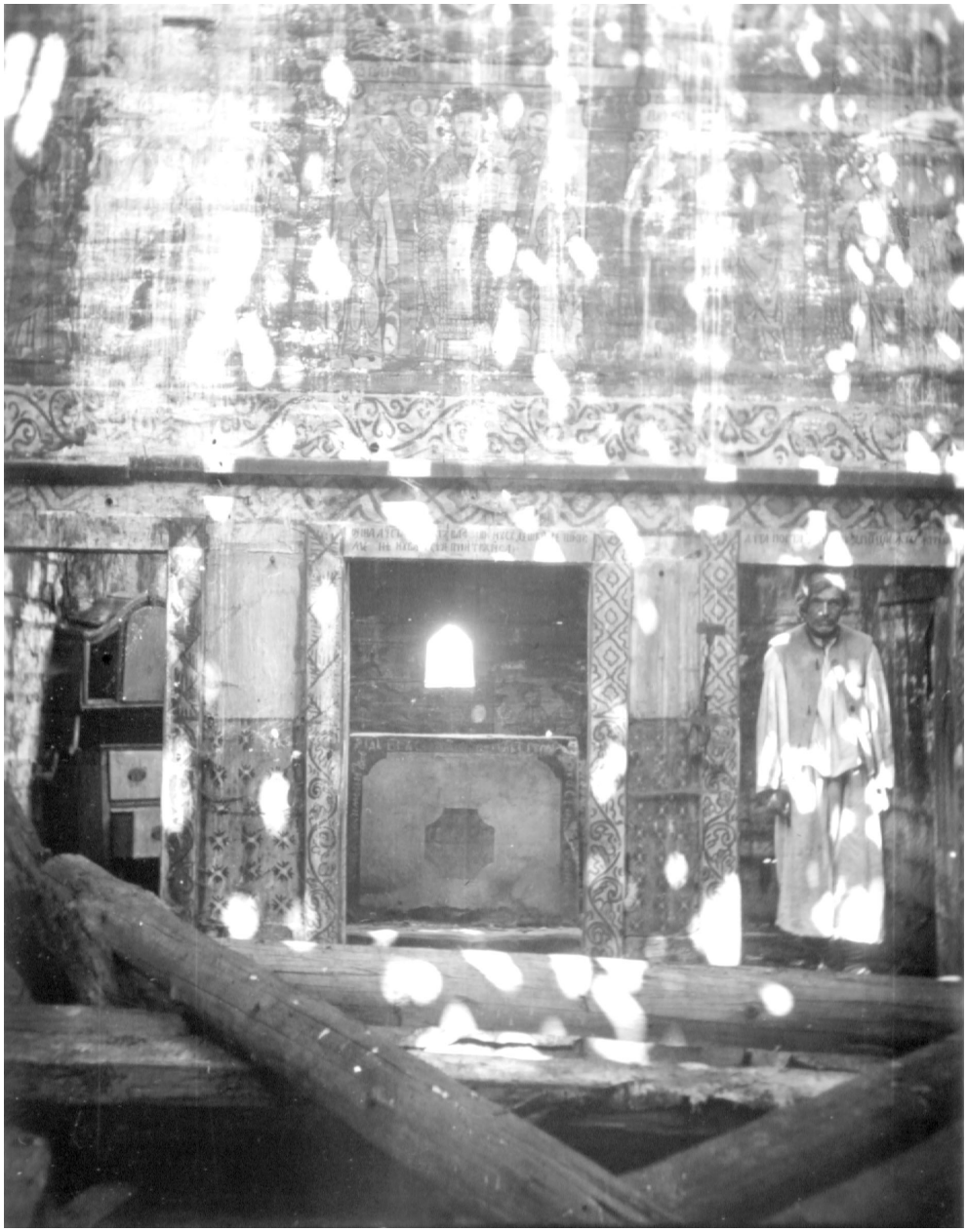
[19] ASM, 229 Vişeu, 81, 6-6v; ASM, 166 Iza, 238, 1-3.
[20] Mihalyi 1900, 25.
[21] Rubia, 1900, 90-91.
[22] Moldovan 1913, 39.
[23] The wooden churches from Velyka Kopania (in Kholmovets 1857-1931), Nyzhnie Selyshche (1936) and others were saved from destruction by transferring them in new communities from Czech lands and Slovakia.
[24] Zaloziecky 1926; Zapletal 1981; Vavroušek 1929.

7 *Năneşti*. A valuable close view of the church from 1928, before its demolition in 1936 (MET, Arhiva Romulus Vuia, H 350). The church was partly from the first half of the 16th century partly from the middle of the 17th century.

Transylvanian Section of the Commission for Historical Monuments, in the first years after the war. The commission elaborated a standard form and initiated a large inventory in 1921 urging for necessary series of pictures (**7**-**8**).[25] Atanasie Popa published a few monographic studies from the wooden churches he visited in Maramureş while Coriolan Petranu persistently debated about their importance along with the Transylvanian ones in the history of architecture.[26] In 1941, just before Romania entered the new war, the art historian Victor Brătulescu published the first comprehensive study dedicated to the wooden churches standing in the Romanian parishes from Maramureş, completed by 33 scale drawings prepared by the architect N. Chioreanu in 1937 (**9**). From an art history perspective, Victor Brătulescu indicated their Byzantine character inside and the Gothic appearance

[25] A good coverage of the early protection of the historical monuments in Transylvania and Southern Maramureş made Ioan Opriş (1988).

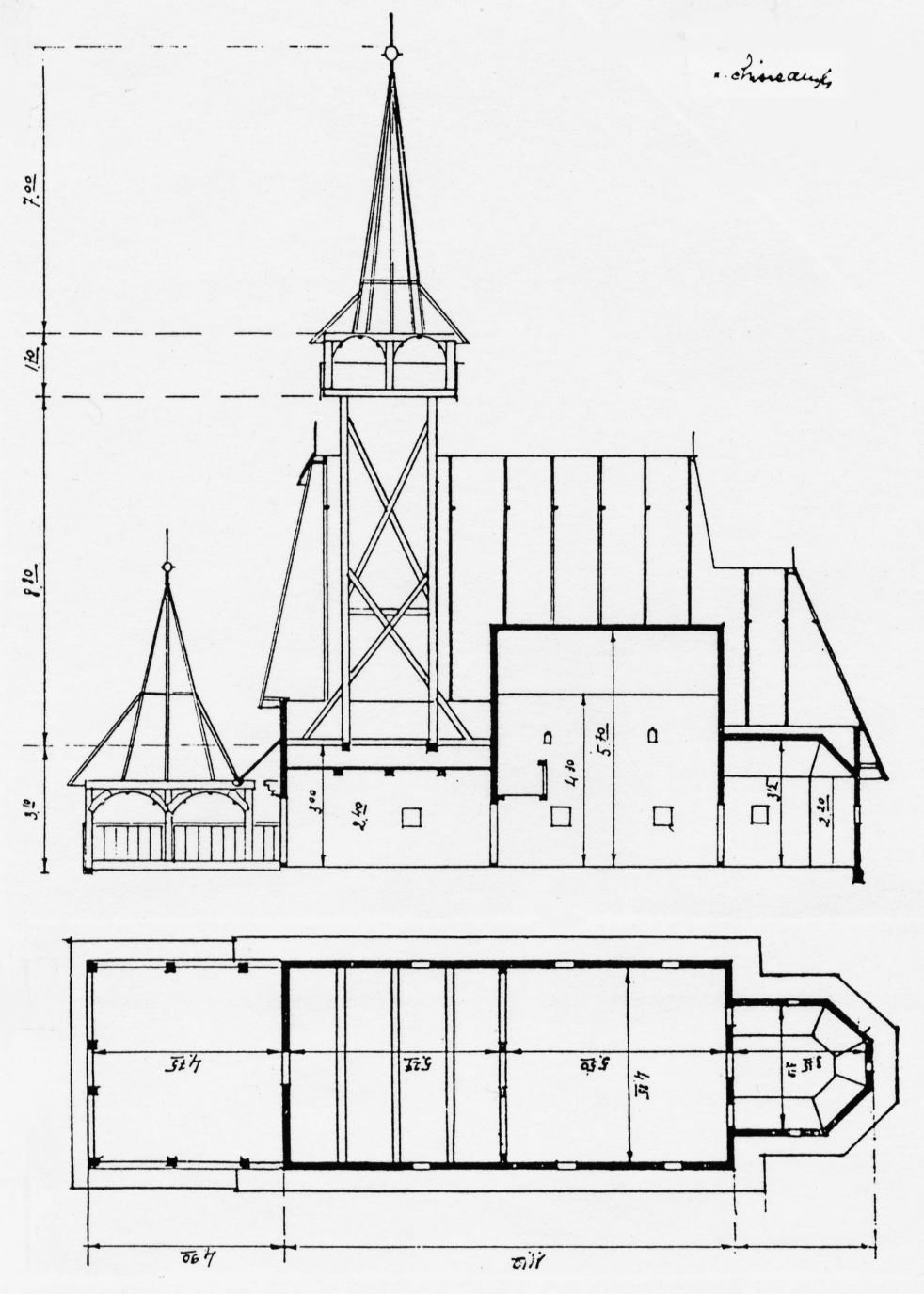
[26] Atanasie Popa published the first short studies about the wooden churches from Cuhea (Popa 1932, 204-227), Moisei Monastery and Dragomireşti (Popa 1938, 116-154), while Coriolan Petranu made general considerations (Petranu 1927, 1932, 1934, 1939).



8 *Berbeşti*. Photo by Atanasie Popa, July 1932, just before its demolition (MIT, Arhiva CMIT, C3:4778). The picture was taken from inside the nave looking towards the sanctuary. The spots of light on the iconostasis and the timbers lying on the floor indicate the roof was in a poor state and the vault had fallen in.

outside, stressing an influence from the stone architecture.[27] This view certainly irritated the father of the wooden church research in Transylvania, Coriolan Petranu, who dedicated two short analyzes to Maramureş thereafter.[28] In good agreement with the ideas of the Viennese professor in art history, Josef Strzygowski, he was very reserved to admit influences from the stone architecture, except for the tower, which could have been adapted for pure artistic purposes. Therefore he rather sustained the indigenous character of the wooden churches from Maramureş.[29] Listing the lacks from the work of Victor Brătulescu, Coriolan Petranu actually drew new directions for future explorations. He called for a complete inventory of the wooden churches, a study of their artistic qualities, distinction from those in Transylvania and around, a search for their origin and

[27] Brătulescu 1941, 6.
[28] Petranu 1941 and 1945. However, he earlier admitted limited Western and Eastern influences at the tower and respectively the mural paintings (Petranu, 1934, 15-16).
[29] Petranu 1945, 324-333.



9 *Văleni*. Longitudinal section and plan, scale drawings made by N. Chioreanu in 1937 (Brătulescu 1941, plate XXIV). Ten years later the wooden church was sold with the price of two oxen and demolished (Godja-Ou 2002, 55).

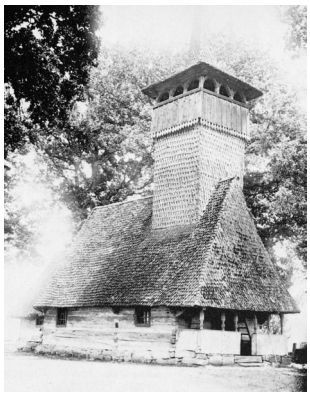
development as a local style and nevertheless an evaluation of their importance for the art history in general.[30] Coriolan Petranu concluded the research in the inter-war period but also influenced the coming one through his insistence on the vernacular character of the wooden churches.

During the inter-war period most of the extant wooden churches from Maramureş were documented in pictures or schematic scale drawings and some general discussions regarding their distinctions, origins and artistic value were started. It should also be noticed the first conservation works, although some wooden churches were still demolished as usual. Yet, none of these efforts made a greater impact outside Maramureş than the transfer of the wooden church from Dragomireşti in the Village Museum from Bucharest in 1936. Abandoned and

[30] Petranu 1941, 415-418.

ruinous in Maramureş, like many other replaced wooden churches before, it was repaired and saved in the artificial village established by the Romanian King Charles II to illustrate the countryside of Romania.[31] On the new location, the earlier damned church regained its dominant presence and austere dignity and became the best cultural ambassador Maramureş ever had (**20**).

After the Second World War and the new division of Maramureş, between Romania and Soviet Union, the research was hindered for a long time to national frontiers. In the Soviet northern part of Maramureş, incorporated in the Ukrainian province of Transcarpathia, the wooden churches swung between protection and demolition.[32] In these conditions, the works of P. I. Makushenko (1956, 1976), D. Goberman (1970), H. N. Lohvyn (1973) and others were, beside their contributions to the study of the traditional constructions from Transcarpathia, manifested efforts to save the wooden churches from the aversion of the local party officials. Due to their activity, numerous wooden churches from Maramureş were repaired and declared museums, but some of them, unfortunately, disappeared (**10**-**11**).[33] Towards the end of the Soviet period, David Buxton (1981) and Titus Hewryk (1987) made valuable overarching studies over the log houses of worship in Ukraine and in that context the wooden churches from the lowlands of Maramureş continued to be remarked as "*drastically different*" in comparison with the familiar Ukrainian ones.[34]



10-**11** *Ruske Pole* (Domneşti). Both wooden churches were demolished by local party officials and burned in 1965. Photoes by Florian Zapletal from 1921 (upper parish, above) and 1925 (lower parish, below); Zapletal 1981, ill. 45 and 47.

On the Romanian side of Maramureş, after World War II, the parish churches were reverted from the Uniate Church, prohibited in 1948, to the Orthodox Church. Thus the old wooden churches remained open for worship and in the care of the parishioners. In 1955, all the wooden churches from the Romanian Maramureş enjoyed protection as historical monuments and in this quality they were continually repaired. The importance of this decision can be better understood after the rapid disappearance of the wooden churches from Văleni (1947), Crăciuneşti, Ruscova (1954) and Repedea (**13**), seemingly all demolished before 1955.[35]

In 1958, the art historians Paul Stahl and Paul Petrescu made an evaluation about "*what is known until now and what should be resolved*" to understand the particularities of the wooden churches from Maramureş. They sketched a program for future research, affirming, like Coriolan Petranu at the end of the war, the need for a comprehensive regional inventory across the national borders. Moreover, they recognized the necessity to define the main features and the originality of the local wooden churches in relation with the sacred architecture of the neighbouring regions and in a comparative perspective with the local vernacular architecture. As a response to this program Paul Stahl published in 1961 a first study of the vernacular architecture from Maramureş and Paul Petrescu a concise analyse of the wooden architecture from the northern parts of Transylvania, in 1969. The articles written by Virgil Antonescu (1967) and Aurel Bongiu (1970) presenting their observations during the restoration of some wooden churches were promising but regretfully not continued. About the same time, there were published several other studies concerning the wooden churches from Maramureş of more or less relevance today.[36] A fundamental work about the history of Maramureş in the Middle Ages was published in 1970 by the medievalist Radu Popa. He touched the subject concerning the wooden churches indicating the vernacular architecture and

[31] Georgeta Stoica and Ioan Godea, *Muzeul Satului Bucureşti*, Bucureşti 1993.
[32] Hewryk 1987.
[33] Syrokhman 1999.
[34] Hewryk 1987, 68; Buxton 1981, 88 and 236-245.
[35] From Crăciuneşti survives the sanctuary as a cemetery chapel and the timbers of the church from Ruscova (originally transferred from Moisei Josani) were reused in 1954 to build a new wooden church in Ruscova Oblaz; Slobodian 1995, 55-78.
[36] Adalberth Toth (1967), I. D. Ştefănescu (1968), Elena Enăchescu (1968, 1969 and 1970).

12 *Dulovo*. The wooden church, erected in between 1739-42, was demolished in 1946 and the timber reused for another church, in Chervone, Ung county, until 1992 (Syrokhman 2000, 506-508). Photo from 1924 by Bohumil Vavroušek (1929, 178).

the local medieval stone churches as their probable source of inspiration.[37] In the following decade we should note the valuable works dedicated to the icons and murals surviving inside the wooden churches from Maramureş, signed by Marius Porumb (1975) and Anca Pop-Bratu (1982). In 1982, the Archbishopric of Vad, Feleac and Cluj had the initiative to publish the contributions of several important historians and art historians concerning the history of the Orthodox Church from Northern Transylvania. In this volume, Marius Porumb made the first complete coverage of the standing wooden churches from Southern Maramureş and often pertinent approximations of their age. He also noticed the necessary distinction among the wooden churches *with one eaves* and those *with two eaves*. Virgil Vătăşianu wrote, in exchange, a short article about the evolution of the church architecture from Northern Transylvania, with Maramureş in focus. In agreement with Radu Popa he considered the particular wooden churches *with two eaves* from Maramureş were formed in the 15th century under the influence of the medieval stone churches. Apart from these we should retain the albums dedicated to the wooden art and architecture from Maramureş with the beautiful pictures of

[37] Popa 1970, 223-231.

Francisc Nistor (1977 and 1983) and the pertinent observations of Mihai Pop. The symbolism of the house interiors was plainly revealed by Mihai Dăncuş in 1986 in the significant ethnographic monograph of Southern Maramureş. In the numerous syntheses over the wooden churches from Romania, the wooden churches from Southern Maramureş belonged to the Gothic-inspired style of Northern Transylvania, which was an organic part of the larger family of Romanian wooden churches.[38] The art historian Ioana Cristache-Panait remarked that: "*all the Romanian wooden churches join in a zone artistic dominant*" expressed in Maramureş "*through a daring monumentality*".[39]

The post-World War II period was marked by serious and consistent works with larger array of approaches. The scholars were some of the foremost in the two countries and fully engaged in their calls. The wooden churches from the Romanian side enjoyed high status and good protection while in Ukraine they were closed for worship, out of parish protection and occasionally under threat.

The political changes at the end of the 1980s opened new opportunities for the research in the region. What Buxton couldn't succeed in the 1970s it was possible beginning with the 1990s: the scholars could cross again the border and study the local architecture from both sides. In the last years several scholars felt attracted by the new opportunities. From Ukraine it is worth mentioning the architect Vasil Slobodian who made the first coverage of the forgotten Ukrainian parishes from Southern Maramureş and Mykhailo Syrokhman who made a necessary inventory of all the churches from Transcarpathia, including Northern Maramureş, a reference work for future researches.[40] In Romania, the art historian Ana Bârcă and the photographer Dan Dinescu came in 1997 with a notable album concerning the wooden architecture of Maramureş with sensible texts and beautiful pictures. Ana Bârcă brought back in discussions the Byzantine and Gothic inspirations in the local church architecture,[41] a recurring theme in the study of the Romanian stone churches but, owing to Coriolan Petranu, long ignored in the wooden churches. The architect Emil Costin, who designed several new churches in Maramureş, made also own studies of the old wooden churches.[42] In 2001, the American scholar Joby Patterson published a new work focused on the wooden churches from Maramureş, covering the entire region from an art history perspective. She, too, was fascinated by the blend of East and West in the character of the wooden churches.[43]

The present book revaluates my entire research in Maramureş. This started in 1993 and some partial results were published from time to time. My investigations began on both sides of the border and gradually progressed in contact with the Scandinavian experience of research. The first extensive documentations and results were gathered in a study of the most modest wooden churches standing in Maramureş, those with a simple roof (1996). My focus on these churches underlined their key potential to understand older local realities. The next step was to extend my research to all the old wooden churches from the entire region establishing the first general inventory, chronology and typology (2000). This work was based on numerous measurements and investigations in the field as well as on firm dating resulted from a dendrochronological project started in 1997 by Ólafur Eggertsson at Lund University, Sweden. The results gained from this work opened the way for further research around their meaning and value on a local and

13 *Repedea* (Kryva). The wooden church, dated from 1769, was by all probabilities demolished before the law from 1955. Photo from 1948 (Slobodian 1995, 63) saved in the Parish Archive and kindly made available by priest Rahovan Petru.

[38] Vătăşianu 1960, Stahl 1965, Petrescu 1974, Pănoiu 1977, Drăguţ 1979, Curinschi Vorona 1981, Buxton 1981, Ionescu 1982 and Cristache-Panait 1982 and 1988.
[39] Cristache-Panait 1982, 315.
[40] Slobodian 1995; Syrokhman 2000.
[41] Bârcă and Dinescu 1997, 94-109.
[42] Emil Costin, *Biserici de lemn din Maramureş*, Cluj 1998.
[43] Patterson 2001, 7-9 and 119-123.

14 *Vodytsia* (Apşiţa). The wooden church from 1803 survived unnoticed until 1990 when Mikhaylo Syrokhman (2000, 578-579) visited it. Two years later it would have been too late, since then the church was already demolished. Photo: Syrokhman 1990.

continental scale, being a necessary basis for the present book. The subsequent short articles were meant to make available in details the partial results from the study of individual stone churches like Sarasău (2002) and Giuleşti (2002) or of wooden churches from Botiza (2002) and, together with the specialist in dendrochronology Hans Linderson, from Putna (2003). The valuable results from the dendrochronological project headed by Ólafur Eggertsson were recently published in collaboration (2003).

In recent years, the wooden churches from Southern Maramureş have been well maintained in comparison to other regions from Romania, yet the last repairs were often inflated with irreversible losses of original parts.[44] The including on the World Heritage List in December 1999 of some wooden churches from Maramureş came as a natural result of the constant research, increasing interest for them and nevertheless due to their value for the Romanian cultural identity. On the Ukrainian side, on the other hand, the situation has been out of control. In the last decade, only in the lowlands of Northern Maramureş, there disappeared the wooden churches from Vodytsia (Apşiţa, 1992), Kobyletska Poliana (1994), Steblivka (1994) and Neresnytsia (2003). Moreover, the valuable wooden churches from Darva (Kolodne) and Sokyrnytsia are in an advanced state of decay, close to partial or complete ruination. The other few wooden churches left are also in need for repairs. If nothing would be done, the Northern Maramureş would loose some of its last unique wooden churches, and the present possibility to read in the landscape the former unity of the region would become a simple memory.

[44] DMI, report 3296/06.11.2000.

15 *Kobyletska Poliana.* This wooden church, datable from 1741, was demolished and set on fire in 1994, after the consecration of a new brick church, just 5 m from the rear of the old sanctuary. The reason of its demolition appears to be a local confessional conflict between Orthodox and Uniate congregations. Photo: July 1993.

In the last approximatively 150 years, the role of the travellers and researchers was fundamental in revealing step by step the value of the surviving wooden churches from Maramureş and urging their protection. Without their enthusiasm and efforts many more would have disappeared without any traces behind, a painful reality testified by the pictures and drawings published in this introduction (**1**-**20**).

The wooden churches have still much to say about their past and in a wider perspective about the European wooden heritage in general. The attempt of the present work is to continue the dialogue with them and write down their messages from the past. Although I try to use all the available and some innovative approaches to go deeply into this conversation, the limits and the eventual misunderstandings are inevitable. It is my hope that further research would improve our capacity to communicate with the past for the benefit of all those open to learn from it. In order to ensure the future dialogue for the next generations, the wooden churches need the official protection and support to be maintained in the most relevant conditions.

16 *Steblivka.* The wooden church from 1797, a few weeks before it was devastated by a fire. Photo: July 1994.

17 *Steblivka.* The burned carcase of the church still stands waiting for a careful documentation or a possible reconstruction before it would be to late. Photo: April 2002.

Limits

The present work is geographically limited to the historical region of Maramureş, covering both the Romanian southern side and the Ukrainian northern part. However, due to old local particularities, the northern mountainous margins of Maramureş are excluded from the present discussion.[45] In these parts the log dwellings often present mixed traditions and the recorded wooden churches display such characteristics that a separate study should be necessary. For this reason, I focused my research on the area that presents the greatest homogeneity in building traditions and where the wooden churches signal a common local identity. The studied area covers entirely the Southern Maramureş and the so called lowlands of

[45] Here there are included the villages around Dolha, added to Maramureş in 1454 (Mihalyi 1900, 223), the northern part of the Lower District known as Verkhovyna, the northern basin of the Taras River (upstream of Ganychi) and Tisa River (upstream of Lunca) in the Sighet District.

Northern Maramureş. This large area corresponds in the main with the populated area of Maramureş in the early Middle Ages (before the series of new rural settlements with people coming principally from outside the region) therefore generically named in the rest of the present work as *old Maramureş*. Unmistakably, the rural wooden architecture from the *old Maramureş* has deep roots in ancient local traditions.

The temporal limit is given by the surviving wooden churches from the *old Maramureş*, which are dated between the 16th and 18th centuries. The age of the wooden churches was established mainly with help of dendrochronology by Ólafur Eggertsson and where this was not possible I dated them by inscriptions, written records or relatively, in comparison with firmly dated ones.

The relevance of the sources

The main novelty with this work is the triangle of approaches around the extant wooden churches – the vernacular architecture, builders and commissioners – providing a deeper understanding of the local tradition in which they were built. This structure was once inspired by my tutor, professor Ole Svedberg, and although I long put it aside I was inevitably attracted by its potential for the subject of this book.

For the present work the main documents of the past and irreplaceable sources of information are the wooden churches. No other sources can tell us more about the tradition of building them than the extant wooden churches themselves. From here derives the necessity to maintain them as much as possible in the original state.

The number of extant wooden churches in *old Maramureş* decreased from around 120 at the turn of the 18th century to 45 in 1993, when I started my research. After the recent loss of the wooden churches from Kobyletska Poliana (1994), Steblivka (1994) and Neresnytsia (2003) their number was reduced to 42, i.e. about one third of their total, two centuries ago. With the exception of the church from Kobyletska Poliana, which was only hastily visited before it was demolished and burned, all the other 44 were investigated. However, the wooden churches from Călineşti Susani, Glod and Poienile de sub Munte, built by a Moldavian itinerant team of carpenters at the end of the 18th century, are discussed only marginally in this work.

The state of conservation of the extant wooden churches varies from case to case. Earlier convictions regarding the extant wooden churches as the result of successive repairs, replacements, transformations and additions are only marginally confirmed by my investigations. Such important alterations occurred during the last two centuries only in a few cases.[46] In the majority of the churches the alterations were variably limited to roof coverings, floors, ground sills, apertures, altar tables or iconostasis. At a closer examination the initial appearance of the buildings can be often determined.

During the fieldwork it was beyond my possibilities and not my purpose to document extensively all the old churches and interesting dwellings. I therefore selected and focused on the most representative ones. The main forms of documentation during the fieldworks were the sketches and measurements for the scale drawings. The scale drawings are the most useful means to preserve, present and read the information collected on the site. At the highest level of accuracy I strived to reach maximal precision in a scale drawing, recording any centimetre deviation from the perfect horizontal and vertical. The process to obtain this type of scale drawings requires an elaborate method of measuring and patience. Due to

[46] The most affected by alterations wooden churches are those from Moisei Josani (now in Ruscova Oblaz), Nyzhnie Selyshche (now in Blansko near Brno, Czech Republic), Hărniceşti, Corneşti, Strâmtura, Darva, partly Breb, Valea Stejarului and Călineşti Căeni.

18 *Neresnytsia*. This wooden church, dated from 1813, is the latest loss in Northern Maramureş and the last one from the Taras Valley. The church burned in the early spring of 2003. Photo: October 2000.

the nature of the log constructions, built of many pieces of timber and sometime very large in sizes, the work on the site can be very long and difficult, yet the result is always rewarding with the amount of data recorded, accuracy obtained and the knowledge gained from the detailed and intimate scanning of the building. I owe the knowledge of this method as well as the general model of reading log constructions to the Swedish school and especially the specialised works of the architect Peter Sjömar.

For more rapid measurements I used even lower levels of accuracy, where the references to perfect horizontal and vertical were replaced by an orthogonal system embedded in the scale drawings, which actually simplifies the reality. These measurements are selective but especially useful to accumulate general information. The visual documentation of a building was complemented with drawings, measurements and pictures of a great number of details, as for example apertures and different types of joints.

Since the main sizes were presumably not accidental, they were measured with a desire for high precision and relevance. Of central importance was the question of how to measure, especially at which level and from where to where. In this sense, the innovative choice was to search for the relevant sizes of a plan at the very base of the construction, the place where the builder evidently had to take key decisions concerning the entire construction. This was not obvious from the beginning, when, out of habit, I made numerous measurements at the level of the breast, above the sill or the socle, leading to irrelevant sizes. The importance of the outer sizes in relation to inner sizes of the rooms was emphasised during the process of research. To increase the accuracy it was even necessary to eliminate the gaps between the ground sills caused by settings. In several cases, the opposite

19 *Darva* (Kolodne). Is this wooden church going to be the next to vanish away? If it still stands it is because the structure refuses to collapse, despite mismanagement and decay. This would be a great loss considering that this is the last one from the lower Talabor Valley and one of the oldest standing ones from the entire Maramureş. Photo: October 2000.

ground sills were not equal in sizes and therefore each had to be measured to ensure a reliable documentation. Sometimes, I was hindered to take all the main sizes, creating unwanted breaks or approximations. Such situations were usually produced by the missing original ground sills, covered walls, building parts out of reach, vanished floors and other lost original building parts. Finally, due to diverse circumstances, a few churches were never measured satisfactorily and therefore their sizes were presented as approximations.

To improve the general picture, a number of 3 vanished churches were measured after the marks left on their site.[47] Fortunately, the timber material from Moisei Josani was partly saved during the third erection of a church from it, in Ruscova Oblaz, though only the sanctuary may still maintain the original sizes. Finally, the church in Steblivka, although devastated by fire, still enables good measurements of its plan.

An imperative component of the fieldwork was the contact with the senior carpenters. In Maramureş, the link to the traditional carpentry was never completely fractured. Despite some losses, the living local tradition in wood is still a complex heritage, saving old working techniques and knowledge with great potential for the historical building research and conservation. The main bearers of this heritage are the senior carpenters practising today all over Maramureş. Since there are a few available records with variable relevance concerning the traditional log building, I was preoccupied to record the testimonies of the present old generation. The interviews with the senior master carpenters Găvrilă Hotico

[47] Two in Ruske Pole and one in Crăciuneşti.

Herenta (1938) from Ieud, Dumitru Opriş *a lu Flore* (1909-2001) from Apşa din Jos, Petru Bledea *a Mării crâznicului* from Vad and many others are therefore essential to understand the basic principles of the log building from a local experience. On the European scale, their knowledge and skills may have an even greater importance and the need to transfer them to future generations is acute.[48] We can not save and understand a valuable heritage without the traditional craftsmen with help of which it was created and maintained.

The fieldwork is not complete without mentioning the discussions with village elders. Their oral traditions are unequal in content from place to place, but where a certain story survived it might often have had a certain local importance. They can retain from the site where the timbers were felled to the name of certain founder or significant events connected to the churches.

The second group of sources are the rich collections of written documents concerning the Eastern Church from Maramureş. They are actually scattered among numerous archives, in different cities from various countries. Those I personally visited or had contact with are in Bucharest, Cluj, Alba Iulia, Baia Mare, Sighet (Romania), Berehovo (Ukraine), Budapest (Hungary) and Vienna (Austria). More archives of interest in the subject can be found in Vatican, Slovakia and in other places from the already mentioned countries. My own archive work, despite some isolated findings, was much reduced in comparison to the volume of potentially interesting records. This remains a task for future research.

Among the published books that already made available or used collections of church records I should mention here the valuable early works of Tit Bud (1911), Alexandru Cziple (1916), Vasylij Hadzhega (1922), Hlib Kinah (1926 and 1930), Alexei Petrov (1930) and Zenovie Pâclişanu (1936). Another group of publications made available the inscriptions found in the wooden churches, with the contribution of Ioan Bârlea (1909), I. A. Iavorskij (1931) and Vsev. Sakhanev (1932). Some recent useful works covering the Church history from the former Mukachevo Bishopric are signed by Athanasie Pekar (1992) and Ovidiu Ghitta (1996, 2001).

Circumstances during research

Just as the extant wooden churches are the main sources, so too at the centre of my research was the fieldwork. Along more than a decade I travelled to Maramureş no less than 24 times and worked there 355 days, of which 56 on the Ukrainian side and the rest on the Romanian side. These accounts do not comprise the work outside the province, especially in the distant archives. Most of the fieldwork was concentrated in the Southern Maramureş, where I speak the Romanian language of the natives and where the majority of the wooden churches stand. I would have been privileged if I could speak the Ukrainian dialects in the north, but I was often assisted by translators from the presently few Romanian villages on the Ukrainian side of the border. For three important wooden churches transferred outside the region it was necessary to travel to Czech Republic and to Bucharest in Romania.

The easiest way to come to Southern Maramureş is by train on the railway between Salva and Vişeu or by buss from Baia Mare and Satu Mare over the Gutâi and Huta passes. The busses reach every remote village but some of them only

[48] We have to notice the dramatic changes occurred in this craftsmanship, since the new powered tools became available. In the future, we can only wonder how many apprentices would learn to cut smooth timbers with an axe when a powered saw spares them a lot of time with little practice. The transfer of knowledge of traditional carpentry to the next generations is therefore seriously threatened in Maramureş. From this perspective, we must point out the role played in the last decades by the Maramureş Village Museum from Sighet in involving in conservation operations some of the most talented craftsmen in the region. This museum has become an open archive of the local building tradition in wood around which it can work a school in traditional crafts with a vital role for the survival of the regional heritage.

20 *Dragomireşti*. One of the most spectacular and successful savings occurred in 1936 when this wooden church was transported from Dragomireşti to Bucharest in the Village Museum. Photo: February 1995.

once in a working day. On the northern side of the region, the busses are also the most effective means of transport between different parts of the region. To spare time and ease contacts in the Ukrainian villages I often hired private persons to drive me from place to place and translate. A major problem has been to cross the border separating the two parts of Maramureş. As this border follows the bed of the Tisa River, there are only two frontier stations for the border population, while visitors like me have to travel about 400 km around the border to come just the other side of it. A bridge was built in recent years with international support from Sighet to Slatina to overcome this absurd isolation of the two sides, but the rigid relations between the two countries delay its official opening. Although travelling through Maramureş was a constant problem, it opened also alternatives to discover ancient paths over the hills or along the rivers, used only by locals. Sometimes I was near to get lost, yet I was often rewarded by the beautiful landscape and the kind people I met.

To examine and document the wooden churches was a delicate work, due to the rich collections of icons and church objects preserved inside them and not least because of inflammatory relations between Orthodox and Uniate congregations claiming the churches. It was usually required a recommendation from some authority to win confidence, yet the final decision was a local one, since a parishioner had to be available to keep the church open for as long as I needed to work inside. This worked well for short visits. When the fieldwork necessitated several days or weeks I had to make various, sometimes daily arrangements.

The villagers from Maramureş are both respectful and cautious towards foreigners. They are hard working people and a way to come closer and win their confidence is to work as hard as they do. However, in contrast to their hard lives, I

was always seen as a gentleman from the city, no matter how well I learned their dialect. My host during the stay was usually a family recommended by the priest, if not the priest invited me to remain in his house. An important rule I learned there was to do not ask for privileges because they treated me generously anyway. Once the villagers appreciate your presence you are always welcomed back there next time.

1 The vernacular architecture in Maramureş

21 *Sârbi*. The Cosău Valley opens with a beautiful perspective across the region towards the snow covered ridge of the Northern Carpathians. In late May, after the snow on the peaks smelted away, the villagers bring their sheep on them to pasture over the summer. In general lines the landscape did not change much since Middle Ages. However, both sides of the valley were then heavily forested with only small clearings for gardens and meadows. Just like a half millennium ago, the village of Sârbi is still gathered along the Cosău River, yet incorporating two other former medieval villages, Baloteşti and Cămârzana. The wooden church, unlike the individual farms, was situated on a sunny hill above the village. Photo: early Spring 1995.

The vernacular architecture in Maramureş

The aim of this chapter is to learn about how the people of Maramureş traditionally built in wood, with main focus on their masterpieces: the wooden churches. The main questions to ask here are: How representative are the surviving old dwelling for a comprehensive analyse of the traditional architecture? What were the means to differentiate the churches from dwellings? And what specialised knowledge was involved? In order to answer these questions we will try to approach the standing old wooden constructions as prime historical sources, to familiarise with the living knowledge of traditional carpentry and make use of all the available references.

1.1 The rural communities

The mountainous *Land of Maramureş* is divided in valleys by its main rivers: Tisa, Rika, Talabor, Taras, Iza, Vişeu and some smaller but nevertheless important tributaries like Hustets, Baylova, Apşiţa, Mara and Cosău. In these valleys, in the narrow fields by the banks of the rivers grew most of the present villages.

The existence of about 100 villages was documented already in the 14th century,[1] mainly in the *old Maramureş*, and after another four centuries their number grew to over 170, especially due to new settlements in the forested, mountainous northern parts. In this vast landscape the distance between them was often considerable and therefore the vital communication routes were documented from the first written records as well. They followed the meandering river beds, and crossed fords to connect together these villages and through deep forests and high mountain passes opened contacts with the surrounding regions. The access through the Tisa gate at Hust opened the region towards the large Tisa plain, and this was along centuries its only reliable one in all seasons. Not accidentally the solitary but unbeatable fortress of Maramureş was placed here. In the middle of the 17th century, an anonymous traveller crossing the region considered the roads full of risks and recommended to voyage only in large groups. He followed and described a regular convoy of up to a hundred carriages transporting salt from the mines of Maramureş to inner Hungary along the Tisa River.[2] In the restless years of the Hungarian war of independence (1702-1711), the Swedish general Johan August Meyerfeld reached Maramureş at the rainy end of August 1709 over the Carpathian Mountains from its south-eastern corner. He stayed overnight in some poor but dry houses in the border village of Borşa. The next morning he continued to Sighet, the centre of the county, following the beds of the Vişeu and Iza Rivers, crossing them countless of times, but, despite a long riding until late in the night, he could only cover 3 of the 5 Hungarian miles, staying again overnight in some village, welcomed by locals with white bread and wine.[3] A half century later, as the war conflicts moved far away from the region, the main country roads began to be edged by inns and taverns speaking of a constant traffic and a certain degree of security.

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[1] Popa 1970, 58-121.
[2] G. Bogdan-Duică, "Simplicissimus descriind Maramurăşul de pe la anul 1650", *Transilvania*, 309, 4-5, 1929 Sibiu.
[3] *Călători străini despre Ţările Române*, VIII, 260-263 and 280-285, Bucureşti 1983. A Hungarian royal mile was 11.3 km (Bogdán 1987, 58).

22 *Budeşti Josani*. The side roads are often muddy and difficult to follow, yet the old character of the village has remained readable from them. Photo: April 1994.

Whenever a traveller reached a village the road was opened or closed by a gate. At the end of the 19th century the children from Bârsana still used to stand by the wattle gate from *Gura Văii Muntelui* to open it for money.[4] These gates and the wattle fences around the villages were certainly not meant for defence but to discourage the robbers. In Rona de Jos - Lilia the wattle gate (*leasa*) was usually closed for the night and the villagers shifted to guard it.[5] When the communities were seriously threatened by a hostile army, which often happened until 1717, the nobles and the burghers from the five towns could take refuge in the noteworthy fortress of Hust while the peasants could hide and defend themselves in the nearest forests and mountains.

During the first cadastral survey of the province, between 1767 and 1770, the constructions in the 11.086 households from the 5 towns and 135 villages of Maramureş were overwhelmingly made of wood, and most of them covered by thatch. In the main town of Sighet there were only some 10-12 houses properly build of stone out of 500.[6]

The dominant construction in a village was the church, usually erected on a sunny hill with long perspective over the surroundings (**21**). From the church and its cemetery, a net of winding, dusty or muddy streets and paths linked together all the parts of a village (**22**). Most of the villages in the lower valleys were compactly gathered, but in the mountains, some of them were largely spread over the hills. In Mizhhiria and Yasinia, for instance, the distance between two neighbouring houses

[4] Inf. Boris, 1999.
[5] Inf. Marina 1998.
[6] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, table.

23 *Breb*. A farm at the margin of the village. A large roofed gate marks the entrance in the yard. Once, this was a distinct sign of nobility. The high pole at the left is the upper part of a draw well, placed in the garden for flowers and spices. The house faces south towards the yard and the barn with the stable on the opposite side. The simpler gate delimits the yard from the plough land. Photo: December 1993.

reached in 1767 *"more than two shots of gun"*.[7] The gardens (*grădini*) or the estates (*stătuturi*) were the main units of a community and corresponded with the number of households. In the central and southern parts of the region, the household's farmstead had its necessary dwellings gathered around a yard, with a garden behind, entirely delimited by a wattle fence.

The yard (*ocol*) was usually dimensioned enough to turn around the cart drought by beasts. The entrance in this yard was by tradition guarded by a large wooden gate. Around the yard, the outbuildings were carefully placed in a functional relation to the house (**25**). The barn with the stable was located opposite to the house if not on the right hand. Aligned with one of the outbuildings or separate, it was *colejna*, a very characteristic light construction in this region, openly sheltering the cart, farming stock and other various tools. On the left hand there were usually situated the pigsty and the wattle corn basket. Behind the inner fence, in the garden, it stood another specific light structure, *şoprul*, i.e. a hay barrack with an adjustable roof. The garden was partly cultivated, partly a meadow and, not least, partly an orchard. Never missing nearby the house, often towards the street, it was a small parcel for flowers and spices. Also in the proximity of the house and its small flower garden it was the place for a well.[8]

Among all these constituent parts of a farmstead, the most representative construction was the house. None of the other rural secular dwellings were so loaded with signification and prestige as the house did. In order to understand this

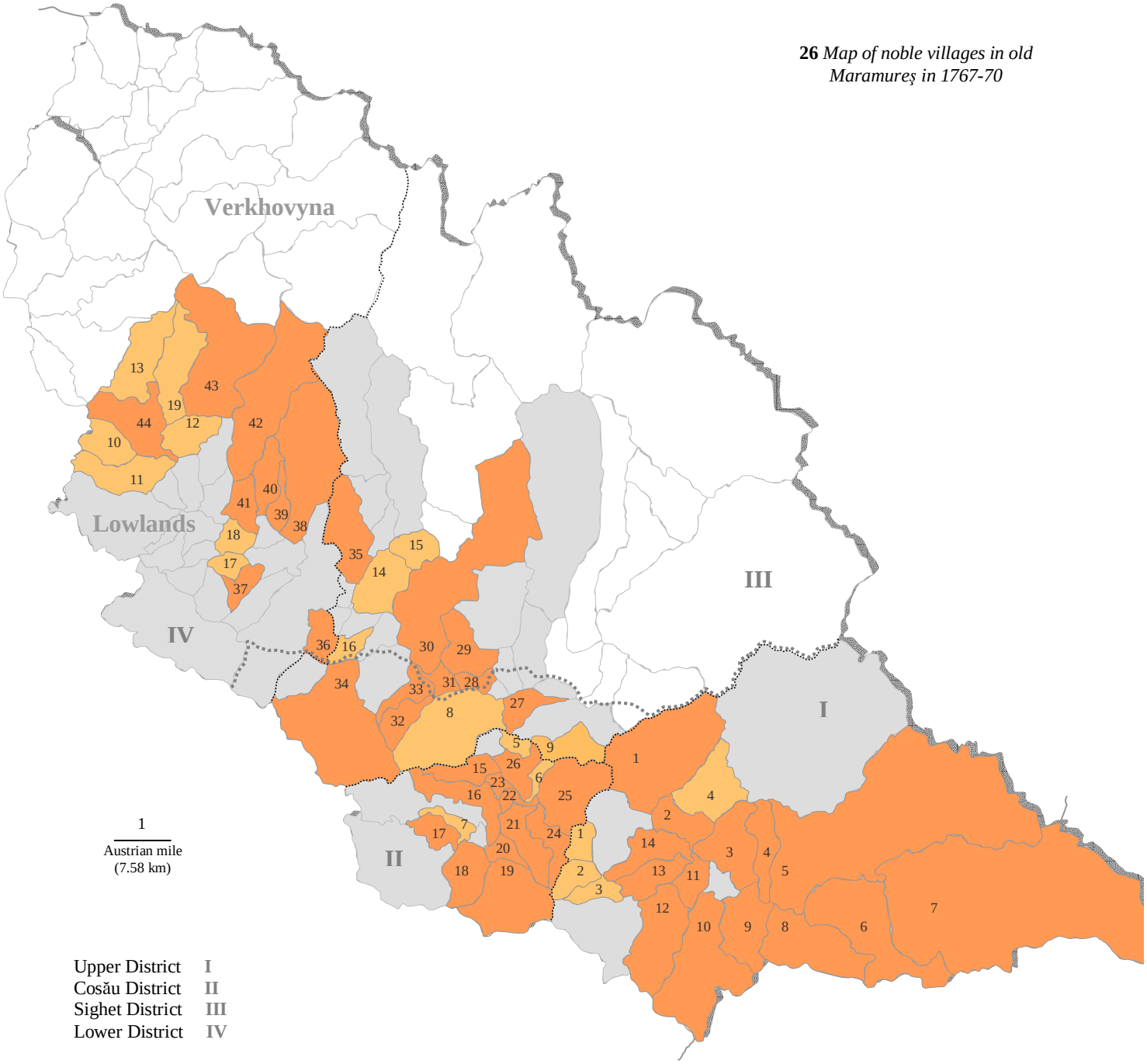
[7] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 32.
[8] Pop 1982, 12-14; Dăncuş 1986, 96-116.

basic construction and the others functionally gravitating around it, I need to focus on the social differentiation as a fundamental aspect of the local society.

24 *Breb*. The water mills have been vital places for the communities. Usually built by a water mill, such whirlpools of wood (*vâltoare*) were very effective to wash heavy woollen carpets and blankets. To wash in them, especially in the spring, before Easter, when the snow smelts on the mountains, is however a hard work and the women need to help each other. Photo: April 1994.

25 *The Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş, Sighet-Dobăieş*. The specific outbuildings of a farm were dominated by the barn with the stable, usually in a single construction (A). The pigsty and the hen house could have been built in log technique as a stable in miniature (B). The other structures were often built in mixed techniques. A specific light roofed structure on posts provided shelter for the cart and farming stock (*colejna*, C). The hay was also regularly sheltered in a similar structure, though the roof was pyramidal and easy to lift or lower at needs (*şoprul*, E). A typical wheel fountain had a log structure at the base and a light one of 4 posts above, protected by a pyramidal roof (E). One of the most interesting structures appears to have been the wattle corn basket resembling in technique the regular wattle fences (D). The corn was needed outside to be at hands to feed the birds, while the grains were stored in more simple wattle baskets, sheltered safely in the garret of the house. Photos: October 2000.

26 *Map of noble villages in old Maramureş in 1767-70*



Noble villages: 1 Petrova, 2 Leordina, 3 Vişeu de Jos, 4 Vişeu de Mijloc, 5 Vişeu de Sus, 6 Moisei, 7 Borşa, 8 Săcel 9 Săliştea de Sus, 10 Dragomireşti, 11 Cuhea, 12 Ieud, 13 Şieu, 14 Rozavlea, 15 Berbeşti, 16 Giuleşti, 17 Deseşti, 18 Breb, 19 Budeşti, 20 Sârbi, 21 Călineşti, 22 Corneşti, 23 Fereşti, 24 Văleni, 25 Bârsana, 26 Onceşti, 27 Rona de Jos, 28 Biserica Albă, 29 Apşa de Mijloc, 30 Apşa din Jos, 31 Slatina, 32 Iapa, 33 Sarasău, 34 Săpânţa, 35 Ialova, 36 Bedeu, 37 Voineşti, 38 Uglea, 39 Darva, 40 Criciova, 41 Ciumuleşti, 42 Drăgoeşti, 43 Breaza and 44 Lipceni.

Noble minority of Eastern rite in: 1 Slătioara, 2 Glod, 3 Poienile Izei, 4 Ruscova, 5 Valea Stejarului, 6 Năneşti, 7 Hărniceşti, 8 Sighet, 9 Coştiui, 10 Kosheliovo, 11 Iza, 12 Herinceni, 13 Lypetska Poliana, probably in 14 Ternovo, 15 Ganychi, 16 Taras, 17 Novobarovo 18 Oleksandrivka, 19 Monastyrets.

1.2 Family ranking and the local architecture

1.2.1 The local nobles

The fundamental institution of the rural society in Maramureş was the family, both the basic family unit consisting of parents with their children and the extended family (*neam*), consisting of family units interconnected by blood and name. A community was made up of a few extended families with a well determined hierarchical structure between and within them. The social ranking regulated the relations between families and individuals. From the gardens in the village to the places in the cemetery and inside the church, all were hierarchically established.[9] The affiliation to a certain extended family and noble rank penetrated all the aspects of the local life and it was plainly manifested in architecture. Without taking into account this fundamental hierarchical structure of the rural communities we would not be able neither to decode the traditional local architecture in general nor the constructions in particular.

From the time the region was gradually incorporated in the kingdom of Hungary, the local Romanian leading families were one by one confirmed as noble by the Hungarian kings. Not all of them accepted to subordinate the king; the most notorious was the voivode Bogdan of Cuhea who left Maramureş and defeated the king's army in Moldavia, in 1359, laying the basis of a second independent Romanian land after Walachia.[10] Those who remained in Maramureş formed in the Middle Ages, with very few exceptions, the entire county nobility and were in possession of almost the entire region.[11] During the 16th -18th century, their dominant role in the county gradually decreased due to concurrence from the growing number of Hungarian nobles, emigrations, uprisings, seizures, religious defections, national assimilation and nevertheless due to the formation of a large royal domain.

The political, judicial, administrative power in Maramureş was under many centuries in the hands of the local nobility. In the second half of the 14th century and in certain aspects even in the next century, the autonomous Land of Maramureş was transformed into a common county. During this process the former local institutions of the voivode, valley and village *cneaz*, were inevitably replaced with those practiced in the kingdom.[12] The county was headed by a prefect (*comes*), usually a magnate appointed by the king to a title for life or hereditary. He was member of the royal council and the Diet and by necessity lived at the court, far from the urgent matters of the county and therefore his role was limited to confirm his assistant. The assistant prefect (*vice comes*) was, actually, in control of the county. He was elected annually from among the wealthiest and most influential local nobles by the county assembly to maintain order, levy troops and contributions voted by the Diet. In the county assembly there could participate the entire nobility of the county, who gathered at least once a year in Sighet to elect from among themselves, apart from the assistant prefect, 4 district praetors (*iudium comitatus*) and 8 judges. This medieval administrative structure survived more or less unchanged until the middle of the 19th century and provided the local nobility with great control over the county.[13]

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[9] Pop 1983, 9-16; Dăncuş 1993 and 2000, 62-65, Kligman 1998, 30-41.
[10] Popa 1970, 240-247.
[11] Popa 1970, 168-181; Marius Diaconescu, "Răscoala nobililor Maramureşeni din 1492", *Nobilimea românească din Transilvania*, 185-197, Satu Mare 1997.
[12] Popa 1970, 135-214.
[13] Filipaşcu 1997, 52-54; Bérenger 1994, 165. The seigniorial rights were at long last abolished during the Revolution of 1848 together with the serfdom, but the hierarchical distinction was more or less

Towards the end of the 18th century, the surviving Romanian nobility of Maramureş (including those of Romanian descent maintaining their Eastern faith) was, actually, more numerous than ever, but on the other side much poorer. Not surprisingly, in this county lived the greatest number of small nobles exempted from taxes in the entire Habsburg Empire.[14] The royal diplomas were carefully preserved and the genealogies were entirely remembered to ensure their rights and liberties. Although most of them only possessed their own land, according to the ancient laws of the country, their social condition continued to give them authority in the county assembly and exemption from taxes in exchange for the duty to defend the king.

In *old Maramureş*, a significant distinction was made among the *noble villages,* and the *serf villages*.[15] Despite this significant distinction it is sometimes hard to find an exact definition to characterise them. A noble village appear to have been inhabited by Orthodox landowners originating from it and often forming the majority of the local population. Respectively, a serf village was mainly inhabited by serfs. However, a noble village with great prestige like Rozavlea, once residence of voivodes, was in 1767 inhabited by 39 local noble families compared to 80 serf families,[16] whereas in Săcel there were even less nobles in proportion to the others, about 110 of about 700 inhabitants.[17] Thus, the status of a village could as much depended on the prominence and origin of its inhabiting nobles. The complex situation recorded in the second half of the 18th century was the result of continual changes and was still in transformation.

The Hungarian historian Bélay Vilmos accounted at least 34 noble villages in Maramureş in 1600.[18] The same historian indicated for 1720 about 45 villages with at least 5 noble tenures and another 9 with less in between 1673-1720.[19] Based on a land survey and other contemporary investigations, I suppose there were about 44 noble villages in 1767-70,[20] which represented almost one third of the total of 141 villages in Maramureş and less than a half of the 103 villages from the *old Maramureş* (**26**). If we count even the places where the nobles formed a modest minority[21] and the villages they owned partly or entirely as magnates,[22] the

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tolerated until the dissolution of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy, after World War I (Papahagi 1925, XII; Karnoouh 1980, 77-86).

[14] Ardelean 1997, 237; Binder 1967, 60-61.

[15] There is a direct reference to the noble villages from 1657 (In Hungarian: "*nemes falu*"); Cziple 1916, 302/25. Some other references: Moldovan 1913; Filipaşcu 1997, 74-88 and 133-134; Chindriş 1997, 75-109.

[16] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 49-53; Chindriş 1997, 75-109.

[17] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 71-74. Actually, the true number of nobles could have been much greater since at that time many nobles were unable to prove their nobility or were in process to prove it.

[18] 1 Vişeu de Jos, 2 Vişeu de Sus, 3 Moisei, 4 Borşa, 5 Săcel, 6 Săliştea de Sus, 7 Dragomireşti, 8 Cuhea, 9 Ieud, 10 Şieu, 11 Berbeşti, 12 Giuleşti, 13 Deseşti, 14 Budeşti, 15 Sârbi, 16 Călineşti, 17 Corneşti, 18 Fereşti, 19 Bârsana, 20 Onceşti, 21 Biserica Albă, 22 Apşa de Mijloc, 23 Apşa din Jos, 24 Slatina, 25 Iapa, 26 Sarasău, 27 Săpânţa, 28 Bedeu, 29 Uglea, 30 Criciova, 31 Ciumuleşti, 32 Drăgoeşti, 33 Breaza and 34 Lipceni; Bélay 1943, 102-103. It was surprisingly missing: Petrova, Leordina, Vişeu de Mijloc, Ialova, Voineşti and others.

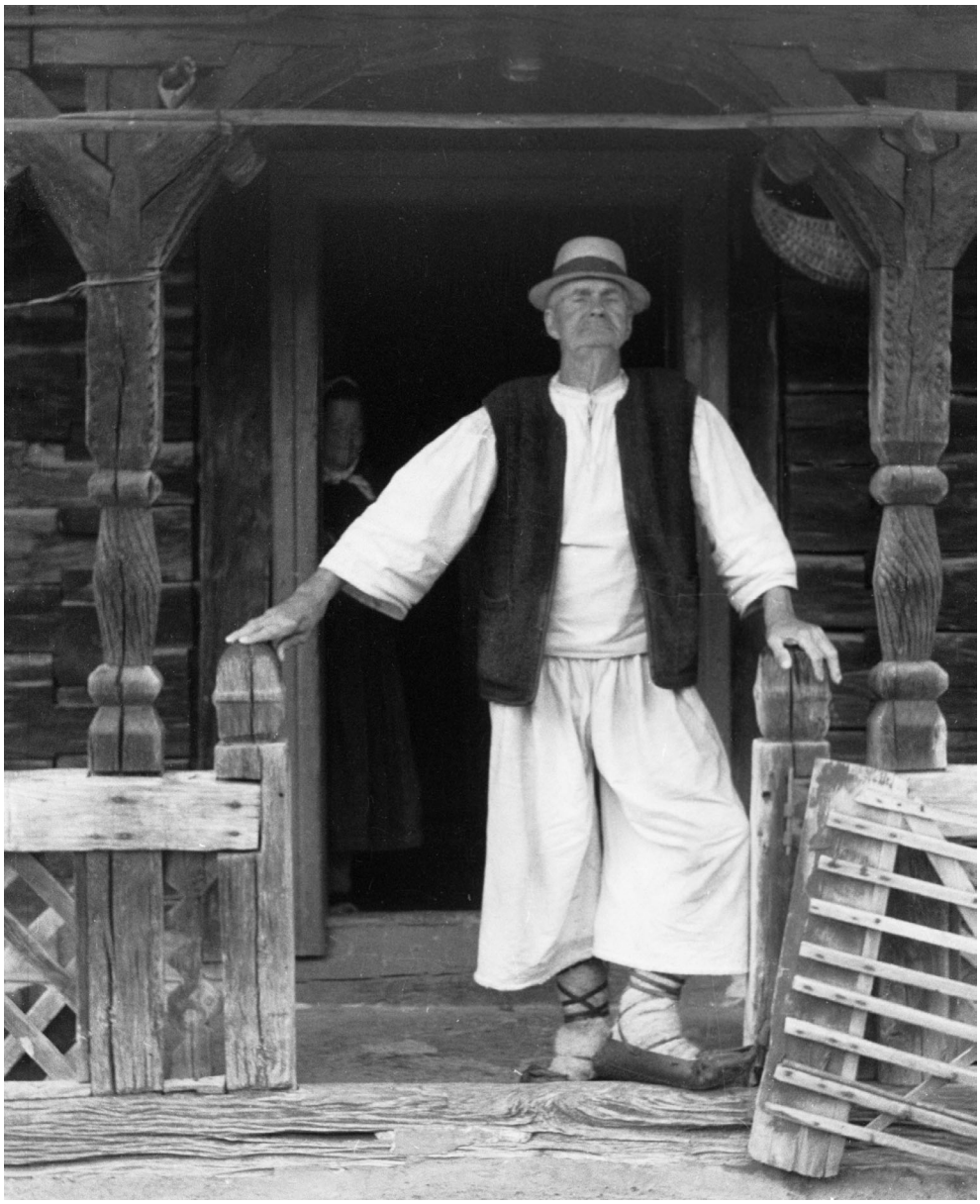
[19] Bélay 1943, 59, 72, 103, 117-221.

[20] The 44 noble villages in Maramureş in 1767 were: 14 in the *Upper District,* (Ioan Chindriş, "Sate şi genealogii din Ierăşul de Sus", *Maramureş – vatră de istorie milenară,* III, 75-109, Cluj 1997), 12 in the *Cosău District*, 9 in the *Sighet District* and 9 in the *Lower District* (ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung 1767).

[21] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung 1767.

[22] Romanian nobles were recorded as possessors or patrons in: Hoteni (Rednic), Sat Şugătag (Pop), Poienile de sub Munte (Petrovan), Bocicoel (Săpânţan and Balea), probably Neresnytsia, Zolotarevo (Balea), Nyzhnie Selyshche (Balea, Cernel), Kolochava (Balea, Râşcu, Pop, Stoica), Synevyr Poliana (Balea), Synevyr (Râşcu), Repynne (Raţ), Verkhnii Bystryj (Raţ), Bukovets (Balea), Rekity (Balea), Holiatyn (Balea), Liskovets (Balea), Tiushka (Balea); ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung 1767; MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774.

Romanian nobles were still present in more than half of the existent parishes (**26**) and in almost three quarters of those from *old Maramureş*. Thus, despite their individual poverty, the Romanian nobles as a compact community continued to play in the second half of the 18th century an important role both on the regional and the local level.



27 *Corneşti. Moşu* allowed me to picture him taking a proud posture in front of his large wooden house, dating probably from the turn of the 19th century. In 1997, after his death, the house was sold by his heirs and transferred by a carpenter from Budeşti to the small mining town of Cavnic, outside Maramureş proper. Photo: June 1993.

The manorial residences

A common local noble (*nemeş*) was a modest landowner that could eventually posses, apart from his own manor, one or several tenures (*sesii*) inhabited and worked by his serfs (*iobagi*). For instance, the nobles of the Dunca de Sârbi family had several serfs working on their estates in Sârbi in 1769.[23] Some richer magnates, like the family of comes Teleky, the vice comes Mihai Balea or the Pogány family possessed entire villages. But the unsurpassed one was the *Aerario*, i.e. the royal treasury, which by 1778 owned 39 villages and all the salt mines in

[23] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 152 and 155.

Maramureş, most of them gathered in the domains of Hust and Bocicoi.[24] Naturally, the most important residences were erected by the most landed nobles.

Some of the most prestigious secular buildings in the county were the royal manor-houses situated in Coştiui, Sighet and Hust, centres of the royal domains.[25] In 1744, the royal manor-house from Hust, *Fejérhaz*, located at the foot hill of the fortress, was an ancient stone building extended to five rooms, a portico, a kitchen and a cellar. The large rooms were decoratively paved with bricks, some of them were even vaulted and lighted by up to *"six windows in complicate lines and provided with bottle glasses"*.[26] Only a few decades earlier, during the war of Hungarian independence, this residence must have occasionally housed the Transylvanian prince Ferenc II Rákóczi. Although the state of the royal residence decayed afterwards, it could stand as an outstanding source of inspiration for the numerous manorial houses in this province.

In 1709, the vice comes of the county Francisc Darvaj lodged the Swedish general Meyerfeld and his companions at his castle.[27] Another castle was mentioned in 1769 in Slatina as the residence of the baron Ludovic Stoika de Szala.[28] We don't know how these castles looked like in reality but they most probably did not exceed the royal residence from Hust. By the end of the 18th century, some of the rich local Hungarian landlords had their manor-seats built of stone inside the towns of Sighet and Hust, in striking contrast to the poor wooden houses of the burghers. From there they exercised their influence over the county's matters and came in closer contacts with the larger cities of Debrecen, Pest, Pressburg or Vienna.[29] In the 19th century the fashion of building manor-houses of stone became increasingly popular among the rural nobles and therefore, at the beginning of the 20th century, a manor-house became almost synonymous to a stone house.[30]

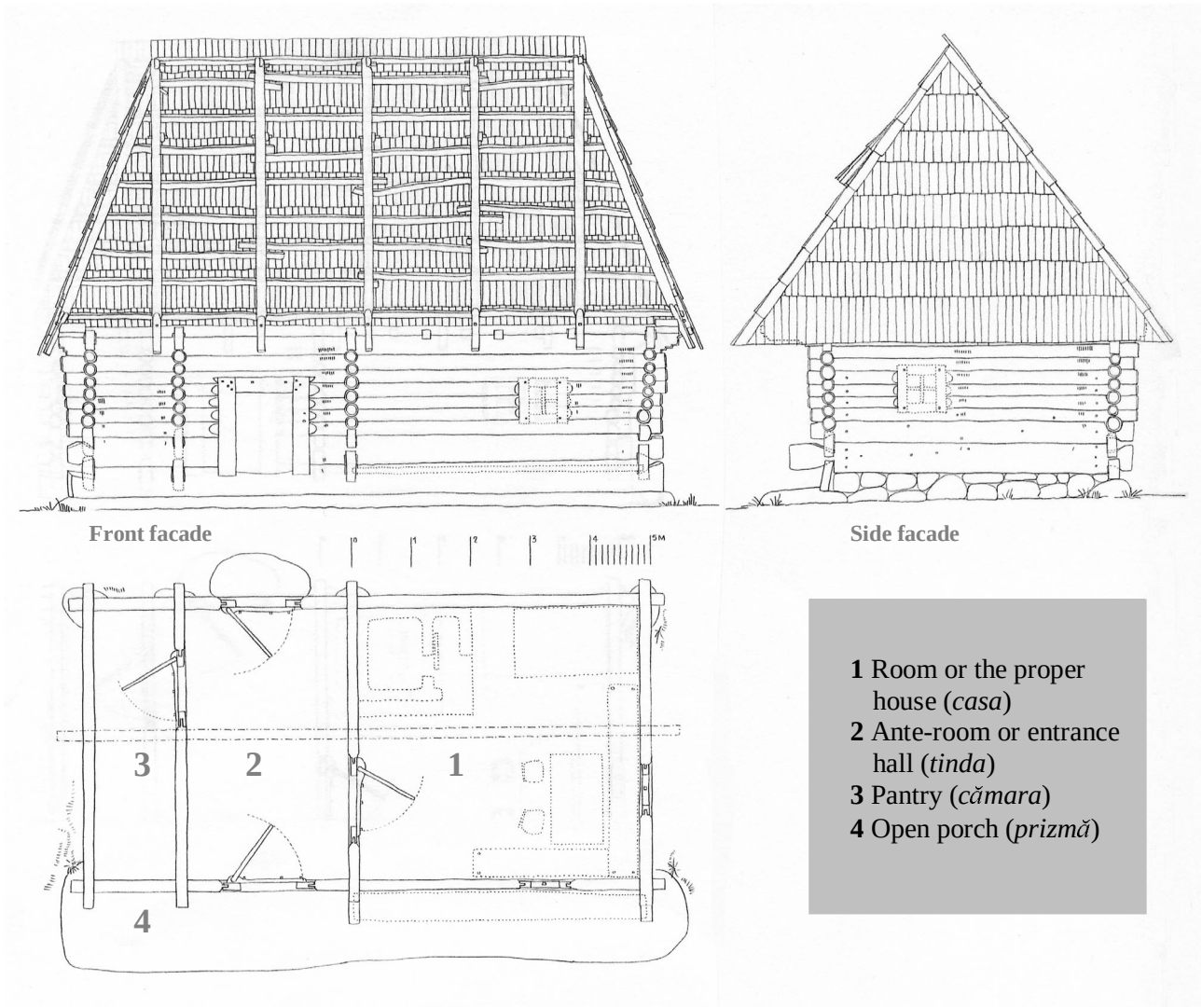
The home of the numerous small country nobles of Maramureş was usually referred to as a manor (*curte* or *curia*). According to the local custom only one of the children remained in his parents' house while the others were helped to build new ones on their inherited estates nearby. As the descendants of the main ancestor continued to settle around this manor they formed together a distinct part of the village. These family groupings, often named after them, actually built the core of the villages into the 20th century.[31] In a document from 1800, only the residence in Apşa de Mijloc of the head of the noble extended family of Vlad was named a manor (*Vlădeasca*).[32] In reality, all the farmsteads of the noblemen were considered manors (**28**), no matter how small, but the manor of the ancestor seems to have always retained a higher status within the family.[33] It was probably there the precious medieval diplomas attesting the nobility of all the branches of an extended family were kept in safe.

The early wooden manor-houses of the small landlords of the county were first mentioned in the royal diplomas of the 15th century, at the beginning only as simple houses (*domus*) but later well individualised as manorial seats (*curia*). The

[24] Hadzhega 1922, 212-215.
[25] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 58 and 207.
[26] MOL, U et C, 220/22, 472.
[27] *Varnaj* in the text, it appears to be the altered form of Vajnag, the Hungarian name of the village Vonihovo (Voinești). *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, VIII, 263, București 1983.
[28] *"Der Herr Baron von Stoika hat allde ein Schlossel, nebst einen Maÿerhoff."* ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 170.
[29] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 16.
[30] MLR, Casa, 365, 394.
[31] Pop 1983, 16; Dăncuș 1986, 32.
[32] Ardelean1997, 241.
[33] Dăncuș 1986, 32.

historian Adrian Rusu suggests the manor houses became already by then more personalised within the rural architecture.[34]

Between the 17th and 18th centuries, the local rural nobility built their wooden manor-houses on one side with concern for the models in the nearby towns, seeking to signal their prestige,[35] and on the other side attached to the traditional customs of their community. This ambivalence of the country nobility was one of the driving factors for changes in the local architecture. Step by step, the most ambitious country nobles introduced in their residences new fashionable features adapted to the traditional local architecture. As the most representative constructions of the rural community, apart from the church, these manor-houses served as models for the other householders. It is significant that in the local usage a beautiful and large house was called a manor-house.[36]



28 *Săliştea de Sus*. A common manorial residence house from a strong noble village, probably dating from the beginning of the 18th century. The wooden house of Chiş Ţicală family is saved in the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş. The marks on the wall beams all around are from an earlier relocation. Initially it might have been thatched. One particularity is the door opening at the rear of the house. Scale drawing, October 2000.

[34] Rusu 1999, 285.
[35] Rusu 1999, 236.
[36] MLR, Casa, 366, 51 and 394.

29 *Sârbi*. The manor house of the noble Dunca de Sârbi family (1690s). The corner joints present a small recess in the neck to improve the interlocking of the beams (below, left). Due to the limited length of the massive logs the house was extended lengthwise by posts, one of them also used as the left jamb of the entrance (below, right). Photos: March 1995, on the initial site (above and below), and August 1997, during its reconstruction in the Maramureş Museum.

1.2.2 Houses for rich and poor

Already in 1767, the houses in the village of Ieud, a community dominated by noble families, were said to be better built than elsewhere around. In contrast, the village of poor serfs of Upper Neresnytsia was made of *"small houses or rather cottages"*.[37] Fortunately, some old wooden manor-houses have been saved in the open museums and in the villages, enabling us to determine the main characteristics of the local rural architecture and follow a few major innovations occurred during the 18th century. In exchange, the fate of the poor houses was in general to disappear, either because of their poor comfort or because the owners replaced them as soon as they were able to improve their social condition. We are therefore limited to some relatively recent poor houses.

The oldest known firmly dated manor-house is from the end of the 17th century and it belonged to the wealthy noble family of Dunca de Sârbi (**29**).[38] This branch of the extended family of Dunca migrated from Şieu, where the head manor was located and the family medieval documents were saved. It was there the entire extended family, spread in 8 villages, might have gathered in the middle of the 18th century to prove its nobility for the Austrian administration.[39] The residence from Sârbi is a remarkable construction, with the local standards of grand sizes: 688 x 1275 cm,[40] built of massive squared logs of oak interlocked with double-slot projecting joints. The oblong layout was traditionally limited to only one room, an ante-room and a pantry, all faced by a porch along the entire front facade and the side with the room. From the very beginning the construction was provided with a stone cellar under the room, a solution that implied a planked floor above. The gentle traditional decoration carved in two of the doorways alerted the visitor then as it does today about the owner's care for beauty and nevertheless his social prestige. In those times, this was certainly not a common house of a poor peasant, either noble or serf, but a country manor-house of the best class.

The extant manor houses dated from the first half of the 18th century were all built with about the same features, but few of them could compete with the sizes of the Dunca house in Sârbi. The manor house of the Codrea family from Berbeşti erected in 1704, of the Cupcea family from Călineşti built in 1710 or of the Bizău family from Cuhea dated in 1752,[41] and many more after that, displayed the same traditional standard.

The next significant step in the local manorial architecture can be firstly recorded in the large wooden house from Borşa of the noble priest Găvrilă Timiş, who proudly signed above the entrance in 1799.[42] Here, the sizes were further increased by adding the so called *odolhaz*, i.e. a second row of rooms at the back of the building (**31**).[43] The name alone suggests this innovation came through the Hungarian manors. However, the walls were built of round fir logs interlocked with *double-slot* projecting joints, in a true traditional way. The large layout, 870 x 1270 cm, was arranged with two rooms and an entrance hall at the front, another three pantries at the rear and a porch with 9 posts sheltering the entrance. Because the

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[37] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 70 and 194.

[38] Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, 46. The house, now in the Maramureş Museum from Sighet, is named Bud house, after the name of the last owner. However, the house was earlier owned by the Dunca family (inf. Tămaş 1995); see also Ioana Dăncuş, „Casa Bud – un monument de excepție restaurat în Muzeul Satului Maramureșean", *Tradiții și Patrimoniu* 2-3, 57-59, Sighet 2003.

[39] Chindriş 1997, 88-89.

[40] The lateral porch was supposed to be later added (Dăncuş 2000, 40-41), but the sill of the porch was dated at the same time with the house (Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, 46, table 6, s. 7).

[41] Dăncuş 1986, 118-122.

[42] Dăncuş 1986, 158. The house is now in the village museum from Baia Mare and it was not directly documented by me. I am therefore in debt to Emil Domuță for the information he collected for me.

[43] Pop 1983, 14-15.

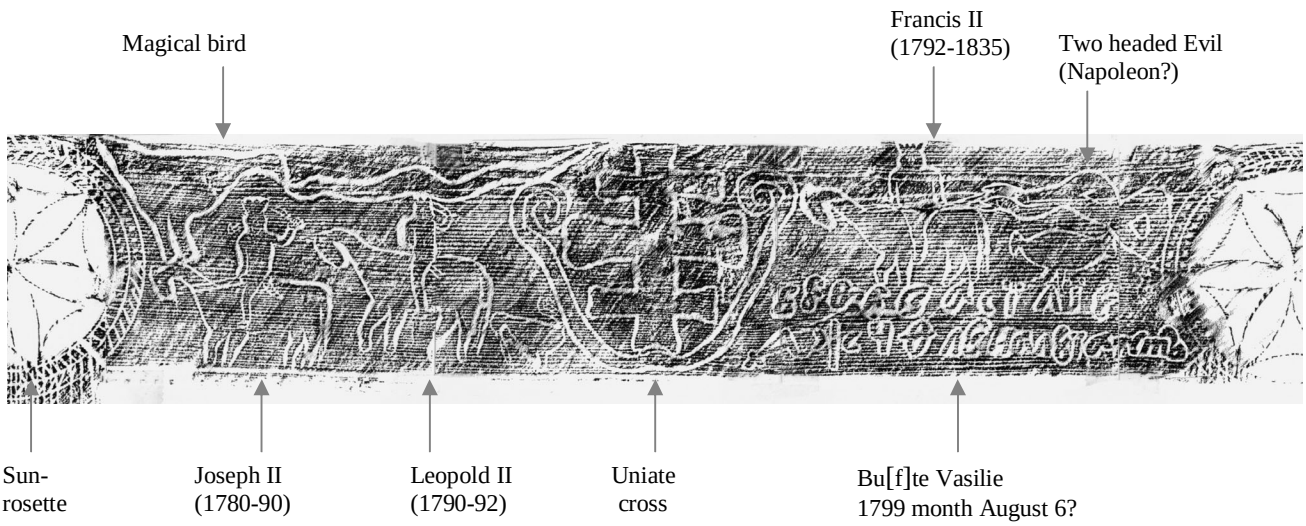
noble owner ministered as a priest in the lower parish[44] the house could have served as a both manorial and parish residence, according to the local practice.[45] It is uncertain if its parish function lasted after the dead of the owner. In 1857, the two distinctively named wooden parish houses of the village were already ruinous,[46] and therefore replaced 10 years later by stone ones.[47] Accordingly, the house from Borşa might have been a parish only for a short period of time, but its features seem to be unmistakably linked to its double purpose.

Another manor-house worth of attention was built by the noble Bufte Vasilie, who dated his home in 6 August 1799 (**30**). This time the sizes were of secondary importance, only 590 x1015 cm. The traditional tripartite layout and the porch surrounding the room from two sides were also faithfully maintained. We need to come closer the building to discover where the owner introduced that distinction he strived for. As we approach, we discover the flush dovetail joint at the corners, a feature earlier reserved only for the churches. In the rural communities of Maramureş this house is the oldest dwelling with flush joints we know of and it clearly marks the moment the transfer to profane buildings occurred. What was earlier meant to give distinction to the sacred room was now taken over by the manor-houses. This was a challenging decision from the owner even if he might not have been the first one. We can only speculate over the reactions generated among the village elders. Once this step was done the flush joint became increasingly popular in the secular buildings. The option regarding the type of joint would have been enough to impress his contemporaries, but there is one more detail that makes this construction worth seeing. The custom to decoratively carve the posts of the porch or to ornate the doorways with traditional symbolic signs was widespread in the manor-houses of that time. He, too, used the customary sun-rosettes and crosses to pride the doorways, but in between them, above the entrance, he drew a unique scene of three riding royalties, surrounded by evil snakes and salutary magical birds.[48] Who were they? And what did our noble want to transmit? By all appearances, the scene captured the historical events before the house was built. Just in the previous years the nobles of the county were called up to defend the emperor Francis II against Napoleon's army, according to the duty of their rank.[49] And the riding royalty fighting the evil on the portal seems to be no other than Francis II. Accordingly, the other two are the earlier emperors, Leopold II and his brother Joseph II. The two-headed eagle on the next doorway, which was the imperial emblem, strengthens this interpretation. Indeed, this proud country noble from Maramureş felt such devotion for these three contemporary emperors that he depicted them above the entrance of his house.

The rural clergy – priests, teaching church singers and sextons – was not individualised as a distinct class until the second half of the 18th century. Many of the parish priests were from the nobility and lived on their own goods. In the serf villages the priests were simple tenants with seigniorial obligations. It was not until the union with the Roman Catholic Church the program to emancipate the clergy from their serfdom took shape and it was intensively implemented by the Uniate bishops of Mukachevo, in agreement with the privileges granted to the new confessional denomination by the emperor Leopold I in 1692.[50] During the canonical visitation from 1751 very few priests lived in parish houses. Their

[44] Bud 1911, 31; Udvari 1990, 109.
[45] Dăncuş 1986, 158. In 1774 no parish house was recorded in Borşa since all three priests serving in the village lived on their own estates. MOL, C 99, XI A, Maramoros 1774, 50.
[46] ASC, 149, 1271/1858.
[47] Siematismulu 1867, 219.
[48] Dăncuş 2000, 34-35.
[49] Filipaşcu 1997, 128.
[50] Ghitta 2001, 155-203.

30 *Cuhea*. The house of the noble Buftea family, presently in the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş from Sighet-Dobăieş. Photos and tracing of the portal's lintel: October 2000.



31 *Bârsana.* This is an excellent example of a typical house with *odolhaz*. Initially, the construction was limited to two rooms at the front with access through an ante-room in the middle and seemingly served since 1758 as refectory in the local monastery. After its transfer in the village, sometime around 1795, the house was consistently enlarged with dark rooms at the rear (*odolhaz*) and a porch at the front. Presently the house serves as local museum. Photo: view of the rear and one side, June 1997.

situation improved in 1774, especially in the villages of serfs, but the majority of the clergy assistants, church singers and sextons, still lived on serf tenures paying obligations to their feudal lord. In noble villages the priests continued to live on their own manors. The parish houses described in the 18th century were at first very modest, consisting almost everywhere of one or at best two rooms, an entrance hall, eventually a pantry, and sometimes a porch facing the entrance side. A stable for the priest's own use was several times mentioned and in a few cases even a cellar.[51] By 1778, the bishop Andrej Bacsinszky and the *Aerario* official Paul Festetics established the parish houses in the villages owned by the royal treasury to have three rooms, a pantry and a separate stable with barn. The houses of the church singers were planned with two rooms (of which one for teaching children) and a pantry, whereas for the sexton one room and a pantry were recommended. The *Aerario* obliged itself to donate the land and deliver the necessary timber for construction.[52]

Not surprisingly, the new parish houses copied the ample layouts of the latest Hungarian manor-houses with *odolhaz*, raising their status and making them attractive to any priest, noble or serf. These standards were gradually implemented in the parishes all around the province and led to an unexpected competition with the country manor-houses. The famous ethnologist Mihai Pop, with roots in this region, believed the ample manorial house with *odolhaz* was the model for many later houses of the 19th and 20th century in Maramureş.[53] To this it might have decisively contributed the program to build parish houses of this kind.

There are maybe a few wooden parish houses surviving from that time. Apart from the parish-manorial house from Borşa, we know from written records of the parish house from Breb, built by the noble priest Ştefan Bud in 1801. The large number of rooms mentioned suggests it had a layout with *odolhaz*. The house was

[51] MOL, C 99, XI A, Maramoros 1774.
[52] Hadzhega 1922, 213-215.
[53] Pop 1983, 14.

32 *Breb*. The present large parish wooden house with *odolhaz* and porch on three sides was built in 1903 replacing a similar one from 1801. Its high value derives from its traditional character and position close to the parish church forming an architectonic unity which has not changed significantly during the last two centuries. The small gate at left, separating the church yard from the parish yard, is a replica after one from 1790, saved in the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş from Sighet. The recent religious division separated the parish house, resided by the Orthodox priest, from the church, used by the Uniate congregation. Hopefully the entire ensemble would be preserved. Photo: May 1995.

sold in 1903 to a local noble to become a manor-house and it was soon replaced with the present one (**32**).[54]

A notable construction with an intricate history survived from the former monastery of Bârsana (**31**). This was dendrochronologically dated from the winter of 1757-58[55] and it appears to be the refectory mentioned as newly built in 1765.[56] After the monastery was closed, following the imperial policy from 1787, it was transferred together with the church inside the village, around 1795.[57] Afterwards, it probably served as a confessional school or a house for a clergyman, and with that occasion it was extended with an *odolhaz*. From the beginning, the construction was built of logs of oak with two large warm rooms separated by an entrance hall.

The most common houses for both nobles and serfs were built in the 17th and 18th centuries of logs with projecting joints and with only one room and an entrance hall. Also common was the little more advanced house with an added cold pantry (**28**).[58] The porch sheltering the entrance along the main facade was a free option, especially from the 18th century onwards. In the 18th century the houses covered by shingles were quite rare everywhere, even in the cities the roofs were covered by either thatch or reed. The floors were dominantly of mud, few having possibilities to lay planks inside.

Those who maintained the oldest constructive features alive into the 20th century were the poor people. Even today some lonely elders or poor families still live in log houses with a single warm room and a dark cold entrance hall as for

[54] Doroş Nicolae, Parochia Breb, 1903, mss in Arhiva Parohiei Breb.
[55] Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, 47.
[56] Kinah 1930, 443.
[57] Both the church and the refectory have some timbers dated about 1795 (Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, table 7, sample 1 and table 2, no. 8). Today, the building houses the collections of the local museum.
[58] Romulus Vuia, *Studii de etnografie şi folclor*, II, 72, Bucureşti, 1980; Dăncuş 1986, 117-31, MLR, Casa, 257, 365 and 366.

33 *Strâmtura.* This has been a common farmstead in the former serf village of Strâmtura. The low gate was once a clear sign of the serf status of the holder. The shingled roofs are now generalised if not competed by other modern materials, yet, for one or two generations ago the constructions were mainly thatched. The wooden house, situated rearmost from the street, has only a warm room accessed through an ante-room and a porch of 5 posts. The house was possibly built in the second half of the 19th century or at the beginning of the next one. Photos: March 1995.

centuries ago (**33**). The small one-room houses with wattle walls disappeared for some time ago but a few elders in isolated villages can remember their existence.[59] Even the thatched roofs, once dominant, became towards the end of the 20th century a rare mark of an ancient world. A curiosity today is the mud floor, once called the face of the house. The windows closed by an ox bladder, lasting longest in isolated Gypsy homes, are so well forgotten that some even believed the houses in Maramureş always had window glasses.[60] The change have gone so far during the last century that old manor-houses, not for a long time ago admired for their beauty and filling their owners with pride, are now identified with poverty. And everything connected with poverty is something to be ashamed of in Maramureş,

[59] Inf. Costin 2000.
[60] MLR, Casa, 257, 365, 366, question 183.

34 *Ieud*. Saved in a local private museum, the house of Moldovan Palaga Babii illustrates some of the simplest and oldest types of log houses, with only a small room and a dark ante-room, without any closed porch. However, considering the type of flush corner joints, the house can not be older than 100-150 years. Photo: September 2001.

35 *Cuhea*. The house of Şimon Irina *Cozmii* in Cuhea. The dry space under the eaves has been regularly used to shelter the wood for cooking and warming. Photo: June 1999.

even if that is their cultural heritage. This is the main reason why most of the valuable old wooden constructions vanished away all over Maramureş.

A direct example of a former modest house is visible now in the private museum of the Pleş family, in Ieud (**34**). This small house, which once belonged to Moldovan Palaga *Babii*, was probably built about a century ago, of round logs interlocked with dovetail joints. The construction enclosed only a room and a cold entrance hall. A very simple, ancient solution can be observed at the entrance, where the door jambs were fixed upwards directly in the timber above.

An even more recent and close example of how common dwellings might have looked like for some centuries ago is the house of Şimon Irina *Cozmii* in Cuhea (**35**), transformed in 1956-57 into a room and an entrance hall of 445 x 737

cm. According to the owner: *"previously it was a bit larger but ruinous. If you were poor and couldn't afford, you did as you could"*.

These last examples are decent constructions, able to offer appropriate comfort over the cold winters and rainy seasons. We can go further and imagine even ruinous, improvised shelters in which the people were forced by hostile conditions to live. The local shepherds still use more or less improvised shelters on the heights of the mountains during the pasturing season.

These poor constructions, although they do not excel from an architectural point of view, can mirror the former diversity and graduation in the local housing. Moreover we can better understand the most notable performances in relation to the graduate scale behind.

36 *The Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş from Sighet*. The high gate with roof has been for many centuries a clear sign of the status of the owner. Today there is a renaissance in building such gates, often richly decorated. The decorative pattern of wattle work in the fence on both sides of this gate is specific in some parts of Southern Maramureş. Photo: October 2000.

The house was not always the single one who best marked the social status of an owner. The sizes of the outbuildings or the type of gate (**36**) were as effective means to signal the social affiliation.[61] In the old days it was the stable with the barn that was placed nearer the street exposed to the eyes of the foreigners while the house was drawn inside the garden. The separate pantry (*găbănaş*) was also said to mark the status of a farmstead.[62]

Eventually, every construction in the garden of a landowner could have been subject for expressing his rank. There was an entire array of means to achieve this desire, either through sizes, decorations, inscriptions or the quality of the work. The

[61] Dăncuş 1986, 100 and 107.
[62] Dăncuş, 1986, 115; inf. Hotico Gavrilă 2003.

community also must have been able to decode these signs and respond appropriately. An old local code with roots in old juridical laws was to *"do not enter a noble's property without his permission and speak to him without being asked"*.[63]

The old vernacular buildings surviving today in Maramureş, especially in the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş, although only a small number from the numerous ones of the past, are still representative for all the social layers of the communities, from the manor houses, to the common and even modest outbuildings. In them we can also distinguish all the basic features of the local traditional carpentry of common profane purpose. It is therefore entirely possible to compare the local secular architecture with the sacred one.

The regional rural architecture in general could not have been completely different from their standing examples. Certainly, if many more old building survived, we would encounter today more variety, several local particularities, and impressive individual works. However, there is a lot of work left to document and save what it still stands, before it would vanish away.

[63] Pop 1983, 12.

1.3 Traditional building in wood

1.3.1 The wood

In the course of many centuries the natives built up their knowledge and skills for the woods surrounding them. A good building work always started in the forest. The species of trees, their place in the landscape, their quality, sizes and even the moment to fell them were careful weight to correspond the purpose. The work was preferably done in a team led by a master carpenter. From the time it is remembered, in a team there were invited relatives, friends and neighbours, which by tradition gathered to work for free (*clacă*). Their labour was later rewarded with a feast.[64]

The former vast primeval forests of Maramureş shifted from coniferous trees on the high slopes of the mountains to deciduous trees on the lower hills and in the narrow plane of Tisa. The quality of the wood of Maramureş was considerably appreciated in northern Hungary and therefore it is not surprising that Prince George Rákóczi of Transylvania, in 1647, ordered for the completion of his palace in Sarospatak 900 timbers, 8 fathoms long, and 100.000 shingles to be brought by rafts from Sighet.[65]

The coniferous have softwood easy to work with an axe and are generally lighter to handle on the construction site than the hardwood of the deciduous trees. Among coniferous the fir was preferred for its long resistance, but the shingles were best made of resinous spruce. In the mixed forests of deciduous species the oak and the beech dominated. In the autumn, these woods so rich in acorn and nut were swarmed by large flocks of swine, driven there to fatten from as far as the neighbouring counties. The oak was very much appreciated for its resistance and therefore widely used in construction especially for churches. Less resistant but easier to work with an axe was the beech, mainly used in common constructions. In the village of Rekite, in Verkhovyna, still stands the single known church built of beech logs. In another village, in Kushnytsia, the church was built in 1683 entirely of lime tree.[66]

The difficulty to handle the heavy logs of the deciduous trees may explain why in the lower Iza valley at least two professional carpenters worked together, while in the coniferous zone of the upper Iza valley only one professional craftsman was engaged.

In many villages it was the custom to build with logs of a single kind of tree, often due to the nature of the local forests, but where there were possibilities to select among various species their specific characteristics were well complemented in a construction. The churches built of fir were primarily provided with sills of oak to improve the resistance against dump. For a good quality of the decorative carvings on the portals the responsive oak or ash was preferred. The ash is said to burn slowly and by this reason it must have been used in the tower of the church of Ieud Deal.[67]

According to the local experience, the trees cut in the winter when the moon was decreasing lasted longest in a construction. The dendrochronological analyses from several churches plainly confirm the trees were felled during that season.[68] This knowledge was certainly applied whenever the construction was planned in good time. For important constructions, like churches, it was suggested the logs

[64] Pop 1983, 9. Inf. Mihai Dăncuş 1994.
[65] ASM, 1/786. About the Renaissance palace in: Dercsényi Dezsö, *Historical monuments and their protection in Hungary*, Budapest 1984, 24.
[66] Hadzhega 1922, 215.
[67] Inf. Hotico Găvrilă 1997.
[68] Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, table 2.

were first left to dry several years before the building started. The dried logs (*lemne de coroan*) were harder to work with but gave less setting problems in large buildings. A confrontation of the dendrochronological results with the dating inscriptions and written sources generally indicates a short period from the felling time until the construction was ready. While the churches from Bârsana Monastery and Budeşti Josani were built short after the timbers were felled, those from Giuleşti Monastery, Fereşti and Slatina were raised after approximately one year.[69] There are even some written records where the trees for construction were cut in the summer and used by return. In 1763, when the sills and the roofs of the buildings in the monastery of Giuleşti where replaced, the felling begun in June and continued in September as the work progressed.[70]

A knowledge built up on long experience was about the quality of the wood in relation to the place it grew. The more favourable was a place for vegetation the softer was the fibre of the trees and less resistant the building material. The fast growing trees from the swamps or slopes facing the sun were preferred for common dwellings since they were easy to work in. The resistant timber, in exchange, was obtained from the trees grown slowly in dense forests from northward-facing slopes. The strongest of all were those on the crests of the hills because there they were hindered to grow rapidly by all the climatic vicissitudes. Very appreciated for sills were the solitary twisted oaks that were supposed to last several centuries if properly separated from the damp of the soil. And indeed, the sills of the old churches testify in many places the wisdom of the old masters.

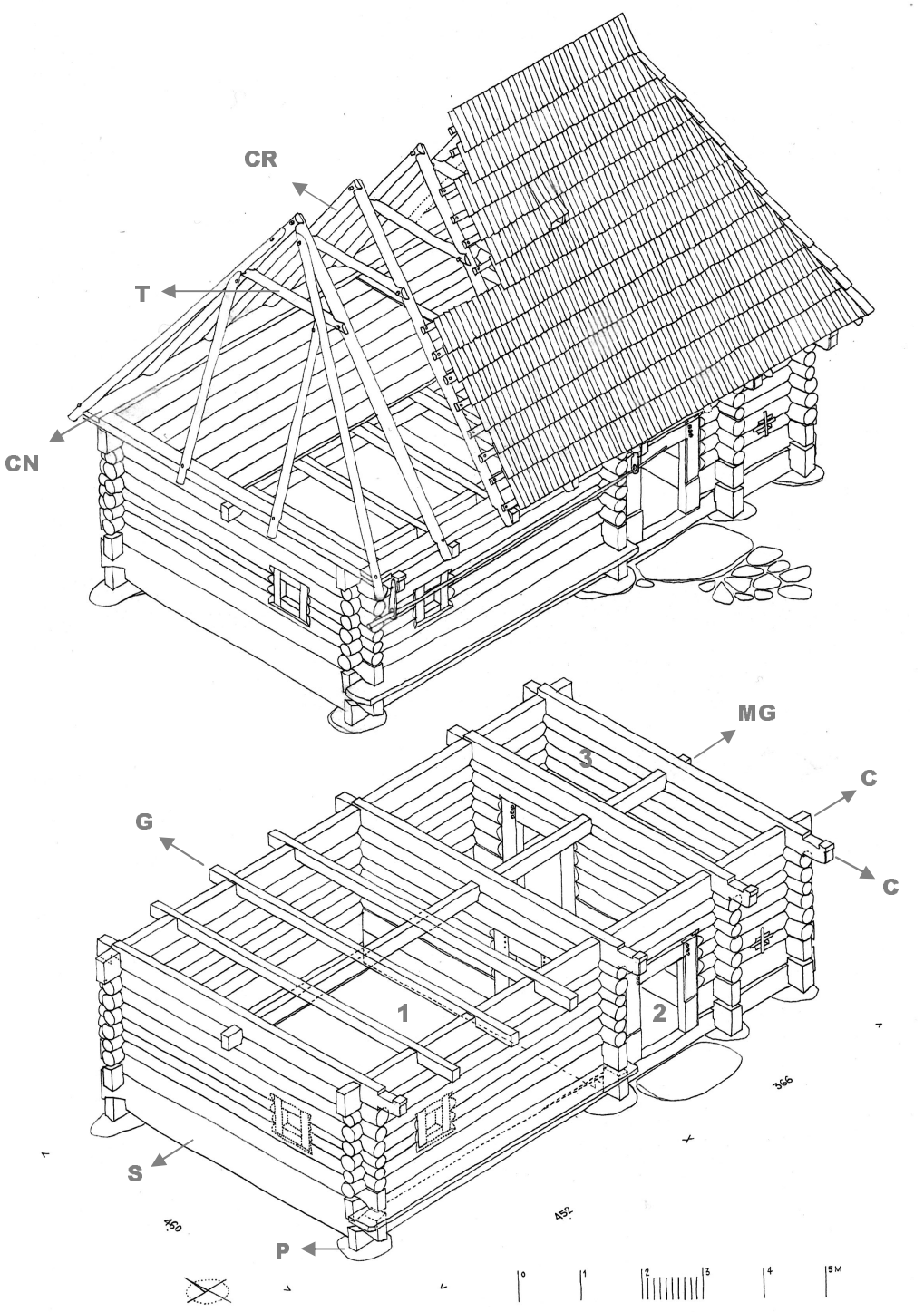
The transport became a concern when the necessary trees begun to be found only further and further from the construction site. A house seldom would have raised problems, but the churches were too large and complex to compromise with the quality and the sizes of the logs. Until the 18th century the primeval forests were still at the margins of the small villages, threatening to claim back what was cleared by earlier generations of people. Therefore some of the oldest standing constructions are said to be built with the logs cut on the place. This was true for the church of Valea Stejarului at the beginning of the 17th century, but about two centuries later, when the northern sill was replaced, the massive log was cut and transported with a cart drawn by oxen from a margin of the village. For the construction of the fine church in Cuhea, in 1754, the oral tradition indicates the fir trees were selected from a stony hill in *Valea Ursului* and the logs were transported in the winter several km with slides drawn by oxen.[71]

37 *Valea Stejarului*. A log of oak was transported from the forest by this cart probably drawn by a pair of horses or oxen. Photo: May 1996.

Another concern when the distance was considerable was the dimensions of the logs. When the clearing site was at a reachable distance, like in the case of the parish churches from Dragomireşti and Săcel, the carpenters asked for the right sizes they needed by shouting to the loggers. If that wasn't possible, to prevent mistakes, the measure in the forest was established a bit longer than the common one.

Once the logs were brought on the construction site the master carpenter was able to proceed to build. He discussed at length the coming features with the customers and planed how to best achieve them. The work started first with rituals seeking good omen for the future purpose. At the end, when the building was ready to be used, another ritual closed the work by consecrating the new built space.

[69] Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, table 2. According to archpriest and parish priest Vasile Voloşan the church was erected in 1790 (Bârlea 1909, 192/696) and not in 1794 as Tit Bud (1911, 64) stated, thus about one year after the felling of the trees. The church from Slatina was moved to Hoteni in 1896-1903 (Bud 1911, 54).
[70] ASM, Rednic, 107/1763.
[71] Inf. Munteanu 1996; inf. Bizău 1999.



38 *Cuhea.* The house of Coman Maria *a lu Babău* represents a common log house and is datable probably in the second half of the 18th century. The lower drawing displays the entire log structure (*butea*) just before the construction of the roof. Customarily, the house was planned with a square room (1) and two narrow cold rooms for the entrance hall (2) and the pantry (3). The work started with the massive squared sills (S - *strat*), laid on large stones (P – *căpătâie*). The walls of round fir logs were ended by squared plates (C – *călăreț*). The master's girder (MG – *meştergrinda*) was fastened to its position by the plates to strengthen the joists (G – *grindă*). In this way the log structure was interconnected with its ceiling and roof. The roof starts where the log building ends, at the ceiling. A rectangular frame of eaves purlins (CN – *cunună*) is positioned all around on the ends of the plates and eventually of the joists to support the raftering. The rafters (CR – *corn*) are paired and strengthened by a collar (T – *tingă*). Scale drawing: November 2002.

39 *The Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş, Sighet-Dobăieş*. The log building is still common in Southern Maramureş. During the last decade even some new wooden churches with traditional appearance were made. In this picture the carpenters worked with a wooden church for a Romanian community in Caracas, Venezuela. Photo: July 1994.

1.3.2 Log building

The log technique effectively controls the shrinkage of the wood by taking in account the gravitation as a mean to continually seal the walls against all weathers.[72] This is probably one of the reasons it became so widely spread in the cold but richly forested parts of the continent, both in the north, the east and along the high mountain chains across. In rural Maramureş, it was the dominant way of constructing walls into our days. A structure built entirely of layered logs, up to the ceiling, was here distinctively named *bute*; thus excluding the roof, which was built of rafters. A peasant from Vad described in 1926 the construction of a log house in the following way:

"[Firstly] *the place is measured,* [than] *the stones are brought and the base is made.* [After] *the sills are laid, all the places for doors and windows are measured on them.* [After that,] *the walls are joined and the windows* [are placed] *in the*

[72] Zwerger 1997, 80; Sjömar 2000:1, 123.

walls. On the walls there are laid the plates, above them the joists and on them the eaves purlins. [Than] *comes the porch with its posts. After this it follows the rafters fixed in the eaves purlins. On the rafters are the laths fixed and on them the shingles. When the rafters were raised, a red textile material on a fir branch is hanged on their top. Than it comes the boarding of the doorways and windows. After that the house is filled with mud, which is packed down by inviting the young men to dance* [on it]. *Than the oven is made and the walls are plastered."*[73]

This description contains the basic moments and parts of the constructions in their succession and largely corresponds to realities longer in the past (**38**). Another peasant, from Săpânța, continued the list with the furniture, which into the 20th century was still sometimes made by carpenters.[74]

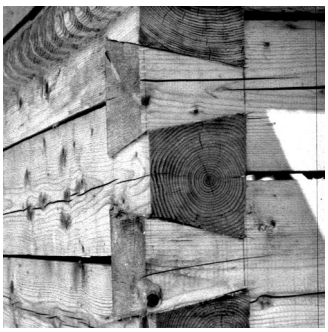
In this simple succession, more or less, there were built from all the common buildings in a farm, to the fashionable manor-houses and also the large local churches. Beyond these evidences, clearly reproduced by any native, the carpenter stood alone with a number of problems that he had to solve every time he engaged in a construction. For the first, the logs had to be joined together to become walls. Since often the result sought by the carpenter was a well sealed wall, he needed to control the shrinkage of the logs as they dried and became pressed together by the weight of the construction. Another concern was how to make openings in the walls for doors and windows without weakening the structure. And finally, he had to build the suitable roof to protect the construction from precipitations. The main secrets of the local carpentry were veiled in these decisions, generating a range of differences among craftsmen, buildings and zones.

The corner joints

According to the well known local master carpenter Găvrilă Hotico *Herenta "the entire strength of a log construction is on its corners. If they are well assembled, the entire building lasts. And there you can recognise a good craftsman."*

One of the basic functions of the corner joints stressed by the local master carpenters is to unload the entire weight of the building. Vertically, the corner joints work together like pillars, transferring the load above to the large corner stones bellow. Any alteration of this vital function can lead to unpredictable consequences. If the weight of a construction unloads from the beginning in between the corner joints, the corner joints will open after a time and the risk to ruin under a storm would become imminent. For this reason the old carpenters were very serious with the problematic shrinking of the logs as they dried and the settlement created by the heavy load. They secured the function of the corners by providing a settlement gap between the tiers of logs (*apădaş*). The gaps (**40**) prevented the walls from taking over the load from the corners during the shrinkage. Each of the gaps was calculated in the sizes of the ending corner joints, by carefully weighing between the essence of the wood, the size of the building, the location in the wall, the thickness of the log, the angle between the walls and especially if the wood was green or dried. This particular but basic knowledge was learned only through long experience. After a period of time, the heavy pressure on the corners closed these gaps making the walls impervious, and the entire construction long lasting.[75]

40 *Dragomireşti*. The settlement gaps were plainly visible during the construction of a new wooden church in Dragomireşti by master carpenter Găvrilă Hotico *Herenta* from Ieud. Photo: July 1997.



[73] MLR, Casa, 365, 33. The red textile in a fir branch is a local custom to honour the carpenter for his work, and it is called the flag or the reward of the master.
[74] *"*[And than] *we fill the house with benches and a chest ... table and chairs, a bed ..."* MLR, Casa 366, 33.
[75] Inf. Hotico 2000; inf. Lăscăianu 2000.

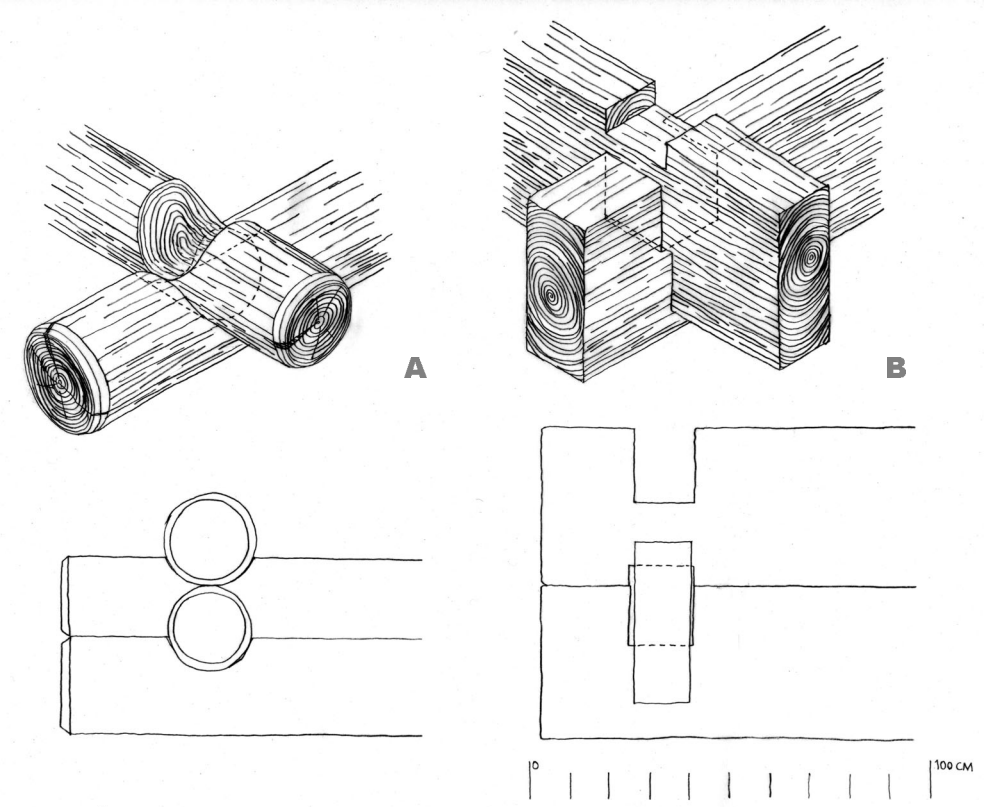
In a building, every interlocking between two logs was unique, because of their particular sizes, but there was a single guiding principle behind all of them. In the most elaborated joints this standard procedure was not easy to be read, since there were involved not only the skills of interlocking but also a good knowledge based on a long experience of how the wood worked in a wall. A joint had to be tight, robust, to stop the logs slipping out and to provide settlement gaps. All these requirements were synthesised in one principle, specific to each type of joint, and it was kept highly secret by the old masters. Each carpenter applied a principle in his own particular way, leaving his personal print on the joints he made. It is a chance that in Maramureş the general principles behind a few types of joints have survived, due to the uninterrupted shifts of generations of professional carpenters.

In the local vernacular architecture, the small variety of corner joints can be basically reduced to *projecting* and *flush* joints.[76] Most of these joints must have been known since centuries or even millenniums ago in many parts of Europe. It is generally believed that they were created alongside with the first tools.[77] An archaeologically uncovered wooden well with projecting joints in Germany was firmly dated from as back as 5084 BC,[78] confirming the earlier suppositions. For this reason, the age and the origins of the European joints are often older and farther than the time and the place of the surviving historical buildings. And for the same reason, the results obtained in one corner of the continent can be useful in another. Accordingly, the study of the joints in Maramureş can be a subject of importance for a large geographical area.

In the central and southern parts of Maramureş, the differentiation between projecting and flush joints was fundamental and it overlapped with the distinction made between secular and church constructions. The refined flush joints were ranked higher than the simple but practical projecting joints. This distinction was not unique, identical attitudes being recorded from Middle Ages in other parts of Romania,[79] in Scandinavia[80] and so on.[81] This old sacred distinction lasted in Maramureş until the end of the 18th century, when it became a social ranking sign, as it was recorded in the manor-house from Cuhea.

It is interesting to notice that the Rusyns from the mountainous parts of Northern Maramureş, mainly in Verkhovyna, built their churches with various projecting joints until the turn of the 18th century, when a new local type of church, with flush joints, was created. The projecting joints of the churches resembled those from the secular buildings, which were mainly cut from split logs, with the flat part inside and the round part outside. Their attachment to these joints is obviously in Roztoka, where the massive squared timbers of the sanctuary, originating from a transferred church with flush *covert* joints, were rejoined with specific projecting ends, in 1759. Not surprisingly, even the wooden church from Izky, one of the first where the new model was adopted, the projecting joints were retained for a joyful play with their shapes.

[76] Terms used by David Buxton (1981, 22-25).
[77] Zwerger 1997, 121; Dinu Antonescu, "Continuitate", *Ethnos*, 2, 79-100, Bucureşti 1992; Radu Florescu, "Vechimea construcţiilor din lemn încheiat pe teritoriul României", *Acta Musei Maramoresiensis*, I, 289-294, Sighet 2002.
[78] Peter Sjömar, *Byggnadsuppmätning, Historik och praktik*, 64, Borås 2000.
[79] Baboş 2003, 43-59.
[80] Ullén 1983; Sjömar 1988, 286-290.
[81] Zwerger 1997, 143.



41 *Projecting corner joints.* The *hollow* joint (A) as documented at the Chiș-Țicală house from Sălișstea de Sus and the *double-slot* joint (B) as measured at the Berciu house from Călinești. Scale drawings: October 2000.

Projecting corner joints

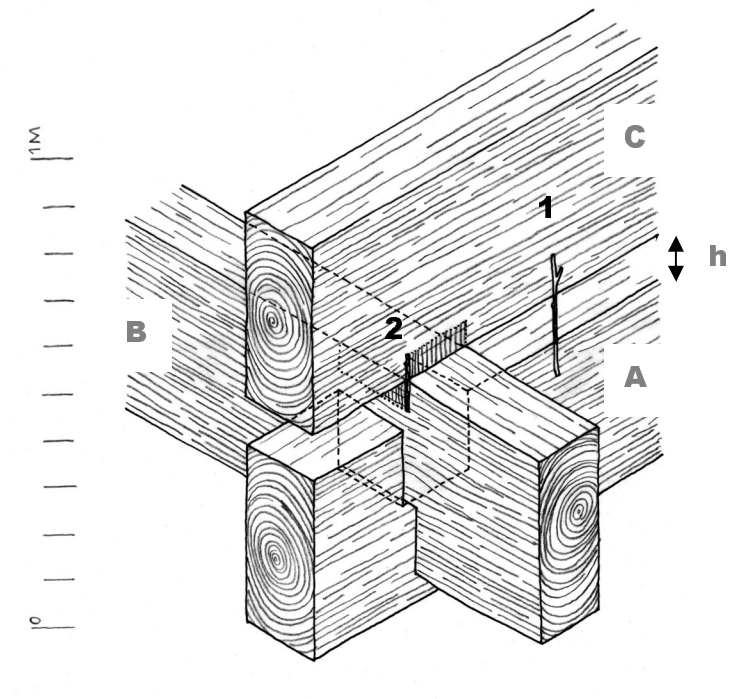
The local projecting corner joints, the *hollow* joint and the *double-slot* joint, were easy to execute with an axe or an adze and resistant in the walls. Thanks to these essential qualities they were extensively used in the local vernacular architecture until the middle of the 20th century, when they were completely replaced by the dovetail joint. A peasant said he preferred these old projecting joints before the flush ones because they better resisted any attempt to brake in from outside, a valuable attribute in the insecure times of the past.

The *hollow* joint (*în halău*)[82] was a semicircular cut made on the top of a round log (*mereu*) to receive the rounded shape of the next log above (**41** A, **42**). The end protruding out of the corner locked actually the log above from being twisted out of its position. In Maramureş, there are no longer old carpenters working with this joint, but the principle of cutting such a joint was appreciated by the master Borca Pătru Ciorbănesii from Bârsana to have been very simple. The bottom log was cut after the rounded underside of the incoming top one until the space between incoming logs was closed, without concern for a settlement play. However the well sealed joints and walls of some old manor houses indicate the settlement play might have been used. The hollow joint is considered one of the most primitive corner joints and it was largely utilised in many parts of Europe into our modern times.

42 *Șieu*. Hollow joints at the house of Petrovai family, now in the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureș. Photo: October 2000.

The *double-slot* joint was the suited alternative to the hollow joint when the logs were squared (**41** B, **43**-**44**). In Maramureş it was named the "straight" or more commonly the "Romanian" joint (*tyeotoare dreaptă, românyască*) indicating its wide use in the Romanian villages. The principle of cutting such a joint is

[82] The joint had different names in different parts of the region. Most often it was simply called "the joint" – *chetoare*. In Ieud it was named *în halău* (Zderciuc 1955, 318), *șuruit* in Berbești (Focșa 1992, 138) and *bârneşte* in Budești (IEF, AER, chestionarul 2, AII/17-1066/1979, 130).



43 *Double-slot joint*. In log building, the interlocking principles always involve three wall logs. The incoming top log (C) should be lowered over the incoming bottom log (A). For this, a joint needs to be cut between the incoming top log and the transverse bottom log (B). Thus, the joint is built between two perpendicular logs (B and C), but it also has as necessary reference the height above the third one bellow (A). The height (h) is measured with a simple stick that is shortened after it (1). In the *double-slot* joint the height represented by the shortened stick (2) is half cut from the incoming top log (C) and half from the transverse bottom log (B). Scale drawing after joints at the Berciu house from Călineşti, October 2000.

44 *Călineşti*. The house of the noble Berciu family, now in the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş, was built in the 17th or the 18th century entirely with squared logs of oak and *double-slot* joints. Photo: June 1999.

remembered by some carpenters and it basically recommended to measure first the distance between the incoming top log and the incoming one below already fixed in the wall, and to divide it then equally between the two interlocking logs.[83] Thus, a double-slot joint was half cut in the bottom log and the other half in the incoming top log above (**43**). The height of a slot determined in its turn the length of the projecting end, about three times the slot's height.[84] At the end, each timber locked both the lower and the upper incoming timbers by its projecting ends. In late examples, with very high squared logs, like the Stan house from Săpânța,[85] a cog is visible inside the joint extending a much too short slot. Sometimes a settlement play was said to have been included sometimes not, depending probably on the knowledge of those who built with this largely used joint.

[83] Inf. Bledea 2000 and inf. Dan 2000.
[84] Inf. Pop 1997.
[85] The house is now in the Maramureș Museum from Sighet. Dăncuș 2000, 39 and ill. 33.

45 *Apşa de Mijloc Susani.* This medium sized wooden church, from the first decade of the 18th century, was excellently built with well levelled walls and flush covert joints. Photo: October 2000.

Flush corner joints

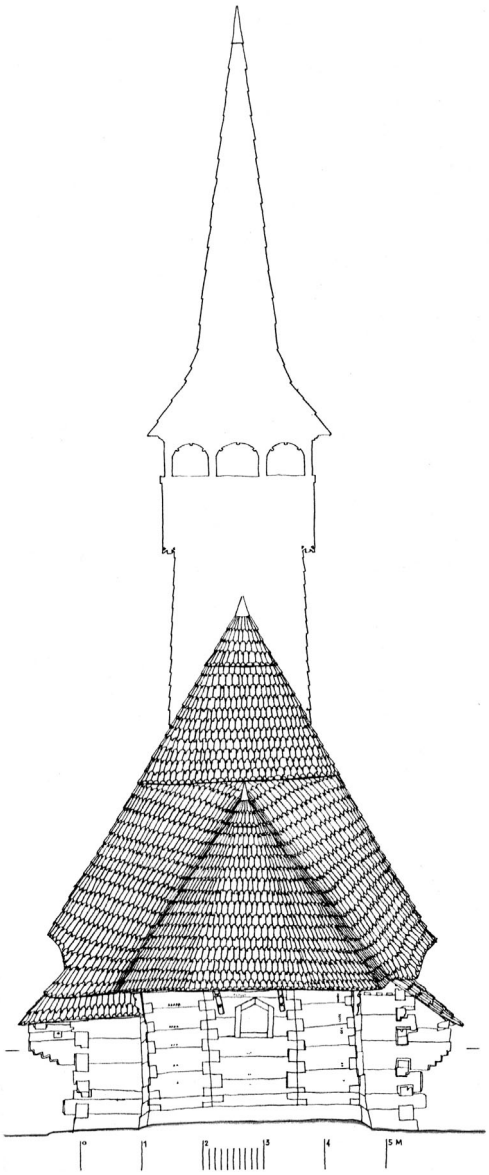
The flush corner joints, or the church joints, were required to lock the logs without protruding ends beyond the wall. The lock and the settlement play had to be calculated inside the joint without compromising either the stability of the large constructions implicated or the quality of execution. All these requirements met in a few types of flush corner joints with a long history behind. They are firmly documented in churches from the 13th century in Sweden,[86] the 14th century in Poland,[87] the 15th century in Romania[88] and from the beginning of the 16th century even in Maramureş.[89] We don't know who should we thank for their survival into our days in Maramureş, the proud owners of the manor-houses or the hired professional church carpenters who applied their ultimate knowledge to secular buildings? One thing seems sure: at the turn of the 18th century the wooden churches began to be outdated by the new stone ones. About the same time the last wooden churches were built, it also began the construction of the first manor residences with flush joints. Thus, the transfer appears as a natural consequence of

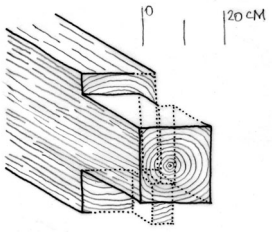
[86] Ullén 1983.
[87] Wazny, T. et al, "Dating of the oldest wooden church in Poland in Tarnowo Paluckie – a multidisciplinary task", *Dendrochronology, Environmental Change and Human History. 6th International Conference on Dendrochronology*, 375-376, Quebec 2002.
[88] Baboş and Linderson 2003.
[89] Baboş 2002, 230-248.

the changes occurred in the church architecture. Of the three types of flush joints used in the old local churches – the *covert* joint, the *tabled* joint and the *dovetail* joint – only the last two have been used until today.

As remembered, at the beginning of the 20th century the old secretive master carpenters measured these flush joints with a simple stick. But in the use of that stick was concentrated the entire principle of the joints. These elaborated joints were time-consuming to accomplish, alternating several tools. Despite the common belief that the flush corner notches were made only by axe, there were even other tools necessary to accomplish a tight interlocking, like chisels, mallets, sometimes gimlets for drilling pegs and in a few cases even saws. As the heavy logs were lifted with difficulties to their places, the corner joints had to be cut directly on the wall, near their final location.

The oldest known church joint in Maramureş is the *covert* joint, and it can be seen at the polygonal shaped sanctuary from Corneşti, firmly dated from the first decade of the 16th century (**46**).[90] It was also currently used in the churches from the 17th century and rarely even in the 18th century, last time in the parish church from Slatina, in 1794. If we add the churches from the 15th century in Little Poland[91] and Bucovina[92] and many other later examples around, then we will have strong reasons to believe that this joint was widely spread in the church wooden architecture of the Northern Carpathians in the Middle Ages and afterwards. As this joint was not identified in the late secular buildings it is possible that its secret principle was forgotten in Maramureş with the last wooden church builders. Today, we have only the existing joints to tell us about their inner logic (**47**).

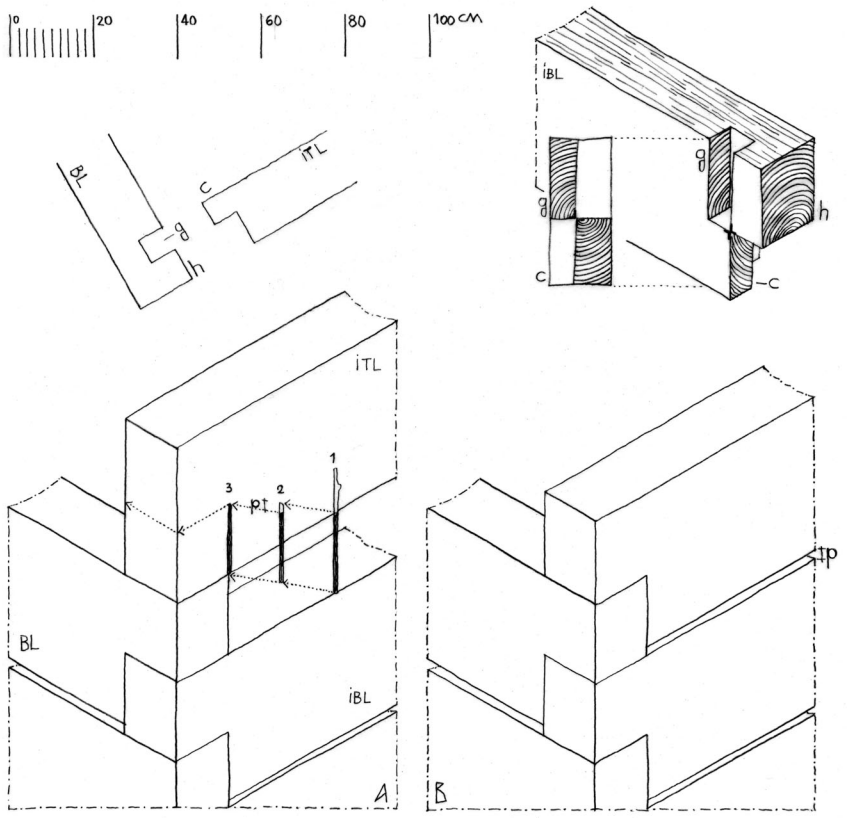


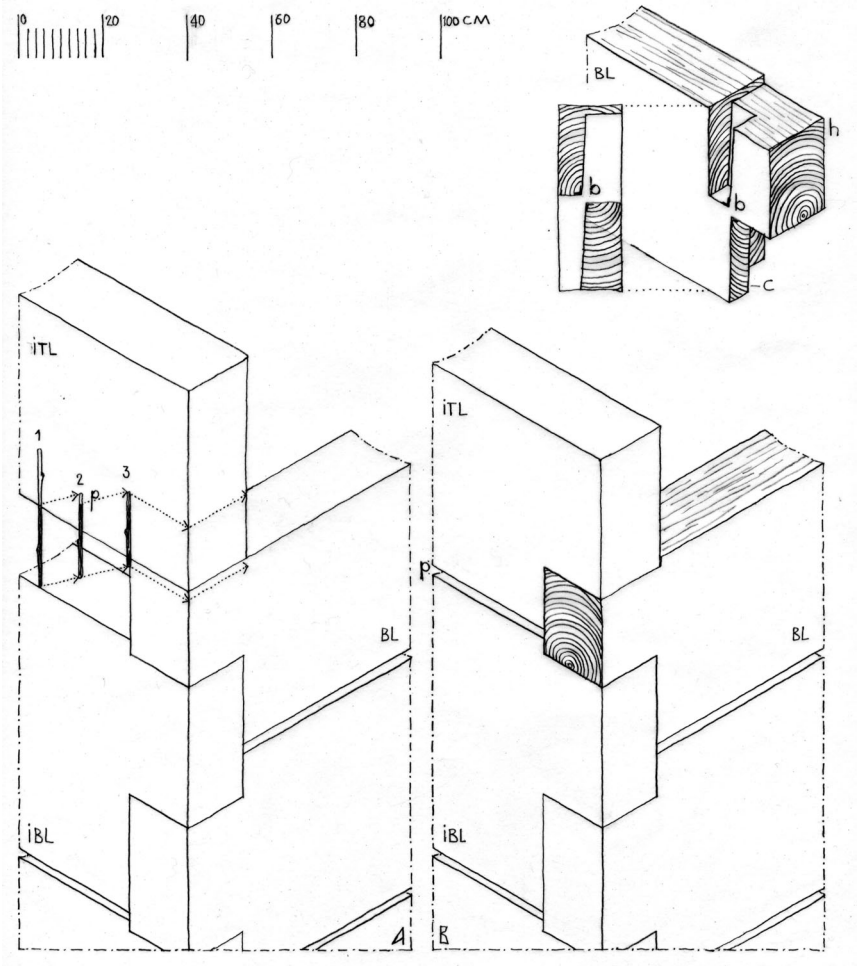


46 *Corneşti*. The sanctuary, erected in the first decade of the 16th century, displays well refined covert joints and a higher quality of wood work than the rest of the church (finished probably in 1615 and significantly repaired in the 1670s). The local oral tradition indicates the origin of the sanctuary from the Iza Valley. Scale drawing of the rear from August 1997, of a joint from June 1998 and photo from June 1996.

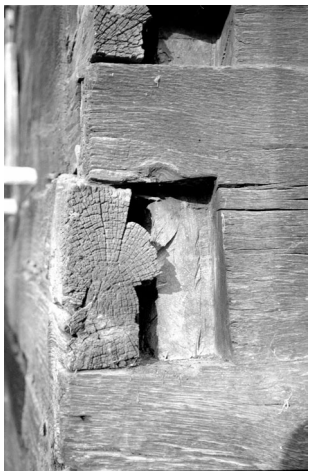
[90] Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, table 2.
[91] Brykowski 1981.
[92] Baboş 2003, 43-59.

47 *Covert joints.* At right it is reconstructed the principle to determine a simple covert joint as it might have been applied in the former church from Botiza (1594) and bellow it is illustrated the principle to establish a more elaborated covert joint as in Krainykovo (1666-68). A: preparing the joint with a stick; 1 – measuring the distance between the incoming bottom log (IBL) and the incoming top log (ITL), 2 – the necessary settlement play (p) is removed and 3 – the joint is determined with the remaining stick. B: the final location of the incoming top log (ITL) in the bottom log (BL). The main parts of a covert joint are: c – the cog, g – the groove, h – the hook and b – the bridge uniting the hook with the cog.

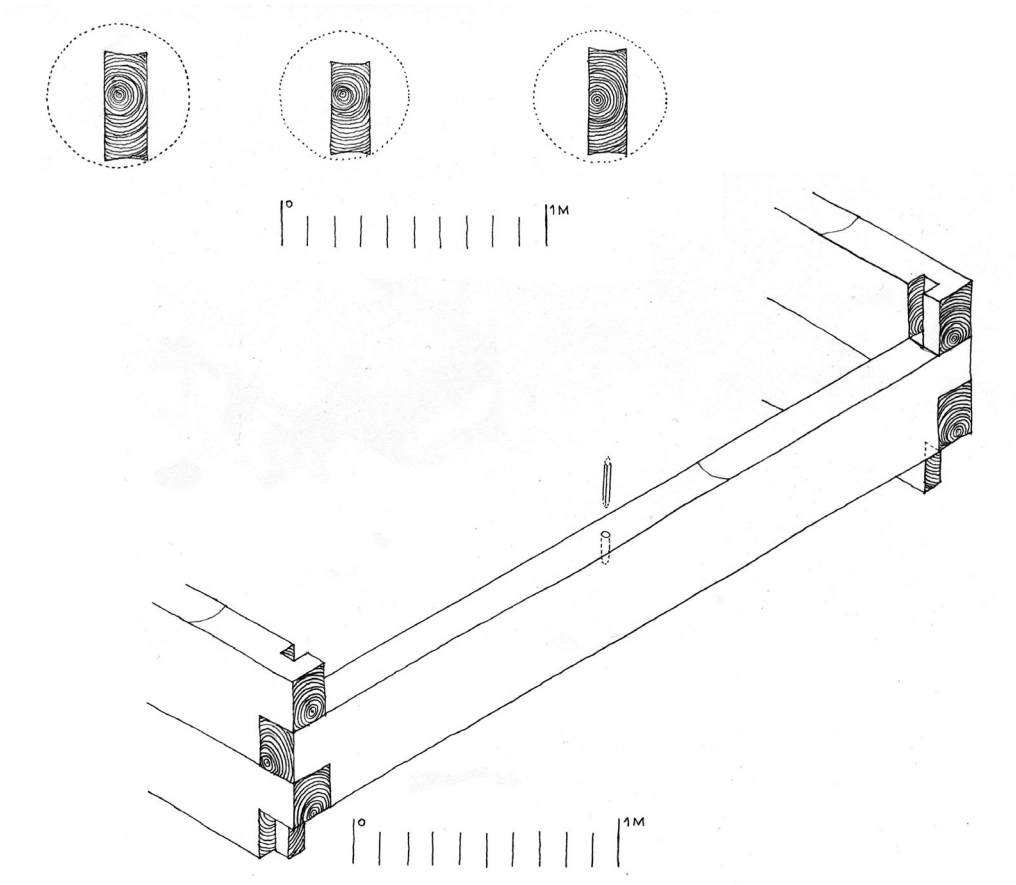




In the simplest examples of *covert* joints, like in the old church of Botiza from the turn of the 16th century,[93] the ends of two squared logs were joined together by cutting away the lower half of the incoming top timber to fit above the head of the bottom timber. Inside the joint, the lower part of the incoming top timber was provided with a vertical cog, which entered in a groove cut inside the head of the bottom timber. This hidden cog was actually the real lock and the entire strength of a joint. It had to be as minimal as possible in favour of the weaker hook like head of the bottom log. To improve the strength in the notching ends of a log, a bridge was provided in a more elaborated variant to link the hook from the upper joint with the cog of the lower joint. The bridge was obtained by sinking the head of the top timber in the head of the bottom timber by mean of a simple narrow notch, like in Corneşti and Călineşti Căeni. The deeper was that notch outside, the stronger became the bridge inside, but also the shorter remained the vital cog. A balance between these three parts was therefore critical for the strength of the entire construction. At the same time the head was moved in the middle of the beam's end, the heart of the wood remained inside the hook strengthening it once again (**48-49**). Another refined thought was expressed through the slight narrowing shapes of the cog and the groove, allowing the timber to sink into the joint, sealing it entirely against draught. This was the main quality of the joint, apart from the plane corner. And without any doubt, this type of flush joint was carved from the very beginning with great concern for the settlements in the wall.



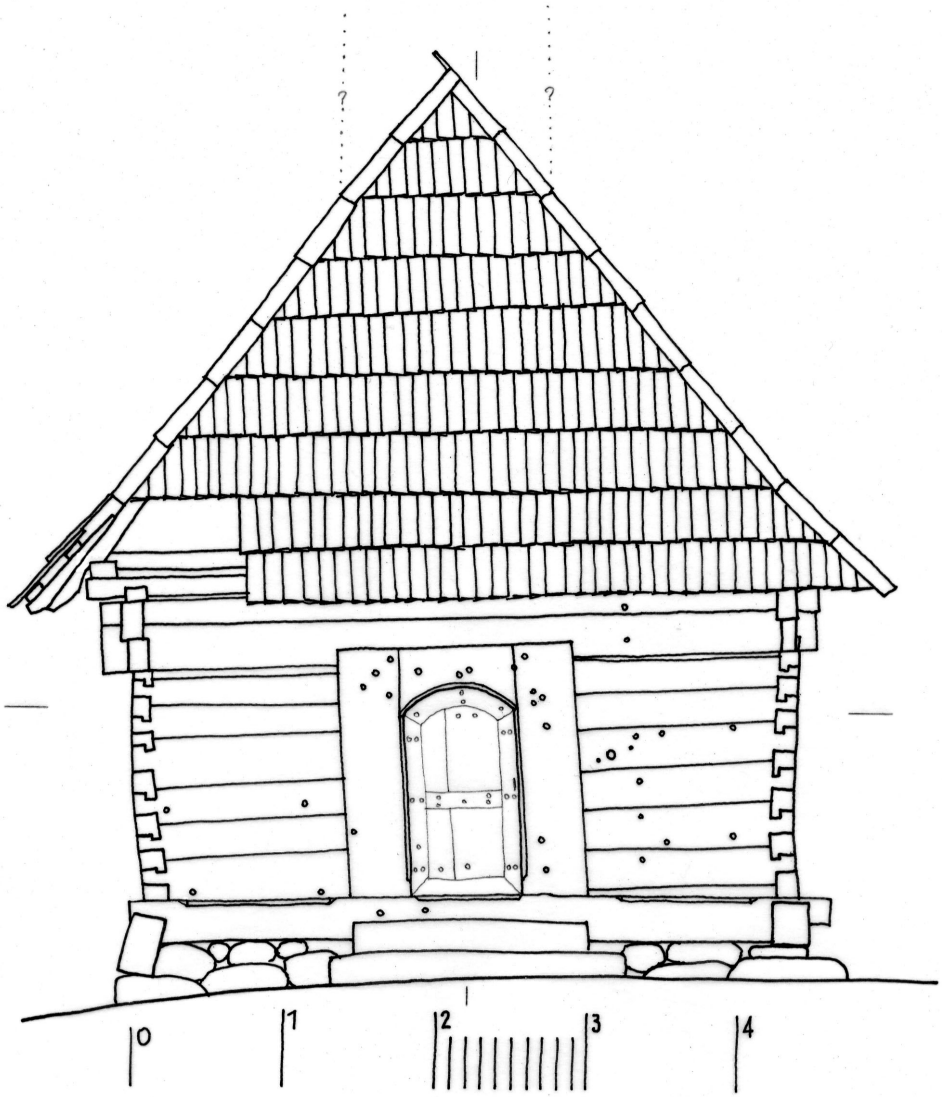
48 *Breb*. Settings in the north-western corner of the building damaged the hook in the picture exposing the covert cog. However, the damage was limited thanks to the presence of the heart of the tree in the hook. The visible traces indicate the cog was cut with an axe. Photo: October 2000.



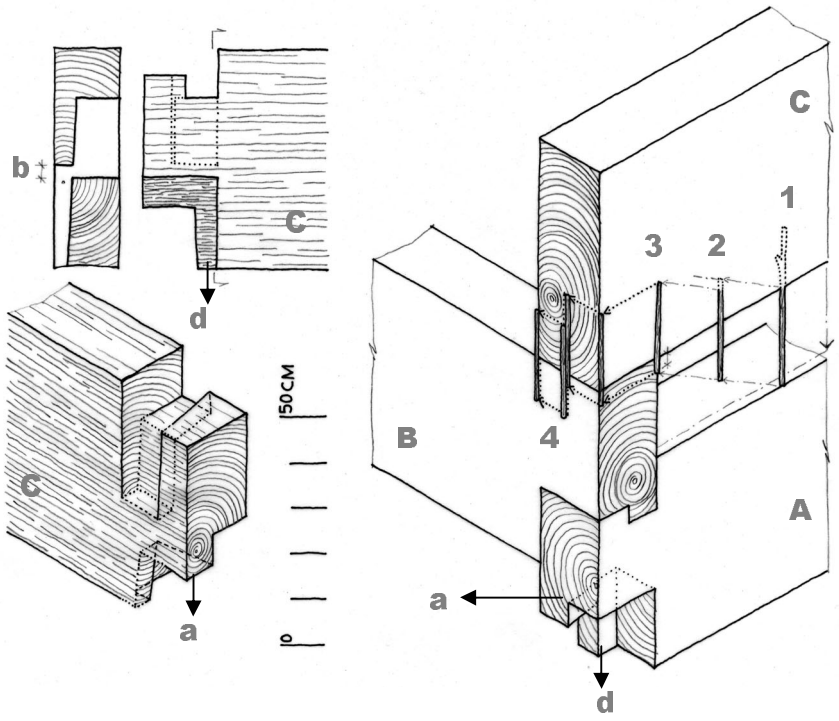
49 *Botiza*. The squared wall beams of the vanished church from Botiza (1594), exposed after the demolition of a former confessional school in Hoteni, were all cut lower than the round log would have allowed and decentred, seemingly with the intention to place the heart of the tree inside the hook. Reconstructions of a squared log in the eastern wall of the sanctuary and of 3 sections through logs. Scale drawings from August 1997 and October 2000.

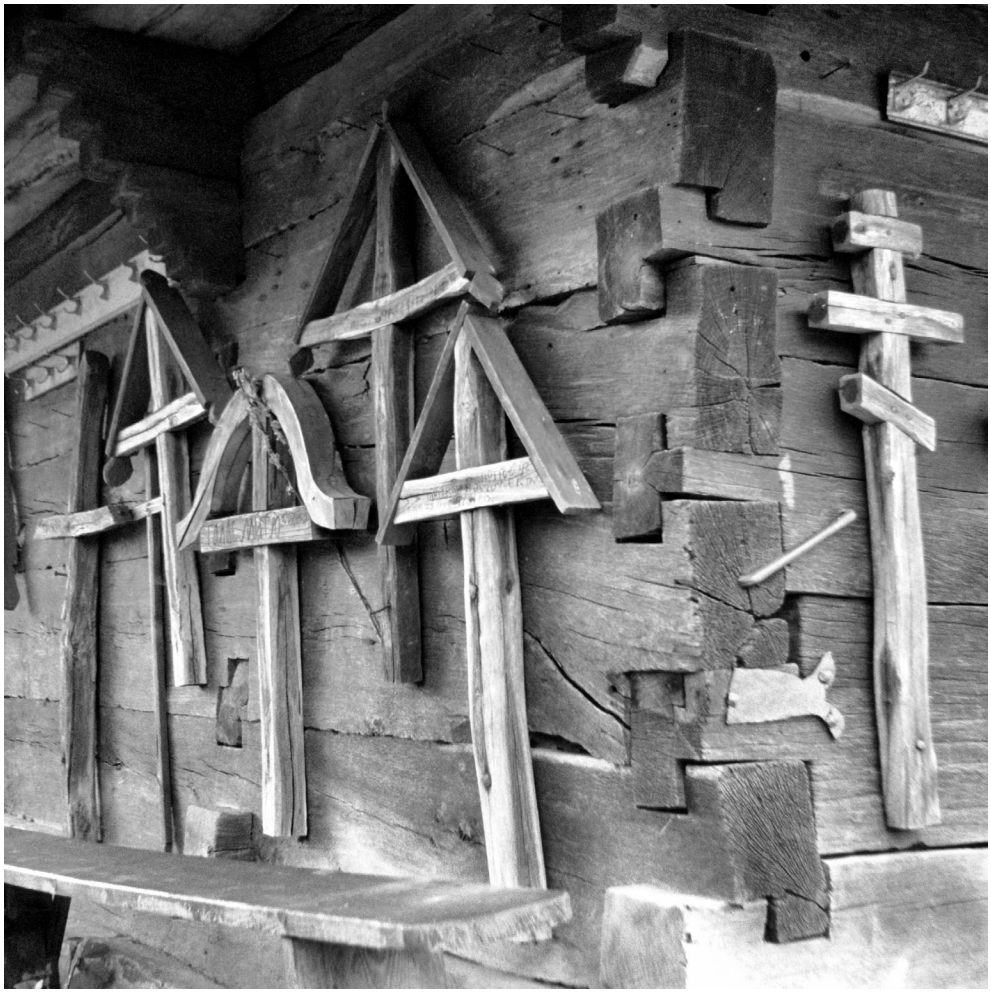
[93] Three proves from this church were dendrochronologically dated by Ólafur Eggertsson preliminary from c 1600 (Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, 44, table 2/17) and recently more precisely from 1594. Thus, by all probabilities, the old wooden church from Botiza was built in 1594 or the following years, certainly before the turn of the 16th century.

50 *Valea Stejarului*. Around 1620, the western entrance would have been enough to signal that this modest construction was a church. But for its higher dignity the flush tabled corner joints were necessary. Scale drawing: May 1996.



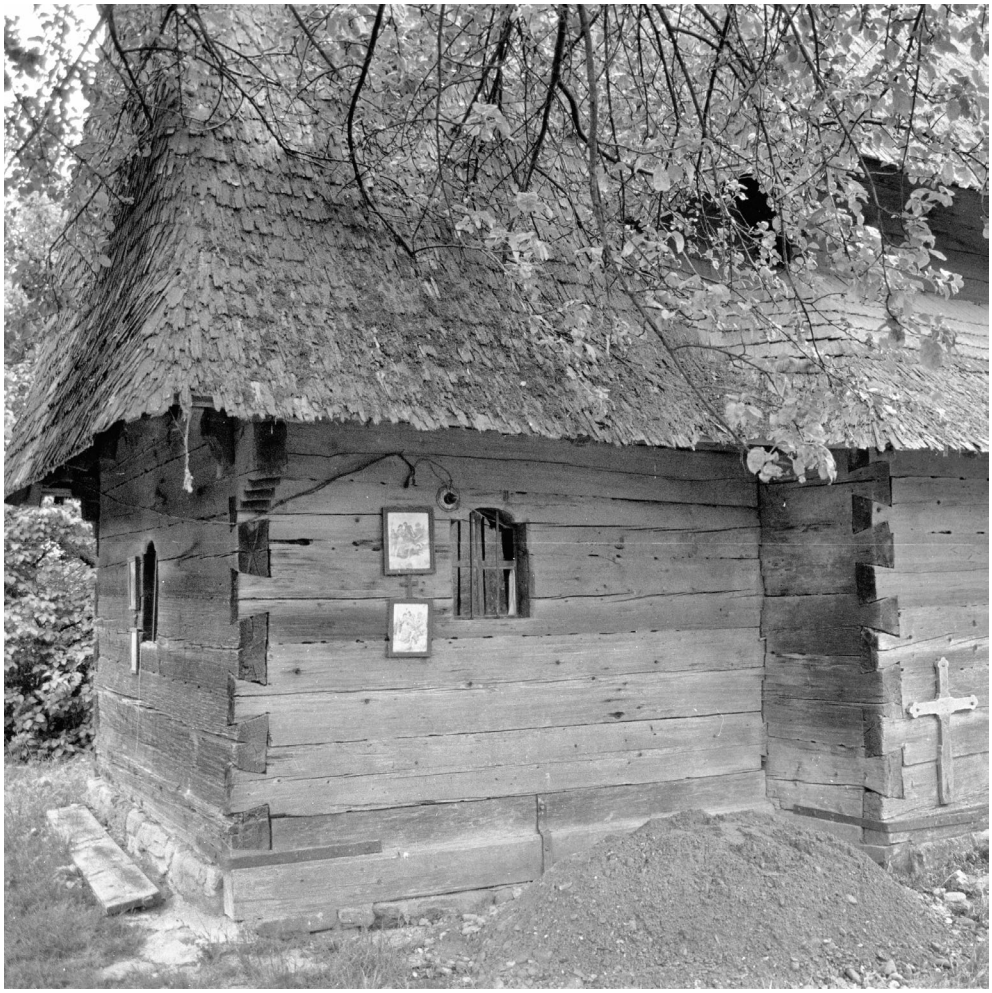
51 *Sârbi Josani*. Reconstruction of the principle to dimension a tabled joint from the church of Sârbi Josani (c. 1685). The stick representing the distance between the incoming logs (1), reduced by a settlement play (2), is used all around the overlapping ends of the joining logs (B and C). In this case, the stick is lowered 3 cm from the start (3) over the transverse bottom log (B) to provide a bridge (b) inside the head of the incoming top log (C). Further, the stick was lowered another 6.5 cm when the table (a) was dimensioned (4). A supplementary hidden cog (d) was necessary to strengthen the joints due to the massiveness of the interlocking logs. Scale drawing: October 2000.





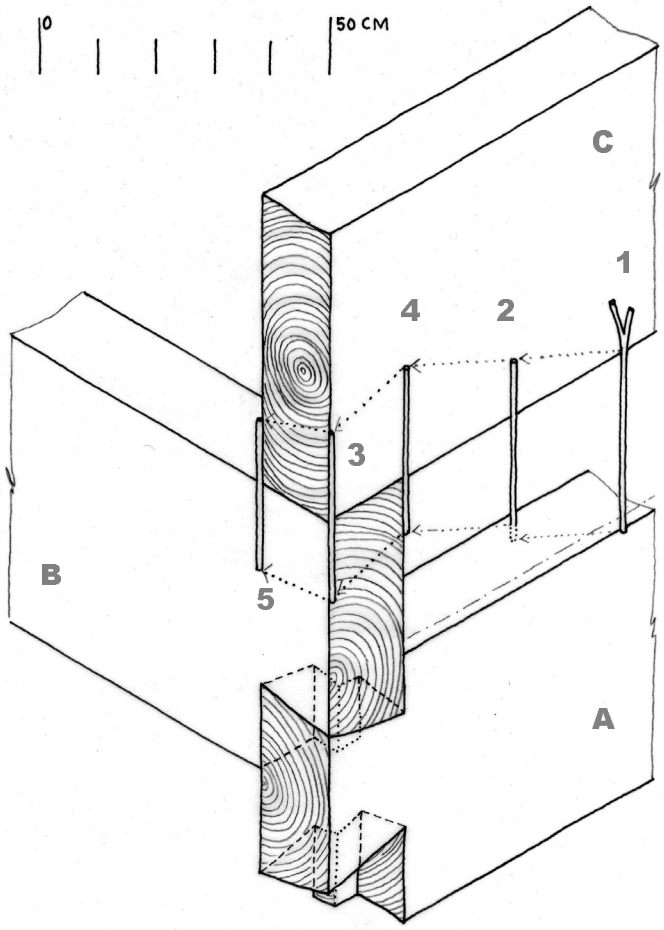
52 *Steblivka*. In the construction of this church the master carpenter shifted here and there from the common tabled joints to double tabled joints. Photo: July 1994.

The *tabled* joint (*în dintye*) became very fashionable in the inter-war period in the villages along the Apşiţa River. The master carpenter Dumitru Opriş from Apşa din Jos became hired to build numerous houses in the valley thanks to his knowledge of this demanded flush joint. This church joint is known in Maramureş from as back as the beginning of the 17th century in the parish churches from Onceşti and Valea Stejarului (**50**), and it was often utilised in the churches from that century and the following one. Characteristic for this joint is the visible table under the head of the joint, always carved with a dovetail inner shape. In Apşa din Jos and Sârbi Josani, where the timbers are very high, a horizontal cog was added extending the table inside the joint to strengthen it (**51**). This inner cog was narrowed downwards allowing the timber to sink into the joint, like in a covert joint. In 1754, the church from Cuhea was raised with tabled joints secured by a peg drilled inside them. Another more elaborated variant of the joint has two tables, arranged one above and the other under the head, as executed here and there in Steblivka, in 1797 (**52**). According to master Opriş, the old carpenters firstly measured with a stick the distance a timber had to be lowered by means of a joint. Directly after that, without being observed by anyone, the stick was once broken after the measure and then, again, to detach the short part representing the considered settlement gap. With the remaining stick it was finally measured and scratched the future joint all around the ends of the two overlapping squared logs (**51**).



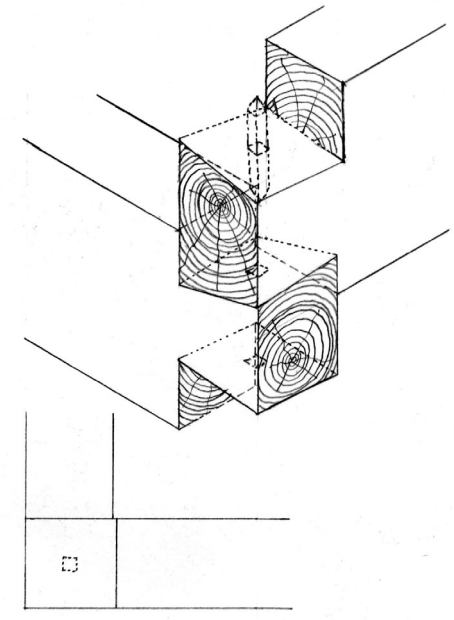
53 *Săliştea de Sus Nistoreşti* (*din faţă*). Built around 1680, this is one of the first churches where the dovetail joint was used. Photo: June 1999.

The *dovetail* joint, also known as the German joint (*nyemţască*), is today the most common one used in Maramureş, from new churches, to houses and even outbuildings. However, in the local church architecture it appeared only at the end of the 17th century (**53**), when it immediately became very fashionable. Its popularity never decreased since then. Outside Maramureş the joint was widely used, as for example in Sweden, where it was known already in the 13th century. According to master carpenter Hotico Găvrilă this joint was also measured with a stick and once again the stick was broken detaching the calculated settlement play. The outline of the future joint was then delimited by help of that stick (**54**). Firstly, the stick was positioned half way on both future interlocking logs, at the outer and inner corners, and secondly the angle of the dovetail was controlled by more or less lowering in the bottom log and lifting in the top log, at the other two edges. A more elaborated form of this joint was used in the churches from Vişeu de Jos and Sat Şugătag, at the turn of the 17th century, where a hidden inner cog was placed under the dovetailed head of the joint, certainly to strengthen the high squared logs. In Borşa de Jos (**55**), the dovetail joints were secured with pegs inside, sometime after 1717. A more unusual variant to fortify the dovetail joint was made in the church from Poienile de Sub Munte, in 1798, where the inner side of the top log was cut diagonally to enter a recess in the head of the bottom log (**56**).

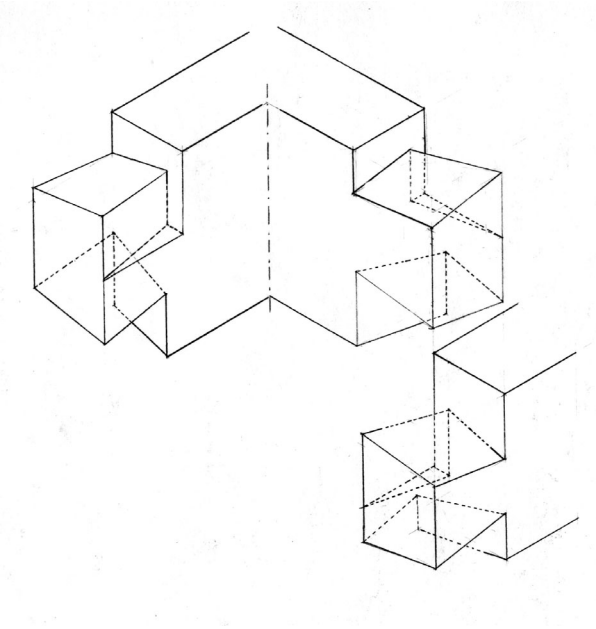


54 *Sat Şugătag*. The basic principle to dimension a dovetail joint. The height between incoming logs (A and C) is measured with a stick (1) and than reduced by a settlement play (2). The stick is first placed right on the corner (3) half way up on the incoming top log (C) and the other half down on the transverse bottom log (B). The next moves assure the diagonal cut (4-5). In Sat Şugătag (1700), like earlier in Vişeu de Jos (1699) and Sârbi Josani (c. 1685), the massive logs required a strengthening inner cog. Scale drawing: October 2000.

55 Borşa de Jos. Dovetail joint strengthened by a peg. Scale drawing: June 1998.



56 *Poienile de sub Munte*. A particular type of dovetail joint with a recess inside. Scale drawing: June 1998.



57 *Sârbi Josani*. This log twisted out of its allotted position damaging the joint and altering the plainness of the wall, possibly after a dowel broke inside. Photo: October 2000.

The wall

A plane, impervious wall was an essential feature in a wooden church. It invested the church with that status, perfection and elegance the community strived for. Today, we might not even notice it, but for that time this was a great accomplishment. The hired carpenter had to master with his knowledge, experience and skills how the logs would work in a wall, long after the construction was finished. A great deal of that knowledge was concentrated in the corner joints, as shown before, but the wall had to be controlled even in between the joints.

The massive log walls in between the corners were rather hanging than bearing as the weight pressure was concentrated in the joints from the start. Therefore they could twist out of their position (**57**) or buckle, due to their inner tensions or their own load in the middle. The tasks of the carpenters were to stiffen the wall, prevent the buckling and make it as plane and impervious as possible. In the small rural dwellings this knowledge was not necessary, but in the large, heavy church constructions it was a science. Certainly, these specific problems were faced by carpenters everywhere and the solutions were elaborated throughout Europe.[94]

[94] Zwerger 1997, 146-148, Sjömar 2000, 122-131.

Stiffening

To secure the wall timbers would remain in their allotted position, they were stiffened together by hidden dowels in between them. In this way the individual logs built a rigid wall. Thanks to a well sealed wall, they remained unveiled. However, the centuries of small moves in the structures opened here and there the spaces between the logs exposing these small but vital pieces. In Ieud Deal and Apşa din Jos, where the windows were enlarged for more light inside the church room, the dowels nearby became plainly exposed.

The present carpenters currently apply this technique, because it is bounded to the use of flush corners and straight walls. According to their experience, the number of dowels between two logs depends on the distance between corners. In general, there are two dowels in between two joints, but, in walls with many windows they must have been even more, because every opening in the wall required good stiffening on both sides. The thickness of a dowel depended on the gimlet. The largest one employed was the raft gimlet (*dye bocur*) about 3-4 cm in diameter. For a good strength, the dowel was cut with a square section and pressed inside the round hole. Its length depended on the height of the two logs, but it was always an empty end left inside the hole to prevent the wall from lying on the dowel's head (**59**). The dowel was made of hard wood like ash, acacia and eventually oak.

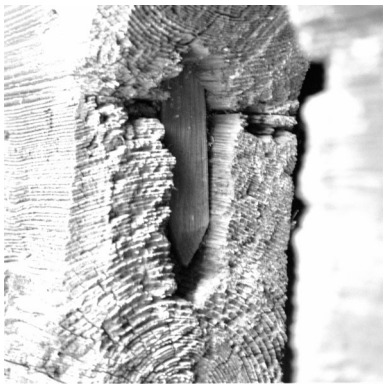
The location of the dowel had to be exactly established in both the upper and the lower log to ensure a plane surface.[95] An over 400 years old scratched working line near the hole of a dowel, visible on a timber coming from the former parish church of Botiza, testifies how important that moment was for a craftsman (**60**).

The drilling moment was also essential for the straightness of the wall and the perfection of the joints (**58**). A small deviation could jeopardize them both. In case the hole was not drilled vertically, the dowel had to be adjusted. If the upper timber was deviated outwards, the dowel was adjusted from inside part and as much corrected with a small wedge on the opposite part. The opposite correction was necessary if the upper timber was pressed inwards. This correction technique is still used by the local carpenters and named "*to cut from the dowel*" (*să ciople din ciăp*).[96] In Sweden, this technique was widely used in the past and documented even in the medieval church from Pelarne.[97]

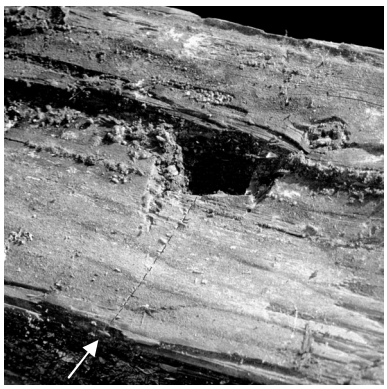
Only in a single place a rectangular wedge was identified between logs, in the church from Breb on the southern facade, and it must have been introduced in a groove made by a chisel.

58 *The Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş, Sighet-Dobăieş*. Drilling a hole for a dowel was vital to stiffen the log but any deviation from the vertical direction could jeopardize the joints and the plainness of the wall. Photo: July 1994.

59 *Ieud Deal*. This dowel (about 18 cm long) became half exposed after an enlargement of the aperture of a small northern window in between the eaves. It has a square section (about 2.7 x 2.7 cm), a pointed end and a small empty space in the hole. Photo: July 1997.

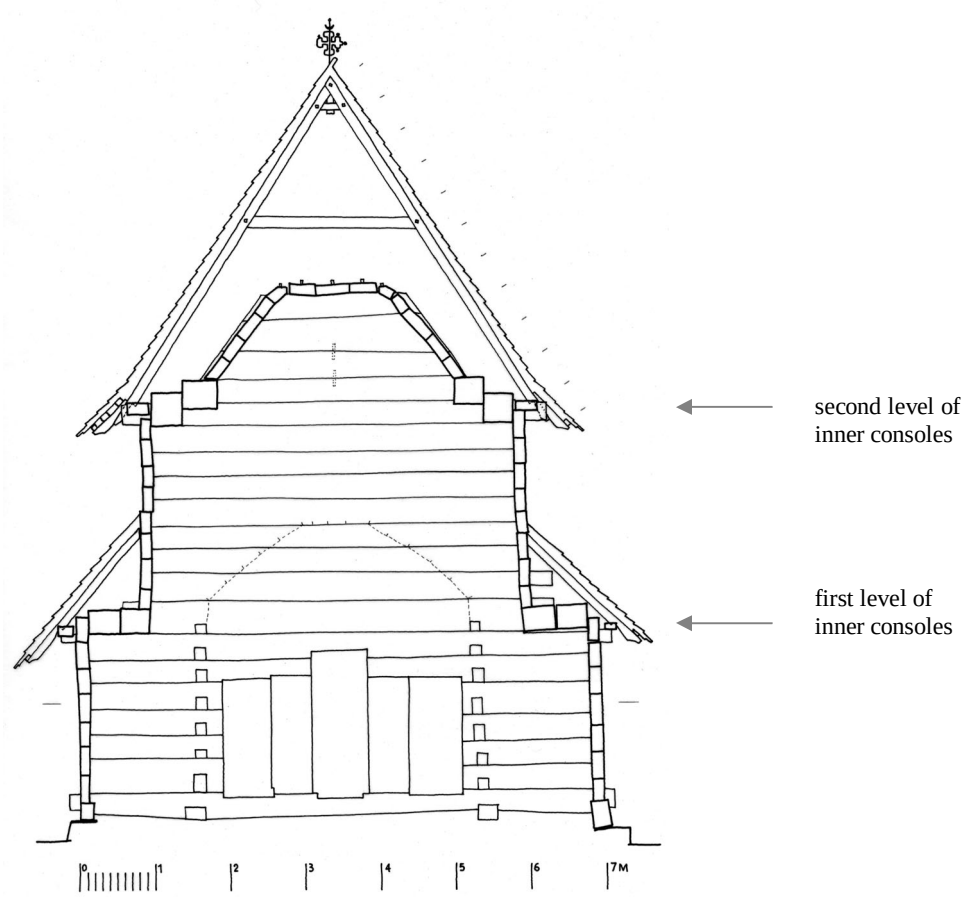


60 Botiza. The scratched line marking the position of the dowel before drilling was still visible after 4 centuries. Photo: October 2001



[95] Zwerger 1997, 146-148; Sjömar 2000, 126-131. Inf. Hotico 2003.
[96] Inf. Hotico 2003.
[97] Peter Sjömar, "Lusning, drag och knutar – synpunkter på den medeltida timmerbyggnadskonsten", a study in manuscript for the future book *Medeltida träkyrkor* III, kindly made available by the author in November 2003, 1-7.

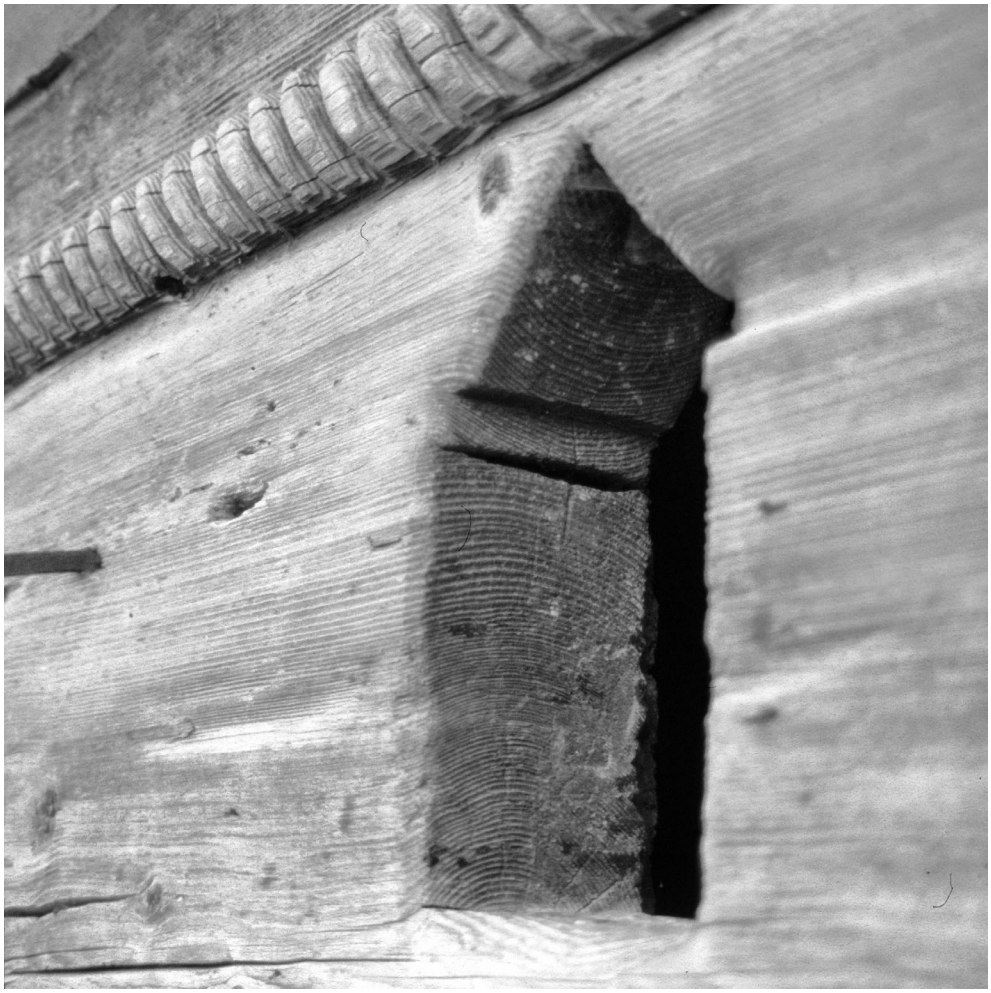
61 *Ieud Deal*. Section through the nave looking eastwards. Scale drawing: July 1997.



Buckling

The buckling or the bending of the walls was a great concern in log construction due to the limitations it imposed on the sizes of a room. This deformation was generated by the self weight of the wall and it occurred when the distance between corners and the height became considerable, not including even the thickness of the logs.[98] The only way to prevent this happen was to minimise the free area of the wall. In some churches the length of the timbers reached up to almost 14 m, a performance which would not have been possible without the inner wall separating the church room between men and women. The largest recorded span in between the corners is 881 cm in the nave of Budeşti Josani and there it seems to have been drawn the acceptable limit in the local sacred architecture. In such a long wall the height had to be hold as low as possible, though, the low walls were inadequate to church rooms. By extending them with the customary round vault the self load even more increased and with it the risk for deformations. One of the illustrative examples is the church of Breb, with 7 m long and 3 m high walls in between the corner joints. Adding to this area at least one fourth of the extending vault above it results about 37.5 sq m of self load.[99] And this was only one of the middle churches. This conflict was solved by help of inner consoles, so specific for the local basilical wooden churches. The successive brakes in the wall created by these consoles allowed the construction to continue further up to impressive heights (**61**).

[98] Inf. Bledea, Borca, Hotico and Dan 2000.

[99] The present bends appeared after the eastern gable was taken down for the enlargement, in 1863. The lateral posts were helpfully placed after that, to stop the following deformations (Baboș 1996, 52-58).

62 *Cuhea*. Difficult to capture in pictures, the grooves are however identified in most of the wooden churches from Maramureş. Here, the groove appears in the aperture of an original window. The small hole in the wall at the meeting edge of two logs, just a few cm at left from the aperture of the window, was made by a woodpecker, possibly taken in by the sound of the empty groove inside. Almost everywhere the grooves are used, there are countless holes made by these tireless birds. Photo: June 1997.

Imperviousness

The contact between the laying timbers was decisive for the straightness and the imperviousness of the church walls. A skilful carpenter, by using only a hatchet, could finish squared logs with very plane facets. By assembling them with wedges and enough settlement play, he could thus obtain those perfectly straight and flush walls a church required. However, no matter how even they cut the meeting surfaces of the logs, there always remained small gaps creating problems with the insulation in the cold church rooms. Therefore, the church carpenters were expected to have a solution for that concern. And they did.

In rural dwellings such a performance was never required. After the log structures shrunk, the horizontal spaces left between the beams were filled with moss and strips of daub. Many times the inner walls of a house were entirely daubed. Therefore, the common house builder was not concerned with how round or straight the logs in the construction were. Even crooked and knotty logs were used, if necessary, because the owner could easily seal the walls with moss and daub against driving wind and snow (**63**).

These sealing solutions were neither attractive nor practical in a church. Any long tolling of the bells in the tower above would have made the daub fillings to crack from vibrations. Concealing the walls by boards or shingles was not customary here, only a plain straight wall was the best.

In order to bring the logs into a perfect sealing position, the church carpenters used the so called *wood-to-wood* method.[100] They carved a groove along the entire underside of a log to fit its mating log bellow. According to master carpenter Găvrilă Hotico, the slight depth of the groove had to be subtracted from the settlement play. When the settlement play closed and the weight begun to unload even in between the joints, the sharp edges on both sides of the groove became pressed in the plane upper face of the log bellow. Sometimes the slight groove was cut from both meeting surfaces. The meeting logs were thus perfectly sealed without other filling material, though small amount of moss might have been used in between the logs. In Maramureş, the majority of the wooden churches were insulated in this manner (**62**).

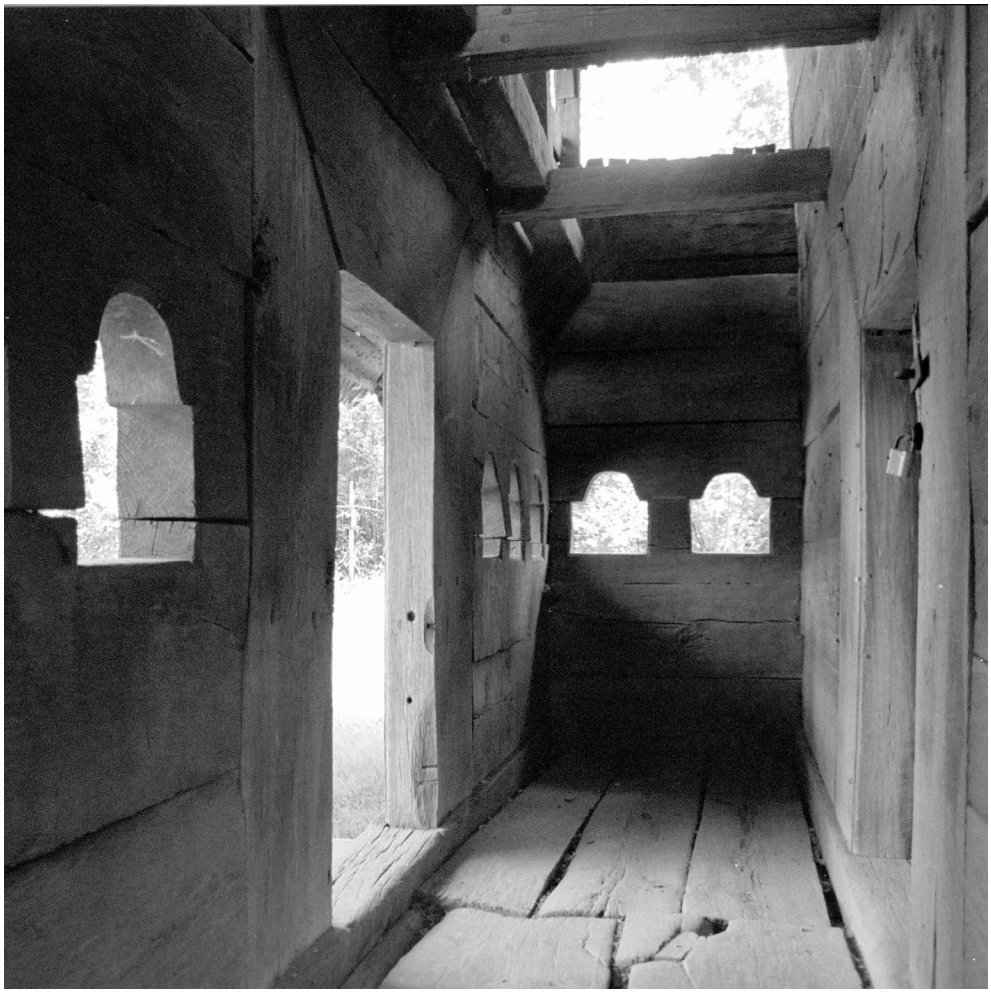
The churches from the former monasteries of Giuleşti and Bârsana, built in 1692 respectively in 1711, display no such refinement. This means not all hired church builders used or possessed this knowledge. The spaces in between the logs, although well levelled, had to be filled afterwards in some places with narrow strips of wood.

The wood-to-wood imperviousness technique is today currently used by the carpenters from Ieud working in soft coniferous wood when they slightly hollow the dovetail joint with an axe (*cuptyit*) to improve the sealing of the corner joints. This technique is on the other hand rejected by the craftsman Petru Borca Ciorbănesii from Bârsana, more familiarized with oak hardwood, as too problematic because the risk the joints would open under pressure. However the presence of a isolating groove was observed in wooden churches built of both fir and oak.

The sealing of log walls by this practical technique was documented around Salzburg, in Austria already in the 19th century,[101] in mediaeval buildings from Scandinavia[102] and in Russia.[103] The wooden churches from Maramureş confirm its further circulation even in the sacred architecture of Central Europe, at least between the 16th and 18th centuries.

63 *Crăceşti*. The house of Bohotici family after its transfer and reconstruction in the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş. The faints of light reveal the irregularities between the rounded logs. The room would be sealed with daub as it was finished for 150 years ago. Photo: October 2000.

[100] Sjömar 2000, 123-125.
[101] Eigl, J., *Das Salzburger Gebirgshaus*, Wien; after Wesser 1903, 11, ill. 31.
[102] Sjömar 2000, 123.
[103] Opolovnikov, Alexander and Yelena (1989): *The Wooden Architecture of Russia. Houses, Fortifications, Churches*, London 1989.



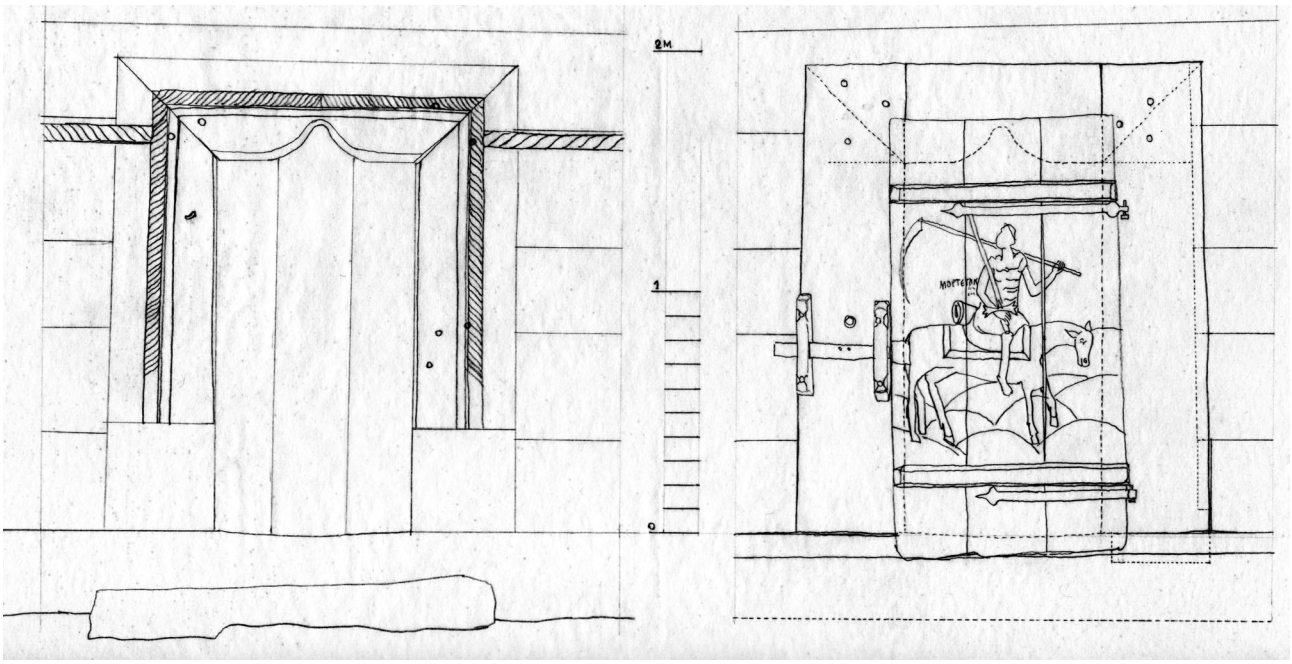
64 *Danylovo*. The half open antechurch was penetrated from all sides by doors and windows with apertures and doorways fashionably designed in the second half of the 18th century. Photo: July 1998.

Openings in the wall

The walls were not accomplished without openings for access, light and ventilation. Yet, any opening could weaken the walls. Therefore they were made minimal and only where they were necessary. Beyond their functional meaning they were also invested as demarcations or passages between outside and inside or from collective to private, a perfect place to show the status of the owner. For these reasons the carpenters were asked to perform at their best in these representative parts of the construction. It is probably for the same reason the smallest differences between sacred and profane buildings were found in these frames.

Doors

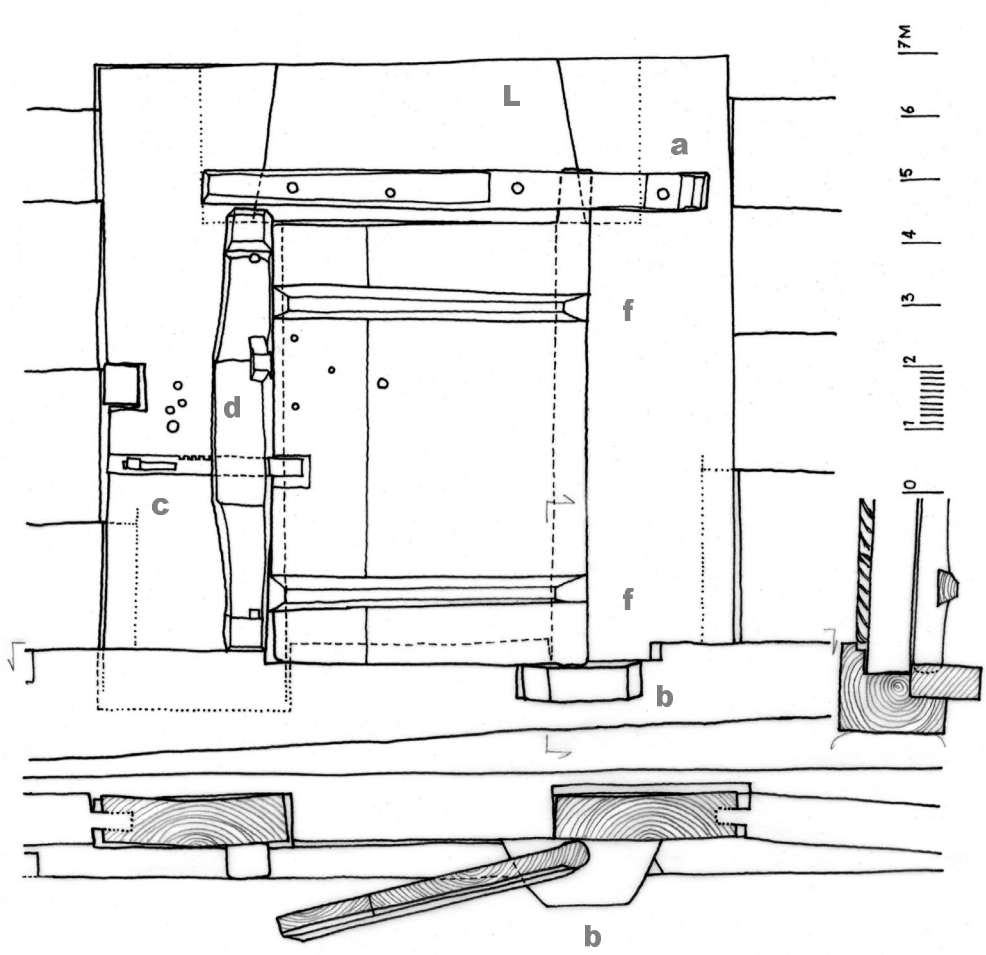
A door was a large opening, severing all the logs around it. In order to hold the shortened logs in their places the aperture was sided by two lateral jambs (*uşorii*). The jambs were grooved to take in and fix the projecting ends of the lateral logs. In the simplest doors, these jambs were fixed by a tenon or other means in the sill bellow and in the log closing the aperture above (**66**). To prevent the upper logs from lying on the vertical jambs, a settlement play had to be provided above the jambs and inside the receiving upper mortise. This simple method must have been widely used in the past in Maramureş and, with regional varieties, also throughout Europe.



65 *Cuhea*. The front and the back of the entrance door survived in good condition. While the front is dominated by decorative carvings the back retains the functional parts: the wooden door bolt, iron hinges and fillets. The joining of the lintel with the lateral jambs shifts from flaring upwards at the front to straight at the back. Also remarkable is the painting of the riding Death on the backside of the door's leaf. Scale drawing: June 1998.

In many old wooden churches, manor houses and even in some modest houses the original doors have survived. For the most part, they present a more advanced design, with a lintel mounted above the jambs, forming a frame around the aperture. This solution had the advantage of avoiding the jambs to be fixed in the log above, a problematic detail before the settling of a construction. For this case, a large gap was left above the frame of the door, equivalent all the gaps between the lateral logs.

66 *Crăceşti*. The poor stable of Costin Grigore *a lu Zaharie* retains a simple door sided by jambs and mounted in the sill bellow and a beam above without any tenon. It is hold in place by the slots carved from the sill and the beam above. The lateral grooves receive the tenon of the wall logs. Photo: October 2000.

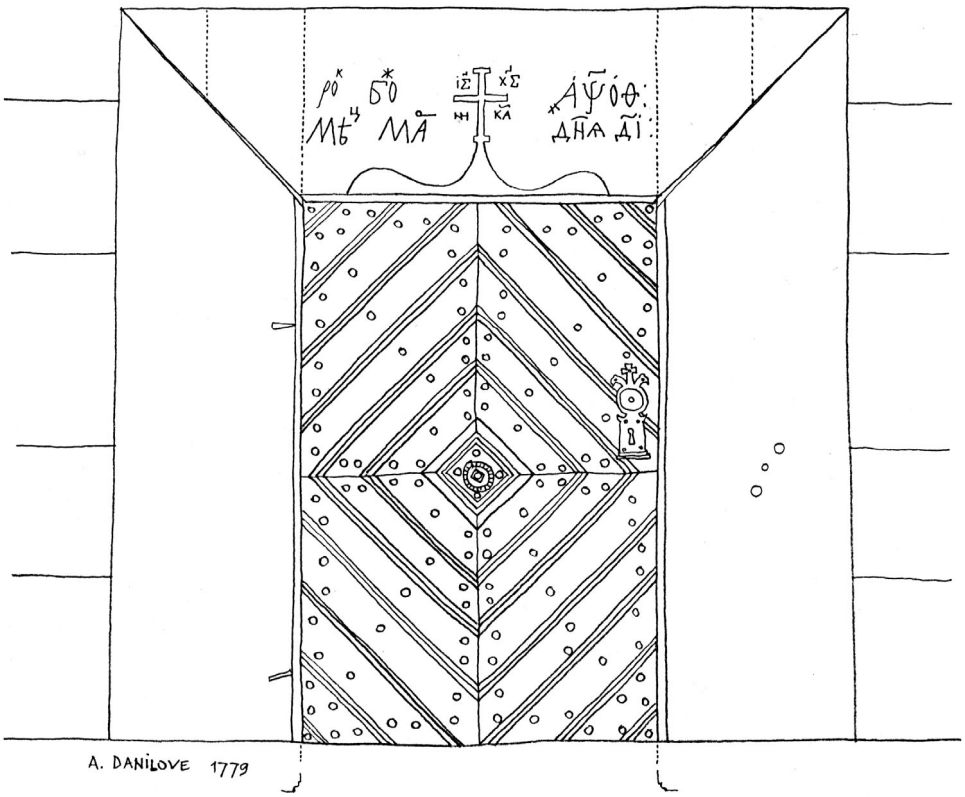


67 *Sârbi Susani*. This is the best preserved church door entirely made of wood by a carpenter. Until its recent restoration it maintained all its original parts. In order to rotate, the upper and the lower cylindrical ends of the door blade were hold by a top and a bottom hinge. The massive top hinge (a) was fixed to the portal by four strong pegs, while the small trapezoidal bottom hinge (b) was simply embedded in the massive sill. The heavy door blade was made of two pieces, held together by powerful fillets (f) housed in narrowing dovetail trenches. The door blade is locked by a door bold (c) moved back and forth by a simple wooden key inserted through a hole in the right jamb (seen from outside). The door bold is secured by a massive vertical piece (d). It is good to notice that the lintel (L) was designed flaring downwards. Scale drawing of the backside of the entrance door: August 1997.

In the oldest churches and houses the threshold was also the massive sill and therefore extremely high, like an obstacle. One had to step in by almost riding on it. This explains why the door apertures in these constructions were made so low, only about 1.6 times the width. The way they are used today is completely wrong; no wonder that many visitors hurt themselves with their foreheads in these lintels. For example, the jambs of the vanished church from Slătioara were only 153 cm high. Taking away at least 20 cm for an arched lintel it results an aperture about 130 cm high. Certainly, the villagers were not that short. One reason for preferring short jambs was that fewer logs were cut away for the entrance.

A specific feature for the oldest church doors, found mainly in the churches with a single level of eaves, is the door leaf pivoting in wooden hinges.[104] The last one remained at the entrance of the church from Sârbi Susani, dated in 1639 (**67**). The massive leaf was made of two butted planks connected by two fillets and small hidden pegs. Each of the fillets was housed in a narrowing dovetail trench. At the left side the leaf ends with pivots fixed in two wooden hinges. The bottom hinge is locked in the sill, while the long top one is fixed to the lintel. The door was locked by a wooden bolt sliding through a massive vertical piece of wood. This bolt was moved by a special wooden or iron key inserted through a hole in the right jamb. A wooden latch was also devised in the door leaf but it is now disappeared. This description matches more or less all the doors in the secular buildings until long in the 19th century and they were entirely made by carpenters, therefore named

[104] The church with two eaves from Sârbi Josani appears to originally have had only doors hung in wooden hinges.

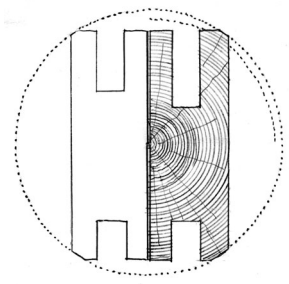


68 *Danylovo.* The massive portal to the narthex retains an inscription in Cyrillic indicating the date of consecration from 14 Mar. 1779. The lintel was fashionably joined with the lateral jambs by flaring upwards. The door blade was decoratively covered by boards fixed with iron nails, forming the so called "door with buttons". Notably, the handle and the lock were decoratively made of iron by a locksmith. Scale drawing: July 1998.

"carpenter doors". The main problem with these doors was their weak insulation. But this shortcoming was of some help in the ventilation of the room. A few village elders remembered how in the old days, people knew who was at home by the particular creak of the pivoting doors from every house, a world of sounds that vanished away from Maramureş with the ancient buildings.

By the middle of the 17th century, the church portals became more differentiated from common houses. For the first, the western entrance appears to have become a standard. Secondly, the apertures were made higher, about two times the width. And finally, the new door leafs were almost everywhere hung in iron hinges (**70**). The heightened aperture might be connected with a lower threshold and a plank floor inside, which created a different perception of the sacred room. The locks continued to be made mainly by carpenters even in the middle of the 18th century, and it would take long time until the iron ones will become available in a large scale. After the middle of the 18th century, the door leafs begun to be decorated by boards fixed with iron "buttons", but even these were made by carpenters and not joiners (**68**). For further understanding of this situation there is a description from 1767 of the artisans working in Sighet, the centre of the county:

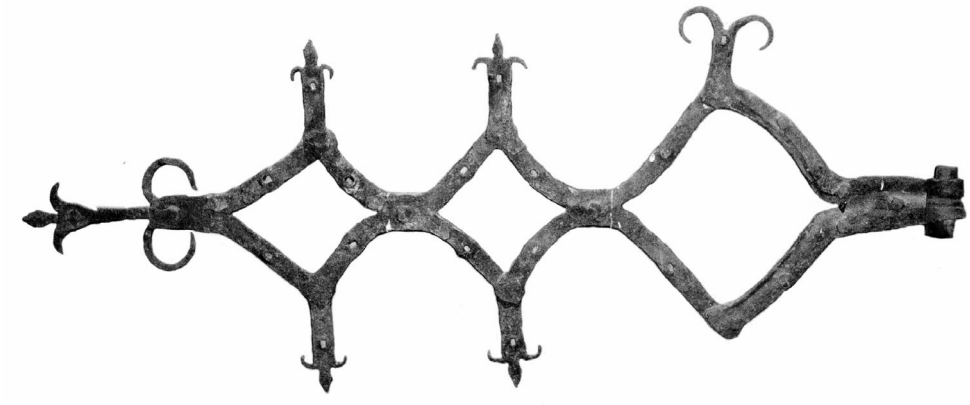
"Here the artisans are hard to call in. For the most necessary professions there is no one, and for the very few existent there is one or at best two; and these are so unskilful, and also so expensive that it is hard to imagine. One must wait many weeks, even months, until a minor work gets finished. There are here for example: only two joiners and as many locksmiths, who covers the entire region, and as far as I know there are no more others in the whole Maramureş, and the same skill they have in all the other professions."[105]



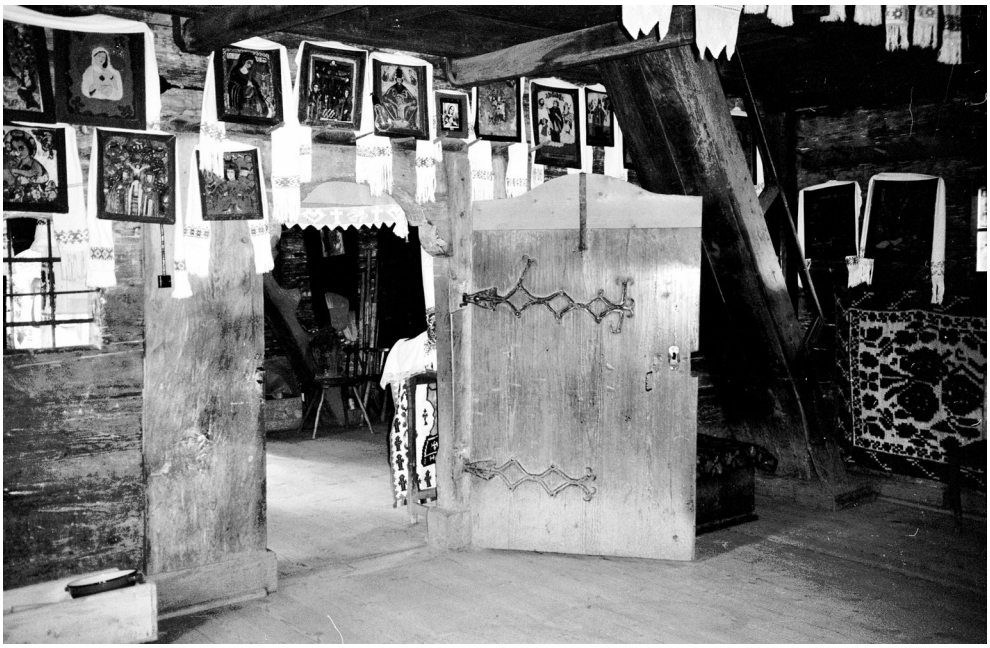
69 *Budeşti Josani.* The pair of jambs from the inner portal was cut from a single log, about 65 cm in diameter, split into two halves. Scale drawing: August 1997.

[105] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 13.

A particularity of the jambs of the church portals is that they were always made from the same trunk, split into two halves (**69**). The dendrochronological analyses highly confirm this. The third piece, the lintel, probably comes from the same tree, too. Another feature good to pay attention to is the way the lintels were mounted on the jambs. The oldest designs of their joining vary from flaring downwards, like in Ieud Deal (1611-21), to straight in Valea Stejarului (1615-20) and to flaring upwards, like in Rona de Jos (c. 1637), but there is almost always a small shoulder cut in the jambs before the lines of contact with the lintel follow their way up. Beginning with the church from Hărniceşti, dated in 1679, the diagonal lines widening upwards were cut directly from the corners of the apertures to the outer corners of the portal (*în şrec*),[106] a feature that became increasingly fashionable in the following century in both churches and houses (**68**).

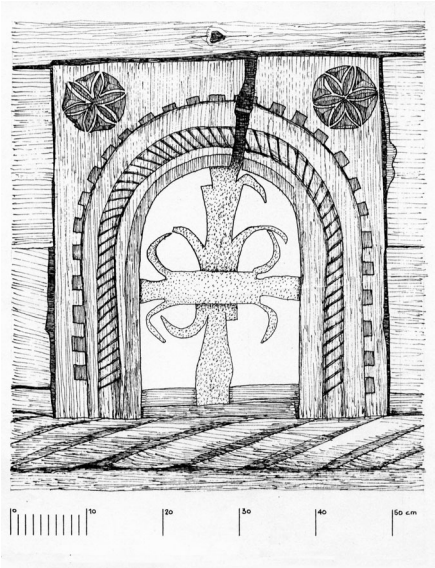


70 *Ieud Şes*. The decorative iron hinges of the inner door to the nave (below) remind of the surviving hinge from the inner door in the church of Dragomireşti (above) indicating the work of a single smith behind both. The two close churches were also built soon one after the other in the 1710s. Photos: July 1997 (below) and June 1999 (above).

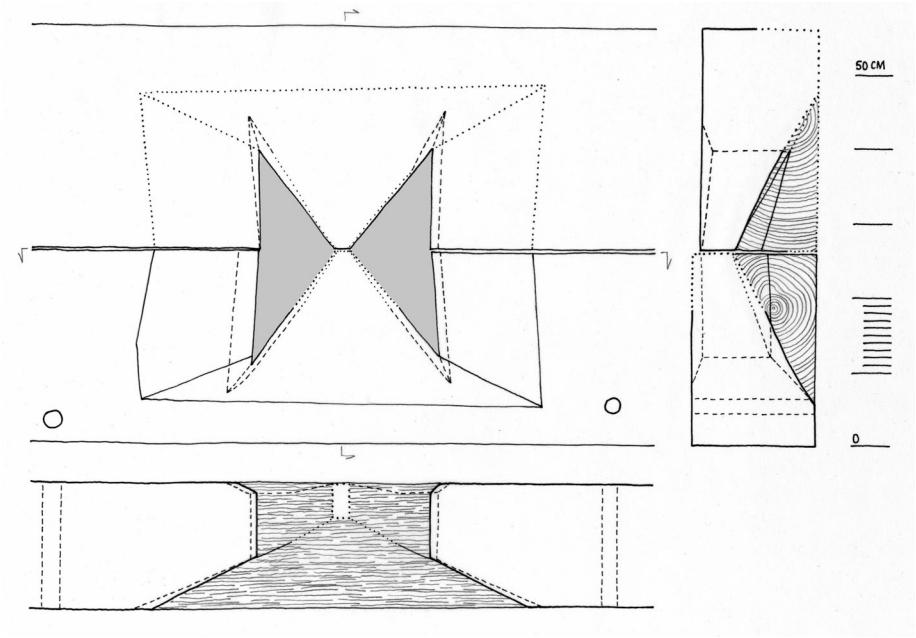


[106] Focşa 1992, 138.

71 *Sârbi*. The house of the noble Marinca family was provided with large windows, comparable with those seen in a few churches. Moreover the one at the front was decoratively carved all around the frame. The owner must have been very ambitious to demand such a work. The house is dated by an inscription above the entrance from 1785 and it is saved in the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş. Photo: October 2000.



72 *Sârbi Susani*. One of the most remarkable windows survived in the wooden church from Sârbi Susani, on the southern side. Arched and beautifully decorated, the window attracts attention mainly from outside. However, the really interesting part is hidden inside the wall from the very construction of the church, in 1639. A wooden shutter (a) was placed in a deep groove made in between two beams (opposite page). A hole (b) was drilled right through the wall and the shutter to lock the shutter with a wooden peg. Scale drawings of the front side (right), back side and sections (opposite page): August 1997.

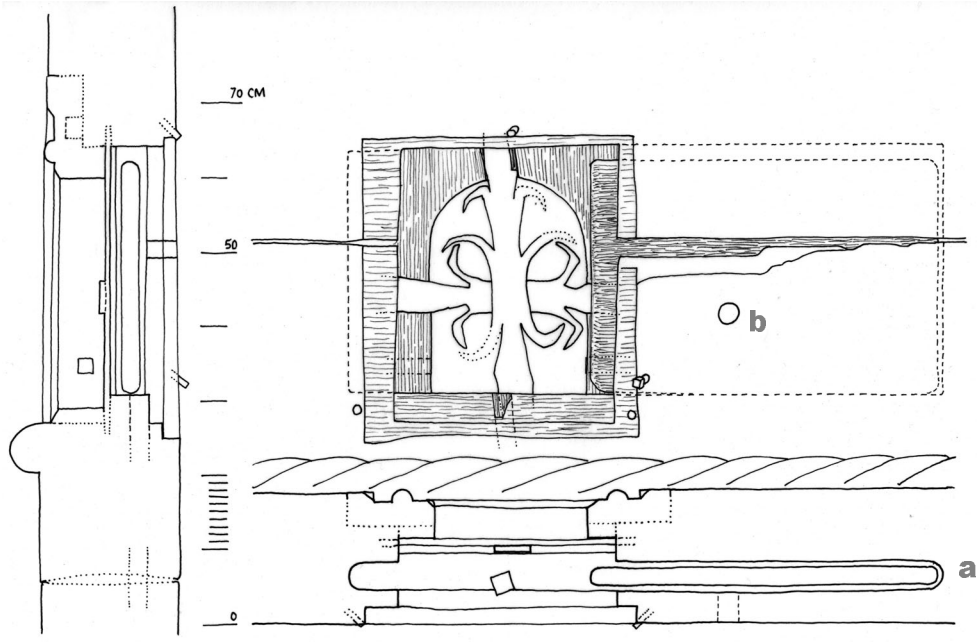


73 *Corneşti*. Two logs from the northern wall of the church retain the halves of one or possibly two separate open windows. The samples taken from the logs gave no firm dendrochronological dating, but the windows seem to come from a previous construction, maybe from the 16th century. Scale drawings with a possible reconstruction, front side and sections: August 1997.

Windows

The oldest windows we find in Maramureş were very small. Their apertures were mainly opened inside one log or between two logs without amputating them entirely. Even so, in churches, the logs around these small windows were secured with dowels on both sides.

In the church of Onceşti one of the openings is only 8.5 cm wide and 14 cm high, and its chamfered edges both inside and outside suggest it was never closed. Another open window, with a unique shape of two triangles, was maintained in Corneşti, though its two halves were separated either under a repair or from the beginning. It is possible they originated from a previous construction. The small aperture was steep chamfered to let the light inside to the last degree (**73**). Such a small open aperture was usually named "eye" (*otyi*) and in the rural profane constructions it is known only as rectangular. In the house of Maria Coman from Cuhea (**38**) the small "eye" was crossed by a wooden lattice, to stop birds or small beasts to come inside the pantry.

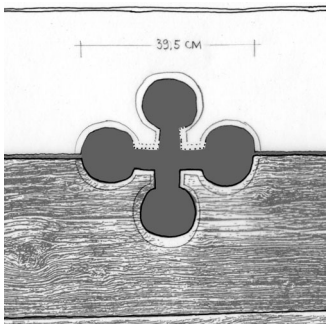


In rooms where the insulation was necessary, the windows were in general closed, either by shutters, ox bladders or by framed bottle glasses. The glasses were imported from far, so the first two materials must have dominated in the past. Beginning with about 1760 a glasswork functioned in Bicsad, at the margins of the region, and from the beginning of the 19th century even in Franzensthal in Maramureş.[107] With the production of cheap industrial window panes, the traditional windows were left behind even in the poor houses and by the beginning of the 20th century they disappeared everywhere almost completely.

The windows closed by sliding wooden shutters only let in the light and the fresh air while they were open. It is therefore a rarity to find a few examples left. Surprisingly enough, there are two such windows preserved in working condition in the parish church of Sârbi Susani (1639), one in the sanctuary and the second in the nave (**72**). The window in the axis of the sanctuary, the most symbolically charged in a house of worship, was covered from inside and replaced by a new one above, probably in connection with a raising of the floor level and the wall painting from 1802.[108] Its square aperture, 20 x 20 cm, still displays the traces of the saw by which it was cut. The shutter was inserted in its grooved location in between the logs from the very beginning. In the other window, used by the deacon to read, the shutter can be locked by a wooden peg driven through a hole made for this purpose. Under the cold winters these windows must have been for the most part closed even during the services. In those situations, the priest and its parishioners could have used some candles to continue their devotions in the darkness of the rooms. For good ventilation two other small openings were provided under the spring of the vault, protected by the eaves. Similar windows with sliding wooden shutters existed in the parish church from Şieu, at the windows of the deacon and sexton, but they were altered by enlargements. In the local rural dwellings they were not documented until know, although they might have been common once. The other known types of wooden shutters, like those sliding on a rail outside the wall or especially side hung, are still to be found.

The ox bladder was the very first transparent material used to let the light in while keeping the wind away from the room. According to a record from 1926, the use of bladder was only a memory, and it had been simply washed and fixed on the wall around the aperture of the window.[109] Apart from being easy to obtain without costs there were no other advantages in competition with the window glasses, and therefore they disappeared as soon as the glasses became affordable.

74 *Darva* (*Kolodne*). The significant window in the eastern wall of the sanctuary, here resembling a quatrefoil Gothic one of stone. Drawing after a picture and measurements: October 2000.



The windows with bottle glasses must have been already used in Maramureş in the Gothic stone churches, built not only in the five towns but also in some villages. Their windows were large enough to impress the contemporaries from all the corners of this remote region. In the sanctuary of the church from Darva it was even cut a unique quatrefoil window inspired by a typical Gothic window frame (**74**). The nearest model could have been in the neighbouring village of Uglea, where a mediaeval stone church survived until the end of the 19th century.

The oldest standing wooden churches, from the beginning of the 17th century, were already provided with windows glasses. Some of the few original windows, maintaining intact their glazed frames, have survived in Budeşti Josani from 1643, side by side with those enlarged in 1923 (**75**). Despite the nave room was one of the largest in the region, the apertures of the windows averaged here between 18 cm wide and 21-24 cm high. Their small acute frame was fixed by tiny

[107] Podea, Ioan, *Icoanele pe sticlă şi iconarii de la Nicula*, 19, 2000 Cluj. The glasswork was situated near Teceu and was also known as Officina Vitraria or Ferencz Völgye (Schematismus 1822, 65). In 1863 it started to produce decorative glass (Filipaşcu 1997, 160).
[108] Bârlea 1909, 143.
[109] MLR, Casa 366, 183-184.

75 *Budeşti Josani*. This nave, the largest known sacred room in wood from Maramureş until the end of the 18th century, was lighted by two rows of three small windows from both sides. In 1923, on both sides, two of the lower windows were enlarged changing significantly the light inside. Fortunately, the small one in the middle (enlarged at right) remained untouched, witnessing the intricate work to frame every small piece of glass. A large unbroken bottle glass was about 14.8 cm in diameter and a small one about 9.6 cm. The frame was fixed to the wall in the groove around the aperture and was by all appearances never opened. Photos: August 1997 (right) and June 1999 (above).

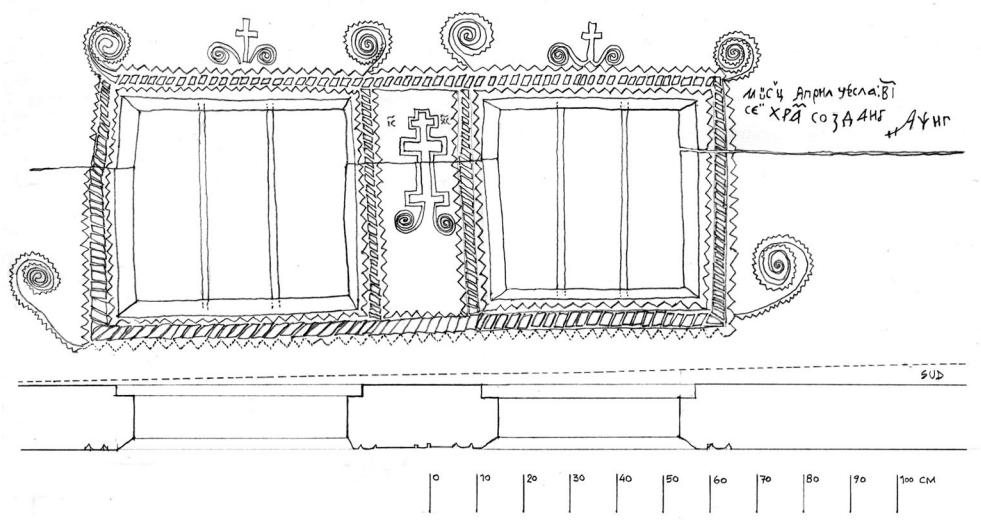
wooden nails into a groove following the aperture in the wall. The bottle glasses, for the most part used in small shivers, were embedded in the frame by delicate grooved pieces of sycamore maple wood. Until the end of the 18th century, the majority of the churches were supplied with such windows.

76 *Rona de Jos*. The church was well known around as the "*church with eyes*" because of its large openings in the antechurch. Photo: October 2000.

77 *Sârbi Josani*. The inner "eyes" allowing the women to see inside nave. The lower half was removed. Photo: October 2000.

The oldest datable windows with substantial frames around their apertures, where the logs were severed and inserted in the grooves of the frames, survived in the church *"with eyes"* from Rona de Jos (c. 1637). Here, a frame enclosed a pair of windows in the wall between the eaves to let the light inside the nave (**93**). The *eyes* that gave this church its name were also large window openings, but without frames and unclosed. They were primarily cut in the walls of the antechurch, near the entrance, and therefore made such an impression (**76**). I also suspect that two similar *eyes* opened for the first time the wall between women and men in Rona de Jos, creating an even greater effect inside, but the wall was unfortunately altered right in that place. In exchange, the closely related church from Velyka Kopania (1669), just outside the limits of Maramureş, still retains them. The oldest surviving ones in Maramureş can be seen in Sârbi Josani (c. 1685), where the wall separating the women from men was perforated by a row of 7 small arched openings on each side of the door (**77**). These inner *eyes*, so welcomed by the severed women in the narthex, were opened beginning with the next century even in those churches that never had such previously.

From the second half of the 18th century, the churches were built with increasingly larger windows. Already in 1753, the new parish church from Oleksandrivka was provided with three large openings in the upper wall, about 40 x 40 cm, though still cut between two timbers (**78**). By all appearances, they were also closed by large frames with numerous bottle glasses. In this village of serfs, these windows were a real performance. Their importance was emphasised with unusual ample decorative cuts in the wall around them. Even the consecration letter was engraved nearby them, hard to be read from the ground but stressing again an understood implication. As the entire Eastern Church of Maramureş was still



78 *Oleksandrivka*. The pair of southern windows in between the eaves. The inscription on the right states: "*Month April 12 this church was consecrated 1753*". Scale drawing and tracing: July 1998.

young and hesitating in the union with Rome, that understood implication might have sounded: the union brought a new light inside the church, the very heart of the community.

The use of larger windows to signal at least a new fashion can be distinguished in all the churches built afterwards. In Deseşti (1780) some of the windows were larger than ordinary but still traditionally cut from two logs (**79**). In Danylovo (1779), instead, the *eyes* of the antechurch displayed already fashionable arched lines (**64**). The single known example where the logs were cut off for large windows without hesitation was in the church *"with eyes"* from Steblivka, erected in 1797.[110] There, the windows were made between five tiers of logs, of which three were fixed in the lateral grooves of the frame (**81**).

From one church to another the number of windows varied significantly. At least three or four light openings were essential: the most important in the axis of the sanctuary, the second at the *prothesis* table, the third for the deacon, and eventually one also for the sexton. The narthex was in the oldest churches predominantly left without windows. There are only a few churches limited to the minimal required, numerous ones displaying a large number of small windows. For instance, the church from Ieud Deal presents no less than 3 windows in the sanctuary, 12 inside the nave and another 4 in the narthex, all small but well placed in the walls.

As compared to churches, the common houses didn't need many windows. For the most, two windows were enough. Eventually, a third small opening was left in the rear wall for ventilation, because the glazed frames of the other two were fixed to the wall. Some original windows were preserved in a number of manor houses, and they are all framed around the aperture. Their design differs between frames "with a shelf" (*cu poliță*) and simple frames with diagonal cuts. The oldest dated windows with shelves are found in the house of the Codrea family from Berbeşti, built in 1704,[111] in the Cupcea house from Călineşti, dated from 1710 (**80**),[112] and later in the house of Pop Gheorghe Tomanu from Berbeşti, dated from 1775.[113] The existing windows with diagonally joined frames are most of them

79 *Deseşti*. The window in the axis of the sanctuary retains a pointed aperture specific for churches and an indented pattern around. Photo: June 1999.

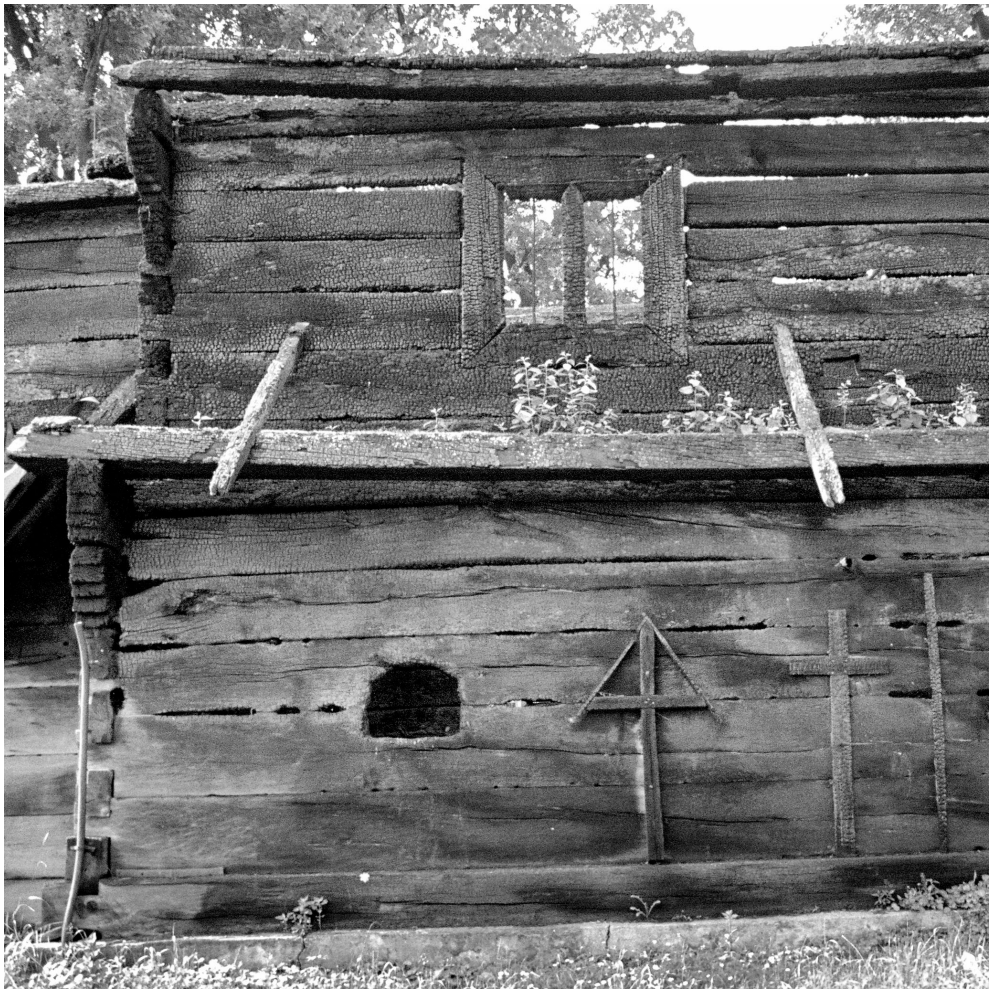
80 *Călineşti*. The window with shelf at the rear of the house of Cupcea family. Photo: June 1999.

[110] The Moldavian inspired wooden churches from Călineşti Susani, Glod and Poienile de sub Munte also retain large windows, but they are not in focus here, because they were built in a different tradition.

[111] The house stands today in the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania, the Open Air Section, in Cluj; Ioan Toşa and Cristian Micu, "Contribuții la studiul sistemelor tradiționale de iluminat", *Anuarul Muzeului Etnografic al Transilvaniei*, 273-289, Cluj 1999.

[112] Now it stands in the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş from Sighet; Dăncuş 2000, 32.

[113] The house was moved in the Village Museum from Bucharest; Dăncuş 2000, 27; Focșa 1992, 148.



81 *Steblivka.* The burned fabric still retains the large frame of the northern double window that severed completely 3 tiers of logs. The lower window was cut in between two logs and was shaped with an arched upper part, according to the fashions from the end of the 18th century. Photo: July 1998.

datable at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the following one. Some of the oldest firmly dated exemplars were assembled in 1785 in the house of Marinca from Sârbi (**71**).[114] In this construction the two main windows impress not only through their delicate decoration, resembling the portal of the entrance, but also by the considerable sizes of their apertures, surpassing by far the small ones in the two local village churches and rivalling with those from the neighbouring church of Călineşti Susani, finished the year before.

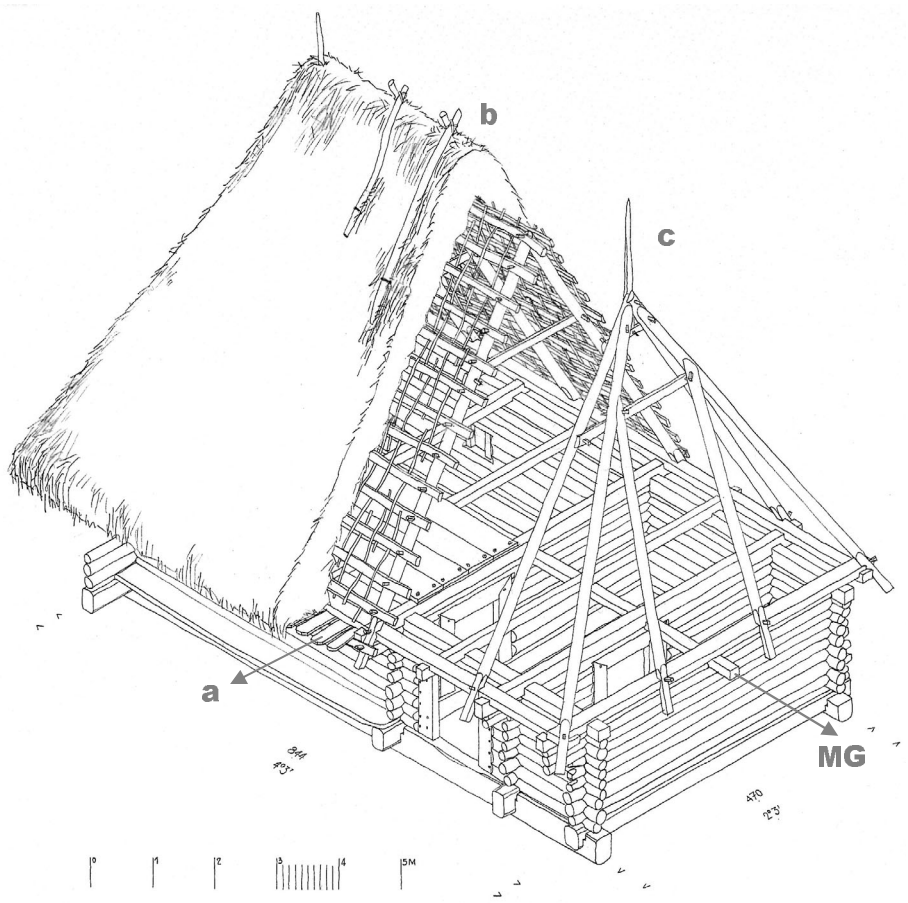
In the way the windows were treated, at least in the 18th century when we have firm dating, there seems to be a balance between the secular and church buildings. In both categories of constructions, the windows increased in sizes and number. Sometimes, the windows of the manor houses appear more ample and elaborated. This reversed situation, compared to other constructive parts, can thus far be explained only through an inhibition to severe the logs in the large church constructions.

[114] Dăncuş 2000, 31-32.

82 *Ieud Şes*. This church, particularly known as the wooden cathedral of Maramureş, built probably in the 1710s or in the previous decades, retains the steepest roof of all known in the region. The rafters over the sanctuary might measure two times the width of the sanctuary or more. Photo: July 1993.

1.3.3 The roofs

In strong contrast to the log structure of the walls, the traditional roof was raised in a completely different technique. They were entirely built of rafters in both rural dwellings and churches, at least as far as the oldest standing buildings indicate. However, there were some differences between them, deriving from the ceilings they protected and the status they emphasised.



83 *Crăceşti*. The house of Bohotici family, dated from soon after the revolution of 1848, maintained its thatched roof into the present, now being rebuilt in the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş. The reconstruction of the roof respects not only the present roof but also the descriptions made by the last owner, Bohotici Grigore *Frigianu* (2000). For a resistant thatch roof it was good to lightly wattle the laths and let the heads of the pegs fixing the laths to the rafters as long as possible outside. The hay was laid and compacted starting from the eaves moving all around the house. The support at the eaves was made of short but thick boards (*poză*, a) placed with one side under the eaves purlins and the other side over the lowest lath, slightly slanting inside to hold back the pressure from the heavy thatch. On a roof like this there were necessary about 5-6 hay carts. The roof could have been strengthened along the ridge with some pairs of short poles (*rude*, b) tighten together over the thatch. At the two ends of the ridge there were put two vertical poles (*ţăpuşti*, c) to prevent the wind from blowing the hay away from the roof. Scale drawing: October 2000.

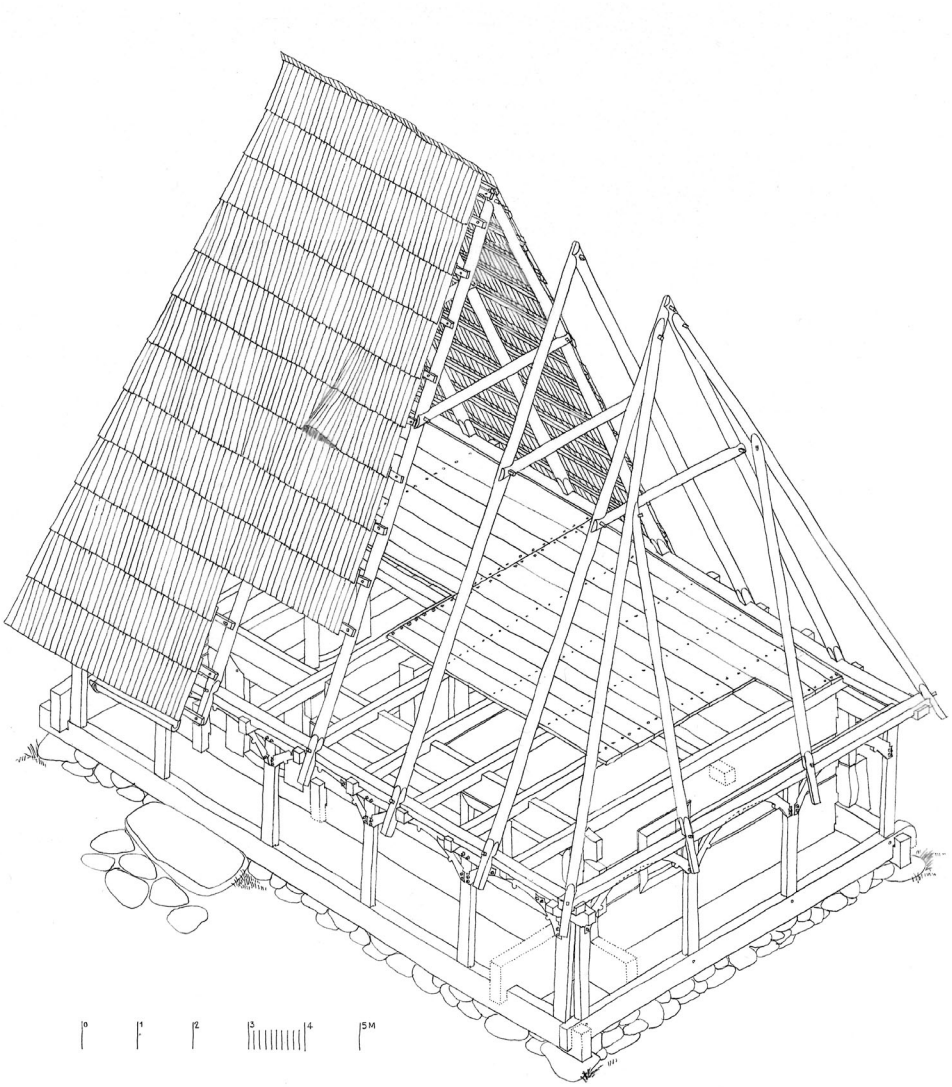
House roofs

In both churches and dwellings, the log wall ended with a plate (*călăreţ*), similar to the sill at the basement. The plates and the sills were preferably selected from hard massive oaks, definitely squared and almost always notched by strong projecting joints, no matter how the logs and their joints were shaped in between them. They had to ensure both a large strong base for the roof above and a good stability on the ground. A lasting roof relayed on these two conditions.

The roof of a house began where the log structure ended: at the ceiling. The main beam supporting the ceiling was the *"master's girder"* (*meştergrinda*, **38** and **83**: MG). This massive piece was structurally vital, since it connected together all the cross walls along the axis of the house, and prevented the joists from bending. The master carpenter Hotico Găvrilă excellently explained why this important piece disappeared from the local traditional house:

"Once, the corn was stored up to the knees high in the garret, and there were also many chests for all sorts of grains. The lards, bacons and sausages, all hanged from the collars of the rafters to smoke safe from the cats. Now you find only empty bottles and rags. What would a master's girder be useful for, today?"[115]

[115] Inf. Hotico 2001.



84 *Călineşti*. The large house of the noble Tivadar family, probably dating from the turn of the 18th century, is an excellent example of a log construction built with double-slot joints. The steep roof is partly unloading through the log structure partly through the posts on two sides of the narrow porch. Scale drawing: October 2000.

Accordingly, most of the year's growth was deposited in the garret and therefore the master's girder supporting it was vital in the past. On the other hand, this girder also played a symbolic role inside the house. According to the native ethnographer Mihai Dăncuş, *meştergrinda* separated the room into a *"space of life acts"*, the half towards the rear of the house, and a *"space of ritual acts"*, corresponding the half with the entrance and the windows at the front of the house.

"In the space of life acts there are the bed and the sleeping places in general. Here the people are procreated, born and here they die, too. In the other space, [of ritual acts,] *it is the table where the child is laid to be baptised. Also at the table the bride and the bridegroom sit under the wedding feast ... On the same table it is laid the coffin with the dead person.... On the side with the bed, in the opposite corner, it is the heating and cooking system, and on the side with the table,* [towards the entrance,] *it is the corner with the sideboard."*[116]

The presence of the girder inside the house was thus used to arrange the space in two symmetrical sides, with four centres of gravity, respecting the four corners of

[116] Dăncuş 1986, 133.

the room (**86**).[117] Not surprisingly that the master carpenter was asked to decorate it and sometimes write a message to the future generations on it.

The master's girder was fastened to its position by the plates. These plates were dimensioned to protrude out of the wall in order to support the eaves purlins (*cununile*). In the next step, the joists were laid in between the plates to support the flat ceiling. Although the joists followed the length of the plates, their ends only secondarily strengthened the frame of the eaves purlins. The four eaves purlins around the construction built a frame entirely suspended on the brackets extending out of the wall. This frame was well notched to become the base of the future roof.

Without exceptions, the old raftered roofs above the extant local vernacular dwellings were formed with four steep slopes, two large separated by the ridge and two small at the sides. Thus these roofs unloaded by all four sides on the frame of eaves purlins. This type of raftered roof is found in a large area of the continent, though, gravitating around the Carpathian Mountains.[118]

Compared with the heavy wall timbers, the rafters were easily fabricated on the ground. Their length was related to the size of the cross eaves purlins. The pairs of rafters were halved at the ends where they met and secured together by a peg to form a triangle with equal sides. The apex of the paired rafters was then strengthened by a collar with lap joints and drilled pegs. At the lower ends, the rafters were provided with a small "heel" to be fixed in the eaves purlins and a short tail extending to form the eaves. After all the rafters were prepared, their assembling begun. It is good to remark that the pairs of rafters formed trusses without tie beams. The frame of eaves purlins and the plates were entirely able to balance the side thrust and transfer the roof load to the corner joints. Finally, the raftering was strengthened by laths.

85 *Tereblia.* In some villages from the lowlands of Northern Maramureş it is still possible to observe ruinous thatched houses as this one of Hrulia Vasilina from Tereblia, probably erected in the 19th century. In this part of Maramureş the strips of daub sealing the walls are specifically emphasised in colours like white and blue. The low opening in the roof allowed the smoke to come out. Photo: November 2002.

Most of the vernacular dwellings were until a century or two ago thatched (**83**, **85**). Intentionally or not, this choice seemed salutary since the thatch on the roofs became in difficult years a critical reserve for the cattle. In 1740 the priest from Budeşti Vinţeşti noted on a church book about the year of famine that plagued the village as he was forced to uncover the barn to feed the livestock.[119] This experience was repeated once again in 1914, in the preamble of the World War I, and it is still remembered.[120]

The shingles were by all probabilities known in Maramureş since Middle Ages. In the 17th century, in the town of Baia Mare the shingles often came from Maramureş.[121] A century later, the shingle makers from Budeşti and Botiza continued to sell their products in Baia Mare and other towns further in the Tisa plain.[122]

In Maramureş it is possible that some country nobles covered their manor houses with shingles, as a mark of their wealth, but we are not able to distinguish it from the surviving rafterings since they were identical for both thatch and shingles. The dwellings in the common farms were however generally thatched, because of the high costs of the iron nails for shingles. In some villages from the southern margins of Maramureş, the wooden nails made of yew tree were also known,[123] and the tradition from Bushtyno remembers the local church was covered with shingles fixed by nails made of oak. Although the natives had alternatives no utilisation of

[117] Stoica,Georgeta, *Interiorul locuinţei ţărăneşti*, 15, 1973 Bucureşti, after Dăncuş 1986, 133.
[118] Stahl, Paul Henri, „Casa Ţărănească la români în secolul al XIX-lea", *AMET* 1959-1961, 133-137, 1963 Cluj.
[119] Bârlea 1909, 60.
[120] IEF, AER, chestionarul 2, locuinţă interior, A II/17, 158, 2; inf. Bohotici 2000, Opriş 2000, Bălin Ileană 1999.
[121] Şainelic, Sabin, *"Arhitectura bisericilor de lemn din Ţara Chioarului"*, *Marmaţia* II, 294, n. 57, 1971 Baia Mare.
[122] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 62.
[123] IEF, AER, chestionarul 2, locuinţă interior, A II/19-20, 159.

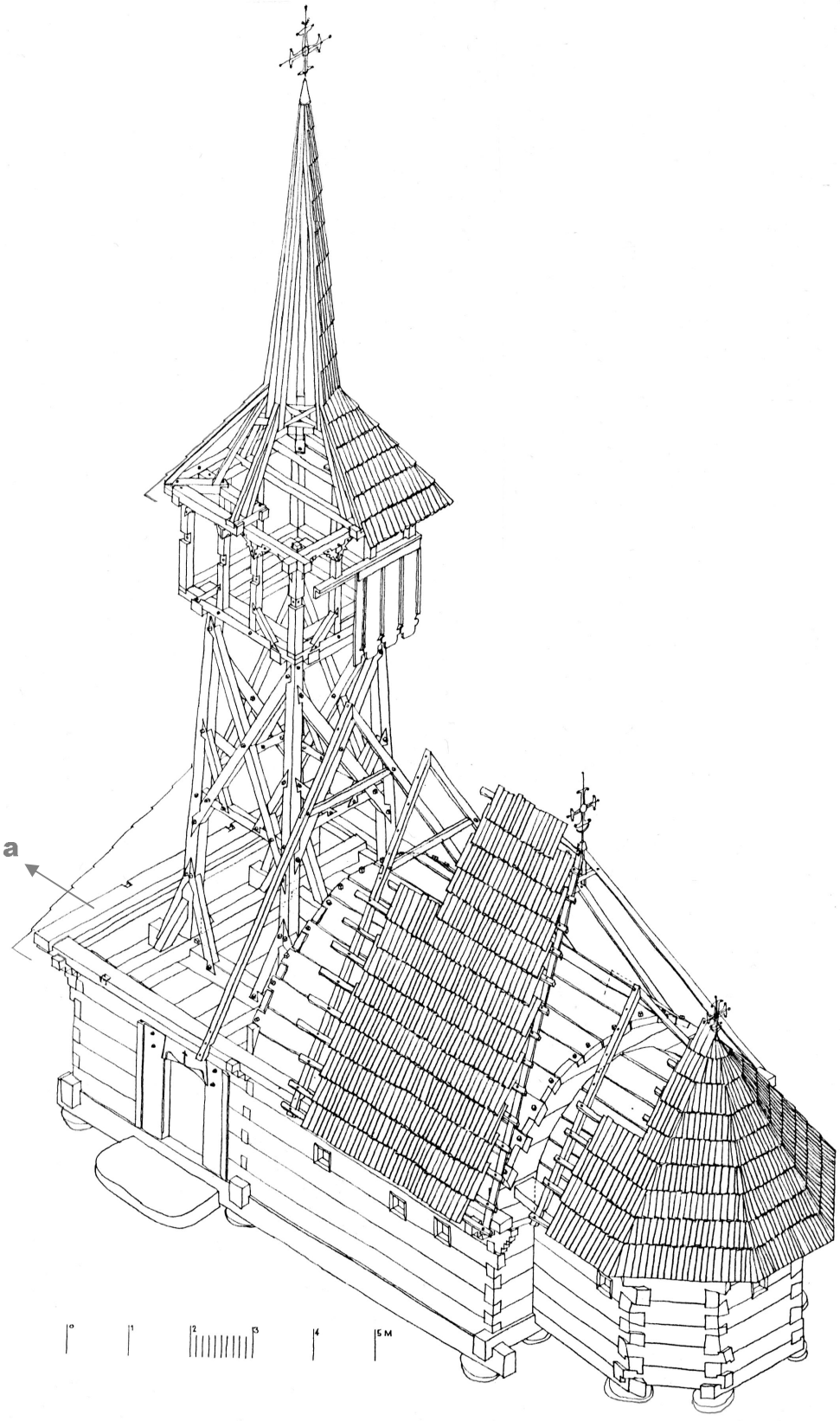
86 *House interiors*. The master's girder delimited the warm room into two parts: the intimate one (of the life acts) and the social one (of rituals). The most protected and also most colourful was the corner with the bed (A). Although close to the door, the fireplace was also regularly placed beyond the master's girder and thus protected (B). It is necessary to remark the low protecting log wall around the fireplace interlocked with fine flush joints and sometimes richly decorated with protective signs, as a sacred part of the house. The eating place (C) is the most lighted corner where the guests were eventually invited to sit. The corner with the entrance had the important threshold where the foreigners were allowed or not to step over. Photos from June 1999 of Iurca house (Călineşti, A and C), Marinca house (Sârbi, B) and Petrovan house (Bârsana, D), all in the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş.

A

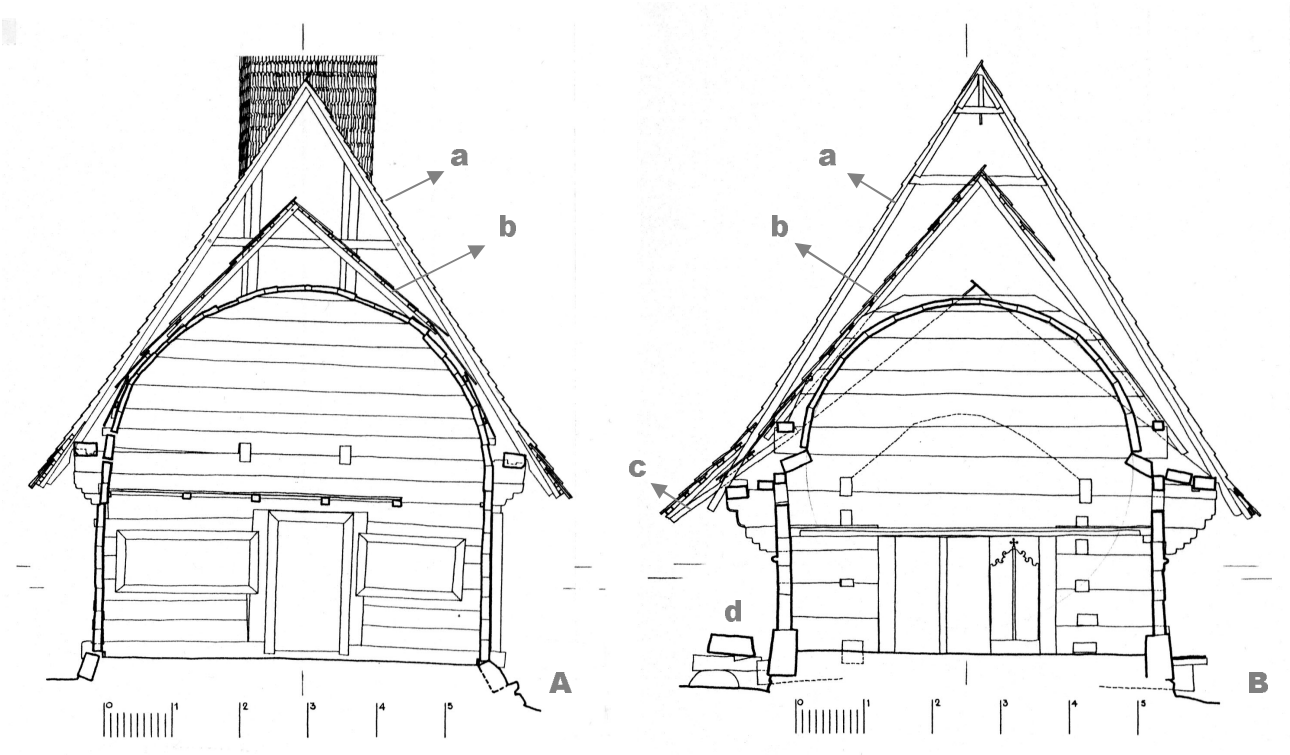
B C D

shingles in a large scale was noted for that reason. It was not until the iron became cheap that the use of shingles clearly increased. The first furnace in Maramureş, opened in Kobyletska Poliana in 1780,[124] might have played a decisive role in the new trend.

[124] Filipaşcu 1997, 127.



86 *Călineşti Căeni.* Axonometric reconstruction of the initial church and its simple roof. The eaves purlins jetted on consoles (a) goes all around the log fabric to support both the large roof above the church and the smaller one protecting the sanctuary. Scale drawing: August 1994.



88 *Breb* (A) and *Sârbi Susani* (B). Sections through the naves. In both churches the new roofs (a) took over the function of the earlier roofs (b). In Sârbi Susani, the short lower rafters (c) extended long outside to protect the ancestors' tables (d). Scale drawings from April-May 1995.

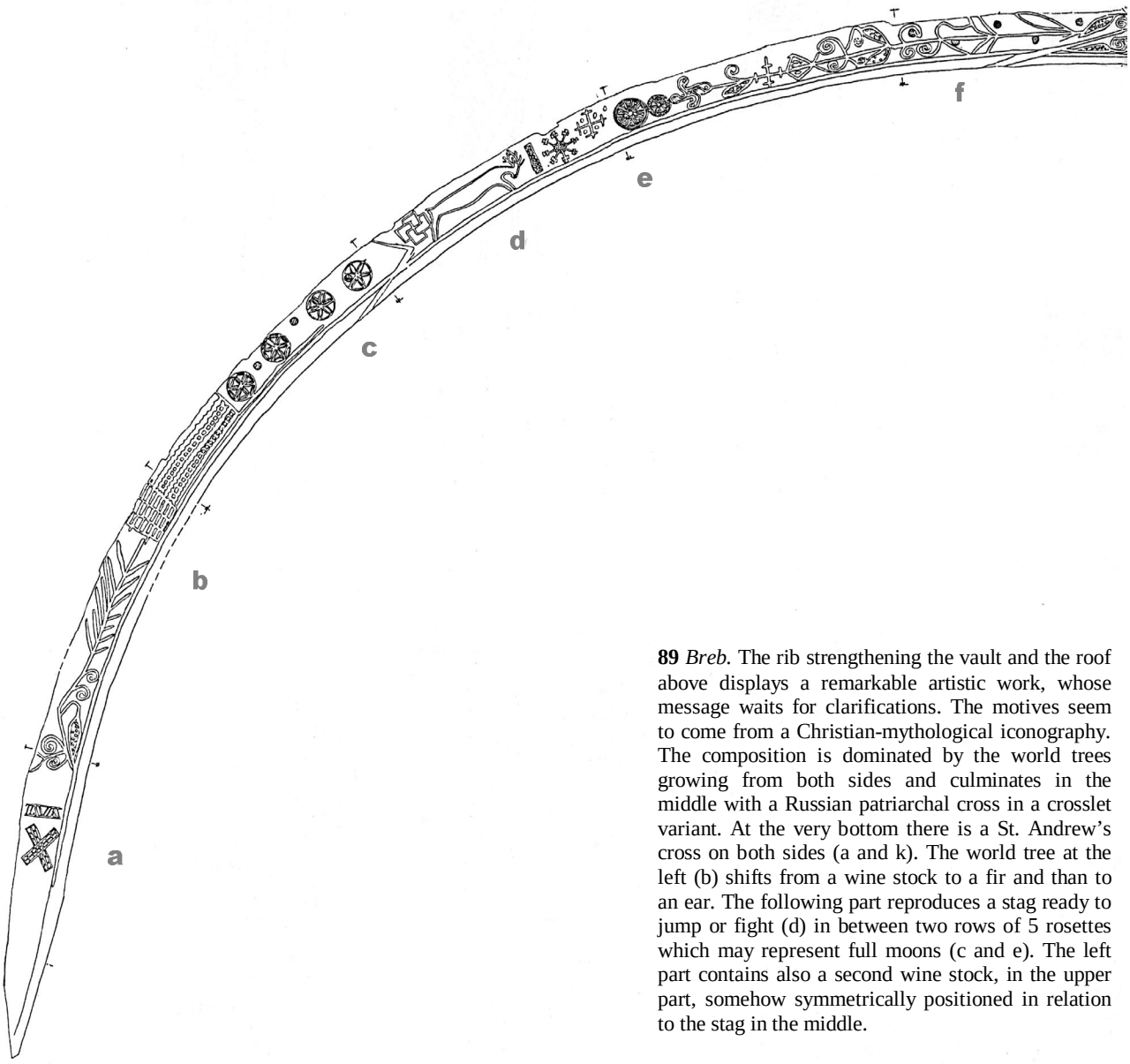
Church roofs

The raftered roofs over the churches had to protect the inner vaulted ceiling, which was itself a log roof.[125] In Maramureş it was not customary to build a light vault suspended from the roof structure, on the contrary, a vault was built so firm above the walls that the raftering could sometimes be reinforced by leaning against its shell. This round log structure was identified with the heaven (*cerime*) and it was one of the most characteristic features of the rural wooden church in the entire Carpathian area. Although Maramureş was at the northern margin of this area, it was here the most robust and ample examples were built.

A vault was primarily obtained by extending the lateral wall timbers over the gables, following a semicylindrical shape. The logs of the vault were notched at the gables except for the last longitudinal ones, who were laid over the gables and fixed by pegs. This inner covering was only raised above the nave, and sometimes in a smaller scale above the sanctuary. The narthex, instead, appears to have been always ceiled flat, since the tower was mounted on it.

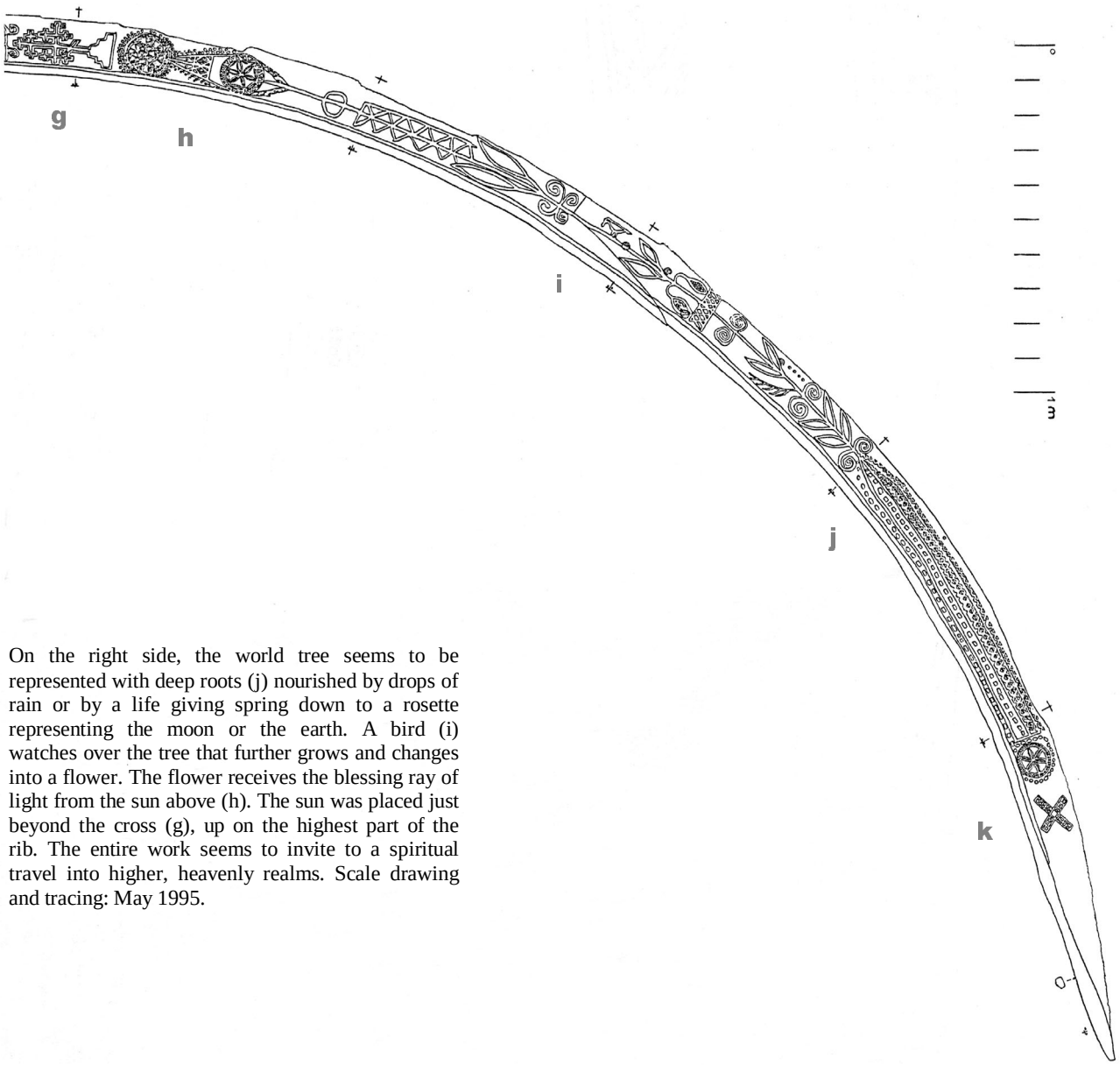
In what measure the vaulted ceiling was perceived as a roof and used as such, it can be at best observed in the oldest standing churches with a single roof (**87**-**88**). The parish churches from Breb, Valea Stejarului, Sârbi Susani and Călineşti Căeni were all built in the first half of the 17th century, but each of them presents a different structural relation between the vault and the raftering. Although they were altered in time, their partial reconstruction is still possible.

[125] Toşa 1999, 150.



89 *Breb.* The rib strengthening the vault and the roof above displays a remarkable artistic work, whose message waits for clarifications. The motives seem to come from a Christian-mythological iconography. The composition is dominated by the world trees growing from both sides and culminates in the middle with a Russian patriarchal cross in a crosslet variant. At the very bottom there is a St. Andrew's cross on both sides (a and k). The world tree at the left (b) shifts from a wine stock to a fir and than to an ear. The following part reproduces a stag ready to jump or fight (d) in between two rows of 5 rosettes which may represent full moons (c and e). The left part contains also a second wine stock, in the upper part, somehow symmetrically positioned in relation to the stag in the middle.

In Breb (1622), the upper part of the old roof is well maintained, only the lower part being affected by a new raftering (**88** A). On the top of the vault there is a small pitched roof of rafters, about 280 cm long. At the eaves, there was a second row of short rafters. They must have been fixed to the massive purlins, with a short tail extending outside, and leaned against the vault either where the upper rafters ended or a bit lower. After the laths and the covering material were laid, the entire roof formed continuous slopes on both sides of the vault. Evidently, in this roofing system it was the vault that took over most of the load and side thrust. On both sides, at the level between the upper and lower rafters, it was a risk the perfectly round vault would deform, especially in the middle. Anticipating this risk, the master carpenter prevented it by a transverse rib. He assembled this rib from four curved pieces of sweet cherry tree, notched together by scarf joints and pegs. There is a natural question regarding this solution: Why were the rafters cut off so short and unloaded on the vault? An obvious explanation would be that the load and the side trust from the upper half of the roof were best taken over by timbers inclined at the same angle, as there were on both sides of this vault. But, although the roof system appears well thought, there were other more practical solutions available and already used in other churches around. There must have been a more important reason for this choice and that could only have been a symbol, integrated in this



On the right side, the world tree seems to be represented with deep roots (j) nourished by drops of rain or by a life giving spring down to a rosette representing the moon or the earth. A bird (i) watches over the tree that further grows and changes into a flower. The flower receives the blessing ray of light from the sun above (h). The sun was placed just beyond the cross (g), up on the highest part of the rib. The entire work seems to invite to a spiritual travel into higher, heavenly realms. Scale drawing and tracing: May 1995.

exceptional constructive solution. And the key of this symbol remained on the rib, fully explained by the carpenter itself. He decorated it with one of the most fantastic compositions of signs and symbols ever seen in the Carpathians (**89**). It seems to me that such "decorated letters" mainly appear in places of double significations. In this case, the strengthening rib seems to emphasise the double role of the vault: to functionally hold up the roof and symbolically identify itself with the heaven.

The second example of a unique roof was maintained in Sârbi Susani (1639), almost intact until 2000, when it was heavily altered by heartless repairs. The roof made of two rows of rafters was also used here (**88** B). However, the upper rafters, about 5 m long, were not fixed to the vault but to some top purlins parallel with the vault. The top purlins rested on the projecting ends of two timbers from the gables, left on purpose for this function. The slopes of the roof were continued to the eaves by short lower rafters, about 2.25 m long. They were leaned to the vault under the top purlins and fixed by pegs to the eaves purlins. Their ends extended long from the eaves purlins to shelter some massive timbers laid along the sills. These were the ancestor's tables (*mesele moşilor*), and they belonged to the local families. On these tables, they carried out certain ritual feasts paying respect to the forefathers

buried around the church. This practice goes long back in time, being attributed in 1586 to an ancient Dacian custom.[126]

The roof from Sârbi Susani retained many similarities with the roof from Breb. Although the upper rafters didn't unload directly on the vault, the rafters were evidently fragmented, the lower rafters were leaned to the vault and inside the nave the vault was provided with two transverse ribs. Indeed, the message from Breb is still recalled here, despite the small variations and less coherence.

An important detail here, which remains unclear in Breb, was the eastern gable. As it appeared before it was altered, the old roof over the nave was left open towards east. There was an identical example at the vanished parish church from Ruske Pole II Inf., erected in 1748.[127] In Sârbi Susani, the ridge extended eastwards about 70 cm from the last rafter, protecting the vault from the rain and snow. As a consequence, the vault was symbolically or not exposed from that side to sun and the weather.

The church from Valea Stejarului (1615-20) presented a similar approach to the roof. The old rafters were replaced here by new ones for long time ago. Despite this loss, we can still observe the grooves and the holes from the former rafters in the logs of the vault. The former rafters would not have been fixed by pegs to the vault if they were not shortened. On the other hand, a rib was not necessary in this construction because the vault was too small and furthermore separated by a wall between the nave and the sanctuary.

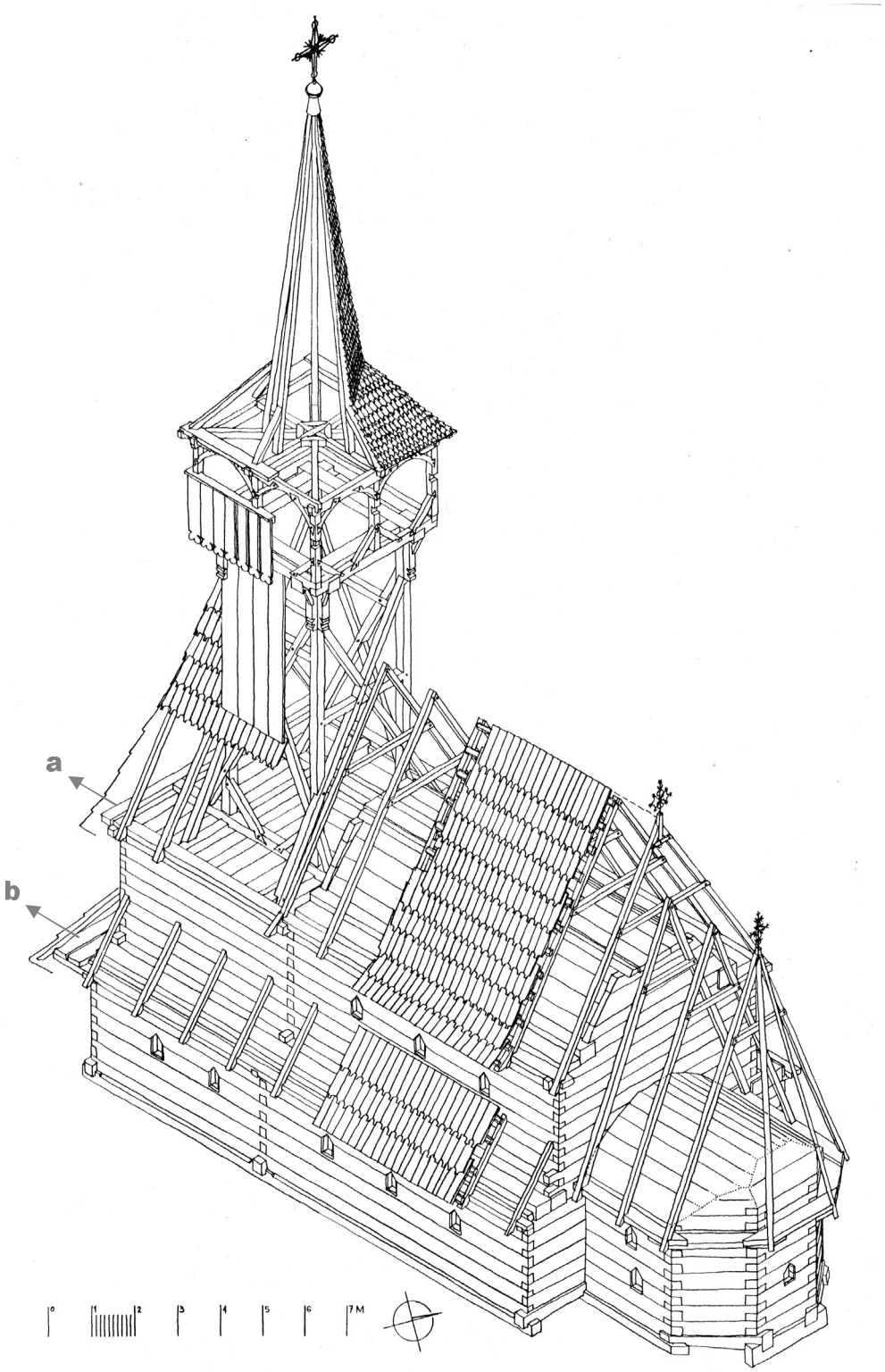
A radical different type of roof was erected over the church from Călineşti Căeni (1629). The old raftered roof is in the main still surviving, despite an enlarging in the 19th century. The pairs of rafters meeting along the ridge were fixed downwards directly to the eaves purlins and strengthened together by a collar. The entire raftering formed a roof with four slopes, surmounting a frame of eaves purlins, identical to any house in the village. The vault was never touched by the rafters, remaining only an inner roof under the outer roof.

It is intriguing that in each of the four parish churches of the ancient model, with only one level of eaves, the roof was resolved in a different way. However, with the exception of the church from Călineşti Căeni, the other three examples, despite their variations, remind of a single principle of construction, unique among the known churches and houses of the region. According to this principle, the vault was given a role in the structure of the roof. And this manifest intention did not appear as an improvisation or a test but rather as an ancient practice loaded with symbolical meanings. We might get tempted to compare them with the large basilical churches, but there the intention with the two rafterings was to build two roofs not one.

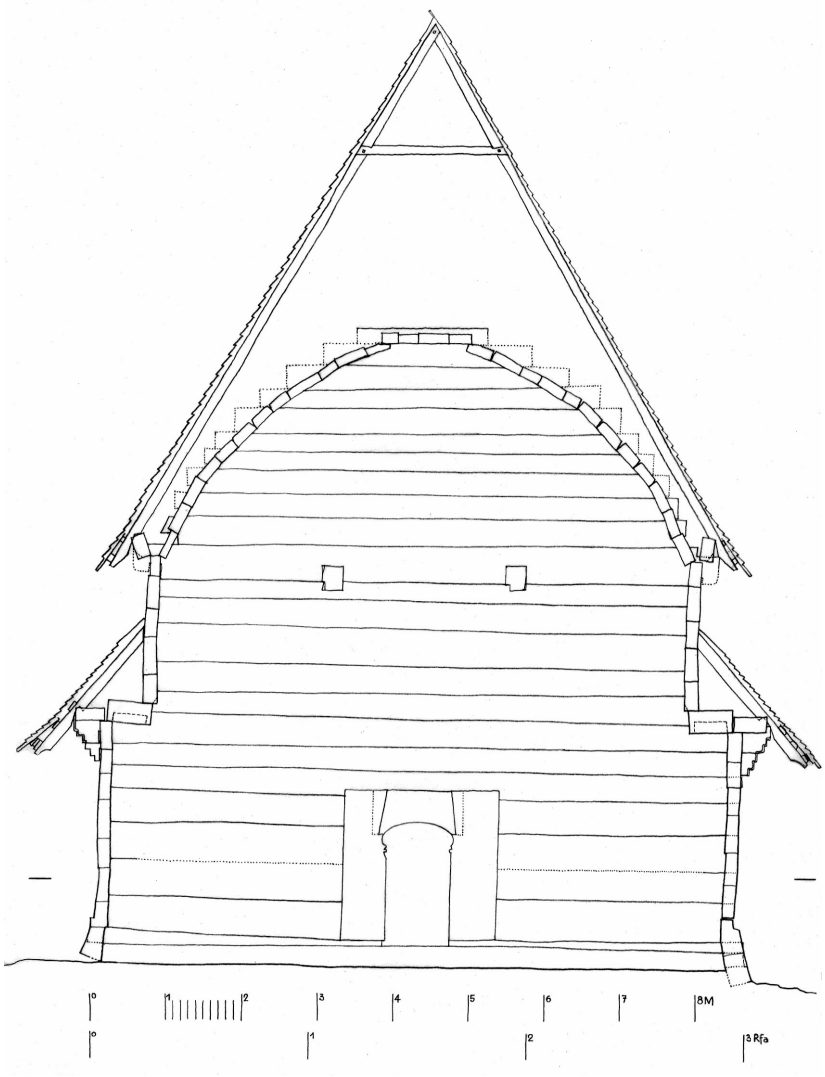
Indeed, the local basilical wooden churches are characterised by the presence of two roofs (**90**). The main roof covers the vault, without any contact with it, while the second roof is a short skirt protecting the brake in the vertical walls. The brake in the wall allowed the construction to be raised high, without risks for buckling, and it was an inseparable part of the large log structure. It was only natural to protect this recess by means of a distinct skirt roof. The vault, in its turn, required its own protection, and this was everywhere resolved by a steep raftered roof.

The main raftering over the local basilical churches or churches with two roofs was similar but not identical with that on the secular dwellings. It is true that, in order to cover the vault inside, the raftering was mounted on a jetted frame of eaves purlins, according to the well proved local practice. However, one should remark that these large and steep roofs were most often closed straight at sides and not by slopes as in common houses. For this reason, their model seems to have

[126] In the antiquity, the natives were named Dacians. Mihalyi 1900, 561, n. 1.
[127] Vavroušek 1929, ill. 171, 173; Zapletal 1982, ill. 45-46; MOL, C 99, XI. A, Maramoros, 92v.



90 *Ieud Deal*. Axonometric view with a reconstruction of the old lathing and shingling. Both the upper eaves (a) and the lower eaves (b) surround the log fabric on three sides and ends levelled with the eastern gable. The rafters over the small sanctuary were mainly sized in relation to the larger roof and secondarily with the width of the sanctuary. Scale drawing: July 1997.



91 *Budeşti Josani.* A section through the largest known church room of wood from Maramureş in the past (above) uncover the problem at the upper eaves purlins, as they appeared twisted out of their position by the heavy roof. The solution was to build a gallery under the eaves purlins to unload them to the lower joints (below). If the galleries were built from the beginning the upper eaves purlins would have more effectively worked laid horizontally. Scale drawing and picture from August 1997.

been the Gothic roof with gables, where the entire load was led to the long lateral walls. In these wooden churches, too, the roof unloaded only on the lateral eaves purlins, and therefore the two cross purlins were more or less unnecessary. They were often excluded from the eastern gable (**90**), while on the west they were mainly maintained for a short widening of the roof protecting the facade. In other words, the carpenters were not anxious with the strains outside the gables of the vault and therefore they speared time excluding the cross purlins near them. In exchange, they focused on the situation of the roof in between those gables, where vital decisions were to be made.

The entire stability of the roof relied on the strength of the lateral eaves purlins in between the extending consoles of the gables. The larger the roof was, the heavier it became and the greater the risk was for the eaves purlins to yield. In its turn, the size of the roof was conditioned by the vault it protected, and further down by the sacred room itself. And, actually, it was down there, in the need to increase the capacity of the room to receive larger congregations, the entire problem originated. By changing our perspective, we can see that the master carpenters started their work on the ground with the future roof in mind as one of its greatest concerns.[128]

The most illustrative example for an analysis is the parish church from Budeşti Josani (1643; **91**). This construction presents the largest nave of all surviving in Maramureş from the 17th and 18th centuries, with the inner spans of 812 cm across and 881 cm along the room, and a floor area of about 71.5 sq m. On its way up to erect the room, the master carpenter used inner braking consoles not only to prevent bends in the walls but also to reduce the spanning of the vault to about 7 m. Outside, the resulting span of the raftering was 7.8 m. At this spanning, the rafters built an impressive roof with large sides exposed to winds and heavy precipitations. Because the master carpenter wanted a free and elegant vault inside, the rafters were not tightened together by any tie beam through the nave and therefore the entire roof load and side thrust were transmitted to the lateral eaves purlins. Although these purlins were really massive, without other supports along the 8.8 m long distance between the consoles of the gables they were the weakest parts of the construction. In normal cases, the purlins were laid with their wider side horizontally to take well over the side thrust, but in Budeşti Josani the load of the roof was so substantial that the purlins were laid vertically instead. Otherwise it was a great risk the purlins would have broken in the middle of the distance between the brackets supporting them. However, the problem continued even after the church was finished and therefore it was necessary to come back and build an additional structure of posts forming arcades under these lateral eaves purlins. This additional gallery like structure strengthened the purlins and improved the transfer of the heavy roof load to the corners of the building. Despite appearances, there was no decorative purpose behind this addition in the first hand, but a serious technical necessity.

This astonishing church must have been seen and admired by many carpenters, clerics and laymen thereafter. A century after its completion, the bishop Manuil Olsavszky of Mukachevo remarked this church as *"ample and magnificent"*, most likely alone among hundreds of others he visited in 1751-52.[129] Later in the 19th century the wooden church was famous long beyond the county limits and described for the first time in 1847 in a periodical from Buda.[130]

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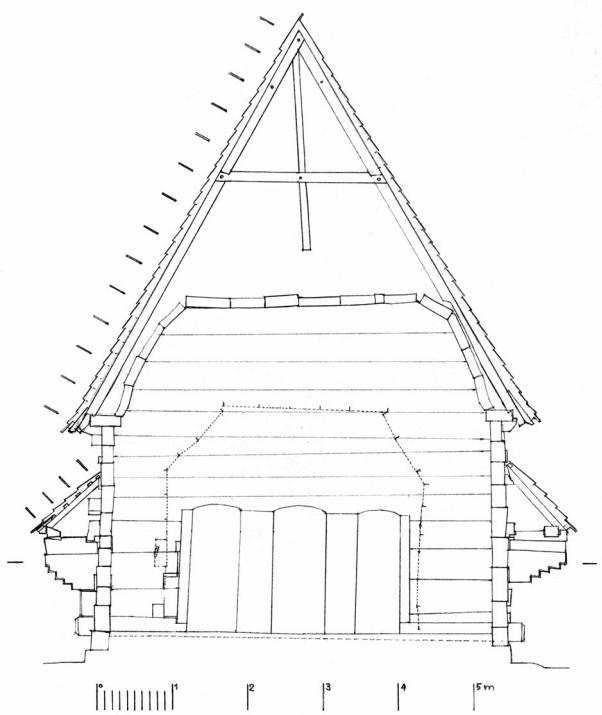
[128] Peter Sjömar demonstrated the real problem in the Scandinavian log churches from the 17th and 18th centuries was the coverings for the increasingly larger rooms demanded by growing parishes. Sjömar 2000, 125-145. The situation from Maramureş was not different, only the response to it.
[129] DAZO, 151, 839/1745, 2v.
[130] Béla K[ároly]-Házy, "Uti vázlat levelekben Fekete Károlyhoz", *Honderü*, II, 494-495, Buda 1847.



92 *Corneşti*. The raftering and the vault share the same massive lateral purlins. Scale drawing of the section through the nave facing east: August 1997.

However, the practical experience gained here probably made the carpenters aware and cautious to engage in such large churches.

In the decades following the large construction from Budeşti Josani, several churches were built, many of them with earlier proved prudent solutions to unload the roof. Was it just a coincidence or the church carpenters really learned something from there? For example, in Apşa din Jos (1659) the rafters ended inside the lateral eaves purlins and the purlins were a few centimetres laid over the wall.[131] An even more radical solution was applied in Corneşti, probably under the major repairs from 1670s (**92**). With this occasion, the two lateral eaves purlins were probably moved right on the top of the wall to be also used as the springs of the vault inside. The load was thus directly transferred to the walls and their joints, without further risks for unwelcome bends in the upper eaves purlins. From a symbolical perspective, in this solution there was a coherent continuity from the ancient ones, since the inner roof was again in contact with the outer one by sharing the same supporting base. This particular solution was afterwards repeated unabated in Hărniceşti (1679), Sârbi Josani (c. 1685), Vişeu de Jos (1699) and Sat Şugătag (1700), indicating a single team of carpenters behind all of them. Despite these improvements, the churches were planed at a lower scale than in Budeşti Josani.

In an other model, found in some villages from the Tisa valley, with roots before the church from Budeşti Josani, one tie beam was accepted across the nave to strengthen both the vault and the eaves purlins in the middle, as for example in Rona de Jos (c. 1637; **93**), Krainykovo (1688) and other later examples. This singular beam was not a simple functional transom altering the perfection of the vault, but an important mark between the sacred and the profane inside the nave. Almost everywhere it was used, it corresponded with the place where the floor was raised for the platform in front of the icon screen. It was probably accepted for that meaning in the first hand. Not surprisingly, it reminds of the tie beam from the rods of the Polish churches, with about the same signification. Similar cross beams

[131] Already in Ieud Deal (1611-21; **61**) the eaves purlins were drawn with the inner edge over the wall.

existed in some churches from the Cosău district,[132] but only with a symbolical purpose, since most of them were fixed to the walls without penetrating them. Nevertheless, the cross beam in the local churches reminds of the master's girder in the axis of the local houses, also with a double role: a functional and symbolical one. It is notably that, wherever these beams over the rooms appeared in the local architecture in the past, they seem to have been invested with more than we can see.

The catches were sometimes used to secure or to hold up the eaves purlins. Around the small sanctuary from Corneşti, dated from the first decade of the 16th century, the eaves purlins are supported only by catches fixed to the walls. In most of the other cases they were used to strengthen the eaves purlins in between the projecting plates.

Many wooden churches preserved their original laths until the recent restoration works (**94**) and in a few places, where the zeal to replace them hasn't reached, they still survive. The original covering materials naturally vanished away, and we have to guess from the old lathings and read some historical information to get an idea of how they initially looked like. Fortunately some old covered roofs from a century or two ago have survived in Breb, Budeşti Susani and until recently in Sârbi Susani. In Breb, the shingles were grooved at one side and extremely large, up to 22 cm wide and 94 cm long. In Sârbi Susani they were also grooved, about 12 x 70 cm, and ended with a beak to prevent them from splitting (**95**). Since the number of nails necessary to fix them was an important economical factor it was only an advantage to cut them so large. For the same reason we find large spaces between the old laths. In the Tisa valley, where the oak forests were dominant, even the shingles were made from the same material. As these roofs appear today, the rafterings were first boarded and then shingled. The shingles were not grooved, but laid side by side and fixed by iron nails. Their present sizes in Apşa din Jos are about 9 x 40 cm and they are named "scale" (*solzi*), due to their lower acute profile.

The protocol of the great canonical visitation from 1751 is the first source giving us a general picture of how the churches were covered in Maramureş. On most of them the roofs were by that time shingled, only five were still found thatched.[133] None of the thatched roofs were satisfactory, and it was probably no longer accepted such a cheap material on a house of worship. However, their survival in the middle of the 18th century suggests the number of thatched churches could have been greater in the previous centuries.[134] On the other side, the dominance of shingled roofs at the time of the visitation clearly points out the distinction of the churches among the common thatched dwellings in almost all the villages.

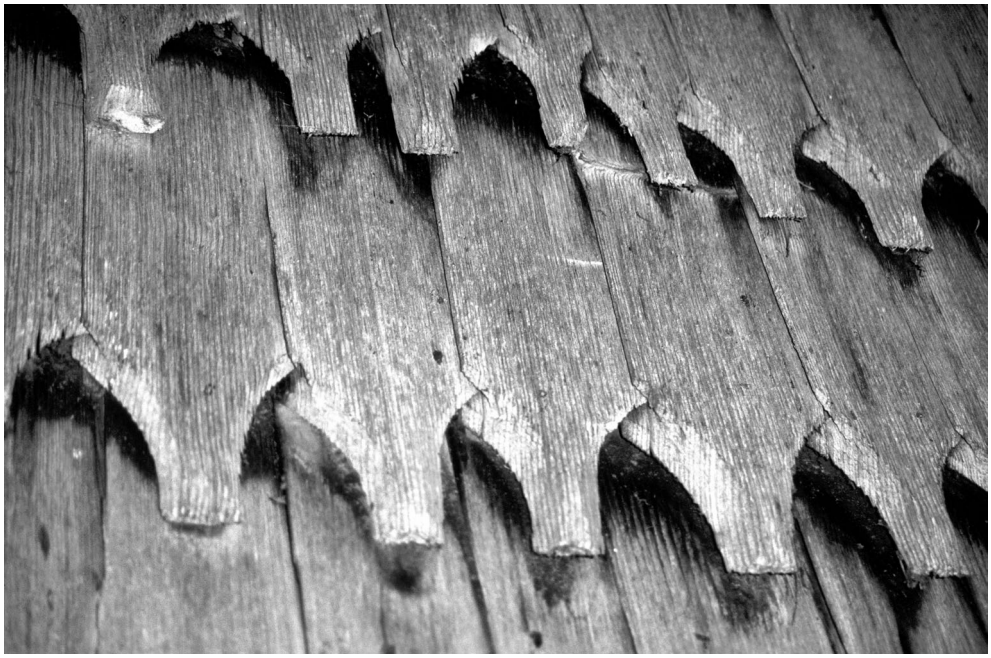
93 *Rona de Jos*. The cross beam penetrates the interior under the spring of the vault in between the two upper pairs of windows. Photo: October 1997.

94 *Ieud Deal*. The old lathing was easily distinguishable by its massive appearance under the repair of the roof. Photo: August 1997.

[132] Sârbi Susani, Călineşti Căeni, Onceşti and Cornești.

[133] The parish churches from Kalyny, Lypcha, Novoselytsia (Verkhovyna), Pryborzhavske (former Zadnoe) and Remeți were thatched. The first four in: Hadzhega 1922, 183, 196, 202 and 209; the last one in: DAZO, 151, 839/1745, 9v.

[134] As late as 1724, the remaining part of an old monastery church in Horinchovo (Monastyrets), burned by the Tatars in 1717, was covered by thatch. MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 95v.



95 *Budeşti Susani*. The oldest types of shingles were grooved on one side and cut with a beak end to prevent them from splitting. Photo: October 1997.

In Maramureş, the outer roofs of the churches and secular dwellings shared the basic principle of a raftering unloaded by jetted eaves purlins. It is important to point out this feature since it strongly links the two categories of construction to a common tradition, at least as far as the dated constructions. On the other hand, the inner roofs shaping the sacred and profane rooms, led to different practical solutions for the outer roofs. Particularly, the straight sides of the outer church roofs resemble the Gothic ones from far around. An unexpected distinction among the local church roofs was identified in the interplay between the inner and outer roofs. The three examples where the inner and outer roofs worked together were neither tests nor hesitations but well thought ancient models. Actually, they might illustrate a previous tradition of building church roofs, unknown to us until now. Built at about the same time, the roof from Budeşti Josani not only marked one of the most daring experiences in the local building tradition but also exposed the limits of the traditional church room. Before and after that several positions for the eaves purlins were noticed, but the roofs above never competed with that from Budeşti Josani.

1.4 Between sacred and profane

The comparative analysis of the church and profane log building tradition in Maramureş in the 17th and 18th centuries brings a few major conclusions.

In a general perspective, the rural secular architecture was characterised by modest functional shelters for private needs, obtained with minimal work, with simple but long proved technical solutions and by using the available local resources as much as possible. From this basic and stable frame there was a variety of options allowing the owner to distinguish from others and signal its individuality. Certainly, the nobles remarked themselves in adapting new features, in competition with others outside and inside their communities. But even the most ambitious results appear anchored in a regional plan with its own established norms and customs. Such fashions are more clear beginning with the second half of the 18th century, often following gradual improvements in living conditions.

The wooden churches responded to the common needs of a community, and were everywhere invested above the ordinary dwellings. The material, either from the place or from around was of the best quality. But more than anything else, the knowledge of building was distinct from almost all traditionally used and only comparable with the elevated experience on a European scale. It is a fact that in both churches and dwellings there were used log walls and raftered roofs, but beyond these general technical aspects there were distinct levels of knowledge and practice, which the old craftsmen, founders, churchmen and common villagers were full aware of. It is also true that in the knowledge of building there were a few common points of contact between the secular and church architecture, mainly in particular details like jetted eaves purlins, richly decorated portals, window frames and porches. But the complex knowledge of building highly finished straight walls with elaborated flush joints was exclusively reserved for churches until the end of the 18th century. Only beginning with the shift to masonry in the local church architecture, the refined knowledge of the church carpenters was redirected to build fashionable residences. In this way the vernacular architecture of the last two centuries was ennobled and refined, razing almost away the former articulate distinction between the profane and sacred constructions.

In conclusion, the sacred building tradition distinguished itself from the secular one until the turn of the 18th century. The church builders were not trained house carpenters and even less peasants leaving their plough to build. The knowledge to raise churches of this performance was limited to a few professional church master carpenters. In this remote and austere region, their works reached standards of European class, inspiring the local vernacular architecture throughout centuries. Although they were responsible for the most perfect local acts of building in wood, it is amazing how little we know about them. Who were they? Where were they from? What can we learn about them? What is the testimony of their surviving works?

2 The church carpenters

95 *Master carpenter Găvrilă Hotico Herenta*. If there are today carpenters comparable with the church carpenters of the past the first to think of is master Găvrilă Hotico *Herenta* (1938) from Ieud. He was born and trained in a family of carpenters, following in his father's and grandfather's steps. His great experience is also based upon numerous observations during wooden church repairs and on intensive training and practice alongside some experimented Transylvanian master carpenters. In his career he has restored over a hundred historical buildings in wood and restarted the construction of wooden churches in southern Maramureş with a clear intention to anchor them in the old local church building tradition. In conservation works he has remarked himself through genuine care and humbleness for the art of the old masters, offering examples of minimal but competent interventions. Unfortunately, between him and the last active wooden church builders in Maramureş there is a gap of more than one and a half century, that is about 5-6 missing generations, but master Găvrilă Hotico learns us something very important, that an engaged training in reading the historical buildings may reduce the loss of practical and oral continuity with the past. Photo during the repairs at the wooden church from Ieud Deal, July 1997.

The church carpenters

In a decisive way, the comparison of the sacred and secular building tradition emphasised the activity in Maramureş until the turn of the 18th century of a distinct but yet unknown group of church carpenters. In the following part we will therefore try to learn more about them, from both written sources and their works. The purpose is to determine their identity, how the transfer of knowledge from one generation to another might have taken place and the role in the erection of local wooden churches. In this direction the main question is: Where in a construction can we read the particular contribution of a carpenter?

2.1 Out of anonymity

In the oldest written sources the carpenters from Maramureş were in general named only accidentally and they are recognizable by the professional terms and eventually by the titles added to their names. The specific conditions from Maramureş led to the use of numerous terms and titles in different languages; in Latin (*faber, lignifaber, carpentarius, magister carpentarius, durepitus*), Hungarian (*ács, acz, ach, alcs, alch, alts, farago, mester*), Romanian (*meşter, maistăr, durepit, lemnar, cemerman*), Ucrainian (*maistrov*) and German (*zimmerman, zimmer meister*). The list is certainly not complete and most of the various forms were rarely used in documents. The titles alone (*faber, magister, mester, meşter, maistăr, maistrov, meister*) require special caution, because they were applied in other professions, too. For instance, in 1728 the sexton Popa Simion collected money from the villagers in Hărniceşti to pay an unspecified master (*meşter*),[1] actually referring to a bookbinder and not to a carpenter. Another example is Emericus Mester from Vişc, who was a shoemaker in 1744.[2] Another significant problem is the common use of occupational names for surnames. Michael Acs was a shoemaker in the town of Teceu in 1744 and Samsa Cemerman was a parish priest in Deseşti in 1751,[3] none of them a carpenter as one might have expected. We should however not deny that often a person named Priest (*Pop, Popa* or *Papp*) was a priest, a Miller (*Molnar* or *Morar*) was a miller and accordingly even one named Carpenter (*Acs*) could often be a carpenter. Nevertheless, the occupations were regularly inherited from one generation to another and consequently the trade names and the surnames served well certain families.

The first recorded carpenters were probably members of the town guilt from Sighet. In 1540, Joannes *lignifaber carpentarius* was mentioned together with Franciscus *carpenterius* from the village of Apşa de Sus. In 1552 it was recorded Domenicus *faber*, the next year Andreas Taracz *carpenterius* and Joannes Molnar, after 7 years the *carpentarius magister* Thomas Nyerges, whereas in between 1560-61 it was active Georgius Zcyws *magister carpenterius*.[4] From the 17th century and the first half of the 18th century, there are numerous records of inhabitants in the 5 towns named *Acs, Acz, Mester,* and *faber*, which are not always true carpenters.[5]

[1] Bârlea 1909, 114-115/406.
[2] MOL, U et C, fasc. 220, no. 22, 495.
[3] MOL, U et C, fasc. 220, no. 22, 500.
[4] Tört. Tár, Nouv. sér. III, 1902, 463-464; after Balogh 1941, 25-26, n. 58; Bélay 1943, 197.
[5] Bélay, 149, 151-152, 197, 205-208, 216; MOL, U et C, fasc. 220, no. 22, 472-524.

In the villages we find other numerous examples of inhabitants bearing names or titles linked to carpentry. In 1550, Alexander Alch, serf in Apşa de Sus, was probably a true carpenter, maybe related with Franciscus of Apşa de Sus *carpentarius* recorded in Sighet in 1540. Jacobus Kovacz *faber* in 1614 and Joannes Asztalos *faberlignarius* in 1744, both serfs from Iza, were also involved in carpentry according to their titles.[6] From the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century we find one group of peoples named *Alch* around Hust, and just rarely some named *Farago* and *Mester*.

Alch is an old form of the Hungarian word *ács* with the meaning of *carpenter*.[7] The *Alch* group of names was concentrated in the serf village of Nyzhnie Selyshche, documented there in 1605 (Gregorius Ach), 1715 (Elias, Franciscus, Jakobus, Lucas, Petrus and Stephanus Alch/Alcs) and 1720 (in addition Andreas and Demetrius Acs) suggesting a possible important family of carpenters, not only along several generations but also numerous.[8] An isolated serf Jakobus Alch lived in 1715 in Darva and two priests, Ştefan and Pop Alcsa were recorded in 1749 in Bedeu.[9] There might have been even others not mentioned by the available records.

Farago is also a Hungarian word for *wood carver*.[10] A single person is thus far known with this name and he significantly lived in the village belonging to the important Peri Monastery. Kondratt Farago was a serf there in 1605.[11]

Mester is the Hungarian word for *master* and it was widely used by all ethnical groups living in Maramureş for the best professional carpenters; *meşter* and *maistăr* in Romanian, *maistrov* in Ucrainian and *meister* in German. An Georgius Mester was named in Petrova in 1720,[12] without knowing if he really was a carpenter or not.

It is interesting to remark that the majority of those who had their surnames and titles linked to carpentry were either town artisans or villagers of serf condition. This corresponds to what master carpenter Hotico Găvrilă remembers, that the best professional carpenters in the past were poorly landed and made a living of travelling around and building for clients. Unfortunately, this selection of potential and effective former carpenters represents an extremely reduced figure of the numerous carpenters who activated about the same time in Maramureş. However, it captures a potentially important family of rural carpenters in Nyzhnie Selyshche and some other individuals who used their profession as a surname.

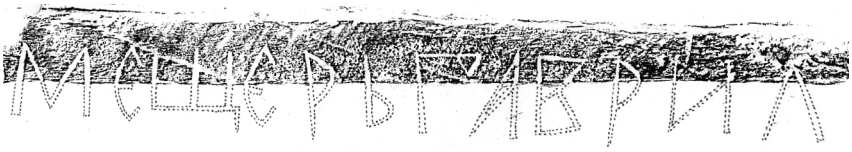
The names of carpenters recorded in written documents without sure connection to a specific church are at this stage not particularly relevant in our effort to identify the church carpenters from Maramureş, but the professional terminology may help us to find them elsewhere. We must therefore continue our research firstly by focusing on a few signatures and reliable written sources and thereafter by studying the church carpenters from their surviving works.

[6] Bélay 1943, 121, 156 and MOL, U et C, fasc. 220, nr. 22, 528.
[7] Balogh 1941, 24-26.
[8] Bélay 1943, 134, 195.
[9] The priest Ştefan Alcsa was already departed, while the other one seems to have been his son; Kinah 1926, 113-114.
[10] Balogh 1941, 24-26.
[11] Bélay 1943, 167.
[12] Bélay 1943, 179.

2.1.1 A few signatures

One of the most reliable ways to identify a carpenter with a church is through signatures. At first sight, the church carpenters appear to have preferred to remain anonymous. However, some of the few surviving names of church carpenters come from inscriptions on the churches. Since they used to sign on the portals, we may suppose that several other signatures disappeared with the numerous later enlargements of the entrances.

The oldest identifiable church carpenter seems to be *Meşter Gavril*, who signed above the portal to the nave in Onceşti (c 1621; **97**). His signature in Romanian with Cyrillic characters is only partially maintained, but still readable (**96**). Gavril is, however, only the first name, the important surname being perhaps lost.



96 *Onceşti*. The fragmentary signature above the former portal to the nave. Tracing, scale 1:4, 2002.

97 *Onceşti*. Of the standing church only the log fabric can more definitely be connected with the signature of master Gavril. The church stands today in the Ethnographic Museum of Maramureş in Sighet. Photo: October 2000.

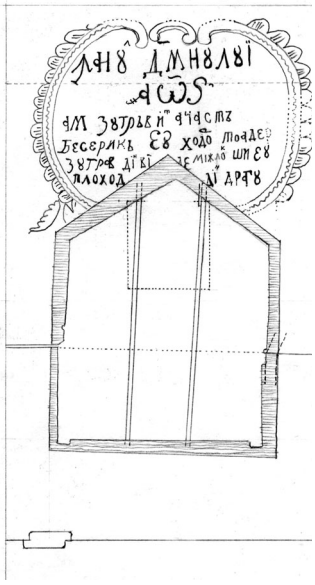
98 *Rozavlea*. This church, erected some time after 1717, was embellished a century later, more precisely in 1825, by Ioan Plohod not only with new murals and the iconostasis as earlier believed but also with the characteristic Royal Doors, the tables before the Royal Icons and possibly even some benches. Accordingly, the wood work of the movable parts can be attributed to his workshop as much as the paintings and murals. Photo: June 1999.

The second but notable example of a known church carpenter inscribing his name on a portal of an entrance is from the far north of Maramureş, in Kolochava Horb. *Majstrov* Ferenc Tekka, later known as Francis Tek, signed above the entrance in 1795, in a time of great famine.[13] In 1799, he became famous for the execution of the iconostasis in the prestigious Uniate cathedral of Uzhgorod. Two years later, he reappeared in Maramureş working with the expensive iconostasis from Hust.[14] This itinerary remarks him as one of the most prominent church carpenters and iconostasis builders of the bishopric of Mukachevo at the turn of the 18th century.

The multiple specialisations of some church builders at the turn of the 18th century are confirmed by a second remarkable example, from the Southern Maramureş. Ioan Plohod from Dragomireşti was known until now only as a church painter.[15] However, his first professions seem to have been the carpentry, wood carving and joinery. In a village account from 1796 he was entitled *durepitul*, i.e. a *builder*, while in 1819 and 1821 he was recorded as a painter.[16] His known works recommends him as an excellent joiner, sculptor and painter of iconostasis, altar canopies, chandeliers, church furniture and finally even as a mural painter.

Ion Plohod descended from a noble family[17] specialised in icon painting, mentioned in Dragomireşti in 1766: Ion Plohod and Grigore Plohod, and in 1781-1784: Gheorghie Plohod.[18] By origin, the Plohod family was not from this village and it possibly came here with the priest Nichifor Plohod, traced in the parish between 1749 and 1757.[19] About the same time with Nichifor, another priest from this family, Simeon Plohod, served in Văleni.[20] There, the roots of the family can be traced back to 1689, when Alexa Plohod was mentioned among the nobles of the village.[21] It can not be just a coincidence that the traditional nickname of the villagers from Văleni is "*icon painters*". The origin of this nickname might well be linked with the Plohod family long before its migration to Dragomireşti in the second half of the 18th century.[22] Thus, the professional specialisation of the Plohod family in church art went several generations back in time and it was sometimes naturally interwoven with priesthood.

One of the first places where we find the signature of Ioan Plohod is the church from Bârsana Jbâr (**99**). There, in 1806, he signed on a wall after the



99 *Bârsana*. The signatures from 1806 of the mural painter "*Toader Hodor from Vişeu de Mijloc*" and of "*Plohod ... from Dragomireşti*". Scale drawing: July 1997.

[13] Sahanev 1932, 70, nr. 4. A background search of the family would be interesting in the future. A Jakobus Teka was documented in Kopashnevo in 1715 and a Gabriel Teka was recently settled in Steblivka in 1720, both near Hust; Bélay 1943, 141 and 192.
[14] Hadzhega 1922, 216; Syrokhman 2000, 18.
[15] Pop-Bratu 1982, 80-90.
[16] Ioan Plohod *durepitul*; Dobozi-Faiciuc 1998, 32 and Table III.
[17] According to a village account from the end of the 18th century Ion Plohod had to serfs; Marius Porumb, *Dicţionar de pictură veche românească din Transilvania, sec. XIII-XVIII*, 291, Bucureşti 1998.
[18] Dobozi-Faiciuc 1998, 31 and Table III. Gheorghie Plohod is known from an altar canopy from Călineşti Susani that he probably both carved and painted: *"Ani de la Is Hs 1789, Această sftă ţiborie o au cupărat Pop Ion din Deseşti la besereca Călineştilor şi s-au ghetă februarie 9; zugravu din Dragumireşti Ghiorghie*". In Sârbi Susani there is an almost identical altar canopy that it can also be attributed to him. Gheorghie Plohod also wrote on a church book in 1799 (Bârlea 1909, 99/344).
[19] Bud 1911, 42. Actually, three other priests were recognized in the village during the visitation of the Uniate bishop from Mukachevo from 1751, Damian Balea, Samuel Turcuş and Nichifor Zubaş; DAZO, 151, op. 1, 839/1745, 5v. Since the active parish priests needed a confirmation from a Uniate hierarch, it is possible that some older ones no longer asked for it fulfilling only limited functions in the community.
[20] He served together with Simeon Nemeş and the deacon Ananie Stanca; DAZO, 151, op. 1, 839/1745, 2v.
[21] *Aleksza Plokod*; Bélay 1943, 174.
[22] Inf. Tiran 1994. The village nicknames are partly published by Papahagi (1925, XXVIII-XXIX). Among the numerous village nicknames used around to make fun of each other, only that from Văleni transmits respect and admiration. The nicknames from Văleni and Sălişte de Sus indicate the origin of this custom 250 years ore more ago.

experimented mural painter Toader Hodor from Vişeu de Mijloc.[23] I suspect he was only responsible for the iconostasis and the altar table and maybe assisted Toader Hodor in painting. In the next year, he followed Toader Hodor to Văleni,[24] the village of family origin, where he seems to have built and painted at least the altar table.[25] Thereafter he specifically signed alone on his works. In 1810 he signed the altar canopy from Bocicoel, in 1817 the iconostasis from Rona de Jos and in 1825 the iconostasis and the murals from Rozavlea (**98**).[26] In Şieu only the murals were attributed to him,[27] though even the iconostasis with its beautiful Royal Doors comes from his workshop. He seems also to have been the author of the iconostasis from Apşa de Mijloc Josani, made probably in 1822,[28] Apşa din Jos Părău and Ieud Şes.

If there are enough works where we can identify him as a joiner and painter, there are no church constructions directly connected to him as a builder. Unfortunately, the tradition to build new wooden churches was almost passed in the area and the time he was professionally active. Even if he might have built churches we have nothing to demonstrate it with, yet. Despite this fact, his skills in joinery, sculpture and his first recognised career of builder recommend him as a possible late church carpenter who could at least engage in some current church repairs and extensions. From this perspective, his signature from 1826 on an obituary from Săcel, after he mentioned a repair of the ceiling in the sanctuary, becomes more meaningful.[29] In conclusion, Ioan Plohod from Dragomireşti was an outstanding example of a multivalent church artist who dedicated at least 3 decades of his professional life taking care of and further adorning many wooden churches of Maramureş.

In the short list of church carpenters signing their works we should include the German craftsman Wenzel *pospishil* (**100**), who left his name on the upper porch of the church from Fereşti.[30] The unusual term he used after his name is an altered form of a Latin word that might approximatively be translated as *post decorator*. The place and the technique in which he signed suggest he was a specialised carpenter that, after the construction was finished, probably insisted on some decorative details. It is also possible that he boarded the doors of the icon screen, and eventually carved and painted the Royal Doors. Later, the church was painted by Falukevici, a mural painter from the town of Baia Mare.[31]

Finally, there is one more known church carpenter, whose name appeared in a Latin inscription on the iconostasis from Neresnytsia.[32] The master carpenter Dimitri Haszinets did not sign there himself. He was mentioned afterwards together with the joiner of the icon screen Petrus Tomasko and the painter Michael

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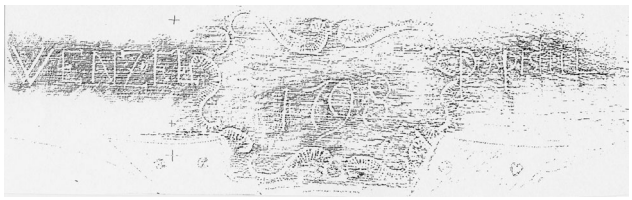
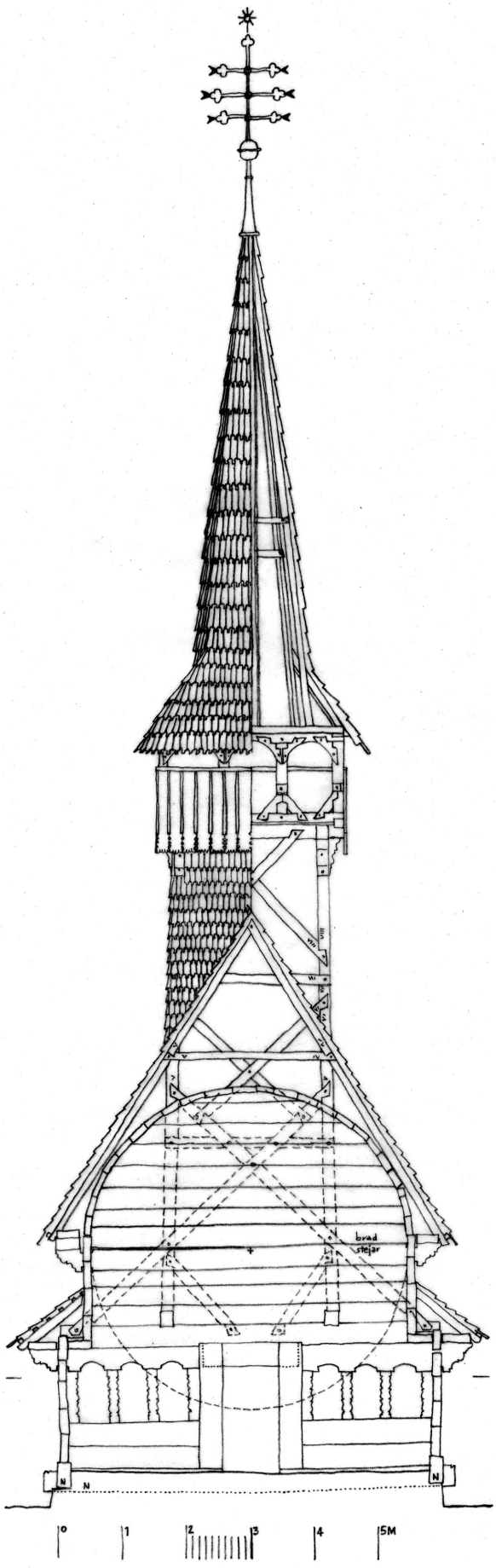
[23] Pop-Bratu 1982, 80.
[24] Bârlea 1909, 204/756.
[25] This piece is still surviving in Văleni from the old church and it is almost identical with that from the neighbouring village, in Bârsana Jbâr.
[26] Pop-Bratu 1982, 80-90.
[27] Pop-Bratu 1982, 86-90.
[28] Bârlea 1909, 6.
[29] Bârlea 1909, 164-165/586.
[30] The oral tradition pointed out the team came from the German community settled in Vişeu (*ţipţeri*). Inf. Ţâplea 1997.
[31] Baboş 2000, 143.
[32] *"1825 / Pinxit Michael Mankovits cum adjuncto / sibi Alexandro Dukovszky Parocho tunc existente / Dominio R. Basilio Gribovszky sub Curator / Sculpsit cum Petrus Tomasko. 1822 sub Curator / Alexio Michalyo. Extructa vero Eclesia hoc / 1813 Ad Parocho D. A. R. Theodora Kosztevits. mami / Dimitrii Haszinets. Expe: Comunitatis et / Adju Camera".* Syrokhman 2000, 561. It is said that this important late wooden church was destroyed by fire in March 2003; *Fest*, 27-2, Uzhgorod 2003.

Mankovits. The record of all the church craftsmen along with the priests and founders was not accidental here, but this late situation is rather an exception than a rule.





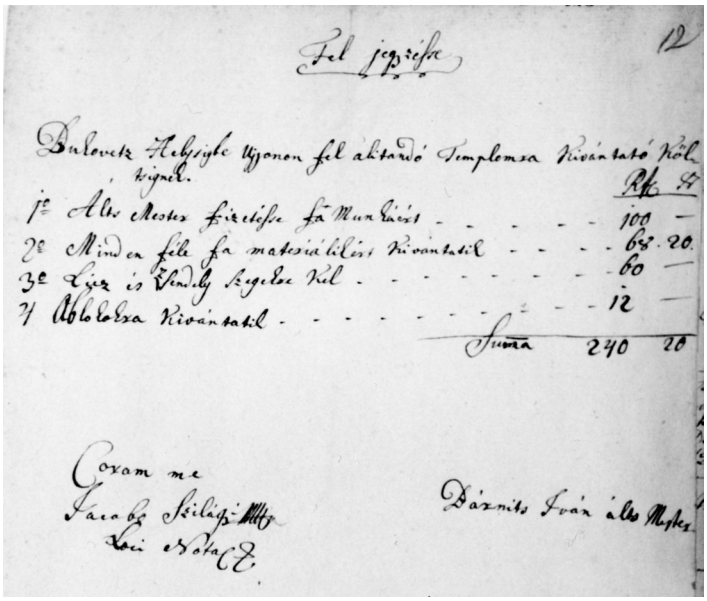
100 *Fereşti*. This middle sized wooden church was built, according to local oral traditions, by German carpenters. The signature of Wenzel *pospishil* from 1798 seems to confirm this tradition. Tracing of the signature (above) and scale drawing of the section through the nave (at right) from June 1998.

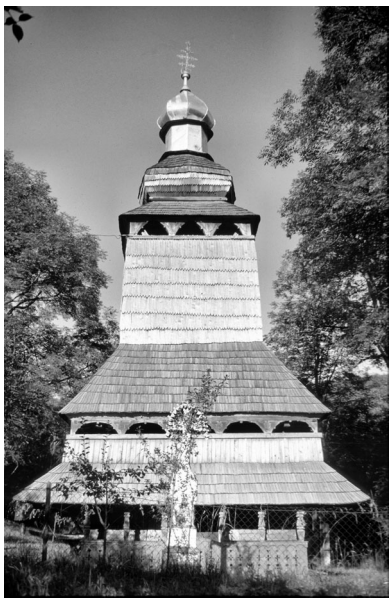
2.1.2 Written sources

The few written documents that came to light after some archive research rather open the hope for future more detailed information about contracts and procedures for construction of churches than they really offer today. One single contract or bookkeeping during construction of a wooden church can significantly widen our view in the work of the church carpenters in the area of our research. Such valuable sources may still wait to be discovered in the archives.

In one of the few relevant historical records, a letter from 30 May 1777, it was named the carpenter Pop *Meşter* who was probably contacted to build a new parish wooden church in Peri (Hrushevo).[33]

By chance, four costs estimations lost from a main document were found in the archives of Beregovo.[34] They referred to the plans to construct a church and a parish house in Bukovets, an iconostasis in Uj Holyatin, present Novoselytsia, and a tower in Prislip. Fortunately, the main document, placing them in the appropriate historical context, was identified in the Parish Regulation of 1798.[35] Although all the three villages are located in Verkhovyna, the northern district of Maramureş, outside the main area of the present research, certain aspects remain relevant for the entire county.





101 Evaluation costs to erect a new wooden church in Bukovets (DAZO, 151, 1, 3017/ 1782, 12), lost from its main document, but identified as an appendix to the Parish Regulation of 1798. According to the inscription above the entrance, the church was finished in 1808. Photo: August 1993.

The estimative costs to build the new church from Bukovets are especially important since the construction still stands. The master carpenter (*alts mester*) Bárnits Ivan was mentioned as a counterpart by the district notary Jacobo Szilagi, the one who wrote and signed the text (**101**). The moneys, 240 Rhenish florins, were asked from the Religious Fund.[36] No less than 100 Rh fl were meant for the

[33] DAZO, 151, 1, 2612/1777, 6-6v. This wooden church was probably built in the following years replacing the earlier one from 1740.
[34] DAZO, 151, 1, 3017/1782, 11-14.
[35] Hadzhega 1922, 219-220.
[36] The Religious Fund was established in Hungary beginning with 1787 from expropriated church and monastery possessions; Filipaşcu 1997, 134 and Pekar 1992, 227, n 17.

payment of the carpenter, 68 Rh fl for the necessary timber, 60 for the iron nails to fix the laths and the shingles and finally 12 Rh fl for the necessary windows. The paper doesn't contain information about sizes or details about the type of church. Therefore there must have been made a proper contract for those matters with the parish. The new parish church was consecrated in 1808 for up to 300 parishioners, and it was built in the new fashionable Verkhovynian way.

This document on one side speaks of the value of the carpenter's work and on the other side asks questions around the identity of the real purchaser and the entire procedure to obtain the money for the construction. Regarding the church master carpenter, we should remark that he took responsibility over the entire work in wood, including the windows and the necessary iron nails, for which he demanded separate prices. Evidently, the carpenter was unable to work alone, and therefore we should imagine that he was assisted either by other carpenters following him or by villagers participating free of charge. Most notably, his work was evaluated to more than one third of the total cost. This substantial share was not accidental but a current practice in the 18th century.

A detailed bookkeeping paper following the repairs in the monastery of Giuleşti, in 1763, fully confirms that the involvement of a professional carpenter implied significantly higher but certainly worth costs.[37] In Giuleşti, the professional carpenter was continually assisted by locals and rewarded with about one third of the total fee and a new coat. Thus, the special status of a professional master carpenter was properly expressed in his earned income.

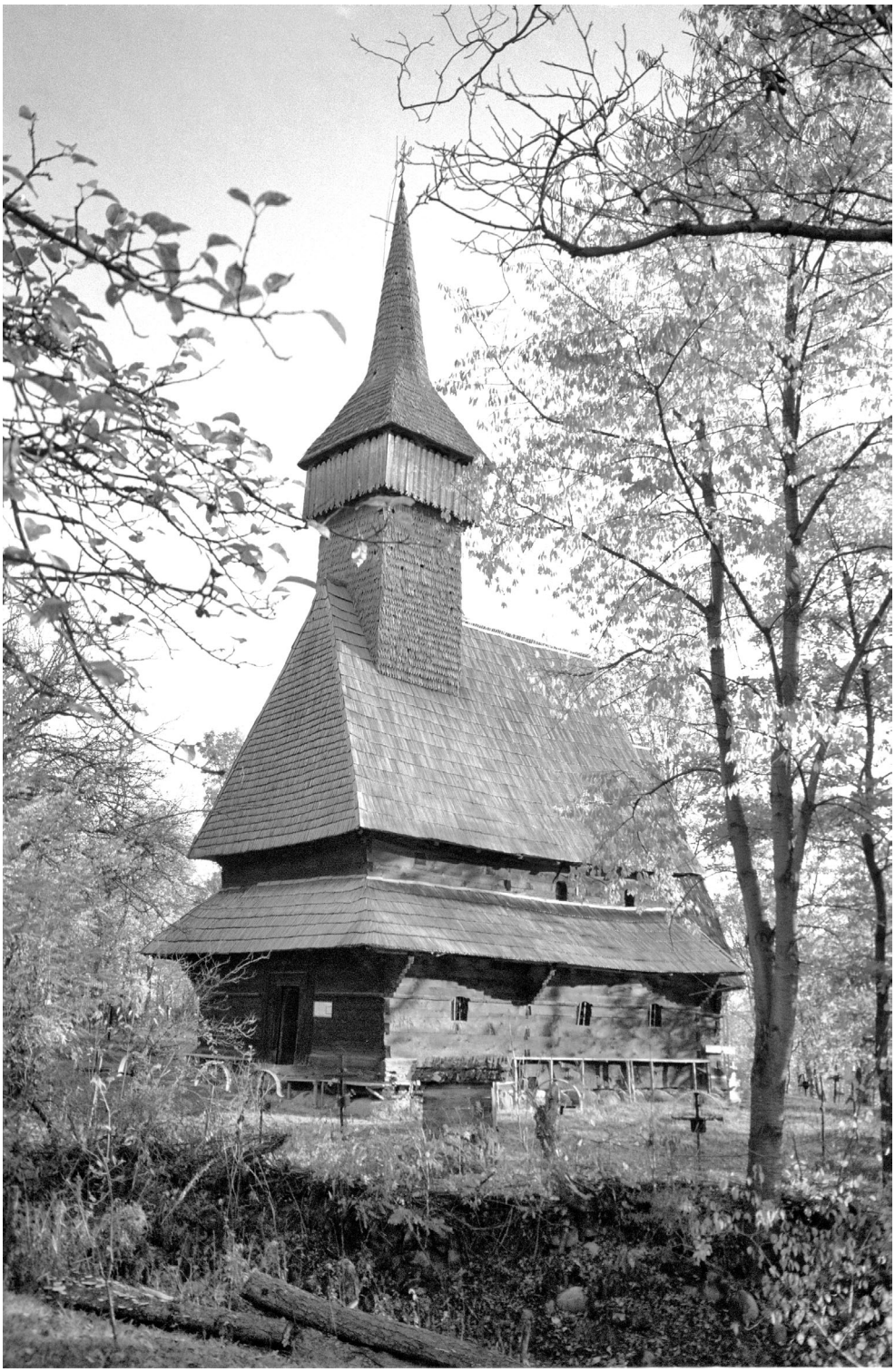
The costs estimation concerning the parish church from Uj Holyatyn, present Novoselytsia, illustrates how the work continued soon after the construction was finished. Here, the church was erected in 1797. A new agreement was therefore necessary with the master carpenter Gátsájla Demeter to build the structure of the icon screen for 50 Rh fl. Another 100 Rh fl were reserved for the one who would carve the icons and 200 Rh fl for the icon painter. In the end, the expenses with the inner adornment more than doubled the total costs of a common wooden church.

The third recorded master carpenter in the costs estimations was Chitrila Ivan, who aimed to erect the tower of the church from Prislip, consecrated just the previous year, in 1797. For this work he was promised 80 Rh fl. A large iron cross and 4 small ones cost 125 Rh fl, while a chalice was 50 Rh fl.

All these prices are only relevant for the turn of the 18th century and not for the period before, since the war with the revolutionary France (1792-1815) brought the entire Habsburg Empire in a serious monetary crisis, with an unprecedented devaluation.[38] However it appears very clearly that the costs for a medium sized wooden church was a modest investment compared with the new fashionable stone churches started at the same time. Only for the future stone church in Dolha there were necessary no less than 2.200 Rh fl, that was about 10 times more than the wooden church planed in Bukovets or in Verkhnii Studeny.[39]

The few names of church carpenters we have from inscriptions or documents partly challenge the earlier impression of general anonymity, because, without any doubt, those who deliberately signed on their works wanted to be remembered. Some of the late church carpenters seem to have been skilled in more than carpentry, building, carving and painting costly icon screens and various other necessary church furnishings. The late costs evaluations and bookkeepings also reveal the professional carpenters were significantly rewarded in relation with the total costs. Despite these notable aspects, there is still little we know about them and their work.

[37] ASM, Rednic, 107.
[38] Bérenger 1997, 127.
[39] Hadzhega 1922, 215-221.



102 *Sârbi Susani*. Was the width of this church just coincidentally alike with that of at least 5 other churches or was it a clear size, easy to communicate and negotiate between carpenters and founders? What was the thought behind the identical room division both here and in Sat Șugătag? Photo: October 2000.

2.2 Reading their works

In order to learn more about the church carpenters and their particular contributions we need to approach their works, as direct proofs of their skills, art and identity. There are three directions of research selected for this purpose here. Firstly, I will look at the way they gave sizes to their works, learning of their almost imperceptible art to erect from very small to very large churches without drawings. Secondly, the towers will unveil not only the effort to rise structures in a totally different technique than the traditional one or a distinctive regional approach to their positioning but also numerous individuals using personal marks to assemble them. Finally, we would look at the main places where their artistic personality was free to express.

2.2.1 Invisible features

To give sizes to a traditional church was a difficult task, requiring a good overview of the spatial and technical implications. These conditions were achieved by the church carpenters only through a long experience. However, this was not enough for a clear and stable repetition of the established local sacred room. Behind all the technical subtleties and formal patterns, there was a refined but invisible system of principles or proportions that harmoniously balanced the parts and efficiently simplified the work of giving dimensions. The system was transferred and adapted from generation to generation of church carpenters, playing a vital role in the making of a local church until two centuries ago. As far as we know, this invisible knowledge was neither written down nor remembered, but plainly maintained embedded in the walls of their constructions. By focusing on the sizes of the churches, I will thus search for a deeper understanding of how the old church carpenters planned their buildings. The key questions are: where can the relevant sizes be found and how should they be transformed in meaningful sources of information?

The royal measurement system

In order to penetrate the silence of the walls we need firstly to know their main sizes and orientation. For this reason the present study is based on measurements and documentation in the field. Of central importance are the measurements made at the base of the constructions, at the level of the sills. Once the measurements were made, we need to transform the sizes from the current metrical system to the historical one of the 17th and 18th centuries. In this way we might find out what significance the width of 720 cm and the length of 1039 cm in Sârbi Josani had in 1685 (**102**) and why no less than 5 other churches were dimensioned with about the same width.

So far, the units for length used before the incorporation of Maramureş in the Habsburg Empire (1687) are barely known. Beginning with the turn of the 17th century the Austrian measurement system was introduced in the entire former kingdom of Hungary, including Maramureş. The basic unit of this system was the Viennese fathom (*orgia* or *klafter*, 1.896 48 m), divided in 6 feet (*schuh*, 31.608 cm) and 60 inches (*zoll*, 3.16 cm). In Maramureş, the first recorded dimensions of the old parish churches as well as of the plans for the new churches, at the beginning of the 19th century, were all submitted to authorities in the Austrian system. However, during a long time and parallel with the Austrian system there could have circulated even the former customary regional systems.[40] The

[40] Bogdán 1987, 16-20.

introduction of the metrical system in 1874 did not replace the Austrian one at once either. During the first half of the 20th century, the master carpenters from Maramureş continued to use the Austrian system along with the metrical system,[41] and even today some living senior carpenters keep a good knowledge of it.

In an unexpected but not accidental way, the living rural carpenters saved in their practice some old units that have survived the two radical system changes.[42] The reason appears to be found in their successive adaptation to the legal systems. Accordingly, the local yard (*pas*) is today approximated to one metre while the ell (*râf* or *cot*), the hand (*palmă*) and the palm breath (*latul de palmă*) are either adapted as divisions of the metre or only used to approximate limited sizes.[43] Although the present practice in Maramureş no longer provides enough information to reconstruct the former system and the sizes of its units, the bare unit terms plainly suggest a long familiarity with the ancient Hungarian royal system.

The royal system (**103**) is said to have been created by King Saint Stephen, the father of the old Hungarian Kingdom. Until the Turkish occupation and the territorial partition (1541), the royal system served over the entire kingdom as reference against the various regional, local and trade specific measurement systems.[44] The use of the royal system continued afterwards in the Principality of Transylvania and its annexed parts of Northern Hungary, where it was repeatedly regulated by law. In some parts of Hungary it lasted as a traditional measurement system until the beginning of the 19th century.[45]

103 The Hungarian *royal system* applied to four standard *royal hands*.

R fi	**finger**	1									1.8	1.87	1.9	1.953
R i	**inch**	$1^{1/3}$	1								2.4	2.49	2.53	2.605
R pb	**palm breath**	4	3	1							7.2	7.48	7.6	7.815
R h	**hand**	10	$7^{1/2}$	$2^{1/2}$	1						18	18.7	19	19.54
R ft	**foot**	16	12	4	$1^{3/5}$	1					28.8	29.92	30.4	31.26
R e	**ell**	32	24	8	$3^{1/5}$	2	1				57.6	59.84	60.8	62.52
R y	**yard**	48	36	12	$4^{4/5}$	3	$1^{1/2}$	1			86.4	89.76	91.2	93.78
R dy	**double yard**	96	72	24	$9^{1/8}$	6	3	2	1		172.8	179.52	182.4	187.5
R fa	**fathom**	160	120	40	16	10	5	$3^{1/3}$	$1^{2/3}$	1	288	299.2	304	312.6
		fingers	**inches**	**palm breaths**	**hands**	**feet**	**ells**	**yards**	**double yards**	**fathom**	**1565** (cm)	**1561** (cm)	**1517** (cm)	**1702** (cm)

[41] Pop Ştefan a lu Toader zâs Chidru, a farmer and builder born in Săpânţa in 1864, related in 1926 that *"like the elders, we measure a metre with three feet (şucuri) and two inches (ţoli)."* MLR, Chestionarul Casa, C 366, V 87.

[42] Gheorghe Focşa (1992, 141) recorded in 1961 units both pertaining to the Austrian system and older.

[43] *"Even today the women use the ell to measure the linen. A man who wants to approximate a metre calculates it as five hands or three feet (şuci). One yard is also set to one metre."* Inf. Hotico 2001.

[44] Apart from this royal system, there were also used the common system, the Transylvanian system, the Bratislava system, the Viennese (Austrian) system, the fortification system, the navigation system, the building system, the surveying system, the riding system, the road system, the mining system, the map-drawing system, the tailoring system, the textile system, the printing system and, not least, numerous local systems. Bogdán 1987, 16-20.

[45] Bogdán 1987, 16.

The most important unit in this system was the royal fathom. Notably, the large Hungarian royal fathom, with its decimal division into 10 royal feet, was a quite rare example in Europe, where most of the various fathoms took the ancient Greek model of 6 feet. The royal fathom appears to have had two basic divisions, the royal hand and the royal foot, hard to converse from each other.

Despite its clear structure, the royal system raises serious obstacles when we need to determine the sizes of its units. The Hungarian historian István Bogdán established the size of the royal fathom to 312.6 cm, after a standard published in 1702,[46] avoiding deliberately to take up sizes of the royal fathom given by the important but problematic *Collection of Hungarian Laws* (*Tripartitum*). Inside *Tripartitum* the royal fathom was often defined as 16 times a line representing the size of a royal hand. The problem is that each edition of the laws presented a different size of the royal hand and therefore the royal fathom, too, varied a lot. Accordingly, the royal fathom was 304 cm in the edition from 1517, 299.2 cm in 1561, 288 cm in 1565 and 1762, 300.8 cm in 1571, 297.6 cm in 1572, 289.6 cm in 1830 and 305.6 cm in 1894.[47] Adding the dimensions of the standard royal hand of 18.43 cm, 18.62 cm, 18.996 cm and 19.1 cm from other sources we obtain the royal fathoms of 294.88 cm, 297.92 cm, 303.936 cm and 305.6 cm.[48] In conclusion, there are at least 11 different standards known of the royal fathom and its divisions.[49]

In order to determine which of the various standards of the royal system was potentially used by the church carpenters in Maramureş, I chose the three oldest known standards of the *Tripartitum*, from 1517, 1561 and 1565, and the one from 1702 selected by Bogdán (**103**). In fact, the four standard royal hands, spanning between 18 and 19.54 cm, encompass all the other known examples. The differences between standards may firstly seem small, but, when we take the width of 720 cm from Sârbi Josani, the result will range from 25 royal feet (R ft) with the standard from 1565, to 24 R ft for the standard from 1561 and only 23 R ft with the standard preferred by Bogdán (**104**). The length of 1039 cm of the same church gives a reliable measure of 36 R ft only with the standard from 1565 and no relevant result with the other three.

R fathoms	R yards	R ells	R feet	1565 (cm)	1561 (cm)	1517 (cm)	1702 (cm)
			1	28.8	29.92	30.4	31.26
		1	2	57.6	59.84	60.8	62.52
	1		3	86.4	89.76	91.2	93.78
		2	4	115.2	119.68	121.6	125.04
1/2			5	144	149.6	152	156.3
	2	3	6	172.8	179.52	182.4	187.56
			7	201.6	209.44	212.8	218.82
		4	8	230.4	239.36	243.2	250.08
	3		9	259.2	269.28	273.6	281.34
1		5	10	288	299.2	304	312.6
			11	316.8	329.12	334.4	343.86
	4	6	12	345.6	359.04	364.8	375.12
			13	374.4	388.96	395.2	406.38
		7	14	403.2	418.88	425.6	437.64
1 1/2	5		15	432	448.8	456	468.9
		8	16	460.8	478.72	486.4	500.16
			17	489.6	508.64	516.8	531.42
	6	9	18	518.4	538.56	547.2	562.68
			19	547.2	568.48	577.6	593.94
2		10	20	576	598.4	608	625.2
	7		21	604.8	628.32	638.4	656.46
		11	22	633.6	658.24	668.8	687.72
			23	662.4	688.16	699.2	718.98
	8	12	24	691.2	718.08	729.6	750.24
2 1/2			25	720	748	760	781.5
		13	26	748.8	777.92	790.4	812.76
	9		27	777.6	807.84	820.8	844.02
		14	28	806.4	837.76	851.2	875.28
			29	835.2	867.68	881.6	906.54
3	10	15	30	864	897.6	912	937.8
			31	892.8	927.52	942.4	969.06
		16	32	921.6	957.44	972.8	1000.32
	11		33	950.4	987.36	1003.2	1031.58
		17	34	979.2	1017.28	1033.6	1062.84
3 1/2			35	1008	1047.2	1064	1094.1
	12	18	36	1036.8	1077.12	1094.4	1125.36
			37	1065.6	1107.04	1124.8	1156.62
		19	38	1094.4	1136.96	1155.2	1187.88
	13		39	1123.2	1166.88	1185.6	1219.14
4		20	40	1152	1196.8	1216	1250.4
			41	1180.8	1226.72	1246.4	1281.66
	14	21	42	1209.6	1256.64	1276.8	1312.92
			43	1238.4	1286.56	1307.2	1344.18
		22	44	1267.2	1316.48	1337.6	1375.44
4 1/2	15		45	1296	1346.4	1368	1406.7
		23	46	1324.8	1376.32	1398.4	1437.96
			47	1353.6	1406.24	1428.8	1469.22
	16	24	48	1382.4	1436.16	1459.2	1500.48
			49	1411.2	1466.08	1489.6	1531.74
5		25	50	1440	1496	1520	1563

104 *Table* with the various sizes derived from the 4 selected standards.

[46] Bogdán 1978, 96.
[47] Bogdán 1978, 69.
[48] Bogdán 1978, 67.
[49] It would be interesting to know how the users of the standards reacted to the repeated changes from one edition to another of the laws and if these variations led to a parallel circulation of different standards, eroding the very essence of the royal system that was to unify the kingdom. This could have been a reality especially after the partition of the kingdom following the Turkish occupation (1541).

105 Table where the main sizes of the extant wooden churches are matched with the sizes derived from the 4 standards.

	Extant wooden churches	width					length				
			1565	1561	1517	1702		1565	1561	1517	1702
		cm	R ft	R ft	R ft	R ft	cm	R ft	R ft	R ft	R ft
1.	**Valea Stejarului**	432*	15				817*			27	26
2.	**Moisei Monastery**	432*	15				1036*	36		34	33
3.	**Călinești Căeni**	460*	16				802*	28			
4.	**Giulești Monastery**	488	17		16		1010	35			
5.	**Bârsana Monastery**	517*	18		17		948*	33			
6.	**Hărnicești**	549	19		18		896	31	30		
7.	**Onceşti**	549*	19		18		924*	32	31		
8.	**Cornești**	549*	19		18		1054*				
9.	**Poienile Izei**	552*	19		18		997*				32
10.	**Apşa de Mijloc Sus**	563				18	885			29	
11.	**Borşa din Jos**	575~	20		19		1188			39	38
12.	**Sârbi Susani**	579	20		19		1008	35		33	
13.	**Darva**	579	20		19		923	32	31		
14.	**Fereşti**	603*	21	20			1013*	35	34		
15.	**Breb**	606	21		20		1290~	45	43		
16.	**Săliştea de Sus faţă**	606	21		20		1300	45			
17.	**Rona de Jos**	607	21		20		1181	41		39	
18.	**Rozavlea**	607	21		20		1183	41		39	38
19.	**Săliştea de Sus dos**	612			20		1319	46	44		42
20.	**Strâmtura**	635~	22		21		985~	34	33		
21.	**Oleksandrivka**	651				21	941			31	30
22.	**Sat Şugătag**	648					1038	36		34	
23.	**Slatina**	660	23			21	1142~				
24.	**Şieu**	665	23		22		1345		45		43
25.	**Krainykovo**	686	24	23		22	1096	38		36	35
26.	**Deseşti**	691	24	23		22	1096	38		36	35
27.	**Vişeu de Jos**	693	24	23			1205	42			
28.	**Danylovo**	698			23		1119	39		37	
29.	**Ieud Deal**	715*	25	24		23	1187*			39	38
30.	**Nyzhnie Selyshche**	716~	25	24		23					
31.	**Apşa de Jos Părău**	717	25	24		23	1269	44			
32.	**Neresnytsia**	718	25	24		23	1412	49			
33.	**Ieud Şes**	720	25	24		23	1199		40		
34.	**Sârbi Josani**	720	25	24		23	1039	36			
35.	**Budeşti Susani**	720	25	24		23	1021*		34		
36.	**Apşa de Mijloc Jos**	720	25	24		23	1204	42			
37.	**Dragomireşti**	743	26	25			1389	48			
38.	**Sokyrnytsia**	772	27	26			1294	45			
39.	**Cuhea**	776	27	26		25	1295	45			
40.	**Steblivka**	778	27	26		25	1353	47			
41.	**Budeşti Josani**	863	30	29			1387	48			

On a broad scale, when the main sizes of all the extant wooden churches are corroborated with each of the four standards, the results are plainly relevant (**105**). The standard from 1565 turns up to be the most useful instrument to determine the old units for the wooden churches. All but two of the wooden churches[50] had at least one of their main sizes determined with the royal foot from 1565 and almost two thirds of them had both. On the contrary, the other three standards hardly fit one or the other main size of a half of the churches and the churches with both their sizes determined are rather exceptions than a rule. In conclusion, in all probability, the master carpenters from Maramureş used the royal system with the standard from 1565 to dimension their churches until the end of the 18th century and, in the case of Neresnytsia, until the beginning of the 19th century.

[50] The church from Oleksandrivka and Apşa de Mijloc Susani had neither its width nor its length defined by the standard royal foot from 1565 but instead the royal hand from the same year.

106 *Table* with the main sizes of the extant churches from Maramureş transformed in Hungarian royal feet.

			Royal feet 28,8 cm									
	wooden churches	dating	church						sanctuary		capacity	
			width	length	porch	narthex	nave	soleea	width	length	3/sqm	5/sqm
1.	**Valea Stejarului**	1615-20	**15**	28^{+}		**10**	**12**		**15**		55	92
2.	**Moisei Monastery**	1672	**15**	**36**	**8**	**10**	**18**				74	123
3.	**Călinești Căeni**	1629	**16**	**28**		**12**	**11**	**5**	**11**	**10**	79	131
4.	**Giulești Monastery**	1692	**17**	**35**	**9**	**8**	**18**		**12**		80	132
5.	**Bârsana Monastery**	1711	**18**	**33**	**8**	**8**	**17**			**11**	81	134
6.	**Hărnicești**	1679	**19**	**31**			**12**		(12)	(11)	111	185
7.	**Oncești**	1621	**19**	**32**		**13**	**19**		**11**	**10**	111	185
8.	**Cornești**	1615	**19**	(37)		**18**	(19)		**13**	**10**	135	225
9.	**Poienile Izei**	1632	**19**			**12**	**17**		**13**	**11**	119+20	199+33
10.	**Apșa de Mijloc Sus.**	1705		(31)		**12**				**12**	95+15	159+25
11.	**Borșa din Jos**	1717-20		(41)	7^{+}		**15**			**13**	129	215
12.	**Sârbi Susani**	1639	**20**	**35**		**11**	**18**	**6**	**13**	**11**	123	204
13.	**Darva**	XVII	**20**	**32**							121	201
14.	**Ferești**	1798	**21**	**35**		**13**	**13**		**16**	**12**	127	212
15.	**Breb**	1622	**21**	**45**		**19**			(10)	(11)	181	301
16.	**Săliștea de Sus față**	1680	**21**	**45**	**5**		**19**				153	256
17.	**Rona de Jos**	1637	**21**	**41**	**.**	**13**		**11**	**15**	**10**	104+22	174+37
18.	**Rozavlea**	1717-20	**21**	**41**	**6**		**15**			**13**	132	220
19.	**Săliștea de Sus dos**	1717-24	21	**46**	**6**	**14**	**21**	**5**	**15**		166	277
20.	**Strâmtura**	1667	22	(34)		14	15	**5**	(16)	(14)	138	229
21.	**Oleksandrivka**	1753			**.**	13^{-}	**13**	**6**	**15**	14^{-}	110+35	185+70
22.	**Sat Șugătag**	1699		**36**		**15**	**15**	6^{-}	**15**	15^{-}	148	246
23.	**Slatina**	1790	**23**	(41)							182	303
24.	**Șieu**	1717-20	**23**		**6**	**15**	**20**		**17**	13^{-}	182	304
25.	**Krainykovo**	1668	**24**	**38**	**6**	**13**	**10**	**9**		**11**	113+19	188+31
26.	**Deseşti**	1780	**24**	**38**		**14**	**24**		**18**		169	281
27.	**Vişeu de Jos**	1699	**24**	**42**		**16**		**6**	**17**	15^{-}	192	319
28.	**Danylovo**	1779	.	**39**	**.**	**13**	13^{-}	**8**	14^{-}		134+20	223+33
29.	**Ieud Deal**	1610 c	**25**	**41**		**16**	**20**	**5**			205	341
30.	**Nyzhnie Selyshche**	1641	**25**									
31.	**Apșa din Jos Părău**	1659	**25**	**44**		**19**	**17**	**8**	**14**	**12**	194	323
32.	**Neresnytsia**	1813	**25**	**49**	**.**	**16**	**26**		**21**		204	340
33.	**Ieud Șes**	XVII	**25**			**17**			**15**	**15**	199	332
34.	**Sârbi Josani**	1685 c	**25**	**36**		**15**	**15**	**6**	**16**	13^{-}	164	274
35.	**Budești Susani**	1760	**25**				**18**	**5**	**18**	**13**	167	278
36.	**Apșa de Mijloc Jos.**	XVII	**25**	**42**		**18**	**15**	**9**		**12**	182	304
37.	**Dragomirești**	1722	**26**	**48**	**7**	**18**	**23**			**13**	223	372
38.	**Sokyrnytsia**	XVII	**27**	**45**	**8**	**13**	24^{+}		**18**		170+35	283+59
39.	**Cuhea**	1754	**27**	**45**			**22**				233	388
40.	**Steblivka**	1797	**27**	**47**	**6**		**25**		**18**	**20**	190+45	316+75
41.	**Budești Josani**	1643	**30**	**48**		**17**	**25**	**6**	**22**	**14**	289	481

Since we determined the right system and the right standard, it remains to find out how the units might have been applied. There are churches suggesting they were planned mainly in royal ells as Strâmtura, Darva, Deseşti and Vişeu de Jos, while others, like Sat Şugătag, Apşa de Mijloc Josani and Sârbi Josani, in royal yards. In Sârbi Susani the church might have been dimensioned directly in royal fathoms, 2 x $3^{1/2}$ R fa. However, in most of the situations the exact use of unit was clear only in royal feet (**106**). In fact, Bogdán indicated the royal foot (R ft: 28.8 cm) as the efficient unit of the system,[51] and, indeed, by multiplying it there were easily obtained the royal ell (x 2 = R e: 57.6 cm), royal yard (x 3 = R y: 86.4 cm) and royal fathom (x 10 = R fa: 288 cm). Moreover, the royal foot and the

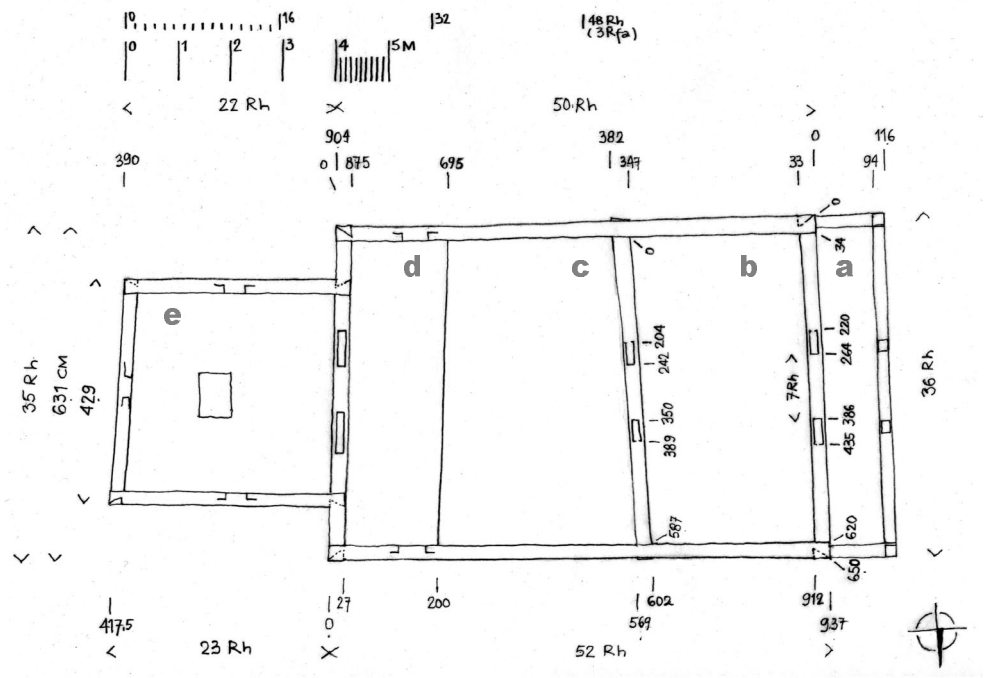
[51] Bogdán 1987, 16.

107 *Rozavlea*. The majority of the wooden churches built after the ravaging Tatar raid from 1717 were built with a western porch on one level sheltering the entrance. This church was one of the narrowest with its width of about 7 R y. Photo: August 1997.

royal fathom built together a decimal system, which worked about the same way as the present metrical one. As a result, although all the royal units seem to have been used, probably depending on circumstances and habits, the royal foot appears to be the most useful unit of the royal system and therefore it prevails in this work together with the royal fathom.

Remarkably, the warping plan and elevation of the church of Oleksandrivka (**108**) as well as the plan of the church from Apşa de Mijloc Susani appear to have been determined mainly in royal hands, distinguishing these constructions, at this stage of research, from the other ones in the region.

At the end of our search for meaningful sizes we can conclude that their translation from metres or centimetres to royal fathoms, yards, ells, feet and even hands, although it is not free of problems, opens the way to understand the hidden process of planning we long for.



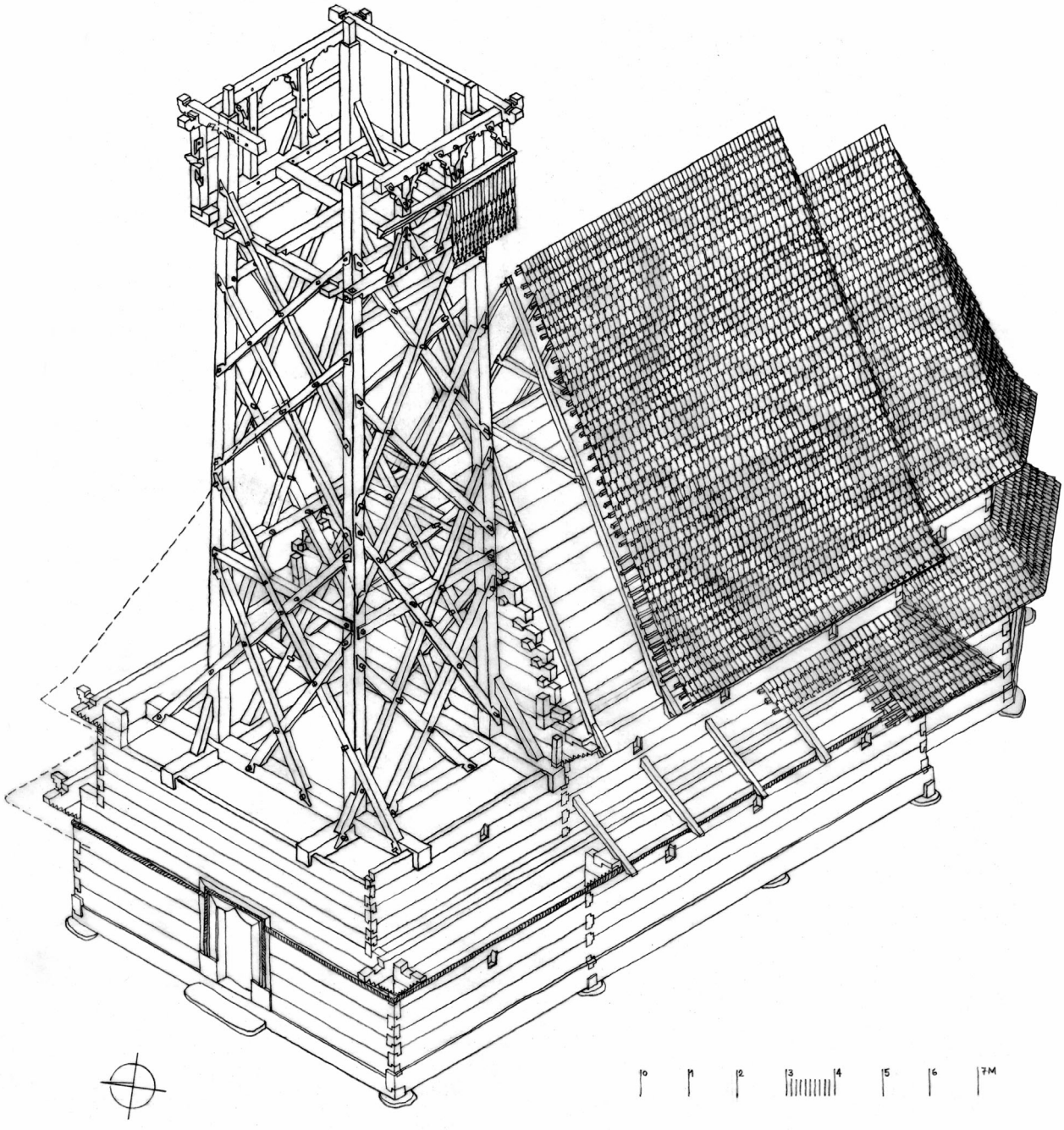
a porch
b women's church or narthex
c men's church or nave
d *soleea* or the platform in front of the iconostasis
e sanctuary

108 *Oleksandrivka* (*Şăndreşti*). The particularities of this church are difficult to observe on the site and capture in pictures, unless careful measurements are preceded. There are few wooden churches with perfect oblong plans and right angle at the corners, but this church is especially warping at all sides, creating difficulties in reading the starting width and the way of planning. However, it appears quite clearly the intention to dimension equally the women's (b) and the men's churches (c). Photo from the north side (top) and scale drawing of the plan (bottom) from November 2002.

The system of proportions

The traditional models of churches might have lasted so many centuries due to their strong inner structure or system of proportions that linked the parts through simple and quite clear principles. These principles relieved the church carpenters from working with drawings and permitted them a great amount of variations without altering the essence of the models. In order to recover the system of proportions, we need to read the dimensions it generated and whenever possible determine its governing rules behind.

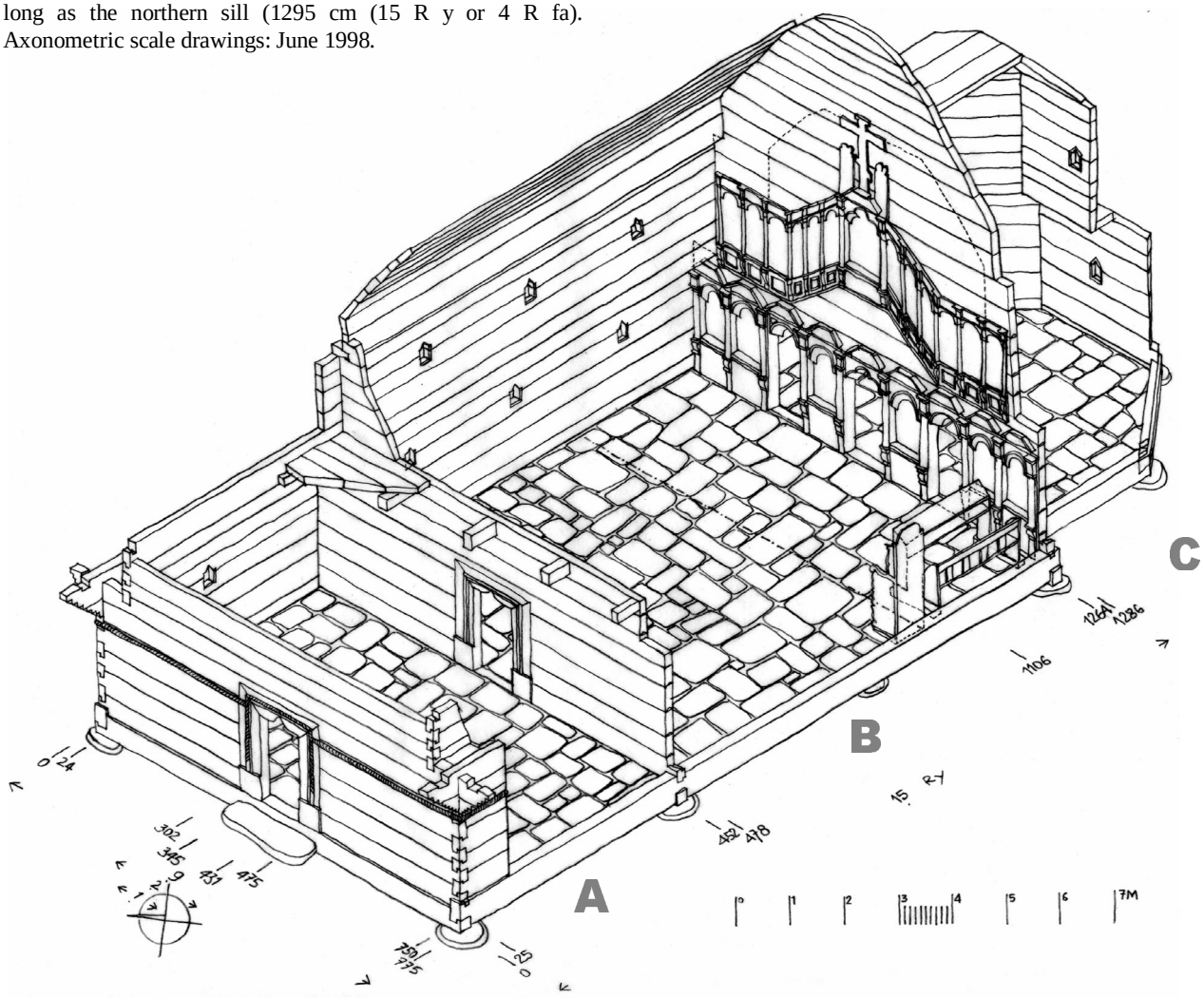
In the making of a building both the width, the length and the height played a major role. However, the most important was the width, because it directly determined the span of the vault and roof above, places with important technical implications. Moreover the width was the reference size even for the length and the height of the rooms. The length and the height, in their turn, complemented the width to establish the capacity and the loftiness of each room.



At the log structure

Of all successive rooms, in the centre of attention it was the nave or the men's church (**109-110**). Here, the width, the length and the height were established from the ground sills. Ideally, these three dimensions were all equal, maybe not by accident reminding of the biblical cube of the "*New Jerusalem*". Such a clear pattern was preferred in some of the earliest churches, erected until the middle of the 17th century, in Călineşti Căeni, Onceşti, Budeşti Josani, Ieud Deal and possibly in Corneşti before the repair of the vault. After the middle of the 18th century, the nave in Budeşti Susani, 25 R ft wide, 24 R ft long and 23 R ft high, still approached the same pattern. In fact, around this basic principle spun all the other numerous variants. Some of the naves were visibly elongated, like in Sălişte a de Sus *dos*, Sârbi Susani and Poienile Izei, whereas many of them were noticeable lofty as in Sat Şugătag, Steblivka, Rozavlea, Vişeu de Jos and Borşa din Jos. In Sârbi Josani, the 25 R ft wide, 21 R ft long and 27 R ft high nave appears both axially reduced and vertically elevated.

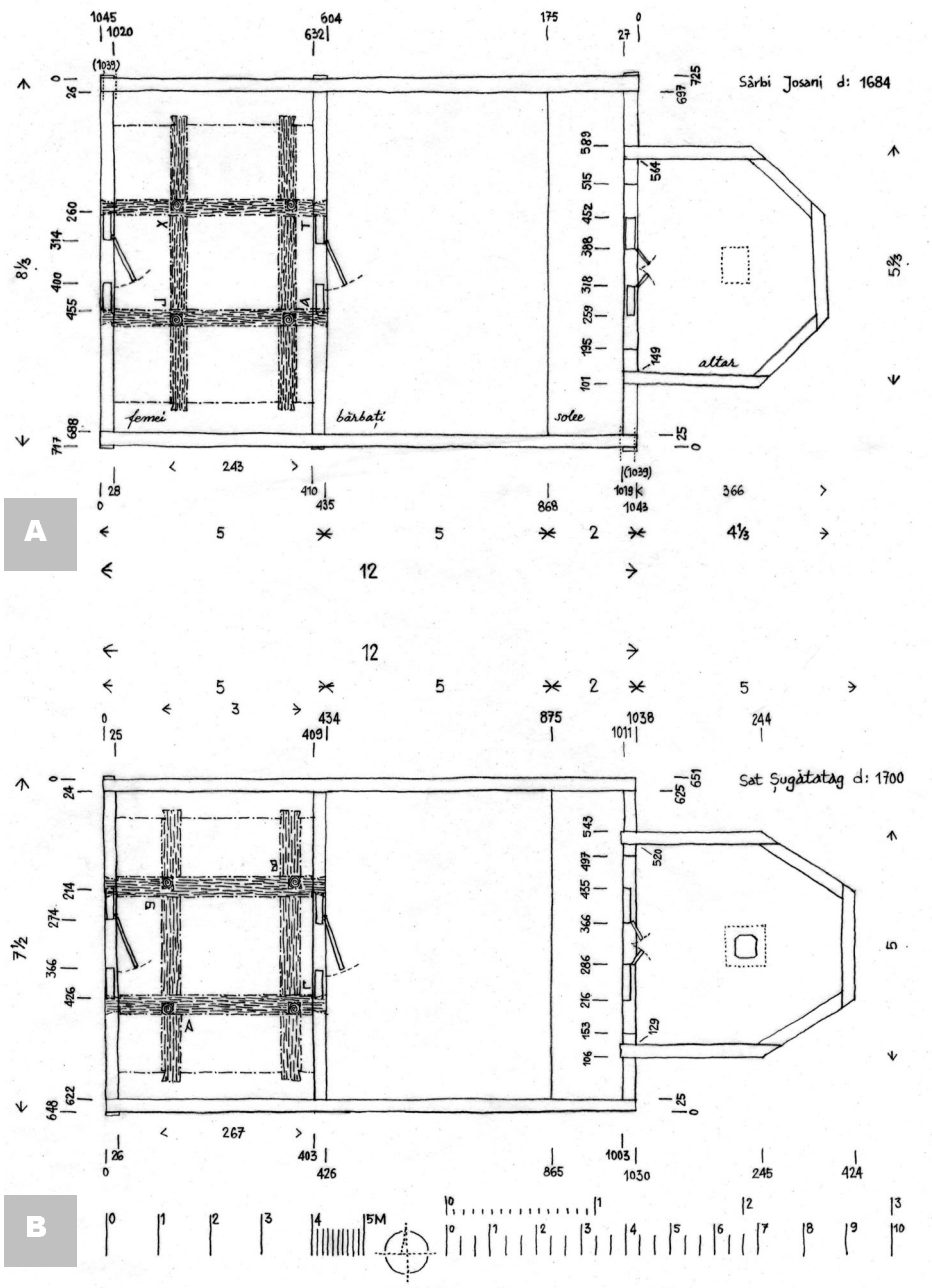
109 *Cuhea*. About 776 cm wide (9 R y), 816 long (on the north side, $9^{1/2}$ R y) and over 830 cm high, the vaulted nave (B) was one of the largest church rooms of wood of its time in Maramureş. The sanctuary behind (C) follows closely the shape of the nave. The narthex (A) was dimensioned only 478 cm ($5^{1/2}$ R y) long but holds up one of the highest towers ever built in the region, 351 cm (c 4 R y) wide and 1302 (c 15 R y) cm high Remarkably, the uprights of the tower are almost as long as the northern sill (1295 cm (15 R y or 4 R fa). Axonometric scale drawings: June 1998.



From a horizontal perspective, inside the nave it was made an important partition. The congregation was separated from the sacred space by a higher platform in front of the iconostasis, called *soleea* (**110**). This platform was not accidentally but intentionally calculated within the length of the nave from the very beginning. In Budeşti Josani (**76**), for example, the platform of stone slabs was heightened 1 R h from the floor and dimensioned 6 R ft inside the nave, including the cross sill under the icon screen. In general, in large churches like Apşa din Jos Părău the platform reached up to 9 R ft, while in the small ones from Hărniceşti and Văleni only around 4 R ft. Particularly, the lengthy nave in Sălişte a de Sus *dos* appears clearly partitioned between the 5 R ft *soleea* and the men's floor of 7 x 7 R y, whereas the entire room was closed by a perfect semicylindrical vault, 8 R y above.

After the nave was determined, the dimensions of the narthex unfold easily from it. The narthex or the women's church was always incorporated in the same oblong plan as the nave, only a cross wall separating them, therefore the two rooms shared the same starting width. Lengthwise, the women's church was often dimensioned about as long as the men's church, excluding *soleea*, which in the main was a natural solution because the women were as many as men if not more. However, the floor inside the narthex was reduced by the two delimiting cross sills, always calculated within this room (**111**). It took long time to understand the meaning of this decision, but the clarification is actually very simple. In order to mount the tower above, the narthex was thought as a stable prismatic structure, dimensioned with concern for all enclosing bearing walls. Through this way of thinking there were planned the churches from Sat Şugătag and Sârbi Josani, with

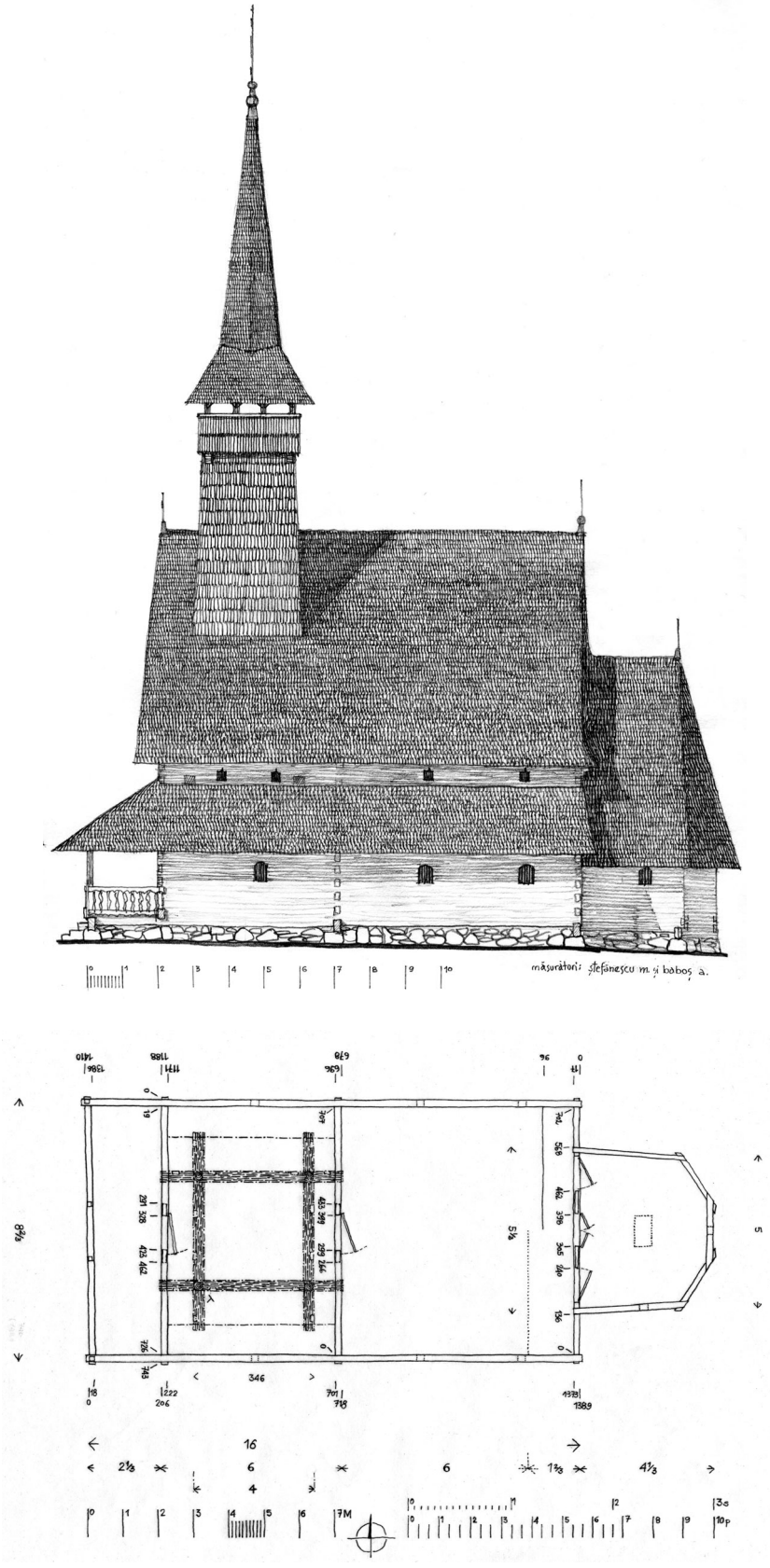
110 *Strâmtura*. Although the renovations from the 19th century changed much of the outer character of the church, the interior of the nave remained about the same since 1771. Hidden by the roof, the vault of the nave is the most impressive part of the interior. The main visual attraction is however the iconostasis with its numerous and colourful icons representing the virtual spiritual world. Just before reaching the iconostasis the floor is heightened for a *soleea*, a platform marking the passage to the most sacred place of the church. Only the priest and his assistants were allowed to use it during the divine service. Photo: March 1995.



111 *Sârbi Josani* (A) and *Sat Șugătag* (B). The plans of the two churches are identically divided in 5 + 5 + 2 R y, only the larger width increases the room for worshipers in the first church. Such a clear division was easy to keep in mind and work with while establishing the other dimensions. Notice that the transverse sills delimiting the narthex were included in the size of its length. The width of the towers mounted above the narthex (accentuated in these drawings) varied in both churches around 3 R y. Scale drawings: October 2001.

the longitudinal ground sills divided identically, in 5 + 5 + 2 R y, unveiling not only a very conscious planning but also the same mind behind (**111**). The churches from Danylovo, Oleksandrivka, Fereşti, probably those from Breb, Dragomireşti, Ruske Pole II Inf. and many others approach a similar pattern. A distinctive pattern presents the monastery churches from Giuleşti, Moisei and Bârsana, where the short narthex is almost half of the nave. This pattern might indicate the minsters were preferentially accommodated for monks. The easier to imagine a short narthex in a minster the harder to comprehend it in some parish churches like Budeşti Josani, Sârbi Susani and Bocicoel.[52] Some opposite examples are the narthexes in Hărniceşti, Apşa de Mijloc Josani and Apşa din Jos, who were established longer than the naves, providing a rare but fair balance between women and men admitted inside.

[52] In Bocicoel the old church was measured inside in 1889 as follows: the nave was 4.75 m wide and 7 m long, while the narthex was 3.45 m long; ASM, fond 131, 16, 5v-6v.



112 *Dragomireşti*. The southern elevation and the plan of the church. The present platform is very narrow and maybe not respecting the initial one before the transfer in the Village Museum from Bucharest. A different size might have delimited the men's church 6 R y long as much as the women's one. Scale drawings from June 1993 (top) and September 2001 (bottom).

Whenever a porch or an antechurch was erected to shelter the western entrance its width followed that of the church and its length was usually limited to 5-8 R ft, while in the very small churches from Moisei, Bârsana and Giuleşti it reached up to 8-9 R ft.

At the other end of the church, behind the icon screen, it was the unconditional place for the sanctuary. With the remarkable exception from Valea Stejarului, this holy room was narrowed from the large nave. In most of the cases it was narrowed by 6 R ft as well in small churches like Corneşti, middle churches like Apşa de Mijloc Susani, Strâmtura and Deseşti, as in large churches like Neresnytsia and in the very large one from Budeşti Josani. Furthermore, the length of the sanctuary followed the width, usually 1-5 R ft shorter. An opposite example was the noteworthy sanctuary from Steblivka, 20 R ft long and 18 R ft wide. Not least important, the height of the altar room was also related to its own width and the height of the nave.

At the roof

The size of the roof was given by the length of the paired rafters. These rafters were often determined by the distance between the eaves purlins in which they were fixed. In its turn, this distance resulted from the starting width of the church, reduced or not by inner consoles on one hand and extended by outstretched consoles supporting the eaves purlins on the other hand. It may seem complicated but in practice it provided the proper slope to keep the snow away. Roofs dimensioned in this way exist in Ieud Deal, Călineşti Căeni, Bârsana Monastery, Giuleşti Monastery and Borşa din Jos. The procedure was explained by the elders from Berbeşti in the middle of the 20th century.[53] At their old houses, a long pole was dimensioned after the distance between the eaves purlins and used as standard for all the rafters. Sometimes, to this standard pole there were added 2 R ft like in Hărniceşti and Budeşti Josani or 4 R ft in Sârbi Josani, while in Apşa din Jos Părău the pole was shortened by 2 R ft and in Sârbi Susani by 4 R ft. In Rona de Jos we might suspect the 21 R ft long rafters were dimensioned after the church's starting width and in Vişeu de Jos the steep roof was most likely build of rafters 3 R ft longer than the starting width.

The roof of the sanctuary was often apart. Many times their rafters followed the same pattern as those of the large roof, but in some cases, like in Ieud Deal, the rafters were dimensioned 1.5 times the distance between the eaves purlins.

As a consequence, the rafters were not dimensioned anyhow, but by using a reference width, either as it was or by taking from or adding to it.

At the tower

In the past, the church carpenters active in Maramureş were seemingly not obsessed by the height of the tower as they are today. The sizes of the tower appear always harmoniously linked to the parts already erected and it is therefore highly interesting to know how their hidden frameworks might have been dimensioned.

Apparently, the tower can be seen as a distinct structure. However, since it was raised above the narthex, its dimensions were always related to the bearing structure beneath. Depending on the type of framing the carpenter had to take 3-4 main decisions in order to establish the final height of a tower: the level above the floor of the basement, the width and the height of the neck, the sizes of the bell chamber and the height of the spire.

The basement of the tower from Budeşti Josani was enclosed in the structure of the building between the last two rows of beams. Observing this detail from

[53] Focşa 1992, 139.

church to church we can come to the conclusion that this was the most common place for the basement. However, in Ieud Deal, Sârbi Susani and in some churches with double porches the basement was laid above the last row of beams.

As a rule, the neck of a tower was raised on the massive beams of the basement, taking in account the entire narthex and sometimes even the porch as its anchoring area, therefore the intimate relation between the dimensions of these two structures. In Corneşti the 6 R y long narthex was superposed by a 3 R y wide tower, in Sat Şugătag the relation was 5 to 3 R y (**111**, B), in Dragomireşti was 6 to 4 R y (**112**) and in Cuhea $5^{1/2}$ to 4 R y (**109**). In Sokyrnytsia, the narthex and the porch were together 7 R y long allowing a tower 4 R y wide, whereas in Steblivka the relation between the length of the narthex and porch on one side and the tower's width on the other side was $7^{1/2}$ to 5 R y. Thus, the longer the bearing structure was the wider could be established the base of the tower.

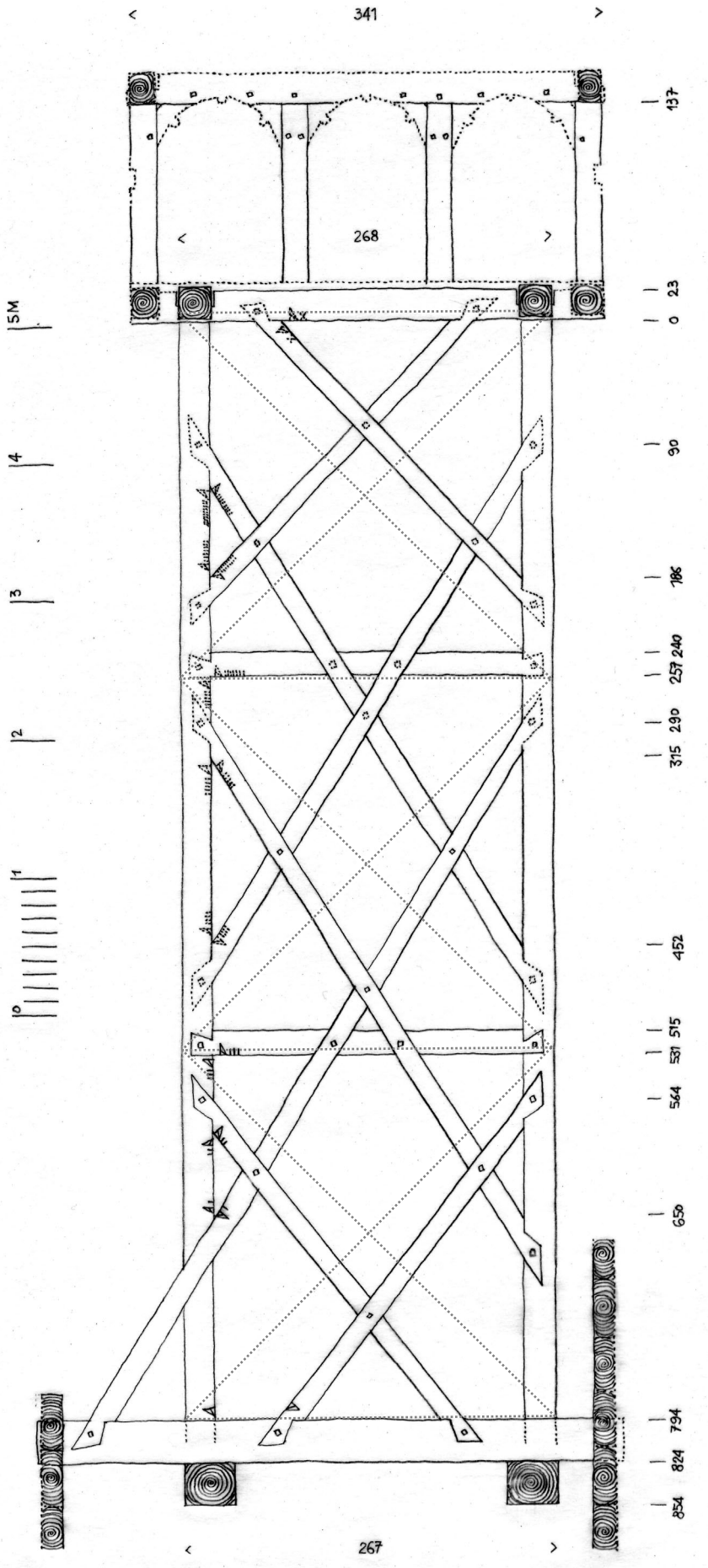
Much of the height of a tower resulted from the length of the corner uprights. These robust uprights were dimensioned 3 times the tower's width in Sat Şugătag (**113**) and Borşa din Jos, and, actually, around this proportion, more or less, there were determined most of the other examples. Out of ignorance, the church in Cuhea was overshadowed by a new parish church nearby. Here, the uprights measured almost 4 times the width, no less than 15 R y, i.e. as much as the long ground sills (**109**). Thus, this church was crowned by the mightiest tower of all known in Maramureş. The second highest known tower was erected above the church from Vişeu de Jos, now in Botiza, where to the triple width of the tower there were added another 2 R y to form the $11^{2/3}$ R y long uprights. A shorter but still impressive tower has the church from Budeşti Josani where the uprights were dimensioned 10 R y long, as much as the impressive width of the church.

Commonly, the frame of the neck was built straight, with the same width under the bell chamber as at the level of the basement. From this basic rule derived the towers in Dragomireşti and Steblivka, narrowed by 1 R y upwards. Distinctively, in all known churches "with eyes" the tower was appreciably narrowed upwards. A singular feature presents the tower from Sârbi Susani which was unexpectedly widened by 2 R ft upwards.

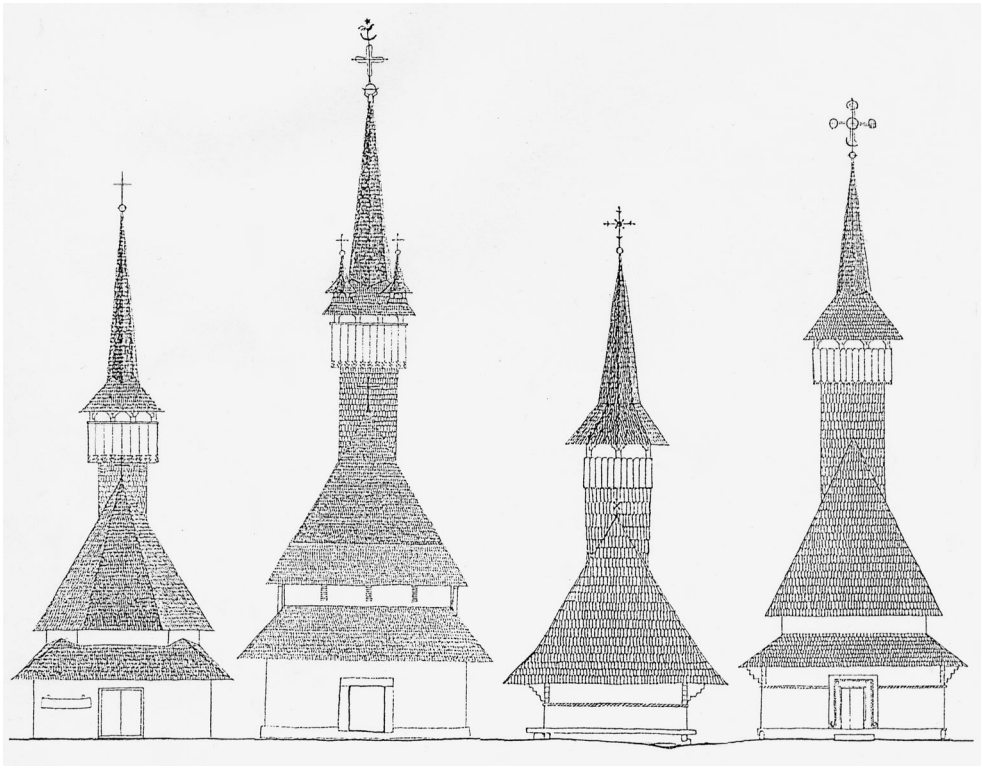
The gallery or the bell chamber not always played a role in the height of a tower since it was often only a secondary structure hanged from or framed by the neck of the tower. But when it did have a role, its numerous posts forming open arcades towards the four cardinal points were usually cut short, between 4 and 6 R ft. In this later situation the gallery was often laid on consoles above the neck of the tower stretching seldom outside more than 1 R ft on each side.

The tower was finally ended by a high pointed roof of long spire rafters, most often very difficult to measure. However, some repairs occurred here and there in Maramureş enabled their measurement in those places. Accordingly, the spire rafters in Budeşti Josani were measured 29 R ft long, identically with the rafters of the roof, while in Sârbi Susani they were 20 R ft long, equal with the width of the church. During a visit in Deseşti in 1996 the dismantled old rafters of the spire were measured 38 R ft long, equivalent with the length of the church. With the last repairs, the original rafters raising the iron cross to the sky were unfortunately replaced by insignificant copies with little respect for their original sizes.

At the end of our search for inner proportions, we can ascertain that these wooden churches were planned with great care for their sizes. From the starting width to the length of the spire rafters probably nothing was left by chance or to obsessive exaggerations. On the contrary, the parts appear linked and balanced to one another, with emphasis on the starting width.



113 *Sat Şugătag*. The height of this tower was dimensioned 3 times its width which in its turn was established after the length of the narthex. Scale drawing of the southern side: October 2001.



114 *Cosău Valley*. The varying scale of the wooden churches from the highest villages in the Cosău Valley (from left to right): Budeşti Susani, Budeşti Josani, Sârbi Susani and Sârbi Josani. Sketches from June 1993.

Scale as relevance

Few features marked the outline of a traditional local wooden church in a more differentiating way than the size did. Consciously or not, the church carpenters played, while giving sizes, with what we call today the scale of a construction. The scale mainly hanged on two interdependent factors: the capacity and the technical knowledge. As the technical approach was in essence the same, it was the variable size of the congregations that most often challenged the carpenter. Therefore he had to think his work more in terms of capacity. A church for a large community was not alike a small one, even when he used the same model with the same proportions. In extreme situations, however, when very large rooms were required, the earlier safe technical solutions became critical obstacles. In other particular cases the site conditions, the building material available or the economical resources could also influence the main sizes of a construction, but my further focus here remains on the two main factors: the capacity and the technical limits.

The question of capacity

A master carpenter, like a skilful women cutting a traditional shirt after the size of the one who would wear it, had to dimension a church in most of the cases with respect for the size of the parish. Therefore, the main sizes, both the starting width and the complementary length, were established with great concern for the required capacity.

The capacity represents the number of worshippers received inside a church, which in normal conditions I calculated for 3 parishioners per sq m. In this situation the church attendants are comfortably able to stand and kneel during the service. In conditions of throng, on the other hand, I estimated 5 standing and unable to kneel parishioners per sq m. The area reserved for the laymen was identical with the floor inside the men's and the women's church. These floors were carefully partitioned between the families, and the inherited places even recorded in church letters. As earlier described, the profane space was delimited from the sacred one by a higher platform in front of the icon screen. In those

churches where the original delimitation vanished, the platform is approximated to about 5-6 feet to ensure a close estimation of the capacity.

Whenever the main dimensions are known, as in the extant churches, the capacity is easy to calculate, but, in return, when we only know the capacity of a church the dimensions are difficult to determine. In the past, however, the size of a church was easier to understand and communicate in capacity terms, sparing the founders from complicated calculations. They simply counted the members of a community and asked for a construction to receive their number. This can be the motive why the oldest written records concerning the sizes of the churches mentioned only their capacity.

The first known suggestions regarding the size of some churches were inserted in the protocol of the canonical visitation from 1751, where we can read about the small church from Budeşti Vinţeşti or the ample churches from Budeşti Josani, Giuleşti and Repynne.[54] In a large church investigation from 1774 we can read about several churches replaced or on their way to be replaced because of the throng inside. Some of them were even specified as narrow,[55] suggesting, in a way, the small starting width was the cause for their reduced sizes. The interest for the capacity of the churches was evidently increasing at that time, but there were still no sizes mentioned.

The situation changed rapidly and in 1778, in a new and more detailed church investigation, the capacity of the churches was for the first time approximated and compared with the number of worshippers able to confess. Unfortunately, I was not able to see the entire church investigation in the Regional Archives from Berehovo and therefore I only used a fragment of a duplicate saved in the State Archives from Baia Mare, covering 13 parishes and subsidiaries from the Upper Royal Domain.[56] From than on the church authorities showed to be deeply concerned with the places inside the churches and therefore continued in the next decades to produce accounts of their sizes. In the parish regulation of 1786-89,[57] accomplished about the same time with the great Josephine census, the situation in the parishes was brought up-to-date, and in it no less than 141 parish churches were recorded by their capacity. On the basis of this regulation we are able to get a first general view over the sizes of the churches in the entire county. Some completion to this church investigation we get from another parish regulation, from the turn of the 18th century, where the capacity of 20 village churches from the district of Verkhovyna was recorded.[58]

The cause of this increasing concern for the capacity of the parish churches was probably the growth of population against the background of an ambitious involvement of the church hierarchy in the church matters at the parish level. The explosive demographic growth was felt in almost every remote village, since the Uniate population grew from about 50,000 in 1767[59] to 92,815 in 1786-89. This probably unprecedented growth in only one generation shift brought a new major problem to those already existent. Throughout the entire region the wooden churches remained too small to receive the worshippers and larger wooden

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[54] DAZO, 151, 1, 839/1745, 1, 2v; Hadzhega 1922, 210.

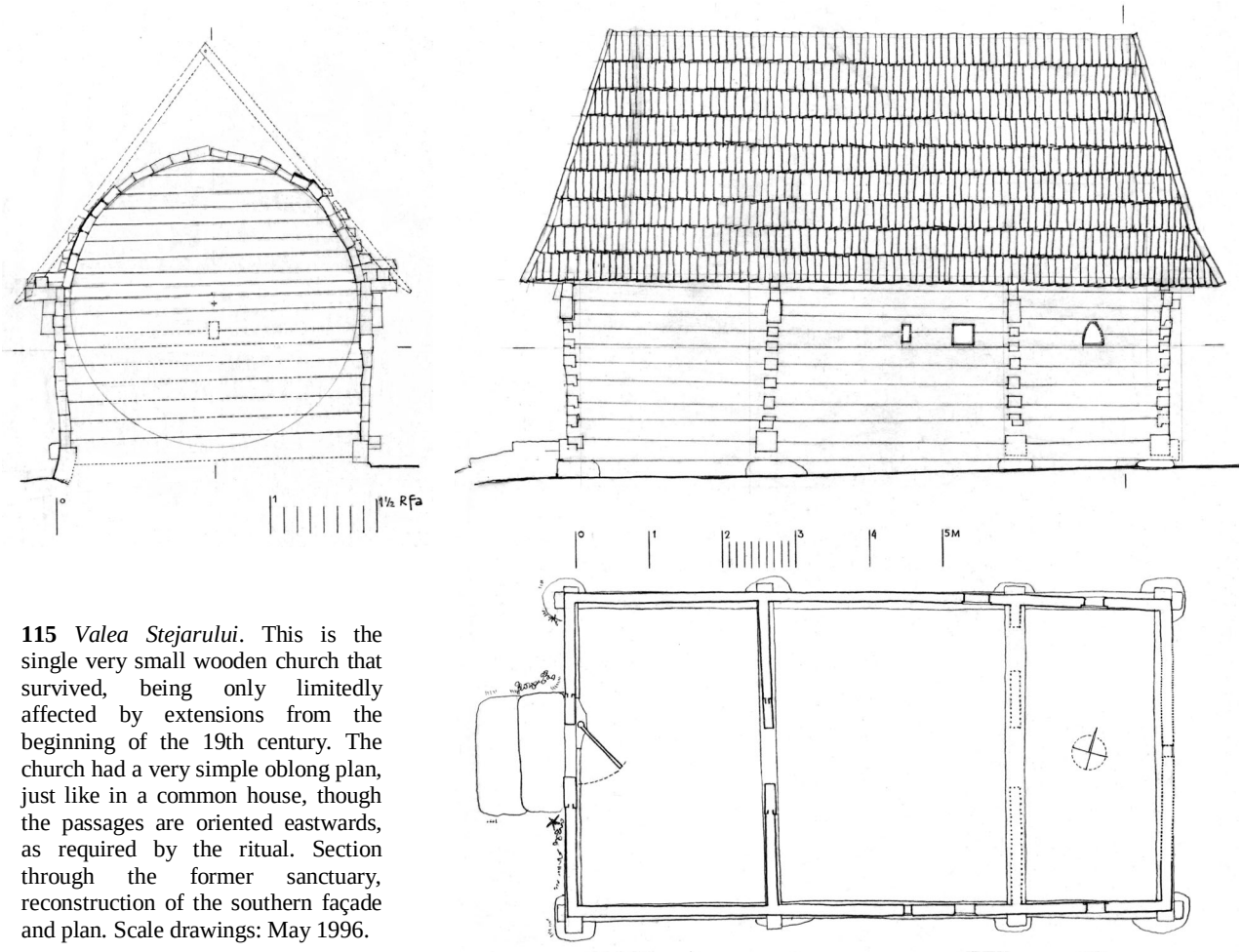
[55] For instance in Hust – *"ab exiguitatem suam angescenti in dies Parochianae Multitudini capiandae"*, Danylovo, Steblivka and Novobarovo (Ujbárd) – *"in ipso corporae angusta, capiendo huic Populo insufficiens"*. MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 84 and 89v.

[56] Kobyletska Poliana, Rosishka, Rakhiv (Bocsko), Kvasy, Rakhiv (Akna), Yasinia I , Yasinia II, Dilove Bily Potik, Kostylivka, Dilove Trebushani, Sighet, Neresnytsia, Novoselytsia (Felsö Neresznice) and Shyroky Luh. ASM, 45, 57.

[57] MOL, C 104, Pfarr-Regulierung, A 54, Munkacs Diocesis, Maramoros.

[58] Hadzhega 1922, 219-220.

[59] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung 1767. The population is approximated since the figures sometimes do not include the nobles in the villages, as for example in Săcel and Rozavlea.



115 *Valea Stejarului*. This is the single very small wooden church that survived, being only limitedly affected by extensions from the beginning of the 19th century. The church had a very simple oblong plan, just like in a common house, though the passages are oriented eastwards, as required by the ritual. Section through the former sanctuary, reconstruction of the southern façade and plan. Scale drawings: May 1996.

churches required new techniques, materials, resources, craftsmen and nevertheless clear guidelines from the centre.

The capacity of the churches collected from the three written sources from the 18th century would have been difficult to verify without the survival of a significant number of them (**120**). A comparison with the capacity calculated in the extant and vanished churches where the main sizes are known suggests the number of parishioners allowed inside the churches was most often approximated in the 18th century in conditions of throng, i.e. the maximal capacity. In some parishes, however, the capacity might have been estimated in normal conditions,[60] while in a few cases it was either underestimated or overestimated.[61] Accordingly, it is good to have reservations for the old capacity estimations at the individual level, where several inconsistencies could slip in, but in a general perspective they might be as relevant for us today as they were for the central authorities of that time. Of about 183 local Uniate churches standing in 1786 in the entire Maramureş for only 15 of them the capacity still remains unknown. In these conditions it is possible to make broad evaluations regarding the sizes of the local wooden churches in a stage they almost completely dominated in the rural communities.

In terms of their capacity, the local churches can be distinguished between the very small ones taking in up to 100 worshippers, the small ones allowing

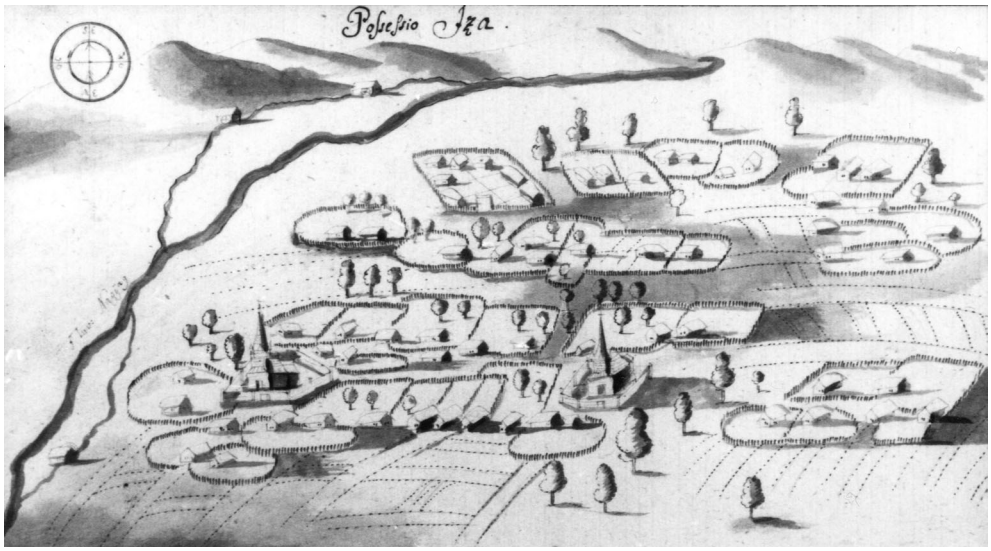
[60] Darva, Sat Şugătag and Sokyrnytsia, for instance.

[61] The parish stone church from Uglea, extended in 1714, could have been much underestimated while the churches from Apşa de Mijloc I Susani, Vişeu de Sus II and Kobyletska Poliana seem to have been overestimated.

between 101 and 200, the medium ones about 201-300, the large ones about 301-400 and the very large ones over 400. Thus, in 1786-89, there were recorded 28 very small, 64 small, 52 medium, 23 large churches and 1 very large church. From those numerous churches survived into the present only 1 very small, 8 small, 24 medium 12 large ones and 1 very large church. Evidently, the smaller the churches were the more they were affected by demolitions during the last two centuries. From this point of view the written sources significantly improve the general picture of how large the local wooden churches were in the past. Of all the estimated and unknown churches probably only those from the noble villages of Petrova and Borşa de Sus could have matched in reality the notable very large church from Budeşti Josani. At the other extreme, with the exception of the particular church from Valea Stejarului (**115**), there are no old very small churches left. Therefore we have to use our own mind to imagine how those from Vuchkovo or Kopashnevo might have looked like, maybe similar the more recent wooden chapels from Tarasivka or Bârsana-Bradova (**116**). Among the small and very small churches we should remark the large number of minsters, 14, either surviving in their remote sites or brought inside the villages. It is also interesting to remark that 6 stone churches were dated back to Middle Ages, while that from Coştiui was the first one opening the series of new mural churches in Maramureş.

Of the 176 wooden churches (of which 121 were in the main area of our research) 6 were dated back to the 16th century, 41 in the 17th century and 81 in the 18th century. No less than 43 wooden churches were vaguely dated from time immemorial – *"a tempore immemoriale"* or *"antiqua"*, which probably dated most of them in the 17th century, though some of them could have been built even before or after that. It certainly surprises the small number of wooden churches from the 16th century surviving by the turn of the 18th century, probably no more than about 10. On the other hand it becomes clearer for us why the extant churches are about half datable back to the 17th century and the other half from the 18th century, since this proportion existed before the erection of mural churches.

116 *Bârsana-Bradova.* A wooden chapel was erected for about 10-15 worshipers around 1990 by Paşca Vasilie on a land donated by Hodor Gheorghe for the small isolated settlements of Bradova and Călăi (inf. Duşinschi 1997). Photo: August 1997.



117 *Iza.* The lower and upper churches as they were depicted in an investigation from 1744. These were some of the smallest and oldest wooden churches recorded in Maramureş in 1774, the lower one on the left being dated from 1580. MOL, U et C, fasc. 220, 22, 525; Hadzhega 1922, 224.

The reason for erection of new wooden churches in the 18th century was in some cases indicated to be the destruction of the former ones, either because of an unexpected fire,[62] flood[63] or because they ruined.[64] A distinct but significant number of churches from the upper district were set on fire by a plundering Tartar army in 1717.[65] In all these cases the following churches could have been adapted to the new size and needs of the parishes. Apart from these, several other new churches were erected in new monasteries and settlements.[66] The most important number of new churches in the 18th century, however, replaced the older ones specifically because of the throng inside them. The succession of larger churches can be certified in at least 27 parishes, while in four other parish churches there were recorded structural additions. During the 18th century, the observable trend was, thus, of a continuous increasing of the sizes, the population growth being the main cause of church renewal in the entire county.

An interesting group of wooden churches were the travelling ones. A church replaced for its incapacity in one parish was spacious enough in another one.[67] Several abandoned wooden minsters were also moved inside the villages, and some of them in the newly established Uniate parishes in the towns of Sighet, Câmpulung and Teceu.

The situation in the 17th century could not have been much different from the following one, since it was seemingly also characterised by growing population.[68] The new ample churches replaced the older ones in a large number, leaving only rarely some memory about them. A chronicle of the parish of Bushtyno recorded a small wooden church from 1384, which was set on fire by a Turkish army in 1661 and replaced in 1672 by a new one.[69] In Breb, a small church dated from 1531 was brought in 1622 from Copăciş and almost entirely replaced by the present one. Similar stories are remembered in Năneşti, Poienile Izei, Bârsana, Rona de Jos and Sârbi. It is true that some of the churches built in the 17th century were already replaced in the following one, as several ones built at the beginning of the 18th century were also replaced at the end of the same century, but in their quality and capacity the wooden churches of the 17th century were often not worse than those built a century later. The devastating plagues from 1676, 1710 and 1742 might have also contributed to their slower replacement, delaying the inevitable throng crisis from the end of the 18th century.

In conclusion, during the 17th and 18th centuries in Maramureş there were constructed increasingly larger wooden churches replacing almost entirely the earlier generations of smaller ones. In reverse, the longer we go back in time the smaller the wooden churches might have been built. Somehow unexpected, the most daring known examples were already experimented by the first half of the 17th century. Finally, there is a small probability that wooden churches larger than in Budeşti Josani were ever engaged in Maramureş until the beginning of the 19th century.

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[62] In Călineşti Susani before 1784 and Slatina after 1786.
[63] Lipceni (Lypcha), Ruske Pole Inf. (Domneştiul Mare) and Biserica Albă.
[64] Among others: Lysychevo, Keretsky, Horinchovo and Kolochava Lazy.
[65] The two parish churches from Borşa, Moisei, Săcel, the lower church of Sălişte a de Sus and the churches from Dragomireşti and Rozavlea.
[66] New monasteries in Uglea II, Boroniava, Ialova (Vilkhivtsi), Valea Scradei, Bârsana, Ieud and Krychevo. Young Uniate parishes or branches with their first churches in Vuchkove, Lopukhovo, Rosishka, Kvasy, Kostylivka, Vişc (Vyshkovo), Vodytsia (Apşiţa) and Repedea.
[67] The church from Hoteni was brought from Budeşti Vinţeşti and that from Vad was transported from Berbeşti.
[68] The period before the *Great Plague* from 1710 was remembered by the elders from Maramureş as *Poiede*, i.e. the populous time. Baboş 2002:b, 231, n. 8.
[69] Kopynets 1999, 10-20.

The technical limits

Throughout the province, in many large parishes numbering over 400 souls, especially after 1767, churches larger than 400 places to accommodate the growing parishes were thoroughly necessary but not built until the turn of the 18th century, except for the remarkable one from Budeşti Josani. Beginning with the turn of the 18th century the new churches were built significantly more capacious, yet only by braking with the traditional model and often shifting to other materials. One of the significant reasons for the inhibition to build larger wooden churches must have been the technical limits of the traditional model.

From the technical point of view the critical places in the traditional model of wooden church were, as earlier exposed, the vault, the roof and the lateral walls. The large central nave was limited in its starting width by the increasing weight of the vault and roof above and in length by the risk for bends in the high lateral walls or in the eaves purlins. The limits of the traditional model seem to have been reached in the church of Budeşti Josani, erected already in 1643, the largest of all known in Maramureş until the end of the 18th century. Its starting width of 30 R ft or 8.64 m generated a large span for the vault and roof above while the lateral walls of the nave reached 8.81 m in between the joints.

Although there was still more place to innovate or increase the size of the traditional model, especially thinking on the great need to improve the capacity of the churches, there were no such attempts recorded until the construction of the large church from Imshady, high up in the northern mountains of Verkhovyna, erected 10.4 m large and 11.65 m long in 1843, for about 470 worshippers.

In Verkhovyna, the new fashionable model adopted at the turn of the 18th century was meant to allow far more worshippers inside the wooden churches. In the lower parish of Studeny it was planned in 1798 a new wooden church for 420 parishioners, in 1825 the new wooden church from Repynne received 545 parishioners while the even larger one from Maidan, built about the same time, allowed no less than 630. This model reached the southern parts only in one known case, in the newly established parish of Apşa din Jos (*a Băscăuanilor*), at the turn of the 18th century, and it received about 240 worshipers.[70] At that stage the traditional model from the southern and central parts of the province was almost completely abandoned in new constructions for the sake of the fashionable masonry churches and their roofs "*on lying seats*".[71]

The scale

Within the frame of the traditional model, the agreement between the needed capacity and the technical experience was unified by the church carpenter in the starting width, complemented by its related length. Once the starting width was decided the other sizes almost flowed from it to build the entire church. As the starting width of the known wooden churches gradually varies between 15-30 R ft, we can establish a working scale distinction between the small (15-19 R ft wide), medium (20-24 R ft wide), large (25-29 R ft wide) and very large ones (over 30 R ft). The very small capacity of some vanished churches indicates they were built at a very small scale (10-14 R ft wide). In this way we obtain an efficient grouping in five successive scale levels.

It is easy to remark that between the conventionally established capacity and scale levels there are many disagreements. A church with a medium capacity was not necessarily built with a medium starting width. In most obvious cases these differences turns into evidences of how church carpenters played with the starting width and the subordinated length in order to achieve the capacity required by the

[70] Hadzhega 1922, 217; Brătulescu 1941, pl. XVII.
[71] "*Pe scaunu culcatu*". ASC, Fond 149, Ep. Gherla, 1271/1858, fila 4.

founders. For instance, the church from Sat Şugătag was built with about the same capacity as the church from Văleni, although the main sizes varied a lot, $22^{1/2}$ x 36 R ft respectively 18 x 39 R ft. This variation brought an important distinction between them. The larger starting width in Sat Şugătag gave massiveness to the construction as a whole, while the narrow width in the long church from Văleni was the cause of its characteristic slender appearance. In the same manner, the large but short churches from Sârbi Josani (c 1685), Budeşti Susani (c 1760) and Berbeşti (1758) were all intentionally built to a larger starting scale than the capacity required, probably to impress or to later enable effective enlargements.

The master carpenters of the past must have worked with the scale through the process of giving sizes, while planning the capacity or searching solutions to technical problems. The scale in terms of capacity or sizes must have been used in communication with the founders and negotiated in contracts. Nevertheless, the final scale could have generated social status and legitimated pride for all those involved.

Facing the sun

Before any of the sizes were marked on the ground, the very first decision to take for a future house of worship was its orientation.[72] The results of the measurements clearly confirm what folk poems still indicated for more than a century ago, that the sunrise was the absolute reference point in Maramureş.[73]

Faithfully, the wooden churches display an entire array of slightly different orientations following the sunrise from the winter solstice to the Midsummer Day. In this way, the parish church from Cuhea, oriented 119° SE (**109**), specifically seeks the sunrise in the shortest days of the year, the church of Oleksandrivka, oriented 90° E, points towards one of the two equinoxes, and that from Apşa din Jos din Părău, oriented 48° NE, plainly celebrates the early morning of the summer solstice (**118**).

An obvious but singular deviation from the figured orientation we find in Giuleşti Monastery, 139° SE, and it is conditioned by the site. The minster was built on a terrace facing north above the Mara River and therefore the sunlight from the winter solstice reaches the sanctuary only after the sun rises above the ridge of the hill behind.

So far, we have too little knowledge about this significant moment of decision and therefore we are unable to determine more precisely who actually decided the orientation and how it was determined on the ground as the main axis of the church. It is more certain that the master carpenters respected in their work the clear orientation towards the rising sun, somewhere between the two solstices. Moreover, they opened a window in the eastern wall of the sanctuary to enable the priest to welcome the sunrise inside.

The case of Maramureş proves that on one side the old metrology can be successfully applied in the history of architecture and on the other side the historical buildings can significantly improve the knowledge about the old metrology itself. Notably, these results are not automatically transferable to other regions. A good example is the present county of Sălaj, where one or several other

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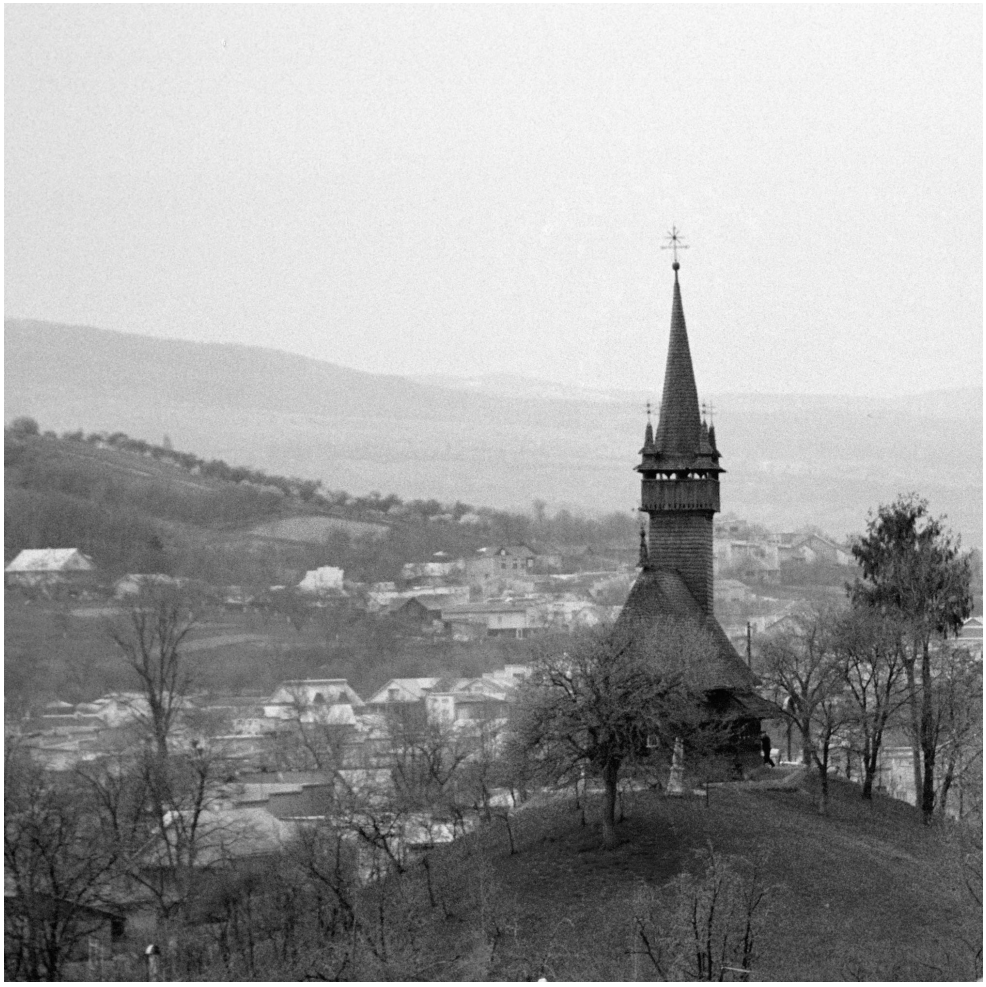
[72] Silvia Păun integrated a few churches from Maramureş in her book about the orientation of the sanctuaries in Romania from ancient to present times. In her work, she stressed the vital importance the orientation always played in the construction of a sacred space. Silvia Păun, *Absida altarului*, Bucureşti 2000.

[73] *"Up there towards the sunrise / the Greeks build a monastery / the Greeks build it, the Turks ruin it. / They don't build it anyhow /* [But with] *9 doors and 9 altars / with the windows towards the sun / and the door towards the sea…."* IAF Cluj, Răspunsurile la chestionarele lui Nicolae Densuşeanu, MS. 4554, II Transilvania şi Banat, 495-502 Tit Bud, ad. 16, 1895.

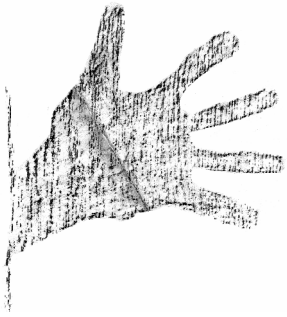


118 *Apşa din Jos* (*Dibrova*). The church was beautifully sited on a hill naturally elongated towards the sunrise in the summer solstice. The Moholiţă Hill, from where the picture was taken, just a few hundred metres away, would have permitted a more flexible orientation, which was preferred by a part of the village. According to the local oral tradition the two sides competed one early morning for the future location by preparing the first logs on the heights. The winning location offers wide perspective over the surroundings and elevating experiences of the sunrise and sunset. Photo: April 2002.

systems with their own standards must have been used by the church carpenters in the past (**119**). These results reveal an already advanced and often standardised knowledge, transferred from generation to generation of itinerant professional church carpenters during the entire 16th, 17th and 18th century.

Another significant aspect revealed here is the continual replacement of the old small parish churches during the 17th and 18th centuries, abreast with the growing communities, until they almost vanished away already by the turn of the 18th century. The demographical explosion from the second half of the 18th century brought the traditional wooden churches to the technical limits of their model. After that, the throng inside the churches was either solved through larger mural churches or, as in Verkhovyna and the Bocicoi Domain, by new fashionable wooden models almost unrelated to the earlier traditional ones. For most of the communities, however, the only way to deal with the throng was to wait for better times and until then to repair or enlarge a bit the old cramped wooden churches. Whatever solution the parishioners chose, the long local tradition to dimension the churches died out in *old Maramureş* together with the last local itinerant church carpenters of the old school, at the end of the 18th century or the beginning of the next one.

119 *Hida*, *Sălaj County*. The hands carved on the portal give the standard of 20.1 cm. These standard hands can give an ell of 60.3 cm and a foot of 30.15 cm. The church seems to have been built in 1717 about 8 such ells wide and $13^{1/2}$ long. The neighbouring church from Racâş, although displays two eaves like in Maramureş, was built with the same standard as in Hida a few years before 1783, indicating the work of a church carpenter from that area. Tracing: July 2002.

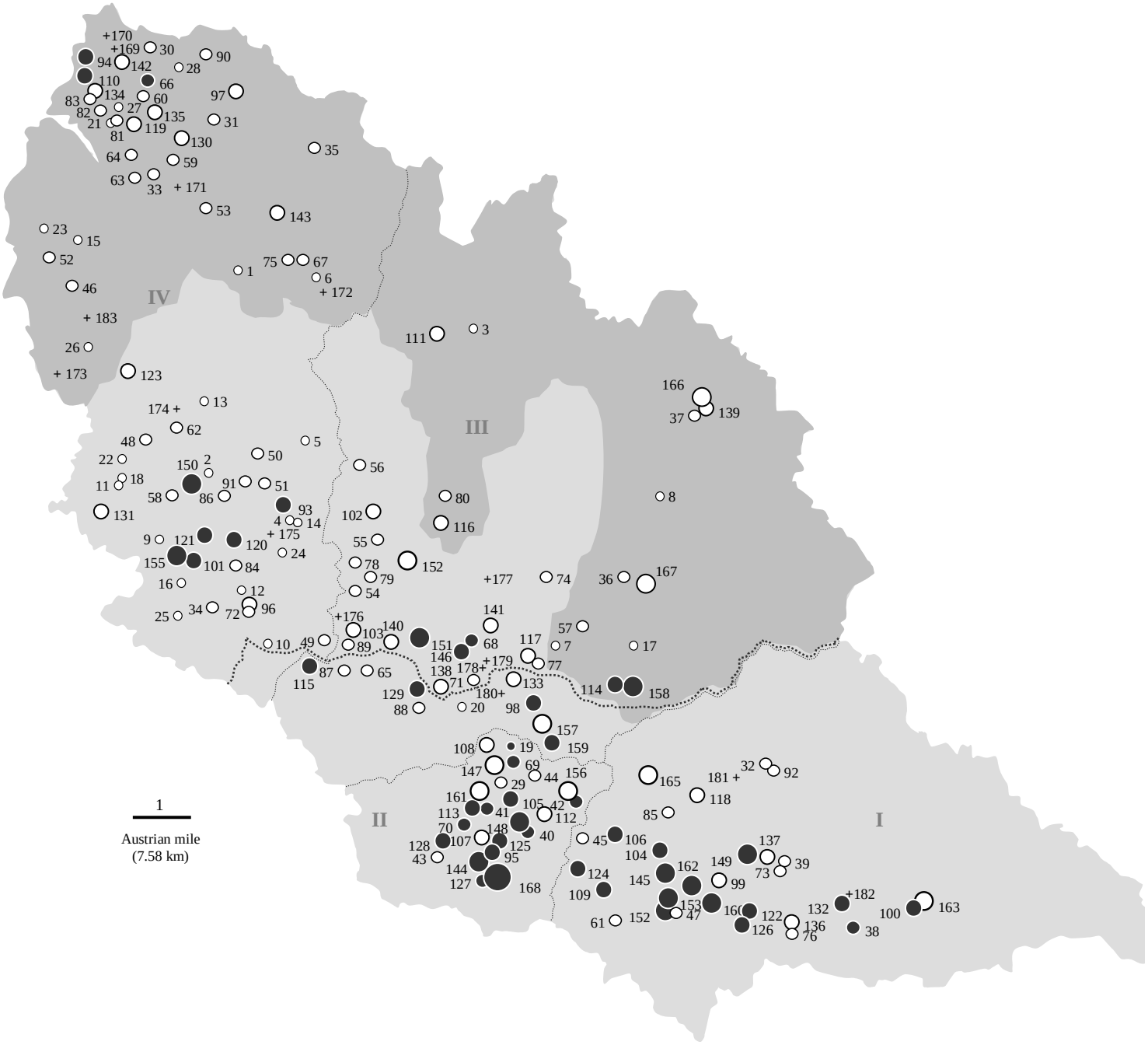


120 *Table over the capacity of the Eastern churches from Maramureş in 1786*. The capacity is displayed in relation to the population censuses from 1751, 1767, 1786 and 1806. The census from 1751 (Hadzhega 1922, 172-212 and DAZO 151, 1, 839/1745, 1-10) figures only approximatively the number of those able to confess. The other three censuses strived more or less to account the total number of population of Uniate confession (1767: ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung; 1786: MOL, C 104, Pfarr-Regulierung 1786-89, A 54; 1806: Udvari 1990, 103-109). The stone churches are underlined to distinguish them from the wooden ones. The churches written with bold are extant. The lighter background indicates the churches are from *old Maramureş*.

Nr.	Eastern churches standing in 1786	Dating	Capacity		Worshipers			
				1786	1751	1767	1786	1806
1.	Vuchkove	1728		17		55	97	181
2.	Kopashnevo	1696		20	96	213	297	374
3.	Lopukhovo (Brustura)	1754		30		150	343	515
4.	Uglea Monastery II	1777-83	30					
5.	Uglea Monastery I Kycherel	ti	40					
6.	Kolochava I Starj Selo	ti		40		516*	456	580
7.	Rosishka	1713	40		40	100	208	205
8.	Kvasy (Borkut)	1712	40			99	185	356
9.	Boroniava Monastery	1716		50			235	294
10.	Teceu (Tecsö, Tiachiv < 1749 Vilkhivtsi Monastery)	1708		60		294	457	651
11.	Iza I Inf.	1580		60	601	406	767	932
12.	Vonihovo (Voineşti)	ti		60		189	318	402
13.	Berezovo (Breaza)	1724		60	160	195	543	516
14.	Uglea	XIV-XV		70	300	445	871	862
15.	Lysychevo (Ravaszmezö)	1758		70		171	262	391
16.	Steblivka	1643		80	160	201	438	643
17.	Kostylivka (Berlebas)	1758	80				171	335
18.	Iza II Sup	ti		90	601	406	767	932
19.	**Valea Stejarului** (Valea Porcului)	1615-20	**92**		66	176	244	286
20.	Sighet (Sziget, Sihot < 1749 Săcel Monastery)	ti	100	60		114	1013	1126
21.	Bukovets I Zalomista (< 1741 Myzhhiria Monastery)	ti	100	90	200	372	532	531
22.	Kosheliovo	ti		100	210	245	864	978
23.	Bereznyky	ti		100	112	101	329	479
24.	Tereblia	ti		100	187	375	707	994
25.	Vişc (Visk, Vyshkovo)	1751		100		352	730	906
26.	Dolha (Dovhe)	ti		100	120	361	502	706
27.	Izky I	ti		100	115	1385*	491	630
28.	Novoselytsia (Uj Holyatin)	-		100	80	147	420	554
29.	Fereşti	ti		110	72	182	230	204
30.	Liskovets (Lyahovecz)	1736	110			159	273	397
31.	Verkhnii Bystryj	1770	120		90		184	333
32.	Poienile de sub Munte I (Rus Poliana)	ti		120	263	981	1619	1854
33.	Sukhy	1710	120	100	240*	425*	209	209
34.	Bushtyno (Buşteni)	1672		120	160	232	493	669
35.	Synevyrska Poliana	1766	120	70	20	92	242	264
36.	Rakhiv I (Bocsko Raho)	ti	120			236	792	776
37.	Yasinia II Inf (Körösmezö, Frasin)	1642	120			971*	1051	1315
38.	**Moisei Monastery**	1672	**123**					
39.	*Vişeu de Sus II* (< 1762 Valea Scradei Monastery)	*1718*	*130*	*60*	*200*	*577*	*1003*	*1205*
40.	**Călineşti II Căeni**	1629	**131**		220*	321*	296	655*
41.	**Giuleşti Monastery**	1692	**132**					
42.	**Bârsana Monastery**	1711	**134**					
43.	*Crăceşti* (Mara)	ti	*135*	130	100	201	265	366
44.	*Năneşti*	1644-50	*135*			191	292	252
45.	*Slătioara*	1639-40	*135*		100	214	349	327
46.	Kushnytsia	1682		144	220	250	428	509
47.	*Ieud Monastery*	1709	*150*					
48.	Lypcha (Lipceni)	1761		150	150	402	815	885
49.	Bedevlja (Bedeu)	ti		150	307	577	914	1042
50.	Drahovo (Drăgoeşti)	1703		150	380	542	1017	982
51.	Krychevo (Criciova)	ti		150	150	217	607	542

52.	Keretsky	1771			150	175	286	574	735
53.	Mizhhiria (Volovoje, Boureni, Ökörmezö)	-			150	300	379	761	876
54.	Dobrianske (Neagova)	ti			150	105	289	406	449
55.	Neresnytsia	1679			150	200	270	518	535
56.	Shyroky Luh (Seles Lonka)	ti		50	150	80	93	248	345
57.	Kosivska Poliana (Poiana Cosăului)	ti			150		252	395	787
58.	Nankovo	ti			150	170		378	460
59.	Repynne	1760			150	240*	425*	263	443
60.	Obliaska	1768		120	150			174	181
61.	*Botiza*	*1594*		*160*	*150*	*150*	*227*	*527*	*552*
62.	Horinchovo (Herinceni)	1725			160	260	450*	971*	814
63.	Tiushka	1688		160		92	131	240	293
64.	Richka	1758		160		101	174	308	474
65.	Câmpulung (Hossumezö <1770 Krychevo Monastery)	1702			160	30	120	457	651
66.	**Rekity**	ti		**163**	110	20	90	143	220
67.	Kolochava III Negrovets	1765		180			516*	248	344
68.	**Apşa de Mijloc I Susani** (Serednie Vodiane)	1705-10		**184**	400	260*	653*	638	715
69.	**Onceşti** (>1970s Sighet)	c 1621		**185**	200	268	518	778	769
70.	**Hărniceşti**	1679		**185**		80	190	275	309
71.	*Biserica Albă* (Bila Tserkva)	1740		*190*	300	200	249	420	459
72.	*Ruske Pole I Sup* (Domneştiul Mic, Kiss Urmezö)	1693		*190*	60	250	300	815	721
73.	*Vişeu de Sus II*	1501		*195*	350	200	577	1003	1205
74.	*Kobyletska Poliana*	1741		*195*	400		165	395	580
75.	Kolochava IV Imshad	ti		200			516*	386	459
76.	Săcel I Susani (a Măgdăeştilor)	c 1720			200	200*	574*	575	1096*
77.	Velyky Bychkiv I (Bocskó I Nagy)	1584			200	300	593*	1014	927
78.	Vilkhivtsi (Ialova)	ti			200	150	538	789	876
79.	Ternovo (Târnova)	ti			200	400	571	984	991
80.	Dubove	ti			200	200	368	784	882
81.	Bukovets II Inf	1749			200	200	372	532	531
82.	Izky II Matachiv	1720			200	115	1385*	491	630
83.	Pylypets I Sup	ti		120	200		1385*	754	804
84.	Novobarovo (Újbárd)	ti			200	90	151	370	446
85.	Leordina	1770 ?			200	70	278	546	610
86.	Zolotarevo	1692			200	120	303	440	573
87.	Săpânța	ti			200	500	676	1052	878
88.	Iapa	ti			200	240	369	733	659
89.	Teresva (Taras)	ti			200	160	289	594	462
90.	Pryslop	1726			200	154	352*	554	526
91.	Chumalovo (Ciumuleşti)	1709			200	25	260	565	538
92.	Poienile de sub Munte II (Rus Poliana)	1774-86			200	263	981*	1619	1854
93.	**Darva** (Kolodne)	ti		**201**	100	150	253	375	521
94.	**Roztoka**	1759		**202**	250	186		483	463
95.	**Sârbi I Susani** (Baloteşti)	1639		**204**	200	120	294	514	520
96.	*Ruske Pole II Inf* (Domneşti, Nagy Urmezö)	1748		*205*	60	250	300	815	721
97.	Torun'	1758			210	103	352*	314	490
98.	**Rona de Jos**	c 1637		**211**	240	300	280	576	560
99.	*Bocicoel* (< Vişeu de Jos)	1669		*214*	160	60	175	380	384
100.	**Borşa II din Jos**	1717-		**215**	300	500	1204*	1186	1200
101.	**Krainykovo** (Crăiniceşti)	1668		**219**	200	190	134	314	390
102.	Novoselytsia (Felsö Neresznice)	ti		60	220	50	282	455	632
103.	Kryve (Nagy Kirva)	ti			220	220	238	327	369
104.	**Rozavlea**	1717-20		**220**	300	200		1014	1061
105.	**Cornești**	1615		**225**		62	143	187	213
106.	**Strâmtura** (< Rozavlea Monastery)	1661		**229**	300	200	366	1088	774
107.	*Hoteni* (< 1758 Budeşti Vinţeşti)	1628?		*230*		183	182	270	325
108.	*Vad* (< c 1758 Berbeşti)	ti		*230*	300	40	132	300	372
109.	**Poienile Izei**	1632 ?		**234**	200	200	412	654	863
110.	**Podobovets**	1785 ?		**237**				253	358
111.	Ruska Mokra	ti			238		124	231	322
112.	*Văleni* (< Cuhea Monastery)	1516-26		*240*	250	162	250	677	581
113.	**Sat Șugătag**	1699		**246**	140	100	184	486	455
114.	**Dilove Trebushani**	1778-86		**248**	380		158	395	452
115.	**Remeți**	XIV-XV		**249**	400	86	174	312	341
116.	Kalyny (Călineştii de Jos)	1756			250	120	242	480	549
117.	Bocicoiu Mare (Bocskó II Also > 1860 *Crăciunești*)	1608		*250*	250	83	593*	376	509
118.	Ruscova	1740			250	112	382	661	824
119.	Kelechyn	1773			250	180*	379	405	427
120.	**Oleksandrivka** (Şăndreşti)	1753		**255**	200	150	191	318	370

121.	**Danylovo** (Dănileşti)	1779	**256**	184	45	97	250	264
122.	**Săliștea de Sus I față** (a Nistoreştilor)	1680	**256**	300	250*	613*	590	640
123.	Lypetska Poliana	1774-86		260	100	115	370	545
124.	**Glod**	-1784	**267**	260	65	175	487	467
125.	**Sârbi II Josani**	c 1685	**274**	200	120	294	514	520
126.	**Săliștea de Sus II dos** (Buleni)	1724	**277**	300	250*	613*	631	584
127.	**Budești I Susani** (Vinţeşti)	1760	**278**	320	425	732	1068	1166
128.	**Deseşti**	1780	**281**	300	180	328	481	676
129.	**Sarasău**	XV-XVI	**288**	300	128	254	424	348
130.	Maidan	-	300	250	120		420	800
131.	Hust (Huszt, Khust)	1710		300	506	353	1662	1884
132.	**Moisei II Josani** (> XIX Ruscova > 1954 Oblaz)	1779	*300*		300	610	1325	1479
133.	Crăciuneşti (Krychuniv)	1710		300	110	137	336	367
134.	Pylypets II Inf	ti		300			754	804
135.	Holiatyn	1769		300	76	124	388	427
136.	Săcel II Josani (a Rățănilor)	1728		300	200	574*	485	1096*
137.	Vişeu de Mijloc	1569		300	80	196	543	602
138.	Slatina (Solotvyno)	ti		300	285	364	807	1186
139.	Yasinia I Sup (Körösmezö, Frasin)	1726	240	300		971*	678	634
140.	Peri (Hrushevo)	c 1778		300	60	160	302	468
141.	Apşa de Sus (Verkhnie Vodiane)	ti		300	120	318*	628	526
142.	Nyzhnii Studeny (Hidegpatak III Inf)	-		300	268	795	1215	1377
143.	Synevyr	c 1786		300	200	240	752	1003
144.	**Breb**	1622	**301**	250	230	472	772	698
145.	**Şieu**	1717-	**304**	350	178	427	796	810
146.	**Apşa de Mijloc II Josani** (Serednie Vodiane)	-1685	**304**	380	260*	653*	554	686
147.	*Berbeşti*	1758	*305*	350	200	467	851	807
148.	**Călineşti I Susani** (a Băndrenilor)	1784	**310**	180	220*	321*	420	655*
149.	**Vişeu de Jos** (>1899 Botiza)	1699	**319**	400	300	425	866	1282
150.	**Nyzhnie Selyshche** (Săliştea de Jos, >1936 Blansko/Cz)	1641	*320*	100	226	351	523	619
151.	**Apşa din Jos Părău** (Dibrova)	1659	**323**	400	267	726	1239	786
152.	Ganychi (Găneşti)	1730		328	200	293	562	691
153.	**Ieud Şes**	XVII	**332**	260	500*	646*	784	1430*
154.	**Ieud Deal** (a Bălenilor)	1611-21	**341**	350	500*	646*	679	1430*
155.	**Sokyrnytsia**	XVII	**342**	200	301	331	1171	1353
156.	*Bârsana*	c 1700	*350*	320	300	794	987	1272
157.	Rona de Sus (Vyshnii Rivni)	ti		360	250	582	1166	1010
158.	**Dilove Bily Potik**	1778-86	**360**	400		151	217	274
159.	**Coştiui** (Rónaszék, Koshtyl')	1780	**365**				558	641
160.	**Dragomireşti** (>1936 Bucureşti)	c 1722	**372**	400	200	329	763	798
161.	*Giuleşti* (extended in 1768)	-XIII-	*380*	390	240	656	819	910
162.	**Cuhea** (Bogdan Vodă)	1754	**388**	400	300	466	757	944
163.	Borşa II de Sus	1717-		400	500	1204*	1228	1673
164.	Luh (Lunca, Kiss Lonka)	1774-86		400	200	257	695	795
165.	Petrova	1670		400	200	721	873	806
166.	Yasinia III Inf (Körösmezö, Frasin)	1756		400		971*	1051	1315
167.	Rakhiv II (Akna Rahó I Inf)	1778-86		400		913	781	881
168.	**Budești II Josani**	1643	**481**	340	425	732	1068	1166
169.	Verkhnii Studeny (Hidegpatak I Sup)	1684			268	795	1215	1377
170.	Serednii Studeny (Hidegpatak II Med)	1741			268	795	1215	1377
171.	Loziansky	-				-	182	296
172.	Kolochava II Lazy	ti				516*	531	590
173.	Pryborzhavske (Zadnia)	1724			100	316	427	616
174.	Horinchovo Monastery (Monastyrets)	1724			90	-	-	250
175.	Dulovo (Duleni)	1737-42			220	176	365	484
176.	Bilovartsi (Cetatea Albă, Kis Kirva)	-			80	162	302	322
177.	Apşiţa (Vodytsia)	1751-74			26	-	116	140
178.	Biserica Albă	1351			200	249	420	459
179.	Biserica Albă Monastery	XIV						
180.	Tisa (Mykovo, Veresmart)	ti			65	44	176	126
181.	Repedea (Kryva)	1769				-	258	587
182.	Moisei I Susani (a Vlongenilor)	1717-			300	610	1325	1479
183.	Bronka	1768				129	200	211

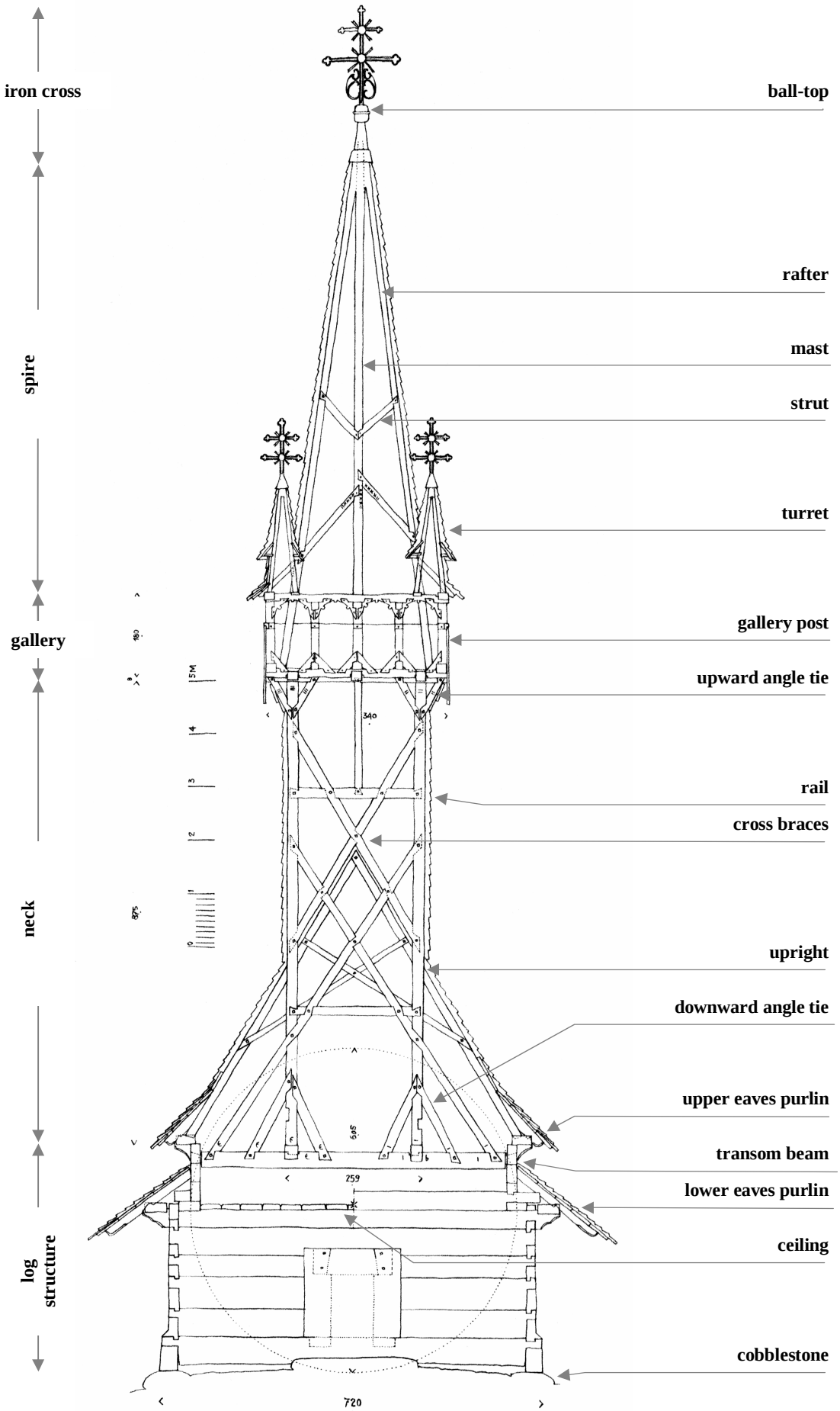


121 *Maramureş*. The approximate maximum capacity of the Uniate churches standing in 1786. The numbers correspond with those listed at **120**. Extant churches are darkened. The thick interrupted line marks the present border between Ukraine in the north and Romania in the south.

- very small (-100)
- small (101-200)
- medium (201-300)
- large (301-450)
- very large (451-)
- \+ unknown

I Upper District
II Cosău District
III Sighet District
IV Lower District

122 *Apşa din Jos*. Western side with exposed raftering and tower frame. Scale drawing: April 2002.



123 *Danylovo***.** This wooden church retains its extremely pointed old tower and the side belfry for the large bells. Photo: November 2002.

2.2.2 The towers

The church carpenters had to finish the wooden churches with one of the most uncommon structures in the local architecture: *the timber framed tower*. A tower of this kind required good knowledge of wood in a completely different building technique than the traditional log one. Moreover, the local craftsmen placed these structures not directly on the ground, as widely used in the Carpathian Basin, but above the walls of the house of worship (**122**). This exceptional positioning inevitably brought with it high concerns for the safety of the worshipers beneath, forcing the church carpenters from Maramureş to perform at their very best. In their work with the tower they had to find a balance between the needs of strength on one side and the care for the weight transferred to the lateral walls on the other side. The result was not an ambiguous simple structure but a distinct and daring creation, able to impress and signal the status of a community. The true art of building towers in Maramureş comes from the courage to engage on height without imperilling the structural balance or distorting the proportions of the whole building.

Certainly, the wooden towers of Maramureş were closely related to the numerous ones across Europe. Some medieval constructions also indicate the lifting of a wooden tower above the top of the walls might have had a large

124 *Rona de Jos*. One of the oldest dated bells from Maramureş survived in this church since its consecration in 1637. Other old bells are preserved in the Reformed church of Hust, dated from 1587, in Vodytsia (Apşiţa) from 1618, in Călineşti Susani from 1656, Giuleşti from 1679 and so on. Photo from October 1997 and tracing of the inscription from April 2002.

circulation in the past.[74] For these reasons, the tower in and around Maramureş can be particularly defined from others further on the continent at the very most by its unfailing location above the carcase of the narthex. Moreover, this constant location was frequent even in some of the neighbouring provinces, though, the centre of gravity appears to remain in Maramureş as the possible source of its widespread regional use or, at least, as the place where it was highly refined. However, no matter where the sources of inspiration came from, the church carpenters from Maramureş accomplished at the end of their entire enterprise some of the most amazing buildings in wood in the history of the mankind.

The purpose of the wooden towers in the rural Maramureş seems mainly connected to bell tolling. Their frames were dimensioned, strengthened and anchored only to take in the precious bells. One single bell was valued in 1797 to as much as the entire woodwork in a tower[75] and in the previous centuries the value could hardly be lower. As the tolling of bells three times a day became widespread in the 17th century,[76] the effort to built towers and hoist bells in them might have accelerated in Maramureş during that period. In the first half of the 17th century, some of the new churches were still built devoid of tower, like in the serf village of Valea Stejarului (1615) and in the community of nobles from Baloteşti, present Sârbi Susani (1639). Despite the limited resources of some communities, most of the new churches were erected with towers and thus provided with bells from the very beginning. Illustrative in this sense is the church from Rona de Jos, where the first bell is still in use since 1637 (**124**). By the time of the first church investigations, in the middle of the 18th century, the design of a church was already unthinkable without a tower since only one was particularly indicated to lack it.[77]

Most of the wooden towers were initially designed to take in about 2 bells. Of 136 parish churches where the number of bells was recorded in 1751 only 15 churches had 3 bells and 4 churches had 4 bells, whereas in 12 churches there was only one bell hoisted. In the other 95 parish churches there were 2 bells, i.e. almost three quarters of their total.

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[74] Cecil A. Hewett, *English Historic Carpentry*, London 1980. Contemporary towers erected above the church rooms are also known in Norway. Rønningen, Gunnar, "Kirkenes tak- og tårnkonstruksjoner", *Kyrka av träd*, 146-159, Vestervik 2000.

[75] A bell from Mala Kopania was priced at 80 Rh fl in 1797 as much as the work to erect the tower from Prislip in the following year. Hadzhega 1927, 111 and DAZO, 151, 1, 3017/1782, 12.

[76] Sisa 2001, 9.

[77] The church of Novoselytsia, former Felsö Neresznice. Hadzhega 1922, 184.

125 *Apşa din Jos*. The heavy bells were moved from the massive tower and housed in the lower but secure belfry in front of it. Photo: October 2000.

Despite demands of security for the worshipers, the towers were not entirely infallible. In 1772, during a heavy storm, the bells of the church from Nyzhnie Selyshche fell on the ground destroying the tower, the roof and exposing the interior to the bad weather.[78] Such incidents were rare but so devastating that the parishes all around became aware of the consequences of neglecting the state of the tower and the bells hoisted in it. In many places the tower was replaced when its state became uncertain. The towers above the churches from Onceşti, Bârsana Monastery were at least twice repaired or completely replaced. Other towers, like those from Budeşti Susani (1777), Budeşti Josani (1798) and Ieud Deal (1827), were reinforced by new ones inside them.[79]

From the second half of the 18th century, the parishes began to afford more and heavier bells. Because most of the old towers were not dimensioned for supplementary load, this development brought with it the custom to erect a separate belfry nearby the church (**125**). In 1774 the tower of the church from Sokyrnytsia was in such a deteriorated state that a separate belfry was planned[80] and probably erected soon thereafter. Some of the late wooden churches were even built with a secondary belfry to house the largest bells from the very beginning, as it might have been the case in Danylovo (1779) and Steblivka (1797). These belfries spread very rapidly in the lower district and Verkhovyna, whereas further south they were introduced only later in the 19th century. In Verkhovyna, especially, the belfry took entirely over the function of the tower to shelter the bells and therefore the towers were often completely closed, maintaining only a formal or symbolical role.

Into our times, the towers and their bells have played a vital role in the visual and sound landscape of the region. The peoples learned the distinct sound of each bell and recognized the particular shape of a tower from long distances. With their help, they guided themselves through the surroundings, learned about the weather or found out about major events. We may wonder today why the Tartars were so willing to set the wooden churches on fire on their retreat through the upper district of Maramureş in 1717. Certainly, they were frustrated by the fierce resistance they met at the entrance in this district and might have wanted to punish the locals by destroying their hastily abandoned villages, but another reason might have been to break down their effective tolling communication, through which they were warned and could further warn in advance.

[78] MOL, C 99, XI-A, Maramoros 1774,101.
[79] The inner towers are dated dendrochronologically in Budeşti Susani (Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, 44, table 2/no19), by a graffiti in Budeşti Josani and by an inscription in Ieud Deal (Baboş 2000, 117, n 82).
[80] MOL, C 99, XI-A, Maramoros 1774, 86v.

126 *Hărniceşti*. The tower framing as well as the raftering were plainly exposed during the last repairs. Photo: August 1997.

Tower frames

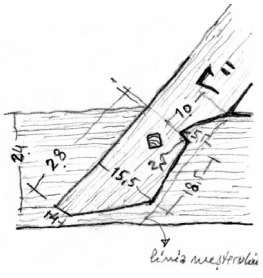
A tower framing consisted of four main parts with well determined functions: the *base*, the *neck*, the *gallery* and the *spire*. The meetings between their timbers required a particular collection of joints, unlike those from the log building parts. They were designed to work as a single body and stand firm against all the inner strains caused by either the strong winds or the swings from the bells.

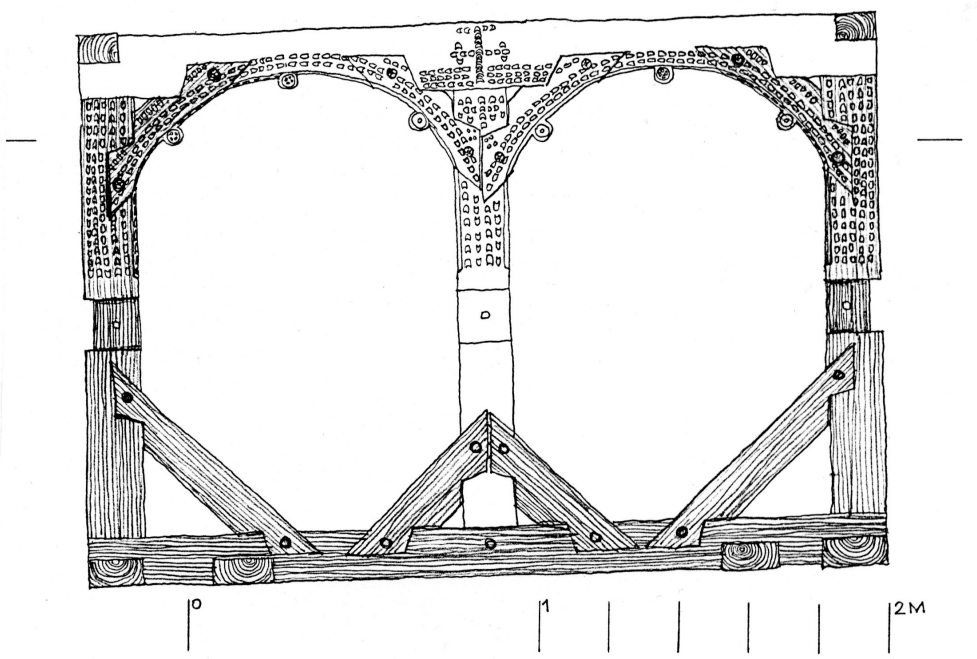
The *base* was commonly made out of two pairs of massive cross transoms with the role to hold the entire tower above and transfer its weight to the lateral walls. These transoms were inserted in the lateral walls of the narthex and notched with them while the later were still in construction (**127**). It is therefore easy to determine where the original transoms were replaced, since the subsequent ones roughly penetrated the walls devoid of notches, as for example in Bârsana Monastery and Onceşti. Similar situations we find in Valea Stejarului and Sârbi Susani, but there the first towers were added in a second building faze. Because of their vital role in the stability of the tower and the difficulty to replace them, the transoms were often cut from robust trunks of oak, comparable in sizes only with the sills. When the transoms were positioned over the narthex, the pair spanning across the main axis of the church often broke the symmetry being intentionally shifted nearer the nave (**113**). The actual meaning with this arrangement was to improve the anchoring towards the entrance and thus prevent the tower from falling over the nave under extreme weather conditions.

127 *Apşa din Jos*. The anchoring of the south-eastern upright in the massive transoms of the base. The transoms were interlocked with the lateral walls while the log fabric was still in construction assuring a stable connection between them. Photo: October 2000.

The *neck* was mounted on the base and depended entirely on its strength. The frame of the neck was constructed out of four powerful corner uprights strengthened together by side cross braces, rails and angle ties (**126**). Its purpose was evidently to raise the bell chamber as high up as possible and insure the stability of the entire tower through its reinforcing parts. The uprights were placed at the four strong intersections created by the transoms below and fitted into them by mean of a foot tenon. In between the uprights the four faces of the neck were laced with long slender pairs of braces assembled in various patterns, from simple to elaborate ones, to resist extensions. They generally terminated with notched lap joints strengthened by pegs. These lap joints were designed rectangular in Şieu, Rona de Jos and Sokyrnytsia, dovetailed in most of the cases and sometimes further refined as in Cuhea (**128**). The rails held the sides of the framing together and were either tenoned into the uprights or ended by lap joints. In the majority of the towers the church carpenter reinforced the foot and the top end of the uprights with short angle ties to prevent them from braking due to the limited unloading surface (**127**). In Sârbi Josani, a pair of such angle ties would have probably eased the transfer of the heavy load above to the base and thus hindered the southern transom and the south-eastern upright from splitting.

128 *Cuhea*. One of the refined details with the lap joints at the tower from Cuhea is the small hook that improved the joint against extensions. Sketch drawing: June 1998.



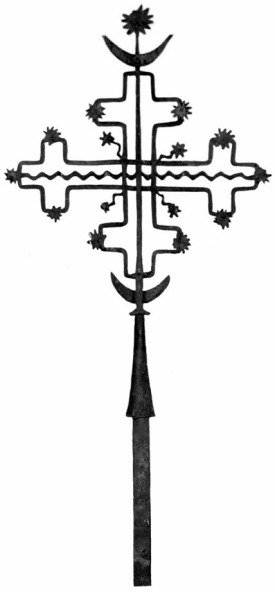


129 *Breb*. The gallery as well as the neck of the tower seems to come from the former church in Copăciş, about 2 km away, firmly dated from 1530. Scale drawing: May 1995.

The *gallery* or the *bell chamber* is a light frame of posts and plates secured by short angle ties in which the bells were commonly hoisted. The gallery was opened towards all cardinal directions to let the bells sound over the surroundings. From long distances this sounding box was the main visual attraction of a church. No wonder it displays such a great variety of designs being most responsible for the character of a tower. For the same reason the posts, the top plates and the angle ties between them built decorative arches all around the gallery and the lower part was covered with boards sawed with filigree frets. We should not forget either some beautiful examples of mouldings surrounding the galleries or the unique outer decoration on the arches in Breb (**129**).

Although it drew such a great attention, the bell chamber was in numerous cases built without a structural function. In Sârbi Susani (1667), Năneşti (c 1650), Rona de Jos (c 1637), Sokyrnytsia, Apşa de Mijloc Susani (1705-10) and in the entire Verkhovyna the uprights of the neck were reared up to the level of the spire and the gallery was arranged in between them. This scheme gave characteristic plane tower faces with somehow more indistinctive bell chambers. Their presence was though accentuated in Apşa de Mijloc and Sokyrnytsia by a narrow skirt around. In other churches, like in Poienile Izei (c 1632), Budeşti Josani (1643), Oleksandrivka (1753), Cuhea (1754), Glod and Călineşti Susani (1784), the gallery was emphasised by hanging it on consoles all around the uprights, veiling so the true bearers of the bells.

In the most sincere tower frames, the gallery was jetted above the neck as a structure of its own. Even in these cases the bells were not always held by the carcase of the gallery. Instead, a separate structure was built inside them to directly unload the bells and transfer the strains from their swings to the steady frame of the neck. In the tower from Breb this structure survived until 1992 when the bells were moved in a separate belfry, but fortunately such structures are still in work in the churches from Sârbi Josani (c 1685) and Vişeu de Jos (1699). We are not able to determine in how many places the original inner structures hanging the bells vanished but it appears that in some of the cases the bell did hang from the gallery. This appears to be the situation in Călineşti Căeni (1629), Apşa din Jos (1659), Giuleşti Monastery (1692), Deseşti (1780) and so on.

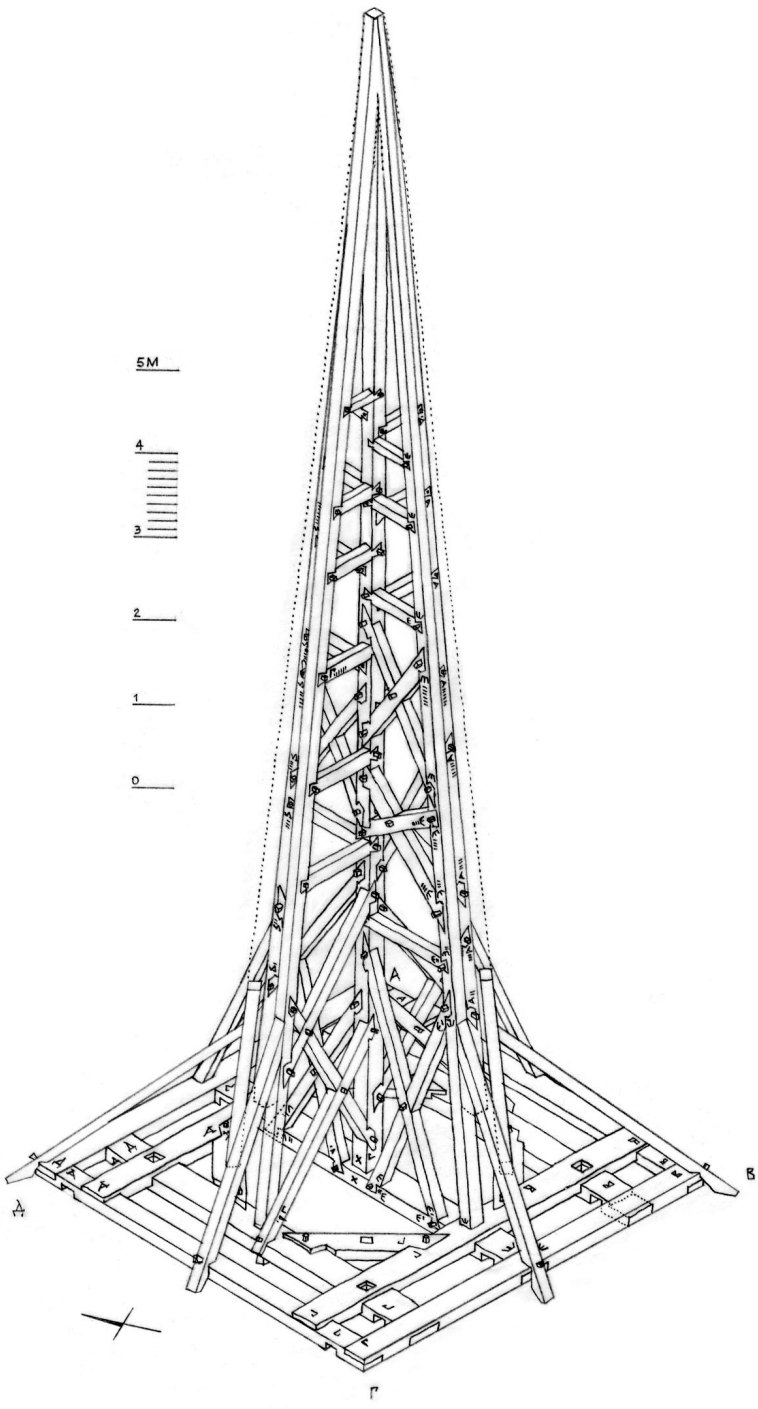


130 *Ieud Deal*. Iron cross with celestial bodies, about 57 cm wide. Photo: July 1997.

Last but not least important it is the pointed *spire* that both protects the bell chamber and raise the top cross to the skies (**131**). The surmounting spire was generally built of eight long slender rafters enforced with cross braces and struts. In Apşa de Mijloc Josani, Krainykovo (1688) and Steblivka (1797) a spire mast was stepped on two short transoms spanning in a cross above the neck to elegantly avert, once again, the transfer of weight and strains from the weak carcase of the gallery. In Apşa din Jos (1659) and Dragomireşti (1722), the impressive spire mast was accompanied down to the short transoms by the four cardinal spire rafters.

Some of the towers attracted attention through four corner turrets surrounding the central spire. These charming superstructures appear to have been inspired by the similar ones above the medieval stone churches in the royal towns. Not surprisingly, most of the towers with corner turrets are concentrated around the towns of Hust and Sighet. The solitary one from Budeşti Josani might have been inspired by that from Sighet or Baia Mare, where the local shingle makers sold their products.

The iron cross surmounted the tower and closed the entire work (**130**). This was fixed on the peak of the spire by a long sharp end. In the ball-bulb beneath the cross there were said to have been saved documents concerning the erection of the church.[81] Like the bells in the gallery these crosses were true works of art, ordered from experienced blacksmiths around. However, as not all the communities afforded new bells, not all of them could crown their churches with iron crosses from the very beginning. The large wooden cross saved inside the porch of the church from Dragomireşti appears to have been once placed on the top of the tower. Another example is the small wooden cross standing over the sanctuary of the wooden church from Novoselytsia, in the neighbouring county of Ugocea near the border with Maramureş.



131 *Cuhea*. Commonly, a spire was very simply built of rafters and some rare cross braces and struts, but the slender spire from Cuhea displays one of the most complex structures, where the carpenter had to make use of assembly marks to differentiate the numerous parts. Scale drawings: June 1998.

[81] In Văleni, three documents and a bottle were found during the demolition of the church in 1947; Godja-Ou 2002, 57. In Deseşti the following inscription was engraved on the iron ball-top: "*N*[eme]*s Pop Dumitru / Renova*^{x} *lododt / Ns Roman Vaszalie x Kantor / Ns Roman György x Kurator / Pap x Ananie xx Honor x Erütt / Istvan x Gazda Ianos x Ats x Szüts x VAS x / Nemes x Tiszteletes x Verdes Peter x 1836 x matzis*".

132 *Bârsana.* The work with a tower frame required a plane place where the pieces were cut and marked to be reassembled above the church. Here a carpenter cut a new cross brace for the tower of the former monastery church of Bârsana during the last repairs. Photo: July 1997.

Assembly marks

The tower framing required a specific working method, different from a log construction. While the horizontal logs allowed the joints to be thought out and cut next to their final place, the vertical frame of a tower was only possible to be made firstly on a plane ground and secondly assembled in its final position (**132**). In order to ease the difficult work of assembling the parts, especially when the tower framing was elaborately designed, the carpenters used various marks or signs, by which they recognized without difficulty the joining pieces.

In Maramureş there are many original towers preserved displaying a collection of interesting assembly or construction marks never studied before. These are not some incidental cuts or recent graffiti which should better be removed, as it unfortunately happened during the last restoration works, but an important category of professional signs. Their potential to unveil the identity of the carpenters, the way they organized their work and eventually their itineraries is proportional with our ability to document and evaluate them.

The assembly marks were useful means as long as they helped the master carpenter to select apart the numerous similar pieces and joints of the framework. He must have been familiar with and also able to name each mark in order to communicate with his assisting craftsmen, as he was unable to work alone,

133 *Deseşti*. During the repairs from 1996, the hidden parts of the tower were exposed revealing numerous assembly marks of great variety. Here there can be observed the graphic signs "+" and "III" on both the gallery posts and their respective downward angle ties. Unfortunately, some of them were lost with the replacement of some original pieces and some due to the "cleaning" of the surface with an axe without any thought for their historical value. Photo: June 1996.

especially in the difficult conditions created by a massive tower high above the ground. Accordingly, it was at hands for him to use alphabet letters, numbers or other common known signs by his own preference.

Scores of assembly marks documented in Maramureş[82] can be easily identified with Cyrillic and some with Latin letters and numerals. Apart from these there is a large variety of graphic signs which sometimes reminds of letters from some ancient writing. The marks appear both with their basic form and changed. The changed marks present an additional stroke, a change of direction, a reverse form or combinations.

The number of marks varies considerably from place to place. On the small towers there were necessary only a few marks while on the large ones a mark was needed for almost each particular joint. Unfortunately, lots of them are unreachable since the frames of the towers are for the most part boarded and shingled. Future repairs of coverings would enable further documentation and hopefully improve our understanding of their use (**133**).

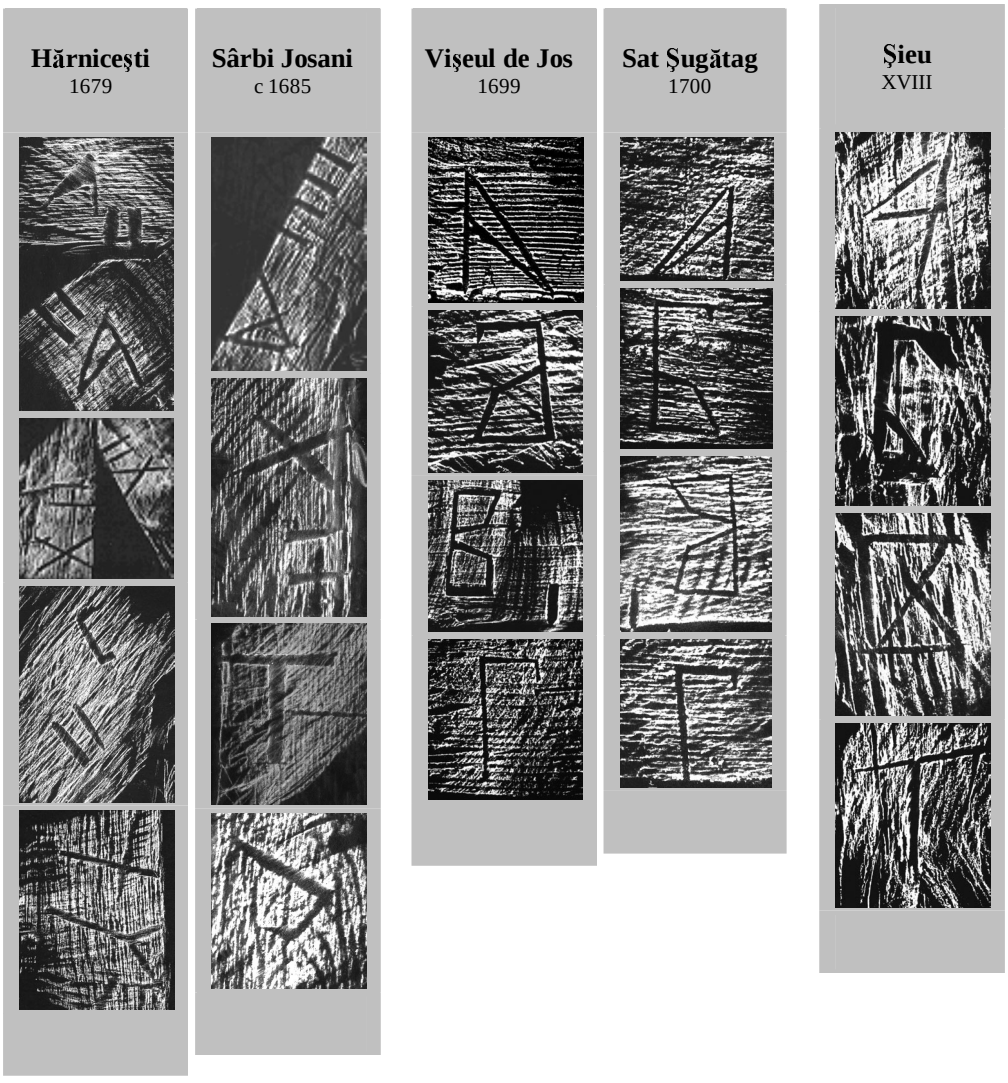
[82] I wish to thank here Professor Emeritus András Róna-Tas from Budapest for his kindness to make suggestions regarding the assembly marks documented in Maramureş.

The Cyrillic signs

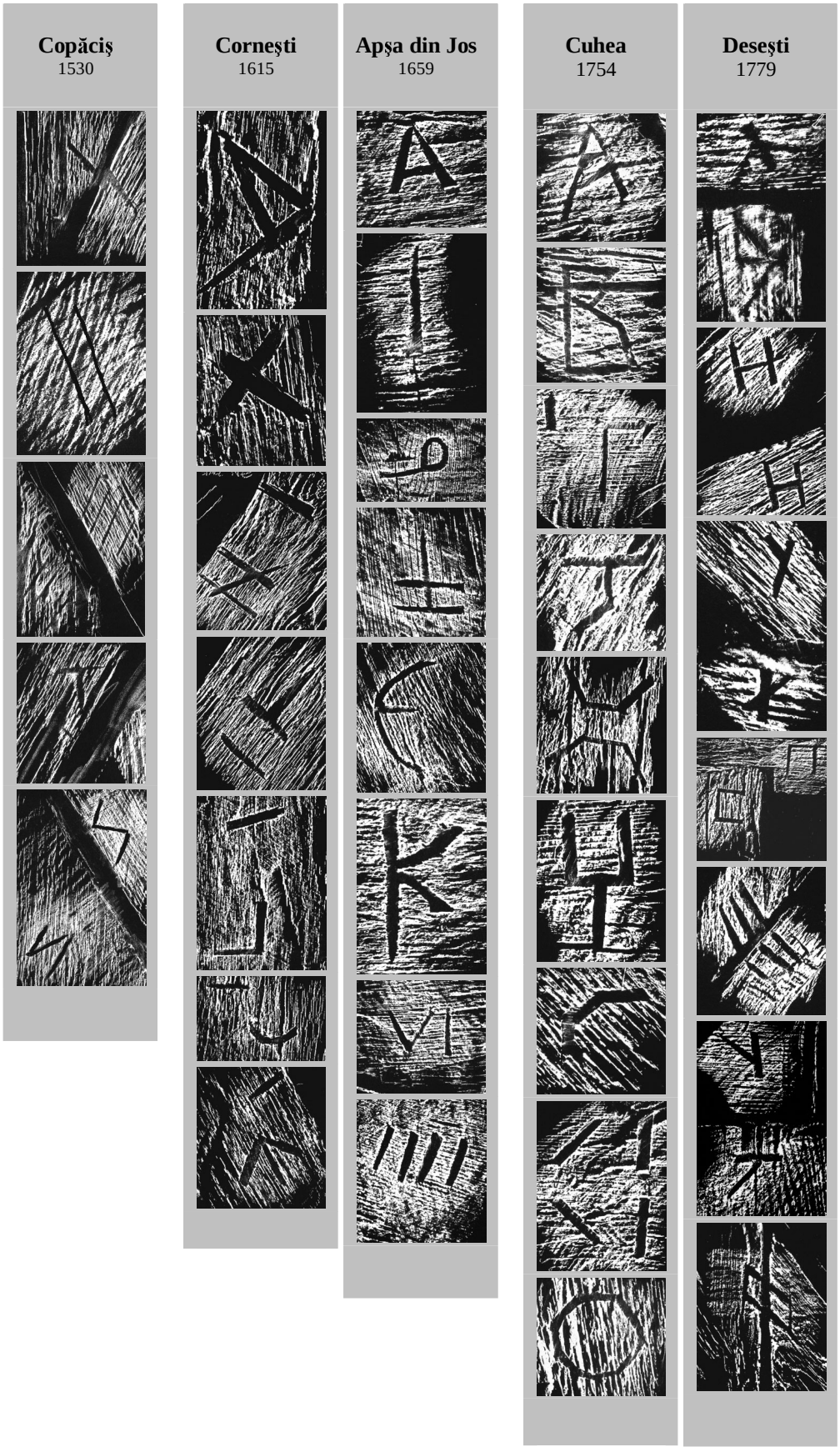
The Cyrillic signs are the most common marks we find on the tower framings in Maramureş, from the oldest tower built in Copăciş in 1530 and rebuilt in Breb in 1622 to the numerous ones erected during the 17th and 18th centuries (**134-135**).

The high occurrence of Cyrillic marks is of exceptional importance for the present research since it unveils the identity of the craftsmen. The Cyrillic alphabet and the Old Church Slavonic were largely used by the Eastern communities of Maramureş, irrespective to their linguistic affiliation, until the 19th century. Accordingly, the anonymous church carpenters using Cyrillic signs in their work belonged to these rural communities and seem to have had a certain level of education. This is further underlined by the character of the letters used on the towers from Apşa din Jos (1659) and Călineşti Susani (1784), which are almost identical with those from the portal inscriptions, revealing the same sure hand behind them. In this conditions, the surviving signatures of the church carpenters no longer appears so isolated and they all together give the picture of a certain level of literacy among the church carpenters.

134 *Cyrillic assembly marks.* Tracings: October 2000 and 2001.



135 *Mixed assembly marks from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries*. The Cyrillic signs were most often mixed with other types of signs. These are only a small number of the existing ones in the respective tower frames, mainly from around the base, where they are easier to reach. Tracing: October 2000 and 2001.



In the Cyrillic alphabet there are no special signs for numbers. For the most part, they are represented by certain letters and eventually indicated by a tilde above. For this reason it is difficult to recognize an isolated Cyrillic assembly mark right from the start if it represents a number or a letter. The other marks may help or not to read it correctly. One may wonder why it is important to differentiate them. The fact is that we need not only to recognise the signs but also find a sense and an order behind their use. For instance, in the churches from Vişeu de Jos (1699), Sat Şugătag (1700) and Şieu (1717-24) the four uprights of the tower were marked with the first four letters of the Cyrillic alphabet – **а б в г**, whereas in Cuhea (1754) with the first four numbers – **а б г д**. The difference between the two situations is made by only one mark. In Onceşti (c 1670), instead, the beautifully carved marks can be read as both letters and numbers (**137**). An exception from these is the tower from Călineşti Susani (1784), where the southern joints along the south-eastern upright were numbered upwards from 1 to 8 in Cyrillic, each mark being indicated by a tilde. In most of the cases the letters and the numerals seem to be mixed or undefined, as in Borşa din Jos (1717-), Corneşti (1615), Hărniceşti (1679), Sârbi Josani (c 1685), while in some cases further mixed with various graphic signs, like in Poienile Izei (c 1632), Bârsana Monastery (1711), Sălişte a de Sus II Buleni (1717-24), Rozavlea (1717-) and Cuhea (1754).

The Latin signs

Thus far, the Latin signs were found as assembly marks only in Danylovo (1779) and Fereşti (1798). In Danylovo, the four uprights were marked at the base with cursive letters (**136**) strongly resembling those from the Latin inscription on the first portal. In exchange, the tower framing from Fereşti presents only Latin numbers, from the base to the gallery and the spire (**100**). While in Fereşti the foreign identity of the carpenters was remembered by tradition, in Danylovo it would be proposed a local one further in the book.

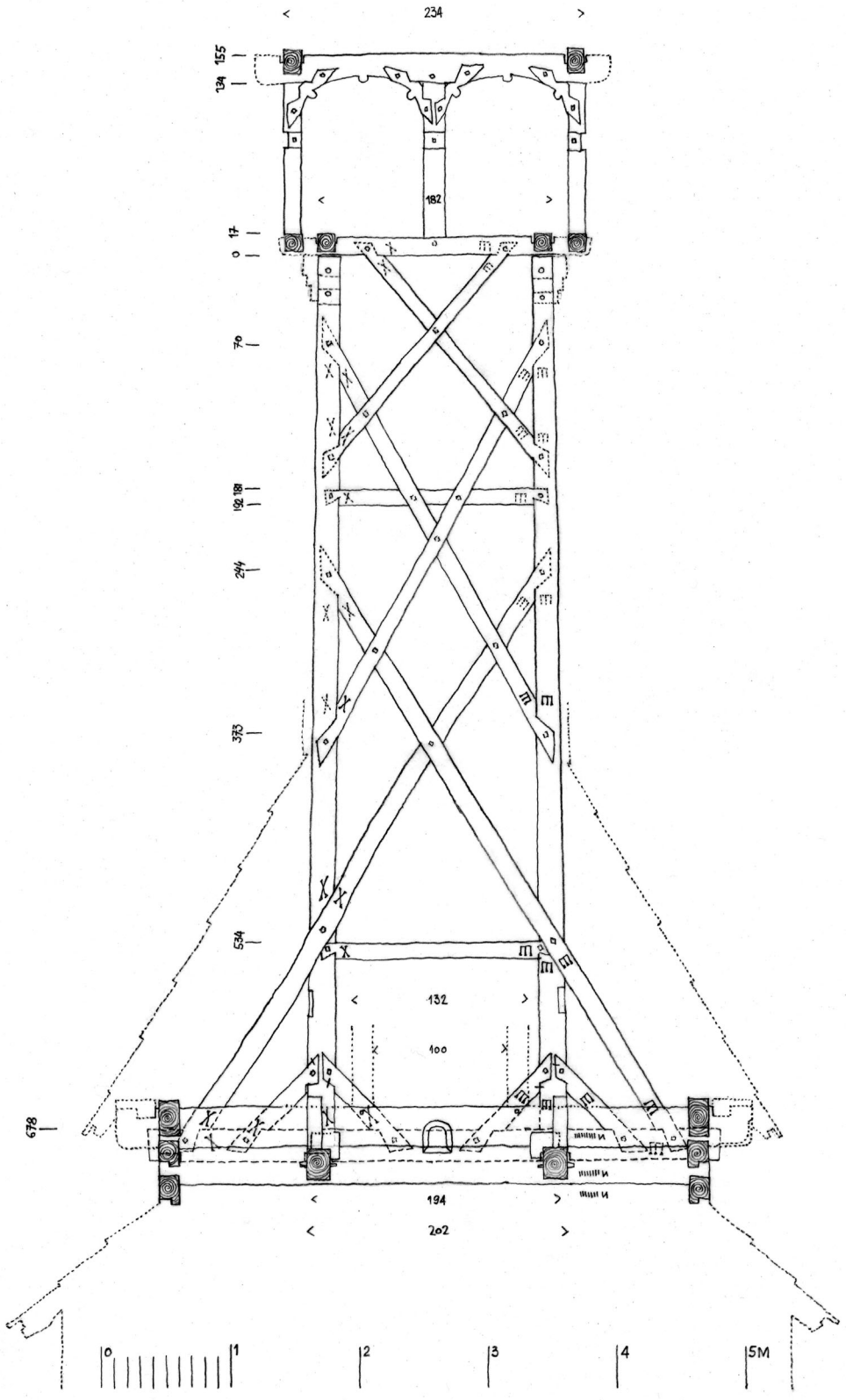
136 *Danylovo*. Tracing: October 2000.

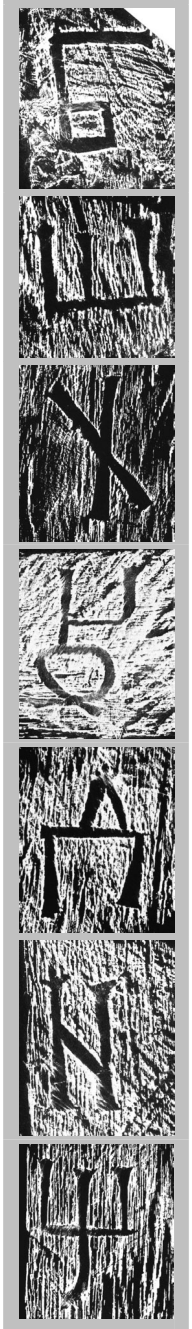
The graphic signs

A considerable number of the various assembly marks documented on the towers from Maramureş can not be compared with the letters or the numbers of the previous two writings. At the first inspection they appear as spontaneous graphical signs, diversified or multiplied to distinguish almost each unique joint. However, after more research, we find unexpected similarities with other signs used in the region and around.

The graphic signs as numbers. Among the graphic signs, we can firstly distinguish those representing numbers. Repeating a line or a hole was a simple numeric notation with large use in the rural communities from Maramureş and far around, in the past. This kind of assembly marks we find notched on numerous towers and even on the wall timbers of the buildings that were once transferred. The use of this numerical system survived into our times in the pastoral occupation and it was therefore more often described in this context.[83] When important accounts were settled between two or more persons they were notched on a squared stick by repeating a cut or a scratch until the desired number was obtained. This stick was particularly named *carâmb* by the Romanians from Maramureş, and was widely known as *răboj* or *rovás* in the entire Carpathian region.

[83] Romulus Vuia, *Studii de etnografie şi folclor*, II, 224, ill 66, Bucureşti 1980; Gheorghe Focşa, *Ţara Oaşului*, II, 126, fig 105-107, Bucureşti 1975; Nicolae Dunăre, *Civilizaţie românească în Curbura Carpatică Nordică*, 307, fig 4, Bucureşti 1984; *Dicţionarul Limbii Române*, serie nouă, tom IX, Litera R, 751, Bucureşti 1975; Dăncuş, 1986, 54-55.

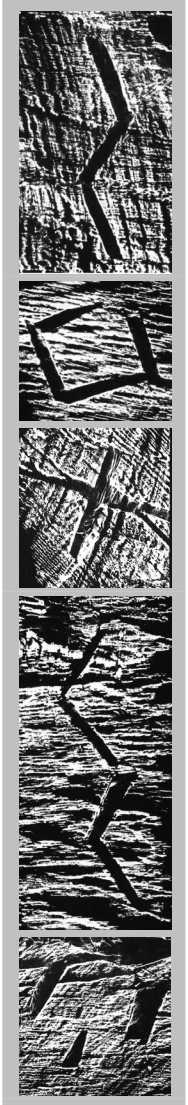




137 *Onceşti*. This slender tower replaced the first one sometimes in the second half of the 17th century, maybe in the 1670s. All the way up, this tower retains some of the most beautifully and carefully carved Cyrillic assembly marks, one for each outer side of the uprights. However, it is difficult to determine if these were meant to be numbers or letters and to read a meaning in their obvious order. Scale drawing of the western side and tracings of assembly marks from all four sides of the tower: October 2001.

This type of number notation is very easy to read on the towers since the carpenters often cut deep in the timber to distinguish the notches from any incidental scratches. Although these signs are not graphically remarkable they plainly display the way the carpenter thought and planed his work, enabling us to follow him almost step by step, as exemplified by the small cuts on the four uprights of the tower in Budeşti Josani (1643), Sălişte a de Sus I *faţă* (1680; **140**) and Bârsana Monastery (1711). Actually, the graphic numbers appear more or less in almost all the tower frames as a complement to the other signs. For instance, the lap joints on the uprights from Hărniceşti (1679), Sârbi Josani (c 1685), Vişeu de Jos (1699) and Sat Şugătag (1700) are numbered by long lines starting from the base, aside with the Cyrillic signs defining the faces of the tower (**113**). In a similar way the carpenter who transferred the church in Văleni (1674-84) from the Cuhea Monastery combined Cyrillic signs referring to the wall side with a number of lines representing the position of the timber in the wall from the ground to the top, i.e. not the move to dismantle but to reassembly the building. In Corneşti, in exchange, the carpenter who transferred and added the old sanctuary used different graphic signs obtained with four different chisels to distinguish each side wall and then repeated them until he obtained the necessary number for each timber.

138 *Rozavlea.* Tracing: October 2001.



The graphic signs as pictographs. The most difficult to designate graphic signs resemble directly neither a known letter nor a number. Fortunately, these signs are not unique in this region. An interesting comparison can be made with the decorative motifs from the local art of needlework where more research has been done. The talented local countrywomen have preserved not only some old motifs (*trăsuri*) but also their particular significations. For instance the signs "⁓" and "⌞" from the tower of Rozavlea (**138**) are named the "*water wave*" (*unda apei*) and respectively the "*elbow*" (*cotuţ*).[84] Most of the graphic signs, recorded on the towers in Rozavlea, Apşa din Jos, Sălişte a de Sus II Buleni, Poienile Izei, Deseşti and others, resemble more or less the motifs from the folk costumes, carpets or other local artefacts suggesting a common collection of signs for all the local rural artisans. This situation is not specific only for Maramureş. Extensive research, covering the entire Carpathian-Balkan area, already proved a high resemblance between the professional signs used by rural craftsmen of various trades, as needlework, masonry, raftering, pottery, iron work and so on.[85]

The potential of the graphic signs. Within the limits of the carpentry, as a trade, there are clear indications from other parts of former Hungary[86] and present Poland[87] that the graphical signs, both as numerals and symbols, circulated among the carpenters from the entire North Carpathian region and further. However, the material available from the surrounding regions is too limited in comparison with the large number of extant old wooden constructions. Hopefully, in the future, the documentation and inventory of assembly marks would extend and become available not only from towers but also from roofs and transferred wooden constructions

A future inventory of the construction marks in Northern Carpathians may also open new perspectives in several unanswered questions regarding the origins and the use of professional signs, at least for this part of the continent.

Certainly, one of the most exciting questions is whether or not some of these graphic signs originate from one or several ancient runiform scripts. Thus far, the

[84] Dogaru 1984, 143.
[85] Romulus Vulcănescu, "Les signes juridiques dans la région carpato-balcanique", *Revue des Études Sud-Est Europeénes*, II, 1-2, 17-69, Bucharest 1964.
[86] Sisa 2001, 20, 149-150, 168, 172, 221 and 228.
[87] Brykowski 1981, 104-105, ill 12-14; Brykowski and Ruszczyk 1993, 78, ill 156/51.

graphic signs documented on the wooden churches from Maramureş seem to neither confirm nor dismiss an eventual link. However, it is possible that the artisans in wood, including the carpenters, might have been some of the last ones using the runiform writing since this script was mainly mentioned to have been notched in wood.[88] In this context I wish to draw attention upon a fragmentary but remarkable inscription on the portal of the church from Suciu de Sus (**139**),[89] in the neighbouring region of Lăpuş, near the limits of Maramureş, which displays a text in a possibly ancient runiform alphabet. If the letters were indeed written with ancient runiform letters and not some altered Cyrillic letters there is a probability that even the similar assembly marks in Maramureş might have been carved as proper runiform letters or derived from them. More research in this problematic subject is highly necessary; and without any doubt it would be rewarding.

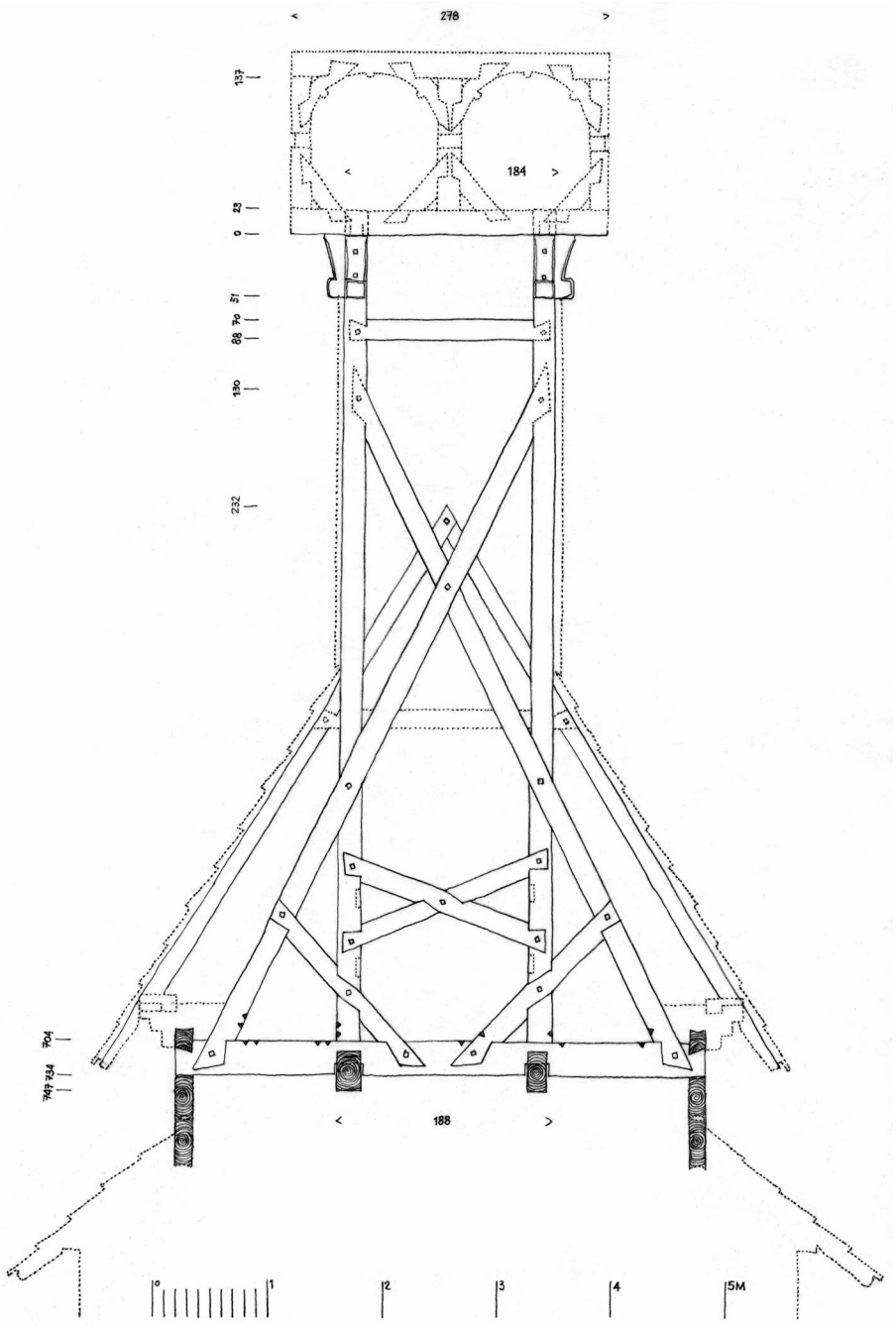
139 *Suciu de Sus*. The entrance retains only the lintel from the formal portal with the unusual writing. The wooden church stands since 1883 in Rogoz and is known as the Saint Paraskeva church. Photo: June 1993.

Finally, no matter what meanings the graphic signs had on the tower framings, the identity of their authors could not have been much different from the handy needlewomen or joiners with whom they shared the same cultural values. Moreover, most of the graphic signs appear to be combined with Cyrillic ones (**135**). In conclusion, the overwhelming number of church carpenters, both from those notching with Cyrillic and graphic signs, seems to have come from this region, most likely from among the rural carpenters but further specialized in church building.

[88] András Róna-Tas, Hungarians and Europe in the early Middle Ages, 437-444, Budapest 1999.

[89] The church was transferred to Rogoz in 1883 and with that occasion the original door jambs were replaced, reducing the unusual inscription to the lintel above. Bogdana Tarnavschi, "Biserici de lemn din Ţara Lăpuşului şi din Ţara Chioarului", *Monumente istorice şi de artă religioasă din Arhiepiscopia Vadului, Feleacului şi Clujului*, 146-147, Cluj 1982.

140 *Sălişte a de Sus faţă*. The church carpenter built this tower frame with few cross braces and a simple numbered notation of the order in which the sides of the tower should be assembled. Scale drawing of the western side: September 2001.



Reading the moves

The assembly marks of some towers give us a unique opportunity to learn about the working process with these elaborate structures. The various steps of this process are indicated by the succession of numbers or letters carved near the joints of the tower. I assume, though, the marks recorded the order in which the pieces were cut with the intention to assemble them in the same succession. Accordingly, no matter how obvious or hidden are their meanings for us today they might have always had a sense and an order in the mind of the carpenter.

The first step we can distinguish is the order in which the four faces of the neck were prepared. The work started with one of the faces continuing with the next ones in a right to left and sunwise succession. This pattern is evident in Budeşti Josani, Sălişte a de Sus I faţă (**140**), Bârsana Monastery, Vişeu de Jos, Sat Şugătag (**141**) and Cuhea (**131**). With the remarkable exception of the tower from Vişeu de Jos, the first face was stepped over one of the two upper transoms of the

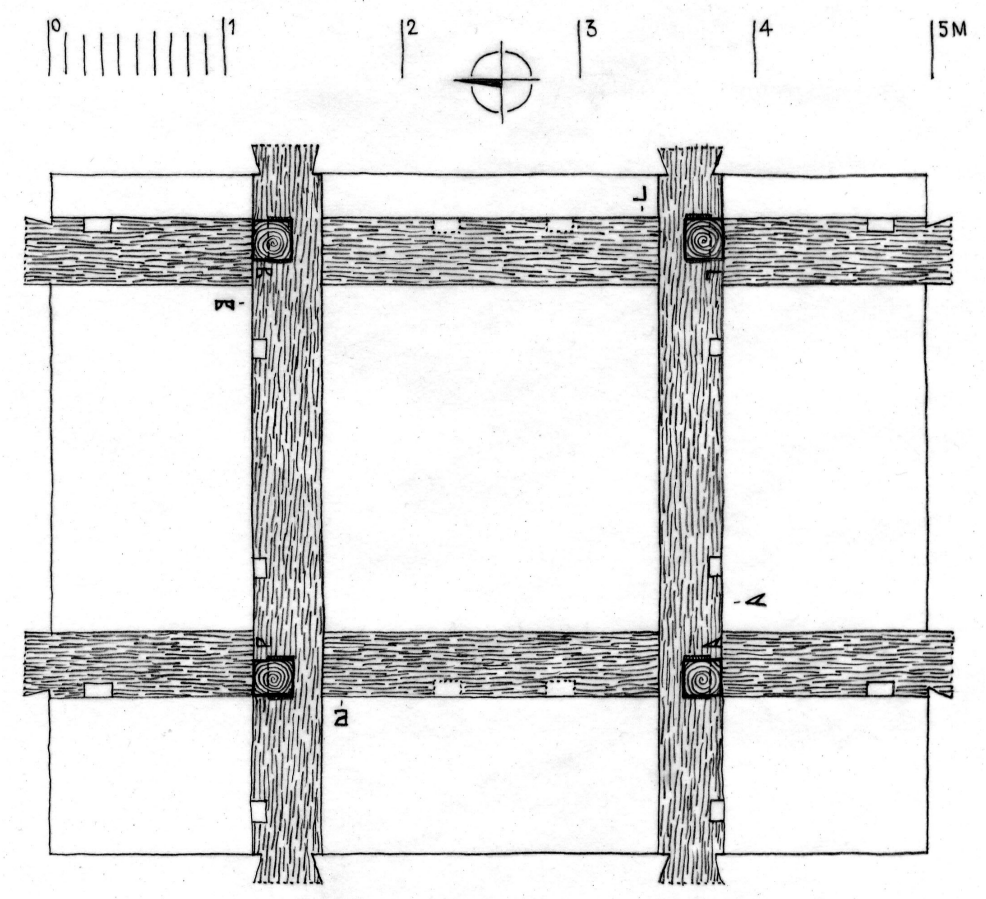
base. A singular sequence displays the tower from Şieu, where the carpenter gives the impression to have worked with the opposite faces in a mental cross, firstly with the southern one (**а**), secondly with the northern one (**б**), then with the eastern (**в**) and finally with the western one (**г**). In this structure the supplementary numbers on the uprights seem to indicate the carpenter worked with the joints from right to left as in the sunwise ones.

The vertical numbering of the joints on the uprights further indicates the cross braces and the rails were positioned in between each pair of uprights starting with the lower ones and continuing upwards. This is obvious in Hărniceşti, Sârbi Josani, Vişeu de Jos, Sat Şugatag (**113**), Rozavlea, Cuhea and Călineşti Susani.

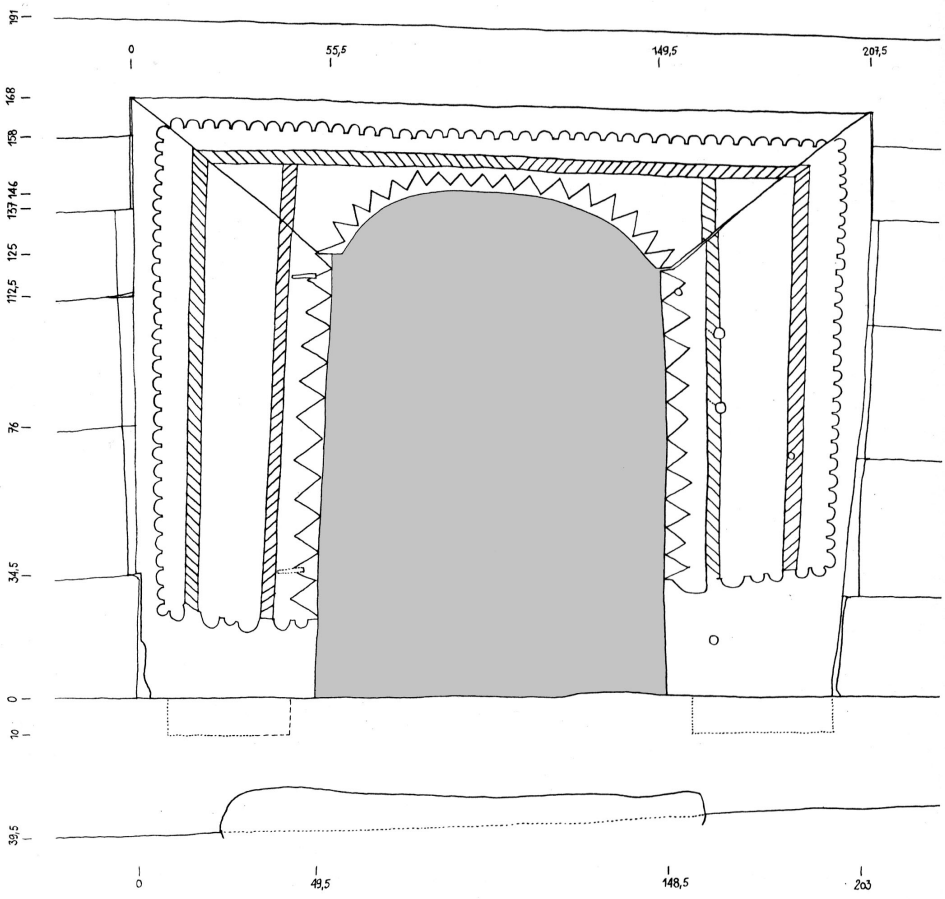
The work with the gallery and the spire followed the same pattern as the neck. The posts, the angle ties and the spire rafters were partly or entirely numbered in a sunwise move in Vişeu de Jos, Bârsana Monastery, Dragomireşti, Cuhea (**131**), Deseşti and so on.

In conclusion, the main consecutive moves in almost all readable tower framings were from right to left, sunwise and upwards. These simple principles must have helped the church carpenters to organize their work and make it as effective as comprehensible for all those assisting them.

The character of the assembly marks, their positioning and combinations, are personal imprints of every skilful and experienced church carpenter. When these are complemented with other formal and technical features, their itineraries from one work to another can be in some cases for the first time mapped without hesitation. But before following on the footsteps of some representative local church carpenters we need to deal with one of the most impressive side of their profession: the artistic expression.



141 *Sat Şugătag.* The base of the tower and the assembly marks used to distinguish the pieces from each side. Scale drawing: October 2001.



142 *Darva* (*Kolodne*). Although we lack a firm dating this seem to be, however, one of the oldest portals preserved in Maramureş. Scale drawing: October 2000.

2.2.3 The art of carving

The majority of the wooden churches of Maramureş are unmistakably dominated by an austere appearance. In the economy of these buildings there are a few places where the church carpenters insisted more than the strict necessity required. However, on the background of the severe mass these places seem to be well chosen to soften the visual contact lifting at the same time the whole above the ordinary. In many churches one or two of these places are further elaborated to achieve a stronger effect unveiling some experienced artists in wood behind. Despite their limited occurrence these details are clear evidences of the carpenters' sensibility for beauty.

Nowhere else the art of the church carpenters was better revealed than on the portals of a church (**142**). The worshipers entered the sacred room through the portal and therefore the most ambitious ones entrusted the master carpenter to make it representative. This was the opportunity the church carpenter used to exhibit the highest level of his craftsmanship: the artist (**143**). Obviously he was neither allowed nor was it in his intention to alter the sense of the house of worship there. On the contrary, he devoted his imagination and skilfulness to underline it. Accordingly, some of the most remarkable portals in Maramureş give the impression of humble devotions and nevertheless of personal marks of the master carpenters. Not by accident the few known signatures of church carpenters were recorded on them.

The degree of decoration and the motifs varied from place to place and from portal to portal. In the more elaborated compositions, they built an iconography of a mixed mythological and Christian content. In many places, however, the portals were simply chamfered around the aperture. The ornamentation of the portals was

143 *Breb*. The portal of the new church from Breb was designed by the former parish priest Mircea Antal and cut by the local wood carver Pop Pătru *Niții*. Photo from his workshop: April 1994.

for the most part made in a bas-relief technique, with figures slightly carved from the plain surface of the jambs and the lintel above (**148**). At a closer look we can sometimes discover the traces from the straight and curved working lines, testifying in details about the intricate geometry the carpenter imagined behind his elaborated designs. Following these traces on the entrance portal from Sârbi Susani (1639), for example, it is possible to learn about the carpenter's practical use of a compass, a square, a sharp iron tool and nevertheless a measuring device since the sizes of the figures don't appear to be accidental. If the focus is shifted from the figurative patterns to the small cuts, it is possible to find also traces from the carpenter's work with an axe, eventually a saw and evidently various chisels, mallets and knives. In some later portals, like in Călineşti Susani (1784) and Steblivka (1797), the carpenters might have also used templates for the rich floral patterns and planes at the edges.

The portals were not the exclusive parts where the carpenters could express their artistic nature. The beautifully decorated window frames from Sârbi Susani (**72**) and Oleksandrivka (**78**), the astonishing drawing on the arch band under the vault in Breb (**89**) and the gallery of the tower from the same church (**129**) were already remarked in this work for their exceptional value.

In addition to these, the spring of the vault, the median wall timbers around the church, the porch galleries, the consoles or the altar foot could offer the church carpenters alternative places to manifest their art. It is, though, important to notice that, in these places, the carpenter cut deep in the mass of the wood unveiling a rather three-dimensional attitude towards the ornament, unlike in the earlier ones.

144 *Ieud Deal*. The austere appearance of this church is softened by the sculptural treatment of the inner consoles, a single but efficient decorative element, increasing the sense of depth in the nave. Photo: July 1997.

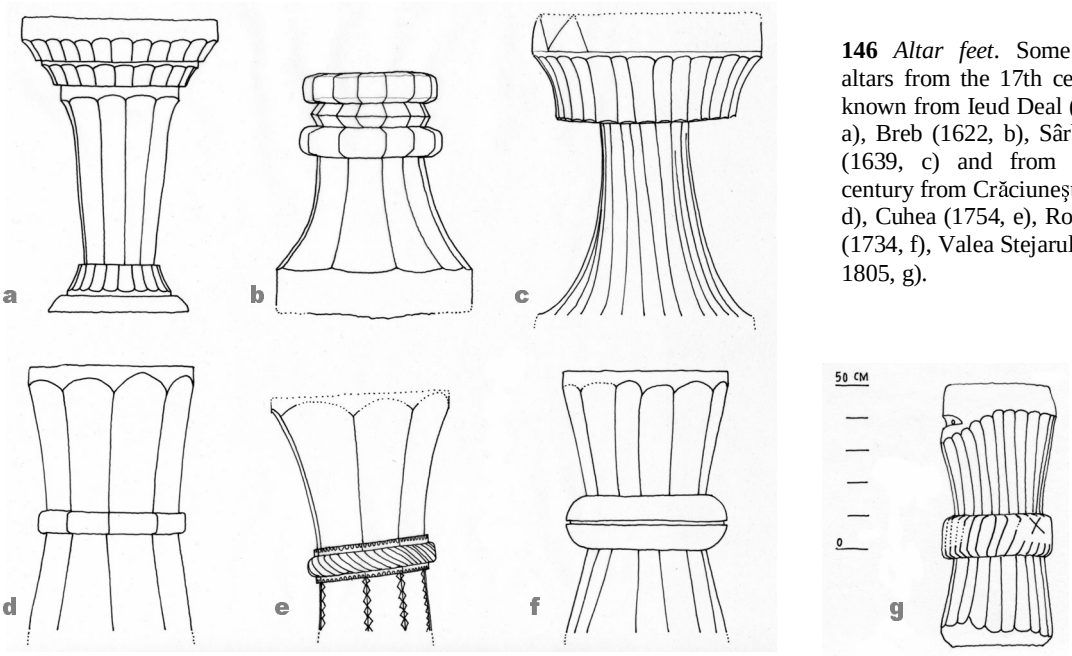
145 *Bârsana*. Medallion marking the moulding on the northern façade, carved from the wall beam. Photo: August 1997.

One of the most distinctive decorative features was the mouldings rope carved from the median wall timbers all around the church. This feature prided many of the churches from the Cosău district, a district where the oak forests provided excellent material for elaborated decorations. Although the oak forests continued downstream in the Tisa Valley the most accentuated decorations can be mainly found in the wooden churches from this small district.

Some well brought into relief median moulding ropes were carved in Sârbi Susani, Sârbi Josani, Sat Şugătag and unexpectedly outside the Cosău district, further to the south, in Vişeu de Jos and Cuhea. In Bârsana Monastery the lateral sides of the church were provided with a similar moulding interrupted by round medallions (**145**). A more sophisticated moulding with numerous medallions was said to have adorned the vanished church from Berbeşti (1758) inspiring later the design of the wooden crosses in the cemetery around.[90] From this church survived a fragmentary sill adorned with a filigree decoration along the outer edge forming in the past a socle all around the church. This kind of careful treatment of the socle also retained the churches from Hărniceşti (1679) and Deseşti (1780). A singular but noteworthy late church with a slightly carved median decoration stands in Imshady (1840), in Verkhovyna, linking it in some extent to the old tradition in the central and southern parts. Otherwise, the wooden churches from Verkhovyna remark themselves through very limited decorations. In fact, the outer median decorations are extremely rare north and west of Maramureş, whereas to the south and east, in Transylvania and Moldavia, they are quite familiar.

Inside many churches we can find linear relief decorations of various kinds, especially underlining the spring of the vault or the brakes in the lateral walls. Two fragmentary ornamented beams from the vanished church of Botiza (c 1594) were originally located in those two essential places. Their plain effect inside the church room can be witnessed in Ieud Deal, where the decorative transition from the lateral walls to the vault was sculpturally treated with the apparent purpose to give depth to the main room (**144**). About the same effect might have been intended even with the fluted massive beams closing the brakes in the lateral walls. Similar decorative patterns were designed in Onceşti, Budeşti Josani and Şieu, while in

[90] Baboş 2000,140-141.



146 *Altar feet*. Some wooden altars from the 17th century are known from Ieud Deal (1611-21, a), Breb (1622, b), Sârbi Susani (1639, c) and from the 18th century from Crăciuneşti (1736?, d), Cuhea (1754, e), Rona de Jos (1734, f), Valea Stejarului (1773-1805, g).

Sârbi Susani, Sârbi Josani, Apşa de Mijloc Josani, Rozavlea and Sălişte a de Sus Buleni we can record some different approaches.

Other relief adornments were usually carved from the posts of the porch, of the openings to the nave or from the consoles projecting out of the walls. These adornments were mainly developed in the 18th century and excelled in the northern district of Verkhovyna.

Whenever a stone altar table was too expensive for the founders, the church carpenter was asked to carve a modest but charming wooden altar table (**146**). The oldest known wooden altar tables were cut from a single massive trunk with the symbolical shape of a chalice, reminding of the Holy Grail and the Last Supper, as they survived in Ieud Deal (1611-21), Breb (1622) and Sârbi Susani (1639). Later, in the 18th century these wooden altar tables resembled the foot of a chalice with a ring in the middle, like those from Rona de Jos (1734), Cuhea (1754) and Valea Stejarului (1773-1805). The fashion radically changed beginning with the 19th century, when the altar tables begun to be made by skilful joiners with a form symbolizing the tomb of the Christ, as we can see in the works of Ioan Plohod from Bârsana Jbâr (1806, former Bârsana Monastery), Văleni (1807) or Rozavlea (1825). In all these three types of altar tables, however, there was a common reference to the Eucharist and the Holy Communion.[91]

Inside the churches, the places of greatest importance and attraction were the iconostasis and the altar table. The development of the iconostasis as a second decorative structure in front of the doors to the sanctuary is distinguishable in Maramureş mainly beginning with the middle of the 18th century. Their highly refined adornments, however, were usually left to other craftsmen, like joiners and icon painters. Among the wonderful works of art hanged on an iconostasis the ones that always signalled the utmost splendour were the Royal Doors in the middle (**147**).

With the noteworthy exception of Francis Tek and Ioan Plohod there are no other church carpenters known who were skilled in carving and painting the portable icons or the necessary church furniture. The church carpenters were probably well aware they had to accomplish in the first hand a spacious and

[91] Branişte 1993, 394-395.

147 *Strâmtura*. These Royal Doors are dated from 1776 and seem to come from the workshop of the Plohod family in Dragomireşti. Most remarkable is the head of the bishop of Mukachevo (probably Andrej Bacsinszky) with a mitre on his head and the cross above. The mitre with a cross continued to top the Royal Doors thereafter and seem to be an echo from the canonical erection of the Mukachevo Eparchy in 1771. The laying figures at the bottom are indicated as the prophet Isaiah and King David. In the medallions there are painted the four evangelists and Virgin Mary receiving the blessing from Archangel Gabriel. The two seraphs watch over the wine stocks symbolising the Christ. Photo: March 1995.

functional building. Their artistic involvement was therefore rather limited but nevertheless important to hand over to the community a house of worship they could be proud of. Of all the parts they usually insisted on, the portal was almost everywhere the highest reference of their artistic engagement and most often decisive to follow them from one place to another.

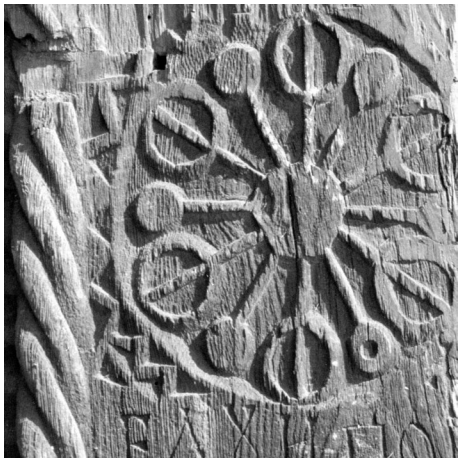
We can not avoid comparing again the local church carpenter with a needlewoman who carefully embroidered the sleeves and the collar of a shirt. Although the strips of decoration were strictly limited around the openings of the simple but practical cloth, a remarkable composition of motifs was concentrated in them to endow the owner with protection, status and grace, all at the same time. Thus, in the work of both the church carpenter and the needlewoman we discover the same traditional way of creating beautiful things.

To decorate in Maramureş (*a împchistri*) was a highly respected art among the craftsmen of various trades. The most skilful needlewomen, for instance, were commonly named "decorators" (*împchistritoare*).[92] Maybe for the same reason the carpenter Wenzel signed as *post decorator* on the upper porch from Fereşti instead of master carpenter on the traditional portal.

Although the decorative value of the compositions carved on the portals or elsewhere is undeniable, their prime meaning might have been to communicate with the worshipers, who must have been able to read and understand them in that case. The symbolic or writing meaning of the decorative motifs was actually captured in a folk poem recorded at the end of the 19th century:

"…On the handle of the glass
Written is the ray of the sun,
On the bottom of the glass
Written is the ear of the corn
And the name of the Lord,
From where she holds it
Written are the moon and the light…"[93]

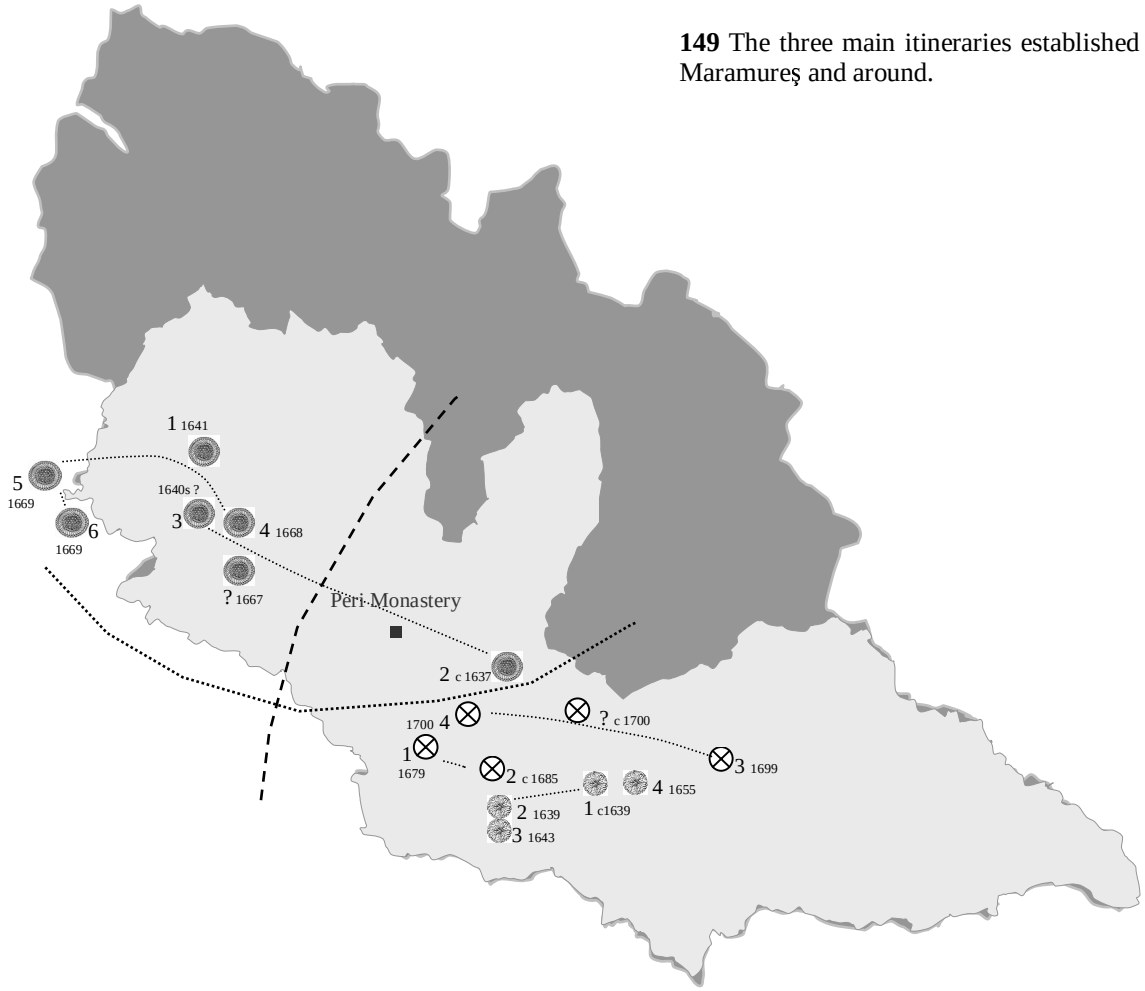
Unfortunately, the comprehensive message of the carved compositions was lost in the course of time and the individual signs let us only to imagine what the craftsmen wanted to record.[94] A careful reading complemented with knowledge of local folklore and beliefs may, however, enable us recover sometimes partly sometimes almost entirely the carpenter's lost messages.



148 *Budeşti Josani*. Detail from the portal of the entrance. The rosette motive was cut in a bas-relief technique while the lateral moulding in relief from the same piece of jamb. Photo: June 1999.

[92] Papahagi 1925, XXI-XXII.
[93] IAF, Răspunsurile la chestionarele lui Nicolae Densuşeanu, MS. 4554, II Transilvania şi Banat, 495-502 Tit Bud, ad. 38, 1895.
[94] Ştefănescu 1968, 36.

149 The three main itineraries established in Maramureş and around.



1st itinerary 1637-1669: 1 Nyzhnie Selyshche, 2 Rona de Jos, 3 Sokyrnytsia, 4 Krainykovo, 5 Velyka Kopania, 6 Novoselytsia.

2nd itinerary 1639-1655: 1 Slătioara, 2 Sârbi Susani, 3 Budeşti Josani, 4 Strâmtura.

3rd itinerary 1679-1700: 1 Hărniceşti, 2 Sârbi Josani, 3 Vişeu de Jos, 4 Sat Şugătag.

..... probable south-eastern limits of the *northern family school of church carpenters*

– – – – – – probable north-western limits of the *southern family school of church carpenters*

2.3 On the trail of the church carpenters

On the basis of an intimate knowledge of the wooden churches and their various distinctive features I can at this stage identify three long itineraries and some shorter ones followed by some of the most representative individual masters or crews of church carpenters active in Maramureş during the 17th and 18th centuries.

The three long itineraries are in the centre of my attention in this chapter, because they enable me to link churches from various places and from different periods (**149**). Within these complex itineraries, I would look in the first hand for the surviving threads from some family schools and in the second hand for the individual church carpenters. A family school actually corresponds with one or eventually several selected itineraries, where all the potentially related church carpenters would be gathered. The individual church carpenters would be tracked in their movement from one place to another with the intention to learn more about them in general lines rather than particular.

The shorter itineraries are of secondary importance for the present research, and therefore would be limitedly treated. In the first hand they illustrate the activity of numerous other experienced itinerant church carpenters in the region, while on the other hand open the churches concerned to further comparative studies. More research focused on them may bring to light new aspects regarding the professional life of the local church carpenters.

Obviously, there are numerous wooden churches apparently little connected to the itineraries established here, which indicate the activity of many other itinerant church carpenters in Maramureş. However, it is not my intention to be exhaustive, although the authors of the churches from Breb, Cuhea and others would have certainly deserved at least the same attention as the other ones.

In my attempt to reconstitute the activity of some church carpenters and some shifts among them from their traceable itineraries, the most unveiling parts are those in which they could be creative or work after their own knowledge and preferences. Here we can include all the decorative parts, the assembly marks, the proportions, and the particular technical solutions. But, more than any of these features, the design of the entrance portal was the guiding element in recognizing and tracing their works.

As already emphasised, the design of the portal can be considered the very mark of a church carpenter, comparable with the sign of a potter on his vessel, though on a different scale. There are, however, many churches without any accentuated decoration on their entrance portals. How can this be explained? We need to keep in mind that the founders, in their position as customers, decided alone if their churches should be adorned or not; and this decision might have had an economical component, too. But, whenever there were enough resources and clear ambitions to accentuate the entrance, the church carpenters could create from simple to intricate compositions in their own personal way. Accordingly, the signature function of the portal design was additional, but nevertheless important for the church carpenter. This must be the main reason why each church carpenter used personal patterns by which we can recognize him from place to place. For the church carpenters, the portal designs seem to have been real professional trade marks that were not allowed to be copied by others. Their transfer from one generation to another seemingly occurred only through inheritance, but every time with some distinct modifications.

Finally, the main questions I ask these itineraries are: Who were the laborious church carpenters or the families of successive itinerant church carpenters? Where did they come from? How connected were they? What can we learn about them from their own works? And what was their contribution to the particular character of the local churches?

150 *Rona de Jos*. The wooden church from Rona de Jos distinguished itself in Southern Maramureş and was nicknamed the church "*with eyes*". In fact it was built by a church carpenter from the Alch family school and it is closely related with the standing wooden churches around Hust, among which it is the oldest one. Photo from the Dolini Hill, where the logs were said to be felled, October 2000.

2.3.1 The first itinerary

1 **Nyzhnie Selyshche** (1641), 2 **Rona de Jos** (c. 1637), 3 **Sokyrnytsia**, 4 **Krainykovo** (1666-8), 5 **Velyka Kopania** (1669), 6 **Novoselytsia** (1669).

The Alch family from Nyzhnie Selyshche

The wooden churches from the first itinerary offer a unique chance to identify a family of church carpenters along 3 generations and localize them in their home village. The numerous works in the villages around Hust and especially the complete signature of Marko Alch on its work in Velyka Kopania help us to identify these church carpenters with the serf family Alch in Nyzhnie Selyshche, only about 13 km North-East from Hust, along the Hustets River.

It is necessary to remind here that the written sources recorded in the village of Nyzhnie Selyshche in 1605 one serf named Gregorius Ach, in 1715 Elias, Franciscus, Jacobus, Lucas, Petrus and Stephanus Alcs, whereas in 1720 even Andreas and Demetrius Acs.[95] Thus, the church carpenter Marko Alch and his predecessors seem to have been some of the missing links in the chain of generations of this family. The use of the professional name Alch (*Carpenter*) is out of the ordinary since, although there were many rural carpenters by necessity active in the region, there are very few known by this surname. Accordingly, this family could have early enjoyed a special status within the profession.

Their residence in Nyzhnie Selyshche was fortunate. Living only about one hour riding outside the town of Hust, the administrators of the royal domain, magnates, landowners and leaders of the Eastern communities from all around could easily entrust them to build or repair the necessary parish wooden churches. According to local tradition, even the distant wooden church from Rona de Jos might have been built at the request of a Romanian noble who moved there from a village nearer Hust.

The Alch masters had to shape the traditional church room in a time of slow and irreversible changes. The oldest one, from Rona de Jos (**150**), is known as "*the church with eyes*"[96] and the later ones from Sokyrnytsia, Krainykovo and Velyka Kopania were built very similar. The particular character of these churches comes from the walled antechurch or exonarthex sheltering the entrance, in which there were provided large arched openings, like the eyes with their eyelashes (**156-157**).[97] The correlation with the human eyes came not only from their suggestive shape but also from the fact that in Maramureş, like in many other parts of Europe, a window was usually named *eye* (*ochi*). The precise function of the antechurch or the similar porch is unclear but it suggests some rituals were moved outside the church room to a space in between the enclosed and the open. Whatever role the *eyes* piercing the antechurch played for the outer appearance of these churches, the most unexpected *eyes* were cut in the wall between women and men (**164**), a place traditionally left *blind* around the necessary door to the nave. This was not a simple fashion but a significant brake in the traditional isolation of the women in the body of the church, which by all appearances began in some of these churches. These new features came from internal necessities appeared in the local Orthodox communities before and during the chronology of the first itinerary.

[95] Bélay 1943, 195.
[96] Inf. Marina 1998.
[97] Baboş 2000, 76-83.

151 *Nyzhnie Selyshche* (*Săliştea de Jos*). The church was by all probabilities erected by the family of church carpenters *Alch* in their home parish in 1641. The picture was made before its transfer in 1936 to Blansko, Czech Republic, where it was enlarged to take in a Hussite congregation. Photo held inside the church.

The old master

152 *Nyzhnie Selyshche*. If the western porch with a double gallery of posts is original it is the oldest known one of this type from Maramureş. Photo from Blansko, Czech Republic, April 1997.

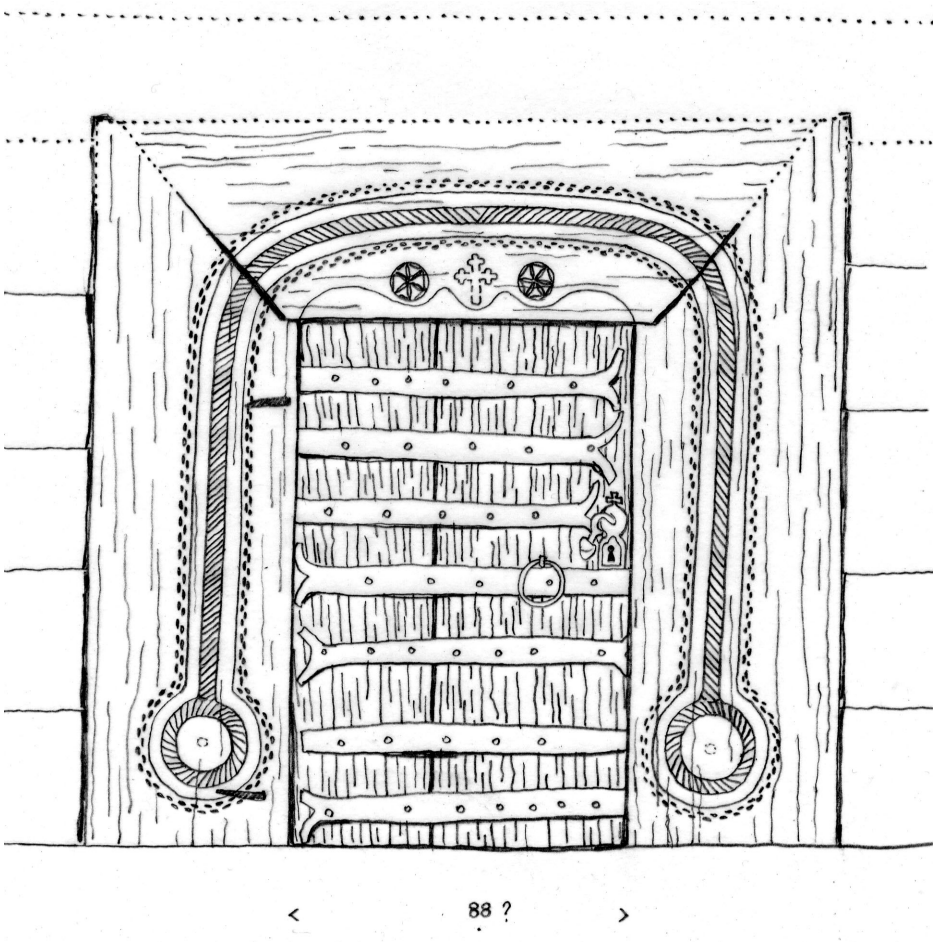
Among all the wooden churches built by the church carpenters here or there, those built in their own parishes must have motivated them to perform at their very best. This appears to be the case in Nyzhnie Selyshche. Here, the parish wooden church was consecrated in "ροκ Вѣж йХдИй мца юл кѳ", i.e. 29 July 1641, according to the inscription from the second porch. Considering the technical standards, the spacious rooms and the ambitious elevation, this church was an excellent achievement.

In the present, the church stands in Blansko, Czech Republic, were it was transferred in 1936. With that occasion, the fabric was extended, the inner walls were demolished and the walls were entirely clothed by shingles outside and by boards inside. For these reasons I could mainly analyse it from some old pictures (**151**).[98]

The church was built with plain, straight walls and flush covert joints. The walls were pierced by a few windows of which the double one in between the eaves, with a frame around, should be especially noticed. Another typical detail is the rounded shape of the serrated consoles supporting the eaves purlins (**154**).

From outside, the most emphasised and characteristic parts are the elevated tower and the entrance. The tower was powerfully built with the basement laid above both the narthex and the porch. At the western front its presence was strengthened by omitting the last pair of rafters in front of it. Upwards the bell

[98] Zapletal 1981, ill. 60-63. Some valuable pictures are in the archive of the present Hussite parish.



153 *Nyzhnie Selyshche.* The portal of the entrance after a photo from 1925 by Florian Zapletal (1982, 63). It is uncertain if it was removed or preserved after the transfer to Blansko. In the later case it maybe stands in the original place but covered by the fragments from the inner one with the inscription.

chamber was distinguished by its slightly jetted structure (**151**). Also remarkably emphasised it is the slender spire at the top. Under the mighty tower, the double porch of posts strengthened by angle ties forms an attractive gallery and a useful shelter in front of the entrance.

The entrance impresses through the portal's decoration and the massive ironwork on the leaf of the door. Despite the low quality of the old pictures we can still observe the massive portal, where the lintel was mounted flaring upwards (**153**). Its decoration is also distinguishable and it basically presents a moulding rope (carved deep from the surface) that goes round the aperture and ends on both lower sides in a circle. All around this moulding seems to have been cut a pattern resembling drops of rain. Reading the rope as a snake binding together and surrounding two moon discs and adding the presence of the water, these elements build an iconography seeking fertility. Another symbolically important part was concentrated above the aperture, where a slightly carved accolade underlines a cross in the middle and two small rosettes at sides. Some rosettes were cut on the second portal, too, and there the small oval drops of rain are more visible.[99]

The church from Nyzhnie Selyshche, although it might have been built after the church from Rona de Jos, seems to have been made by a different carpenter, possibly an older generation. This is mainly stressed by the two motives in the composition of the portal, one ample indicating a common tradition with the masters from the south and one smaller, which appears like an embryo for the future identity mark of the Alch masters.

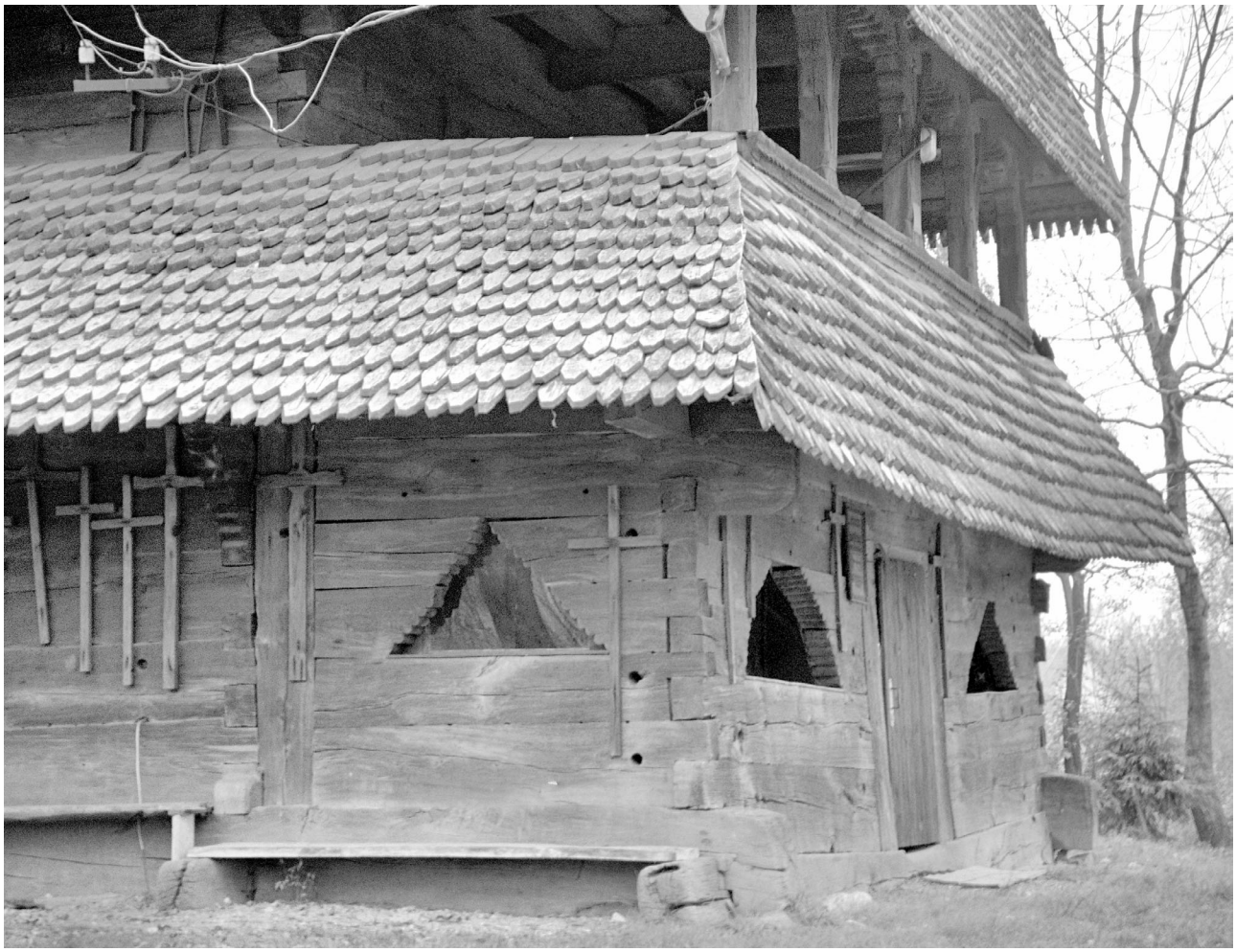
154 *Nyzhnie Selyshche.* The serrated consoles with slightly rounded edges were specific for the oldest churches of this itinerary. Photo from Blansko, Czech Republic: April 1997.

[99] Probably because of the inscription, this portal was partly saved in front of the old entrance.

155 *Rona de Jos*. Due to the addition of a walled antechurch the access became accentuated by a succession of three massive portals. Photo: October 2000.

It is not excluded that two generations worked together, one elder, more experienced, carving the mark of craftsmanship on the portal and the other one responsible for the fabric in general. And, indeed, the log fabric almost entirely resembles those from the following wooden churches, in Rona de Jos and Sokyrnytsia, particularly the square sanctuary, the double window in between the eaves, the covert joints, the joining design of the portal's pieces and even the rounded shape of the serrated consoles. However, the light double porch sheltering the entrance in Nyzhnie Selyshche is completely different from the additional walled antechurch with loggia above at the other churches.

156 *Rona de Jos*. The "*eyes*" of the antechurch. Photo: October 2000.

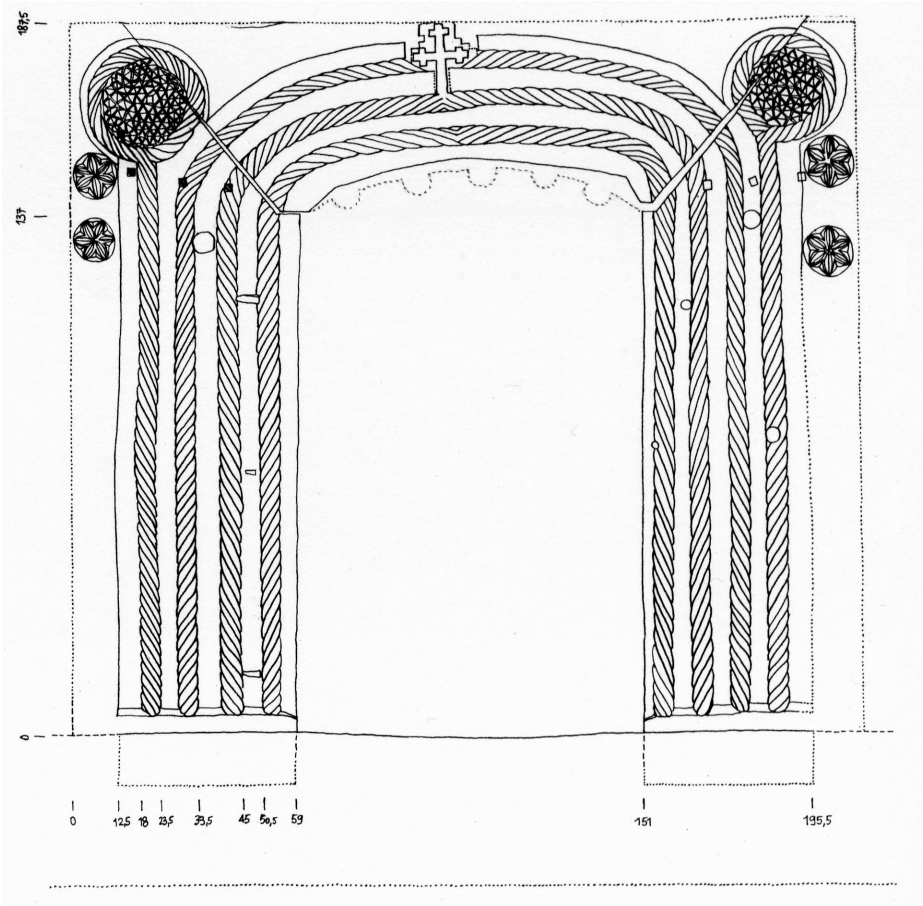


157 *Sokyrnytsia*. The porch on two levels, an open loggia above and a massive walled antechurch at the level of the entrance. Photo: October 2000.

The master of the oldest known churches with eyes

The two oldest churches with *eyes*, from Rona de Jos and Sokyrnytsia, resemble each other in so many details that it seems most probably they were built by the same master carpenter. From the plan with an attached walled antechurch (**76**, **157**) and a rectangular sanctuary, to the choir loft and the transom beam inside the nave, and from the indented round cuts in the consoles, galleries, choir parapet, door apertures and windows to the narrowing frame of the tower, all signal the same mind behind. This might appear surprising, since the distance from Selyshche, the home village of the church carpenters, to Rona de Jos is quite considerable, about 70 km, which at that time must have meant more than one day of travel, but it clearly illustrates how far the church carpenters could reach along their itineraries. Sokyrnytsia, on the other hand, was situated only about 13 km south from Selyshche.

The church from Rona de Jos was dendrochronologically dated from about 1634-44. A bell hanging in the tower eventually helps us to more closely date the entire construction around 1637 (**124**). The second church is antedated by an inscription from 1707 on the northern wall, recording the death of Maria Prodia, a probable church benefactor. The church is, though, much older and the great resemblance with the church from Rona de Jos approximates its construction in 1640s, or, more surely, sometime in the second quarter of the 17th century. However, the motive on the portal from Sokyrnytsia in comparison with that from



158 *Sokyrnytsia*. The second portal, of the proper entrance. Scale drawing 1:20, 1998.

Nyzhnie Selyshche tends rather to indicate a late engagement in Sokyrnytsia, maybe toward the end of that quarter.

Considering the numerous misuses in the past century, the two churches are well preserved, only a few of their characteristic features were altered during this period. Unfortunately, in both churches the wall between women and men was transformed so much that the existence of inner *eyes* remains only hypothetical.

159 *Sokyrnytsia*. The church carpenter liked to round off the serrated profile of the consoles. The working lines are still traceable on one of them. Tracing at the scale 1:4, July 1998.

The three successive entrance portals are more or less preserved in both churches (**155**). Curiously enough, the second portal from Rona de Jos was not adorned, and thus the most important mark of the church carpenter is missing. The aperture is, though, arched and the underside of the lintel indented with 5 round cuts resembling pearls on a necklace. In Sokyrnytsia, instead, the second portal, of the entrance in the proper church, is richly adorned, displaying an original composition of a mature church carpenter (**158**). The aperture here is also arched but the cuts in the underside of the lintel suggest the indented pearls were roughly removed. The single detail at the entrance that still reminds of the church from Rona de Jos is the joining system of the jambs with the lintel above.

The composition of the portal from Sokyrnytsia is dominated by three moulding ropes surrounding the aperture and suggesting the protective presence of the Trinity. At sides there are two moulding ropes ended in the upper corners with possibly flower rosettes. In addition to these, there is a pair of smaller rosettes on lateral edges, probably also symbolizing flowers. The centre of this symmetrical composition is a cross rising from the middle rope, the sign under which all the parishioners enter or go out of the sacred room. The composition reminds of the portal from Nyzhnie Selyshche, yet the focus shifted to the cross in the upper part, due to the new position of the large side discs or rosettes.

Both the middle church from Rona and the large one from Sokyrnytsia unveil a confident and experienced master carpenter. It seems to me that he strived to achieve as fine plane walls and flush corners as he could to underline the status of the building as a whole. The joints were laboriously thought leaving no significant maintenance problems afterwards. The resistance of the log structure from Sokyrnytsia was proved once by a lifting, maybe during the replacement of the sills in 1747, an event from which the numerous holes in the wall timbers all around the building originate. The parishioners and the carpenters involved were probably confident in its resistance and therefore secured it with pillars and wooden nails instead of taking it into pieces. The wooden nails were thereafter cut plane with the wall remaining discernible, but the church was safe. The advanced state of decay that presently marks the church from Sokyrnytsia is mainly caused by the lack of maintenance of the roof covering during the last decades (**160**). Hopefully, the church will be saved for the next generations.

160 *Sokyrnytsia*. The tower was anchored over both the structure of the narthex and porch beneath. Photo: July 1998.

161 *Krainykovo.* The last standing wooden church in Maramureş built by the church carpenter Marko Alch. Photo of the northern side: October 2000.

Master Marko

In the row of churches with *eyes* from Maramureş, the church of Krainykovo is certainly one of its jewels. What is unknown about this outstanding wooden church is that there are another two similar ones outside Maramureş, from Novoselytsia and Velyka Kopania, in the neighbouring former county of Ugocea, built by the same church carpenter. Furthermore, between the master carpenter of these three wooden churches and those who built in Nyzhnie Selyshche, Rona de Jos and Sokyrnytsia three decades earlier, there is a strong relation, most probably a direct succession.

Dating the second part of the itinerary

These three later churches were built successively in the late 1660s and not far from each other, in the vicinity of the town and fortress of Hust. The region was just the previous years plagued by devastating Turkish raids, affecting many settlements around the fortress. Thus the erection of these churches might be seen on the background of the local effort to recover and rebuilt the scattered communities.

162 *Krainykovo*. In comparison to the earlier churches with eyes the antechurch was built here from the same wall beams as the rest of the church. Photo: April 2002.

The first known in this new series of churches was the parish church from the village of Krainykovo (**161**-**163**), only 10 km over the hills from Selyshche. This construction was dated by an inscription on the first portal, of the entrance to the antechurch: "рок Бож ѝχ҃ѕ мца ιюлιи ѕι сюсѧ ѝχ҃и". If we read the text appropriately it firstly records the date of 16 July 1666, when the works probably started, and secondly states that the construction was finished sometime in 1668. In the case my interpretation of the text is correct; we have the first record of how long it took a church carpenter to fabricate a middle church like this.

The second church was erected shortly thereafter in Velyka Kopania (**167**), about 26 km downstream the Tisa River.[100] The inscription on the tie beam inside the nave indicates the construction was finished in 4 March 1669. Accordingly, the carpenter could only work from the spring to the late autumn of 1668 and possibly also just before its consecration in March, which means the church from Krainykovo should have ended in the early spring of 1668.

[100] The church was firstly transferred to Kholmovets in 1857 and secondly in 1930 to Dobříkov, Czech Republic, where I actually documented it; Mayer 1986, 183.

163 *Krainykovo.* View inside the narrow antechurch. Photo: April 2002.

The wooden church from Novoselytsia, the third one in this series, was erected directly after that from Velyka Kopania, about 10 km away across the Tisa River. The construction was possibly completed sometime during the autumn of 1669, if we take into consideration the dating inscription inside the narthex.[101] Like in Velyka Kopania the church carpenter had the entire spring, summer and autumn to accomplish a much smaller church than the previous two.

As we can see, this tight succession can be accepted even if the church carpenter was present on one construction site at the time, but the relatively short distances between the villages also enabled him to commute sometimes and thus prepare his work in advance in collaboration with the parishioners and the local craftsmen. Granted that all these datings are well interpreted, we discover an intense engagement from our itinerant carpenter during a very short period of time.

This church carpenter would not have succeeded with his tough engagements without a long experience and routine in the construction process. Therefore, he must have built other churches before Krainykovo. For instance, in Bushtyno, only 8 km from Krainykovo, it was started the construction of a new church in 1663,[102] two years after the disastrous Turkish raid and three years before the erection of the church from Krainykovo. It is very likely that the new master Alch was involved in the construction of this earlier church, too.[103]

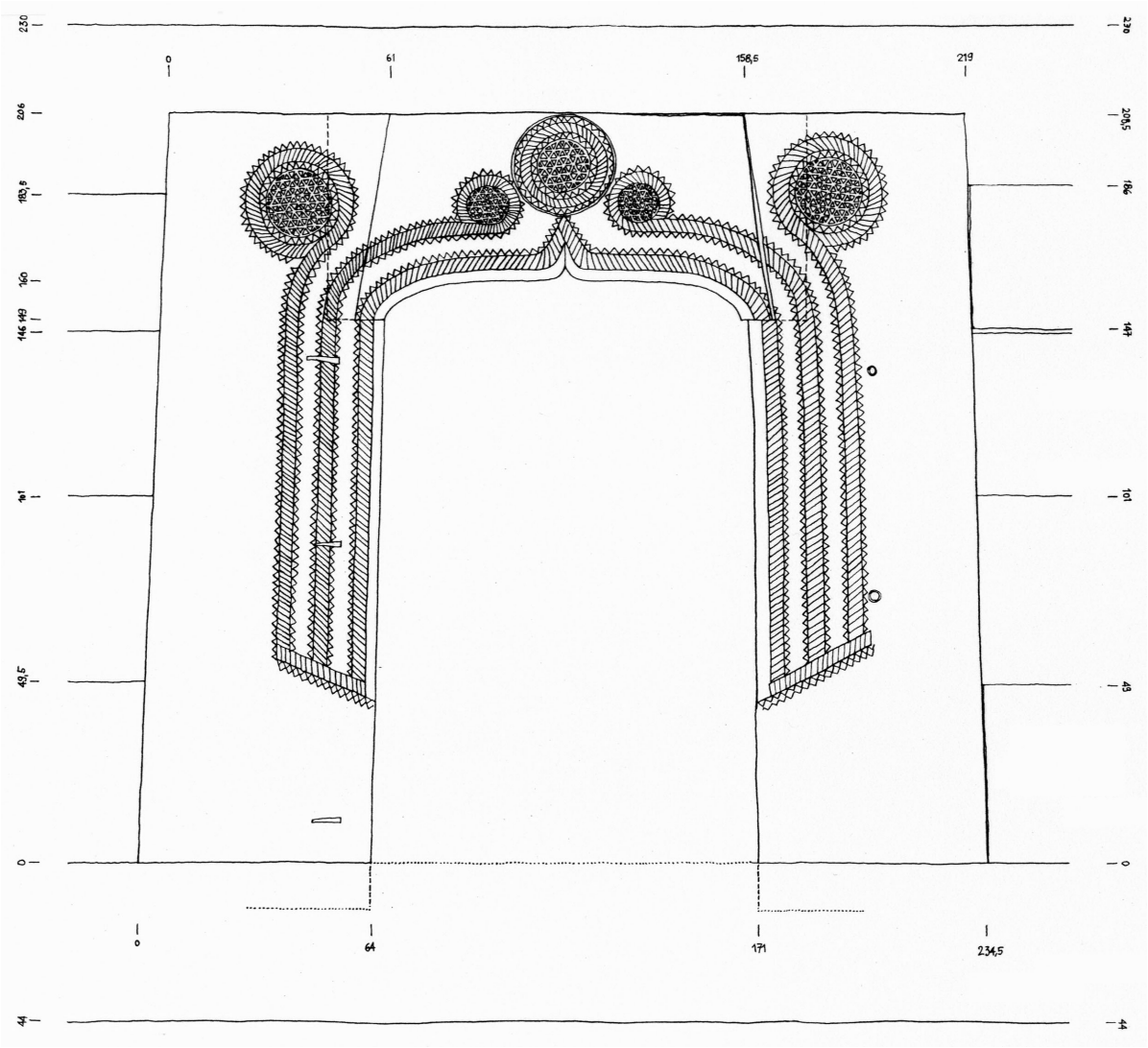
[101] Syrokhman 2000, 383.
[102] Kopynets 1999, 10 and 72-75.
[103] We should however not link this wooden church either with the oral tradition from Bushtyno or with the picture from 1880 where a local wooden church was vaguely captured. There are decisive evidences indicating the church from 1663 was replaced by a new one in 1776, and therefore both the

164 *Velyka Kopania.* An inner "*eye*", in the wall between women and men. Photo: April 1997.

The fascination for the sunflower

The church from Krainykovo was built like a typical church with *eyes*, with an antechurch sheltering the entrance. However, in comparison with the earlier ones from Rona de Jos and Sokyrnytsia, where this part was built like an addition, in Krainykovo the antechurch was enclosed in the length of the wall timbers as the obvious fourth room (**162**-**163**). Thus the character of this entrance room changed from an additional to an integral part of the church in a particular concept, specific for the church carpenters of the Alch family. This further development in the status of the antechurch was probably ought to permanent acceptance to move earlier inner rituals to this half closed and half open room. But, what rituals were that important to have a shelter for and at the same time they were no longer accepted inside? I am not sure, but I suppose the rituals in question were connected to the ancient tradition to have feast inside the churches paying respect to the ancestors,

tradition and the picture can only be linked with the younger one. During the visitation from 1778, the catholic bishop from Eger mentioned the parish church was built in 1776 (photocopy from Viorel Ciubotă, director of the County Muzeum in Satu Mare, whom I thank here for his kind help). The Parish regulation from 1801 also indicated the parish wooden church from Bushtyno was new (Hadzhega, 1922, 216). The confusion appeared when the local tradition was linked with the church from 1663, due to lack of information about the important moment in 1776 in a local church chronology (Kopynets 1999, 10, 72-75). One explanation can be that the church chronology was forgotten after 1716 and then rediscovered and continued around 1840, i.e. exactly the gap that appears in this important source of local history. The turmoil and plundering created by the retreating Tartar army in 1717 were not recorded either, and it is possible that the first records were interrupted with that occasion.

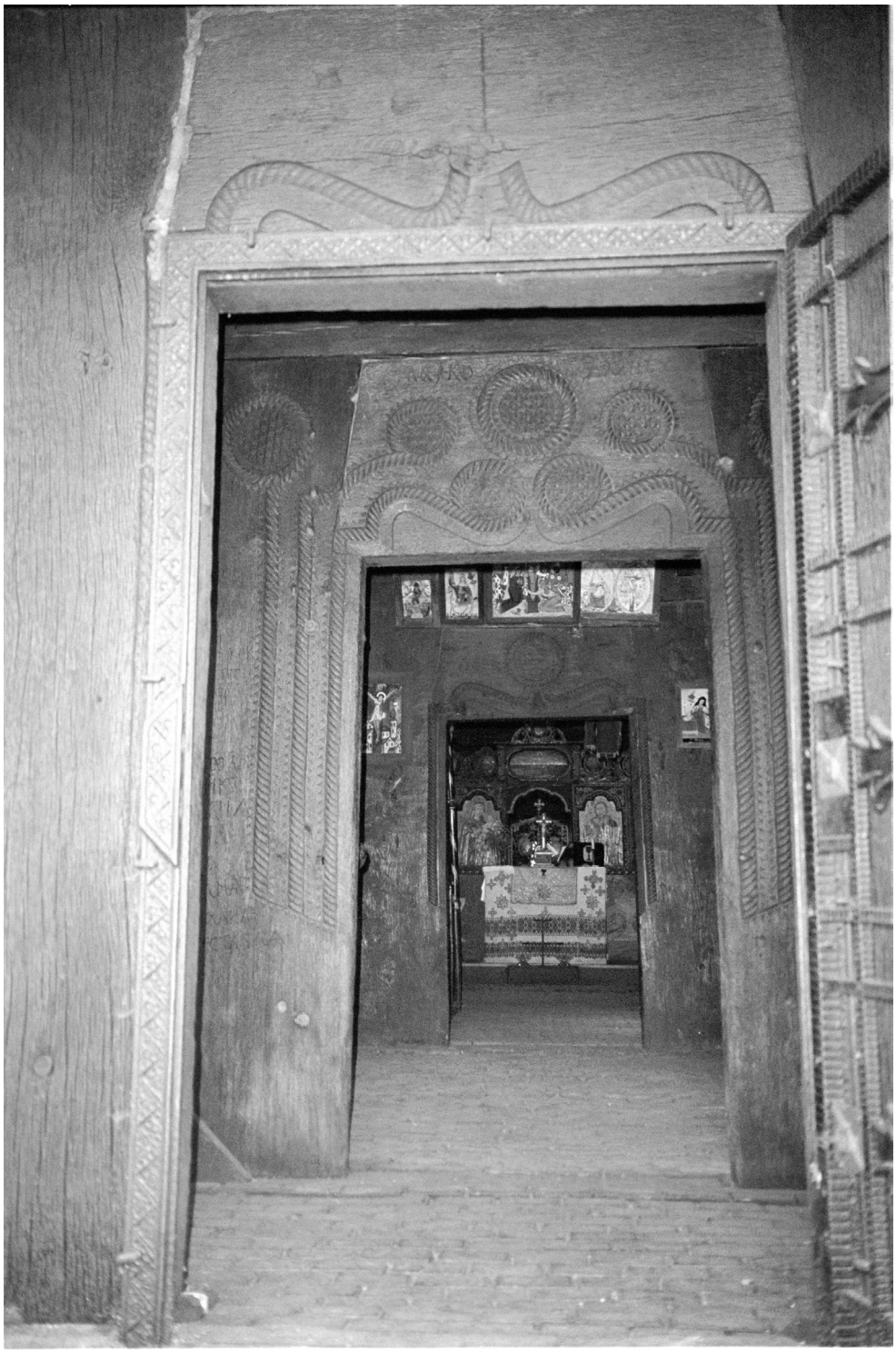


165 *Krainykovo*. The second portal, at the entrance in the church (narthex). Scale drawing and tracing 1:20, July 1998.

as recorded in Budeşti in 1586.[104] The situation from Budeşti Josani becomes relevant in this sense, since the stones forming the ancestor's tables (*mesele moşilor*) inside the earlier wooden church were seemingly not moved in the new one but left outside in 1643, although the new church was very large (**171**). Around the old tables there were later gathered new stones until their present linear formation was established. It is good to notice that these tables are used even today. In Sârbi Susani, too, the ancestor's tables were placed outside but sheltered under the eaves of the church. The ancestor tables are still used and the traditional rituals linked to them are still practiced even in the neighbouring Transylvanian regions.[105]

In the antechurch from Krainykovo there were opened four large triangular *eyes*, resembling the serrated outline of the consoles supporting the eaves (**162-163**). It is interesting that the wall separating the women from men was not provided with side openings, the present ones being of later origin. Further inside the church we recognize the specific choir loft and the tie beam above the platform

[104] Mihalyi 1900, 561, n. 1.
[105] Valeriu Butură, "Biserica de lemn din Cizer", *AMET* 1959-61, 332, Cluj 1963.



166 *Velyka Kopania*. The succession of portals marking the passages to the sacred room. Photo: April 1997.

in front of the iconostasis separating the sacred from the profane, like in Rona de Jos. The upper pair of windows from the southern wall is also reminding the earlier churches from Rona de Jos and Nyzhnie Selyshche. Another characteristic feature of these churches was the loggia like porch gallery above the antechurch which was planked to enable parishioners to use it. The tower was surmounted above both the narthex and the antechurch with its upper porch, while the frame of its neck was made again slightly narrowing at the top. Unlike in Rona de Jos and Sokyrnytsia but precisely like in the home village of Nyzhnie Selyshche, the bell chamber was laid jetted above the neck and, in addition, the spire was unloaded

167 *Velyka Kopania*. The church stands since 1930 in Dobříkov, Czech Republic. The lower porch of posts is a later addition. Photo: April 1997.

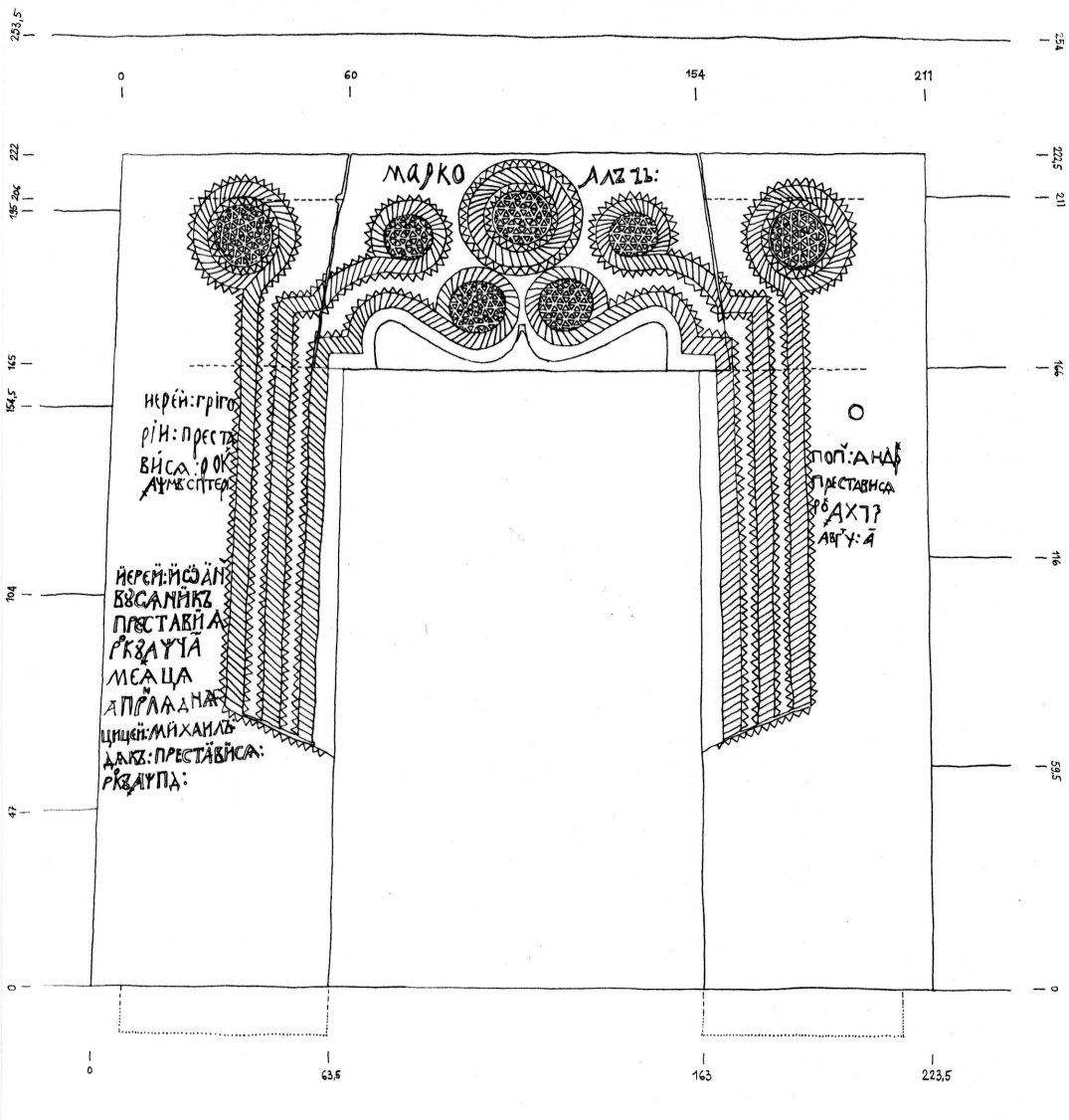
through a central mast directly on the neck. The fabric of the walls displays the same preoccupation for plain surfaces whereas the corner joints are the known flush ones with covert cog (**162**). Most of the constructive features point towards a strong continuity from the three older churches to this 3 decades younger one from Krainykovo.

The most important parts for the identification of the master carpenter are evidently the three portals of the successive entrances in this church. The antechurch was provided with the first portal, and the years of construction were recorded on it. This portal was adorned with two moulding ropes following the sides of the aperture and united like an accolade under a cross in the middle of the lintel. This design, slightly carved from the surface of the timber in a bas-relief technique, reminds little of the accolade above the first portal from Nyzhnie Selyshche and Rona de Jos. The next portal leads to the narthex and the church itself. This displays a more elaborate composition, actually the very identity mark of the church carpenter (**165**). We recognize from the first portal the same moulding ropes carved in the lateral jambs along the aperture and united in an accolade on the lintel above, but this time the cross in the middle is replaced by a sun rosette. On both sides of this repeated pattern it grows a pair of sunflowers. The outermost ones are ended straight while the other two bow in a sign of devotion under the disc of the shining sun. The third and last portal, leading to the nave, was also adorned, but it approximately followed the composition of the first portal. The only remarkable difference is the replacement of the cross once again with the disc of the sun.

If we compare the second portal from Krainykovo with the second one from Sokyrnytsia (**165** and **158**), which present the marks of the two church carpenters, we can find numerous similarities. Both church carpenters surrounded the apertures with moulding ropes and used the sunflowers growing at sides. The holly cross in the middle from Sokyrnytsia is replaced in Krainykovo by the holy sun, yet retained on the first portal, suggesting they were two converging representations of the Christ or the faith in Him. There are also some differences, but more of technical nature, in the carving technique used for mouldings and the joining system of the three pieces building the portal. Despite these secondary differences, the figures and the subject of the two reference portals express a common message, of deep religious devotion. The church carpenter from Sokyrnytsia, following in the steps of his predecessor in Nyzhnie Selyshche, chose as a mark of his craftsmanship the motive of the flower in relation to the cross. In exchange, the master from Krainykovo accentuated the symbolism with the sunflower following the sun on the celestial vault by placing a sun in the middle of his mark.

I suppose the sunflower already reached Maramureş by the time these churches were build, otherwise it would be difficult to imagine its occurrence on the portals without the fascination for it.[106] The symbolism of the sunflower largely circulated in the western parts of Europe and without any doubt it came from there with the seeds of the plant, inspiring these rural church carpenters. However, the image of flowers on both sides of a cross was an old existing motive of devotion, as we can see in several wooden churches from the first half of the 17th century. Thus, the new cultural signals from the west were softly assimilated in the local religious environment, which was not as conservative as often considered.

[106] The plant was recorded in Hungary beginning with the second half of the 17th century; A. Selmeczi-Kovács, "Akklimatisation und Verbreitung der Sonnenblumme in Europa", *Acta Ethnographica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 24 (1-2), 57, Budapest 1975.



168 *Velyka Kopania*. The second portal, of the entrance to the church (narthex). The signature of the church carpenter is located high on the lintel, on both sides of the sun rosette. The other lower inscriptions were added later in the 17th and 18th century. Scale drawing and tracing 1:20, April 1997.

The signature

The master carpenter arriving in Velyka Kopania from Krainykovo started probably immediately to build a new church with the fresh picture of the recently finished one in mind. This might be the reason why the two churches resemble in almost every detail, only the short tower signalling the new church was built outside Maramureş (**167**). A significant innovation was the opening of the blind wall between women and men inside the church by two triangular *eyes* (**163**), which are well preserved and they entirely resemble the exterior *eyes* at the antechurch.

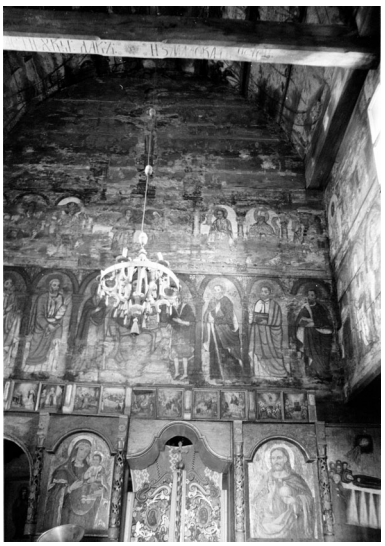
By all appearances nothing else brakes with the earlier known model. However, the representative second portal of the church looks as if it offered the master carpenter the right opportunity to refine his mark. For the first, he heightened the aperture without cutting from the underside of the lintel, with a higher portal as a result. In its turn, the composition was further elaborated to increase the symbol of devotion connected to the sunflower (**168**). The earlier mouldings surrounding the aperture were provided with sunflower blooms, too, and thus there were obtained three sunflowers on each side of the composition.

They bow in reverence to the sun in the middle, suggesting a scenic move. On the left side the sunflower seems to admire the sunset, whereas on the right side it greets the sunrise.

The master carpenter seems to have been pleased by this portal as a mark of his work and fortunately signed it in Cyrillic letters: **Марко Алъчь**, i.e. Marko Alch (*Carpenter*).[107] Thanks to this signature we are able to identify the entire family of church carpenters from this itinerary and localise it in Nyzhnie Selyshche. In particular, master Marko Alch was responsible for this church and thus even for the previous one in Krainykovo and the later one from Novoselytsia as well.

The church from Novoselytsia (**169**) was built in a remote corner of the Ugocea County, under the forested heights at the border with Maramureş. From the very beginning we remark the small scale and the lack of an antechurch. This church was planned with a narrow start width, of 472 cm, to receive up to 155 worshipers. In the main, it is a modest house of worship retaining some ancient features. The narrow rooms allowed only two doors to the sanctuary and therefore the master carpenter decided to shift the eastern window from the axe to correspond with the royal doors and the altar table inside. Because the community lacked resources to buy iron, the entrance door was hung in wooden hinges and the crosses above the roof were made of wood. Despite these poor proportions and details, the vault was strongly elevated inside and the tower accentuated outside. The only adornment we can identify is the design of the portal (**170**), which almost entirely copied the model elaborated in Velyka Kopania. An interesting detail in its composition is the small cross cut just above the entrance in between the sun rosette and the sunflowers bowing under it, combining both signs representing the Christ. In this way, master Marko concentrated in one portal the signs from all three portals in the previous two churches. Unlike the earlier portals the aperture was kept very low reminding the proportions of the oldest entrances, as the predecessors of Marko designed in Sokyrnytsia and Nyzhnie Selyshche.

169 *Novoselytsia, Ugocea County*. The small church does not reveal outside what a lofty nave was hidden inside. Photos: July 1994.



A final problem regarding the church from Novoselytsia is the inscription inside the narthex mentioning that: *"this church was made by Kachalovych in 1669"*.[108] This statement should not lead us into the hasty conclusion that Kachalovych was the true carpenter of this church. This would have been impossible, because if he was indeed a veritable carpenter he would not copy so closely the mark just signed in the same year by the church carpenter Marko. And a local carpenter would have even less succeeded to built this church, since, although it is small, it nevertheless displays qualities in execution compatible only with the work of an experienced church carpenter. We need to compare the statement of this inscription with many other inscriptions on churches and icons where the founders often used to literally record that *they have made* with the real meaning of *they have paid* or *donated* to be made. The last argument speaking against Kachalovych as a church carpenter is the location of his signature, which is not proper for the status of a master in this craftsmanship. As we have observed in Maramureş, a church carpenter either signed proudly on one of the portals or preferred to remain anonymous. In conclusion, Kachalovych wrote that message with the hope to be remembered as a praiseworthy benefactor and founder of this church.

[107] Sakhanev 1932, 70; Syrokhman 2000, 389.
[108] Syrokhman 2000, 383.

170 *Novoselytsia, Ugocea County*. The portal of the entrance and details from the upper part. Photo from July 1994 and tracing from April 2002.

The three church carpenters from the Alch family we have distinguished and localised within this second itinerary were probably three successive generations. From them we have the oldest churches with eyes from Maramureş. The few other similar churches with walled antechurches or light double porches known from the next century in the entire Lower District (except Verchovyna) and beyond are perhaps built by their successors or at least by church carpenters trained in their school. Such could have been the case with the former wooden church from Dulovo (1737-42), those standing in Oleksandrivka (1753), Danylovo (1779) and the vanished ones from Bushtyno (1776) and Steblivka (1797).

The mark of high status in the craftsmanship they created from one generation to another in the 17th century, culminating in Velyka Kopania, was nevertheless as unique as their churches. Their works are characterised not only through particularities but also through a high quality. Accordingly, their churches are robust, functional, with few details above the strictly necessary, but almost always monumental, even when the capacity was reduced.

171 *Budeşti Josani*. This is one of the most ambitious wooden churches ever built in the past in Maramureş, signed by master Gozdă in 1643. The stones in the foreground remind of the ancient tables (*mesele moşilor*) mentioned in 1586 inside the former church. Photo: August 1997.

2.3.2 The second itinerary

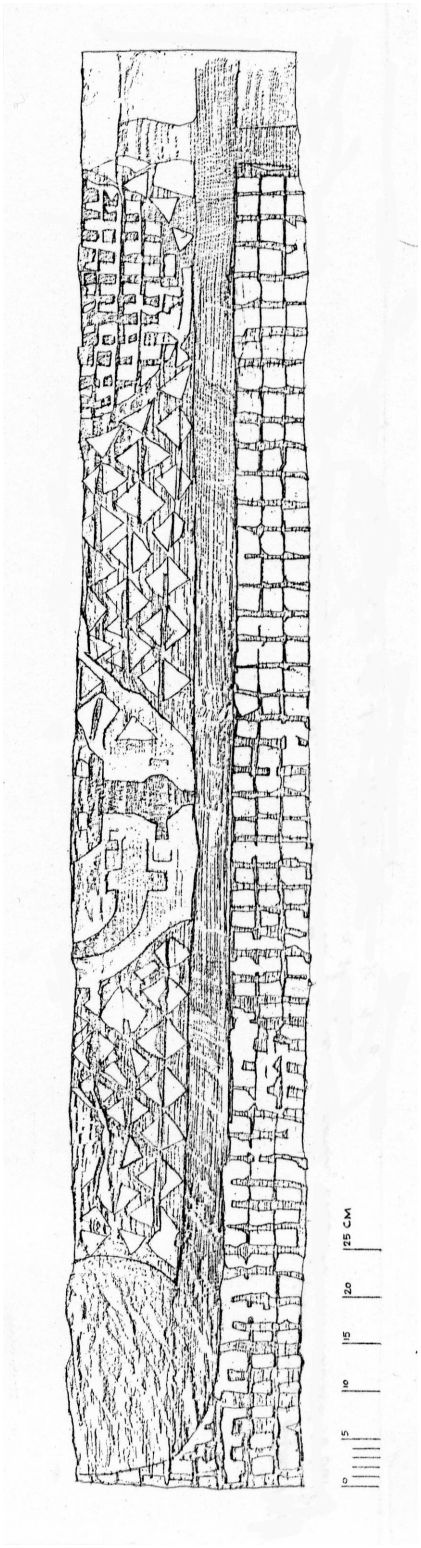
1 Slătioara (c 1639), 2 **Sârbi Susani** (1639),
3 **Budeşti Josani** (1643), 4 **Strâmtura** (1655).

Three successive works

One of the most representative itinerant church carpenters ever active in Maramureş can be traced in the first hand with help of the entrance portals from Slătioara, Sârbi I Susani and Budeşti II Josani. The main features of these three portals resemble each other in such a high degree that we can only presume a single carpenter behind them. This seems to be strengthened by the short period, about 5-6 years, in which the churches were successively erected.

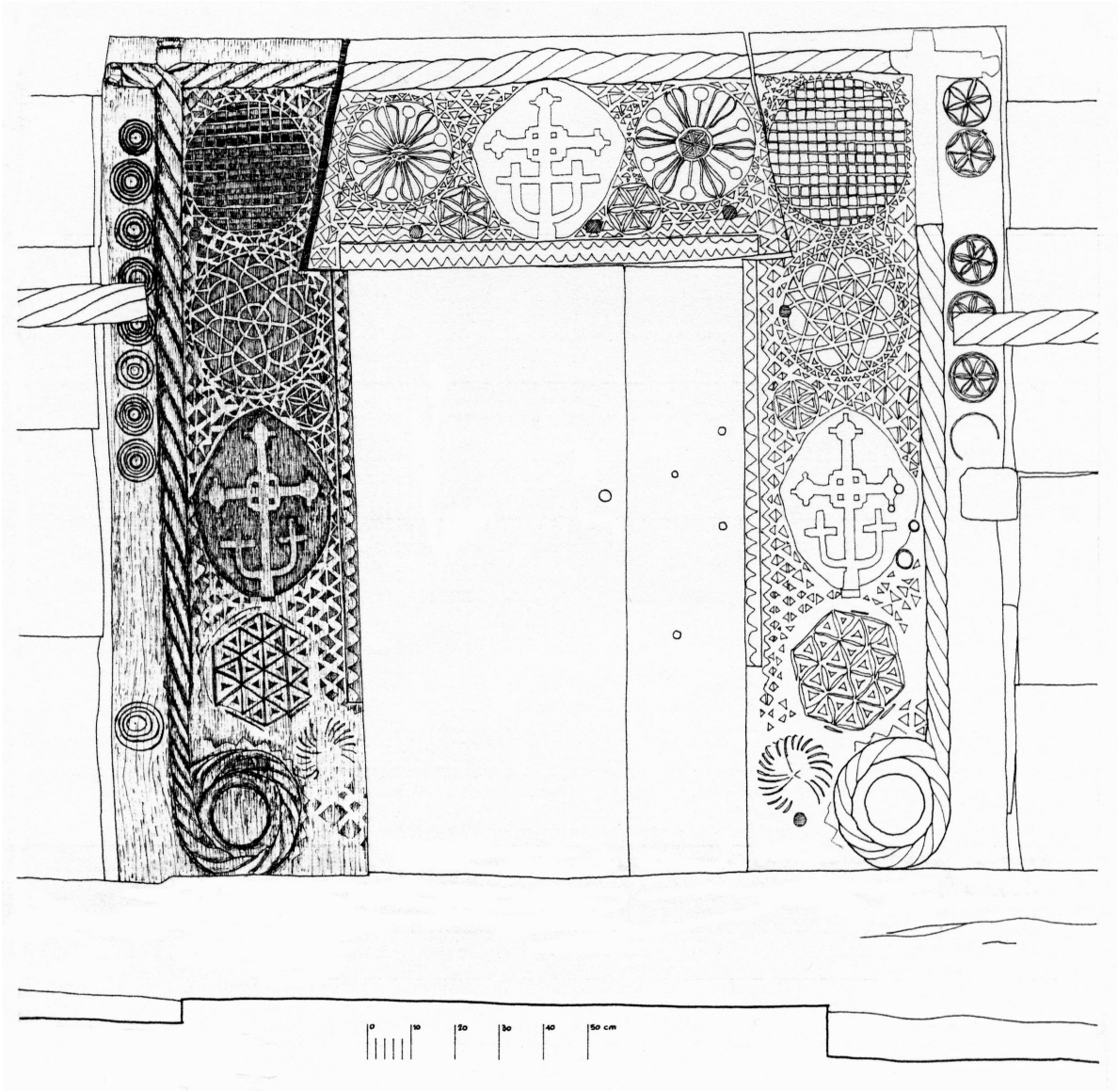
The exact succession is partly unsure but I propose to begin with the church from Slătioara, continue with Sârbi Susani and end with Budeşti Josani. The wooden church from Slătioara was demolished at the beginning of the 20th century, but I was fortunate to find two fragments of the portal reused in a stable from the village (**172**). The design of the portal can approximately date the church about the same time with the other two. More indication we get from a vanished corporal (*antimis*) from Slătioara, signed by the bishop Vasylij Tarasovych of Mukachevo, who administered Maramureş only for a short time, between 1639 and 1640.[109] The corporal was probably obtained in connection with the consecration of the new church and in that case the construction was finished just before that. The second church, from Sârbi Susani, was dendrochronologically dated from the winter 1638-39, i.e. the moment the timbers were felled; thus the construction might have taken place during 1639 or very soon after that. For the third church, from Budeşti Josani, the recent dendrochrono-logical results determined the timbers for construction were felled until the summer of 1642.[110] A lost inscription on the entrance indicated the construction was already completed or about to end in 1643. Accordingly, this church was erected sometime between 1642 and 1643. Considering the time between the possible end of the works from Sârbi Susani in 1639 or early 1640 and the start from Budeşti Josani in 1642, the church carpenter might have had time to engage somewhere else, if not to build a new church at least to repair one.

The wooden churches from Sârbi Susani and Budeşti Josani are both well preserved, despite some inevitable changes. The portal of the entrance from Budeşti Josani was partly altered partly covered in 1923 when the aperture was enlarged. During the extensive repairs from 1999, the fragmentary pieces of the portal were taken down and with that occasion I was able to document them. Unfortunately, their future destination remained uncertain after that.



172 *Slătioara*. The fragmentary right jamb of the portal. Tracing, sc 1:8, March 1995.

[109] Pekar 1992, 179. The corporal is a linen cloth covering the altar table and on which is celebrated the Eucharist. The corporal from Tarasovych was recorded in a church inventory from 1859; ASM, fond 166, 19/1859, 10v.
[110] According to Dr. Ólafur Eggertsson, the samples of oak and spruce (*Picea Apies*) indicate the felling took place until the summer of 1642.



173 *Sârbi Susani*. The portal of the entrance (1639) is a masterpiece of vernacular Christian art and a distinctive professional mark that provides us with some essential keys to understand the symbolical language of the carpenters. Scale drawing and tracing 1:20, April 1995.

The distinctive mark of profession

The best preserved portal, which entirely displays the high professional grade of the church carpenter, is in Sârbi Susani (**173**). Among the various designs recorded on the portals around Maramureş this is without any doubt the most intricate and rich in details known. Due to its rich symbolism I approach its features at three levels: *descriptive, mythological* and *Christian*.

The distinctive features that immediately attract attention are the moulding rope inclosing an elaborate composition of triple crosses and rosettes of various patterns and sizes. The triple crosses occupy the middle field of the three pieces of the portal, whereas the largest rosettes appear on both sides of each cross. The upper corners are covered by large sun rosettes while at the sill the straight mouldings turn round inwards closing the work. The entire composition has a symmetrical scheme, yet with many different details. Finally, a multitude of small triangles breaks up the background in shifting spots of light and shadow. At this descriptive level we should remark the inimitable artistic sensibility of this church

carpenter. He worked not only with the wood but also with the light that touched it to create a unique aura around this passing into a sacred room.

We need to further focus on this exceptional portal and its potential mythological message. It has been long emphasised the importance of the solar symbols in the local vernacular art. Yet, this portal displays only two rosettes that can be related to the sun and possibly the cross as a symbol of the Christ, which actually is also connected to the sun, as we remarked in the first itinerary. The other symbols are rather linked to the other celestial body, i.e. the moon. The relief moulding rope seems to me to indicate the presence of the snake, which, like other monsters in the ancient legends, protects the sacred room.[111] The snake is a dominant motive on the church portals throughout the Carpathian Mountains, most often in stylized forms, but in a few cases even in plain shapes.[112] According to Mircea Eliade, the snake was considered a lunar beast in the old European beliefs[113] and therefore it is possible to read the lower part of the portal, on each side, as a full or new moon coiled up by a snake. In the same context, we should move our attention upon the indented pattern around the aperture, which in the imagery of the local needle women represents the water wave or the river water,[114] possibly the life giving water of a spring, surprisingly identical with the old Egyptian pictograph for the running water.[115] Consequently, the small triangles filling the space in between the rosettes and crosses may represent small drops of rain fertilising the fields. Naturally, we may wonder: what did these ancient symbols want to tell us? In the ensemble moon-snake-rain or running water the church carpenter seems to have sought for the regenerating power of the nature.

There is a still higher level to decode the composition on the portal of the entrance. From a Christian perspective this complex composition with heavenly bodies closely illustrates a Byzantine Calendar. As in the West, the Byzantine ecclesiastical year consists of two overlaying cycles with their respective series of feasts. First it is the Easter cycle (*ciclu pascal*) of the movable feasts and second the monthly cycle (*ciclu sanctoral*) of the immovable feasts. In the Byzantine rite, the offices of the monthly cycle for immovable feasts are gathered in twelve books, one for every month, all together named *menaion*. The Easter cycle is centred on the variable date of the commemoration of the Christ's Passion and is divided in three periods: the pre-paschal (10 weeks before Resurrection day), the paschal (8 weeks, from the Resurrection day to Whitsunday), and the post-paschal (variable number of weeks in between the other two periods). The service books containing the specific offices for the three periods are named *Triodion*, *Pentekostarion* and respectively *Oktoechos*. The three periods are therefore better known by the names of their respective offices.[116] On the portal from Sârbi Susani we can first distinguish the moulding rope carved in relief protecting the entrance and the composition. Starting from the coiled moon at the left and going round to the other coiled moon at right, the moulding rope represents the ecclesiastic year as

[111] Eliade 1992, 270-273.
[112] Some very clearly carved snakes appear on the portals from Jupânești (1742) in the county of Argeș (Crețeanu 1968, ill. 13; Buxton 1981, ill. 260-262), Ibănești (1785) in Olt county (Crețeanu 1968, 21), Crețeni in Vâlcea county (Cristache-Panait 1995, 47), Slăvuța (1683-4) and Scorușu (1821) in the county of Gorj (Cristache-Panait 2001, ill. 75 and 142, 19, 100-101 and 151-153), from Pogănești (XVII) and Vica (XVII) in Hunedoara county (Cristache-Panait 2000, ill. 124 and 239), as dragons on the portal from Săcalu de Pădure (1809) in the county of Mureș (Cristache-Panait 1987, 176-180) and some representations close to reality on the portals from Rieni (1754), Brădet (1733, Godea 1996, ill. 4-5 and 19) and Valea Neagră de Jos (1738, Godea 1978, 219-222) in the county of Bihor. Even in Maramureș, the snakes are clearly pictured on a gate from Salișstea de Sus, now in the Maramureș Village Museum from Sighet (Nistor 1977, ill. 130-131).
[113] Eliade 1992, 163-169.
[114] Dogaru 1984, 143, motif 10.
[115] Eliade 1992, 184.
[116] Branişte 1993, 133-136.

174 *Sârbi Susani*. View of the northern façade with the ancestor's table laid along the sill protected by the eaves. Photo: April 1995.

a whole, from the month of September to August, according to the Byzantine practice.[117] The brake in three parts of the moulding suggests the division in three periods of the Easter cycle. Accordingly, the three pieces of the portal should represent, from left to right, in a sunwise move, the *Oktoechos*, *Triodion* and *Pentekostarion* periods. Indeed, the *Oktoechos* period is particularly individualized on the left jamb by the 8 lateral small rosettes representing the characteristic 8 modes in which the hymns of the offices are sung. Moreover, the additional 9th rosette at the very bottom might allude to the distinctive 9 odes of the canon in the *Oktoechos*. The right jamb is in its turn identified with the *Pentekostarion* period by another 5 lateral rosettes hinting at the Pentecost or the period of 50 days after the Passover. The lintel in between naturally represents the *Triodion* period and needed no distinctive signs. Once the three parts of the portal are identified with the three periods of the Easter cycle, the expected significance of the triple crosses in the middle fields should be the main feasts commemorating the life and the activity of the Christ. Thus, the triple cross at the left corresponds to Christ's Nativity and baptism, the one in the middle above the entrance commemorates Christ's Passion and the third one at the right is a symbol of Christ's Resurrection and Ascension and nevertheless of the descent of the Holy Ghost or the Whitsunday. As a result, the entire Easter cycle appears well illustrated. In order to be complete, this calendar only needs the presence of the monthly cycle. Indeed, the twelve rosettes flanking the triple crosses, 6 small and 6 large, represent the 12

[117] The Byzantine Year started in 1 September and its chronology was counted from the beginning of the world (from Adam), 5509 years before the birth of the Christ; Emil Vârtosu, *Paleografia româno-chirilică*, 192, Bucureşti 1968.

175 *Sârbi Susani*. The rear of the sanctuary with the joyful play of consoles under the eaves. The only original window seems to have been the square one bellow the moulding rope. The rope appears to have separated the earthly world from the heavenly one. Photo: Spring 1995.

moons or months of the year. In the upper corners, the large discs seem to mark the sun at the winter (left) and summer (right) solstices. The presence of all the major feasts and offices along the entire Byzantine ecclesiastic year gives the impression to call the worshipers to plainly participate in them. It is possible that the water wave around the aperture might represent the Jordan River and eventually even the Holy Spirit in which Jesus was baptised. Moreover, the small triangles entirely filling the space in between the large figures seem to further urge the Christians to uninterrupted prays. This is a strong invitation to improve through faith in Christ and participation in the life of the Church, in a true Byzantine monastic tradition.

The third level gives the most comprehensible reading of the portal's composition. Its Christian symbolism strongly revolves around the Christ's Passion and the salvation of the human kind deriving from it. The mythological reading does not impede the Christian message since both seek heavenly regenerating gifts. We stand here in front of a rich and refined language of vernacular and Christian symbols, aimed to lift our souls, hearts and minds beyond the limits of our earthly existence. Actually, this is one of the main fascinations with numerous portals from the wooden churches all around the Carpathian Mountains. The central motif, of the middle cross representing the Christ's Passion and the side rosettes representing the two solstices, concentrates the Christian message being often carved on church and house portals. This reading appears now obvious thanks to the elaborate composition from Sârbi Susani. There is an imperative need to document the hundreds of surviving portals left by the church carpenters in the Carpathians, go beyond their decorative beauty and recover their enigmatic language. That would be a great achievement for the European cultural heritage.

176 *Sârbi Susani*. The interior is dominated by the beautiful vault that closely follows the shape of an arch of a circle and the filigree decorations on the ribs and consoles. The eastern gable above the doors to the sanctuary was painted in 1760 by the local mural painter Alexandru Ponehalski. Photo: Spring 1995.

From modest to ambitious works

We know very few things about the church from Slătioara. From a late written record we find the approximate sizes of a small church,[118] probably with a modest appearance. In exchange, the fragments of the portal direct our attention without any hesitation to the same church carpenter as in Sârbi Susani and Budeşti Josani. Between Slătioara and the other two villages there was an ancient path over the lower hills at the feet of the Văratec Mountain, at a distance of about 15 km.[119] Accordingly, the villages were not far from each other, although Slătioara is in the valley with the same name and belonged to the Upper district, while Sârbi Susani and Budeşti Josani are in the Cosău valley and belonged to the Cosău district.

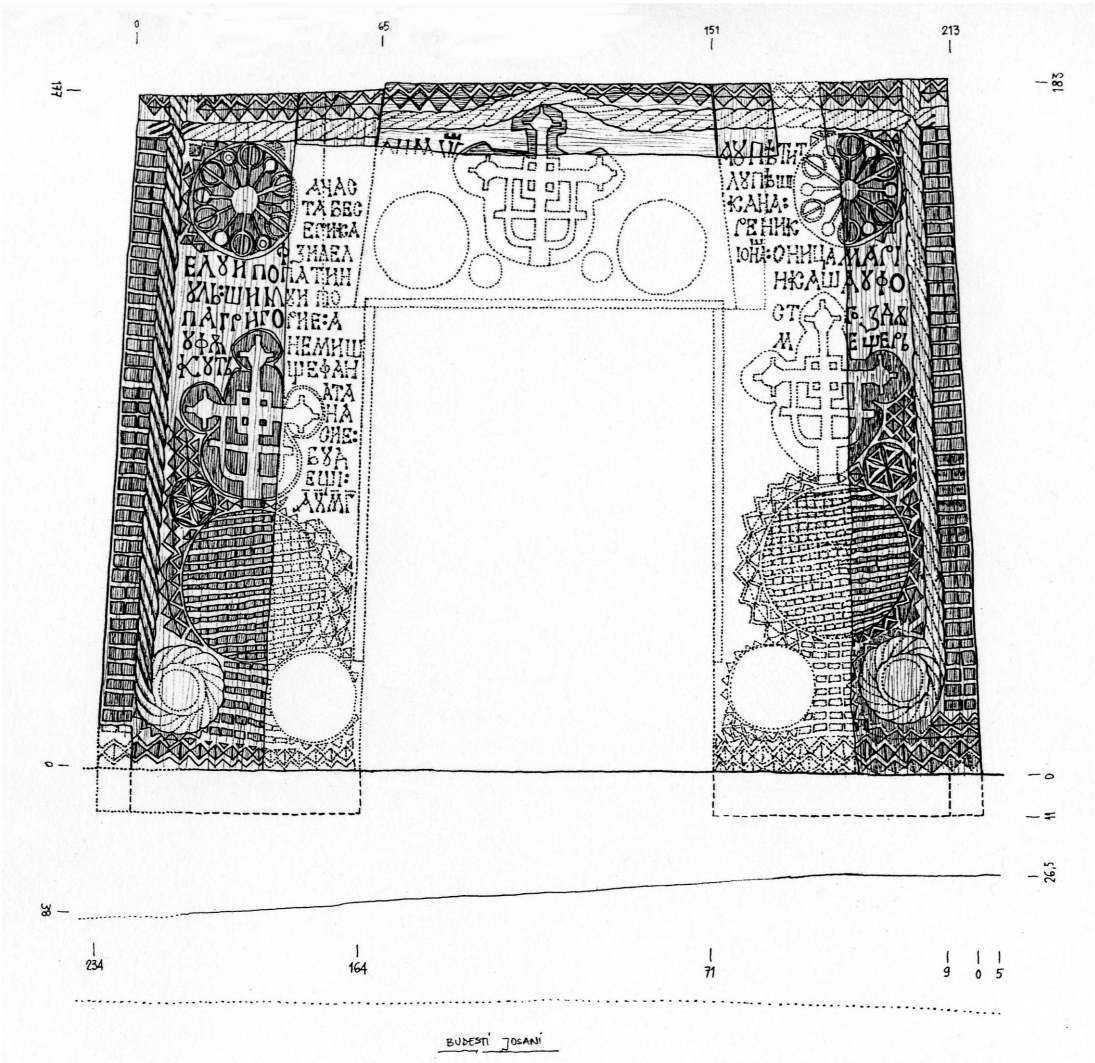
As we can experience, the church from Sârbi Susani was, like the previous one from Slătioara, rather modest in sizes, though really charming (**173-176**). Around its sanctuary the master carpenter played with the consoles under the eaves purlins like nowhere else (**175**). His devotion for this sacred building can be further read in the warm way he softened the plain timber walls with the rope moulding all around, with the small cuts in the frame of the southern window (**72**) and even of the precinct gate, which, although fragmentary, is probably the oldest one surviving in Maramureş.[120] The noble founders of this modest house of worship might have been either poor or conservative, if they couldn't afford or did

[118] ASM, fond 166, 19/1859, 10v.
[119] The path was recorded in the first topographical map of the county from 1766-68; ÖStA-KA, Kartensammlung, *Aufnahme von der Marmorosch in Ober-Ungarn*, B IX a 633, 43.
[120] Nistor 1977, 60-61.

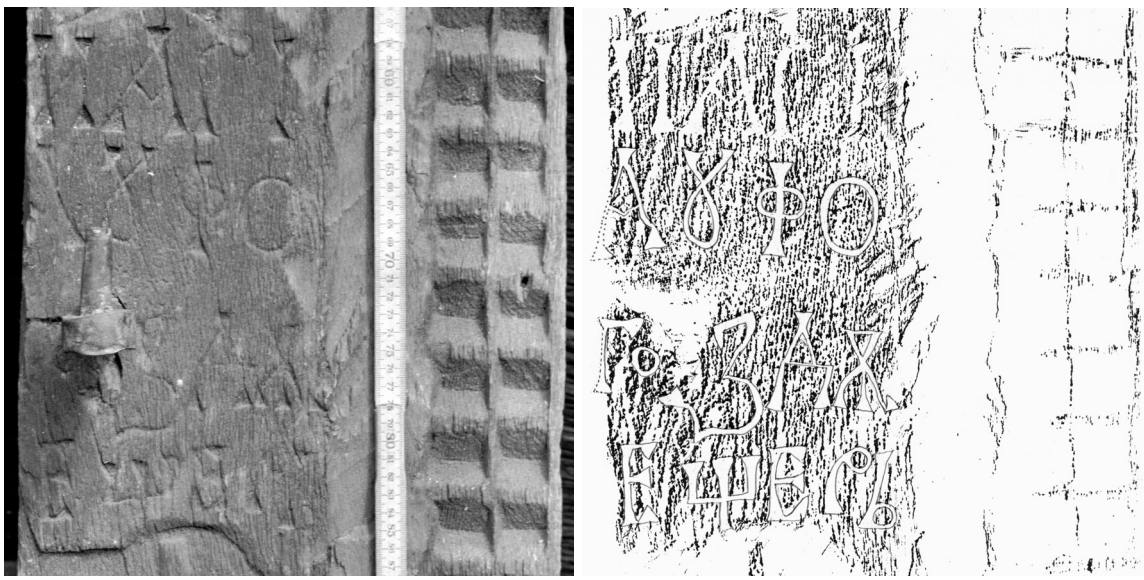
177 *Budeşti Josani*. The church as seen from the yards nearby. Photo: April 1994.

not wanted bells for a tower, iron for the hinges of the doors, carved stones for the altar table or glasses for the windows. Whatever was the situation, the carpenter had to solve the shortage of resources in a very traditional way, replacing the missing materials with pieces of wood. These could have been the reasons why the church from Sârbi Susani retains the most ancient features in the local architecture. Although he was limited in his work by the poor resources of his customers, the master carpenter succeeded to impress them and the communities around in such a degree that he was soon engaged to build the ambitious church in the neighbouring parish of Budeşti Josani (**91- 92**, **171** and **177-179**), only 3 km away.

Indeed, it was this refined church carpenter who became responsible for the largest known wooden church built in Maramureş in the past. This time he had to respond to the high ambitions and expectations of some wealthier noble founders with a fine technical competence and courage. With the same technique as in Sârbi Susani he built up a sacred room at the limits of the local model of church. We can remark the same massive wall timbers, the same flush joints with covert cogs and especially the same positioning for the eaves purlins outside the wall, unloading the roof on the cantilevered consoles of the last wall timbers. I suppose it was the church carpenter who was bound to this later detail, and we already noticed that it led to serious later concerns. Despite this overlook, the result was at the level of the expectations, the very large construction signalling far around and ever since then the pride of the founders and the high technical performance of the local church carpenters.



178 *Budeşti Josani*. Reconstruction of the portal of the entrance (above) and the signature of the master Gozdă (below). The inscription was partially composed after Bârlea 1909, 60/206, partly completed with the visible words on the right jamb. Remarkably, the close relation between lower crosses and sun-rosettes representing the two solstices was accentuated. Scale drawing and tracing 1:20, 1999.



179 *Budeşti Josani*. The portal to the nave is well maintained and presents a particular aperture. Photo: July 1997.

Like earlier in Sârbi Susani, the church carpenter was asked to ornate the entrance from Budeşti Josani. And he proceeded to design the portal with the same distinctive features. But these founders, unlike their humble neighbours, wished this outstanding foundation to be provided with a dedicatory inscription on the portal. As a result, the church carpenter had to make place for a long text.

The Romanian dedicatory inscription in Cyrillic from the portal in Budeşti Josani was copied in the main parts by Ioan Bârlea before the enlargement from 1923.[121] However, as seen on the fragmentary right jamb, he misread the ending statement as "*it was the host from Budeşti*" instead of "*it was master Gozdă*". In original (**178**):

ѧ꙳ ѳо
[ст …?] Гоздѫ
[…? м]єщєрь

It is also at hands to read "*it was the host of the master*", but, if we survey the entire text, we can easily observe that after each verb followed the name of those who participated: "*it was made by Nemiş Ştefan*", "*it was paid by Lupea ...*" and accordingly even „*it was Gozdă meşter*". Consequently, it seems that the church carpenter named himself at the very end of this important dedicatory inscription.

[121] Bârlea 1909, 60/206.

180 *Strâmtura*. After the renovations from the 19th century the church reminds little of that from 1667 or from the significant reconstruction in 1771. Photo: March 1995.

A late work

In addition to the three consecutive churches just presented, there is a fourth church exhibiting related features in the design of its portal. The parish church from Strâmtura was mentioned to have been brought in 1667 from an abandoned monastery in the neighbouring village of Rozavlea, about 3 km away. According to the church records it was entirely rebuilt in 1771, since the old one was too ruinous and cramped for the number of parishioners.[122] The addition from 1837 and a renovation from the end of the 19th century further altered the original church (**180**).[123] In the present, the clay covering hinders any close analyze of the walls. For this reason we are unable to determine in what measure the first church survived. The single part that can be identified with the original church is the formal portal of the entrance, now in a fragmentary state. The dendrochronological analyzes of the jambs and of a piece from a former porch date the first church from around 1655 or soon after that.[124]

As a result, from the former church erected initially in Rozavlea Monastery around 1655 we are able to appreciate only the fragmentary entrance portal. Comparing this portal with the other three ones we firstly recognize the same basic features: the triple cross in the middle of the field, the sun rosette in the upper corner and the moulding ropes in relief turning round inwards in the lower part. On

[122] MOL, C-99, XI.A Maramoros 1774, 63. Tit Bud consulted the same source, though he insisted the year of the transfer was 1661 instead of 1667; Bud 1911, 69.
[123] Baboş 2000, 96.
[124] Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, 44, table 2, n. 22.

181 *Strâmtura*. Detail from the left jamb representing the horn of a ram. The indented line on the left, near the aperture, may indicate the life giving water of a spring. Photo: March 1995.

the second hand, there are some small but obvious formal differences from the familiar ones. The straight mouldings were each split into two thinner ropes, united and transformed at their turning bottom end into a horn of a ram (**181**). The horn do not change the sense of the message since, like the snake, it was also a symbol of the moon.[125] The separation in two ropes is visible even on other portals[126] but its sense waits for clarifications. Another evident difference is the lack of small cuts in between the main figures that so characteristically gave life to the compositions of the other three portals.

Based only on the features of the portal, I believe the master was Gozdă, though two decades older. In this late portal he gives the impression to have been less interested to play with the light leaving the background of the main figures untreated. However, we can remark the same care for the smallest details and probably the same basic message in the end.

[125] Eliade 1992, 163.
[126] Such a feature has the portal from Darva and Bârsana Monastery, for instance.

Master Gozdă and his family school

Although we can closely identify master Gozdă with only three of his early works and a late one, of which only two still stands entirely, we get the intimate knowledge of a complete craftsman, daring as a builder and refined as an artist. Thanks to his inimitable mark on the portals we can correlate the extant churches from Sârbi Susani and Budeşti Josani and follow him from a warm attachment for details to an unexpected courage to prove the limits of his own technical knowledge. Moreover, his fine calligraphy from the dedicatory inscription and his sophisticated use of vernacular and Christian symbolism speak of a good level of literacy and deep religious education.

Who was this master carpenter? Where did he come from? How important is his identity? Which school did he belong to?

Gozdă is a quite unusual name both as a first name and as a surname, but it could eventually have been a curious nickname or an altered form of the common surname Godja. Of the various possibilities the last two seem the most probable. Gozdă somehow reminds of the family team of carpenters from Vad nicknamed Guzănii, active in the middle of the 20th century, yet this does not directly link them. In the second alternative, the noble family Godja is documented from the middle of the 16th century and it descended from ancestors ennobled in 1360 by the medieval kings of Hungary.[127] The authors of the old records had difficulties with the spelled middle sound of the name and therefore it was written in different forms: Gochya (1542), Gochey (1546), Gothya (1550), Gotsia (1604), Godsa, Godse (1689) and many others.[128] Today, there are two forms known: Godja and Gogea. This noble family was by origin from Onceşti but it was also extended by the turn of the 17th century in Văleni, Năneşti and Valea Stejarului, all in the lower Iza Valley.[129]

Was master Gozdă from this area? His works in both the Cosău Valley and the Iza Valley indicate he was most probably from this part of the region. Moreover, the unmistakable preference for adornment indicates a great familiarity with the oak and a long tradition for rich details, which were by all appearances more specific in the lower part of the Iza Valley than upstream.[130] For this reason the church carpenter could have belonged to the noble Godja family and could have resided in their main village, Onceşti or eventually in Văleni. These are however not definitive arguments. More research concerning the families and their nicknames in this area is highly needed.

A remarkable church carpenter like master Gozdă must have had important predecessors and followers, thus he should have belonged to a family school. If we fully accept he was a member of the large Godja family, it is very likely that the parish churches from both the home village Onceşti and from their serf village Valea Stejarului were build around 1621 by church carpenters from the same family, probably the previous generation. Unfortunately, in Onceşti none of the original portals survived. From the dedicatory inscription on the second portal only the first name of a master carpenter, Gavril, can be partially read. The tower with its beautiful Cyrillic assembly marks is a much later reconstruction and therefore not relevant here. The other parish church is not of great help either. The church from the poor village of Valea Stejarului was initially devoid of a tower and was

[127] Mihalyi 1900, 184.
[128] Bélay 1943, 135, 174-176, 213-214. Goje, Goja, Gota (Bârlea 1909), eventually even Hojda and Hoşda.
[129] Bélay 1943, 135, 174-176, 213-214.
[130] The church from the Cuhea Monastery, built entirely of oak in the early 16th century, upstream from Rozavlea, suggests that a strip of oak forest might have stretched in the past a bit longer inside the Iza Valley than we can imagine today.

said to have had a dedicatory inscription that was also altered. The first portal, although well maintained, was not decorated. In conclusion, we lack several distinctive elements to link master Gavril with master Gozdă. Moreover, the first one used tabled joints while the other one covert ones, a situation raising serious questions: Were these church carpenters familiar with both types of joints? What made them prefer the one or the other?

If the church carpenters mastered and shifted among different types of joints, which is highly probable, than many parish churches from the Upper, Cosău and Sighet districts could have been built by masters from one and the same family school, either this was named Godja or something else. Parish wooden churches like in Botiza (1594), Corneşti (1615), Ieud Deal (1611-21), Onceşti (c. 1621), Valea Stejarului (1615-20), Breb (1622), Poienile Izei (c.1632), Călineşti Căeni (1629) Apşa din Jos (1659), Apşa de Mijloc Josani, all build before or during the activity of the Gozdă master, display many similar but also some variable features. In general lines, they suggest the activity of at least two related groups of itinerant church carpenters ramifying from a common ancestor and inheriting common knowledge, skills and style in the southern part of the region. This perspective can both complicate and simplify our understanding of the parish wooden churches from the Southern Maramureş. On one side it becomes even more difficult to distinguish the works of separate masters with our present knowledge and on the other hand we can better understand the great homogeneity among numerous wooden churches. Against such a complex background master Gozda might have especially needed to distinguish himself through one of the most admirable marks of identity. And wherever similar marks were made and survived they are of greatest help in our attempt to follow in the footsteps of some distinct church carpenters. Where they are lost or not marked, we need to further improve our capacity to read the working traces left by the church carpenters in hope to distinguish them. Further comparative investigations of the named standing constructions may greatly improve our understanding of the southern school of church carpenters.

In conclusion, the parish wooden churches from the Southern Maramureş might have been built in the 17th century and the beginning of the next one by some closely related church carpenters or crews belonging to a ramified local family school. This potentially complex situation from Southern Maramureş require caution and restrain to the most evident cases of long itineraries, leaving the unclear ones to further research.

182 *Hărniceşti*. The straight oaks around the church were well taken care of in the cemetery around as a reserve for eventual repairs. Photo: April 1994.

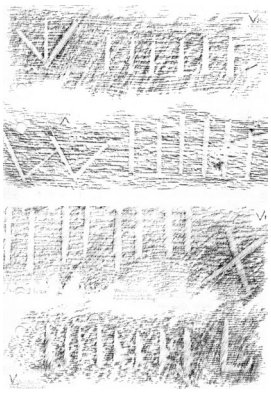
2.3.3 The third itinerary

1 **Hărniceşti** (1679), 2 **Sârbi II Josani** (c1685), 3 **Vişeu de Jos** (1699), 4 **Sat Şugătag** (1700).

Transferring a church

One of the most interesting itineraries we can partially reconstitute starts, for us, about two decades after the second itinerary ended, and not far from there. The church carpenters from this itinerary were certainly related with Master Gozdă, but we can not directly establish a succession among them.

From what the local tradition and some surviving timbers tell us, the wooden church from the Cuhea Monastery, built in the first quarter of the 16th century, was transferred to Văleni in the late 1670s.[131] With that occasion the carpenter marked all the timbers in the wall to ensure a close reassembling of its structure. We also know that he had to replace one of the eaves purlins, since no assembly sign was noticed on it. Thus, there are just a few elements which can link the carpenter with the transferred construction. However, the assembly marks he used help us not only to link him to this church but also with some other later surviving ones (**183**). Characteristic for him was to use assembly marks of two kinds: Cyrillic letters for construction sides and repeated lines to number the wall timbers, as on a *carâmb*. One of the basic signs, "**r**", actually the only asymmetrical one, was reversed.



183 *Văleni*. Assembly signs marked by the master carpenter who moved the church from Cuhea Monastery, tracing, scale 1:8, 2000.

It is highly unsure, yet possible, that the same church carpenter repaired the church from Corneşti in the 1670s, only 8 km from Văleni. This church looks like it was affected by an unexpected accident that required comprehensive interventions, at least at the vault.

Early works

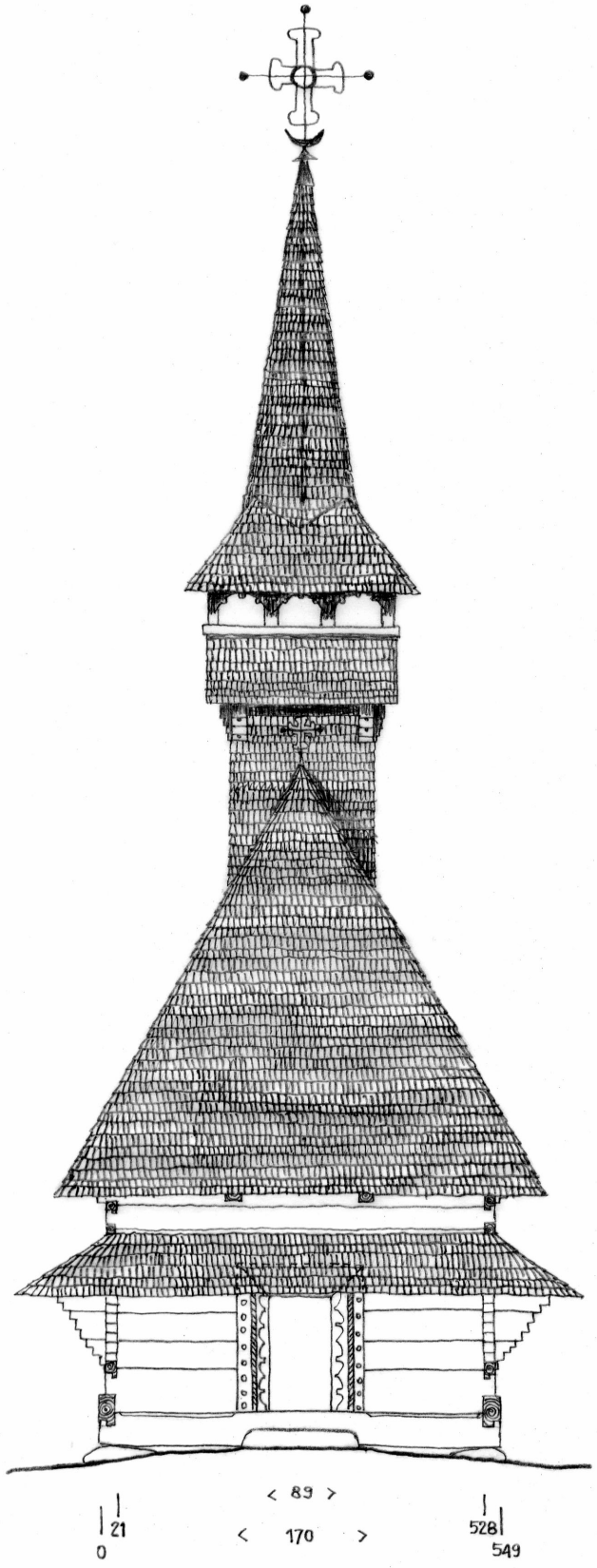
A small beauty

Probably soon after the church from Văleni was rebuilt on its new location, a new church was started in Hărniceşti (**182**, **184**), about 14 km away, in the Mara Valley. The same church carpenter seems to have been hired here in 1679 or the following years to build a small wooden church for a mixed community of nobles and serfs.

We recognize the same craftsman in the assembly marks from the tower, with the same Cyrillic letters for the main sides and the simple numerals for the order in which the pieces were assembled (**134**). The straight lateral walls characterising the old church from Văleni and even that from Corneşti after repairs seem to have been passed on in the new church from Hărniceşti. The intention probably was to obtain a lofty central room even if the starting width was limited.

Although the church from Hărniceşti was repeatedly altered, beginning with the addition of a new narthex in 1893 and continuing with the complete replacement of the old sanctuary in 1942, it maintained some of its unmistakable features. The church was built with plane walls interlocked by flush *tabled* joints. The narthex, i.e. the bearing structure of the tower, was dimensioned 5 R y long for a tower with a neck about 3 R y wide and 8 R y high. The neck was anchored and laced by four pairs of cross braces on each side (**126**), whereas the spire was unloaded by a jetted low gallery of 12 posts. Another important detail, that was earlier remarked, we can observe at the upper eaves purlins, which were drawn above the wall to serve as springs of the vault inside the nave, avoiding bends in between the supporting consoles.

[131] Babos 2000, 26-29.



The most distinct features were retained at the entrances in the narthex (the women's church, **187** A) and the nave (the men's church, **186**). The aperture of the inner passing, to the nave, was traditionally dimensioned quite low (81 cm x 102 cm), and the portal around it was assembled in the old fashioned system with a lintel flaring downwards. In exchange, the passing from outside to the interior of the church was dimensioned with an unusually high aperture, about 1 R y wide and 2 R y high (82.5-89 cm x 168.5 cm), whereas the three pieces of the portal were joined along upwards flaring diagonals (*în şrec*).

The composition of the portal was defined by three basic elements linearly surrounding the aperture from all three sides (**188**). The outer decorative element was a row of small rosettes, in the middle there was a straight moulding rope in relief where we can recognize the protective snake and the third element, edging the aperture, was a curious rampant arch with filigree indented pattern, which I associate with the rainy clouds or the dragons believed to bear the water in the clouds.[132] If the series of rosettes represents the moon from one cycle to another than the church carpenter worked again with the moon-snake-rain ensemble of symbols, similar with master Gozdă from the second itinerary. He might have sought the regenerating properties of these symbols. However, the Christian message is hardly distinguishable.

We should also lay notice to the small decorative cuts in the socle of the church, which refined the plain walls erected above. The result was a small but carefully finished wooden church, where the church carpenter strived to bring some fashionable features outside, while the interior was treated in a traditional minimal way, with plane surfaces and clear rooms. His mark around the entrance is not excelling decoratively, noticing especially its linear composition, but it appears articulate in his message.

184 *Hărniceşti*. Reconstruction of the western facade as it might have looked before the addition of a new narthex in 1893. From this side and from inside the nave the church reminds in a high grade of the older church from Cornești, repaired just before this church was built. Scale drawing: June 1996 and October 2000.

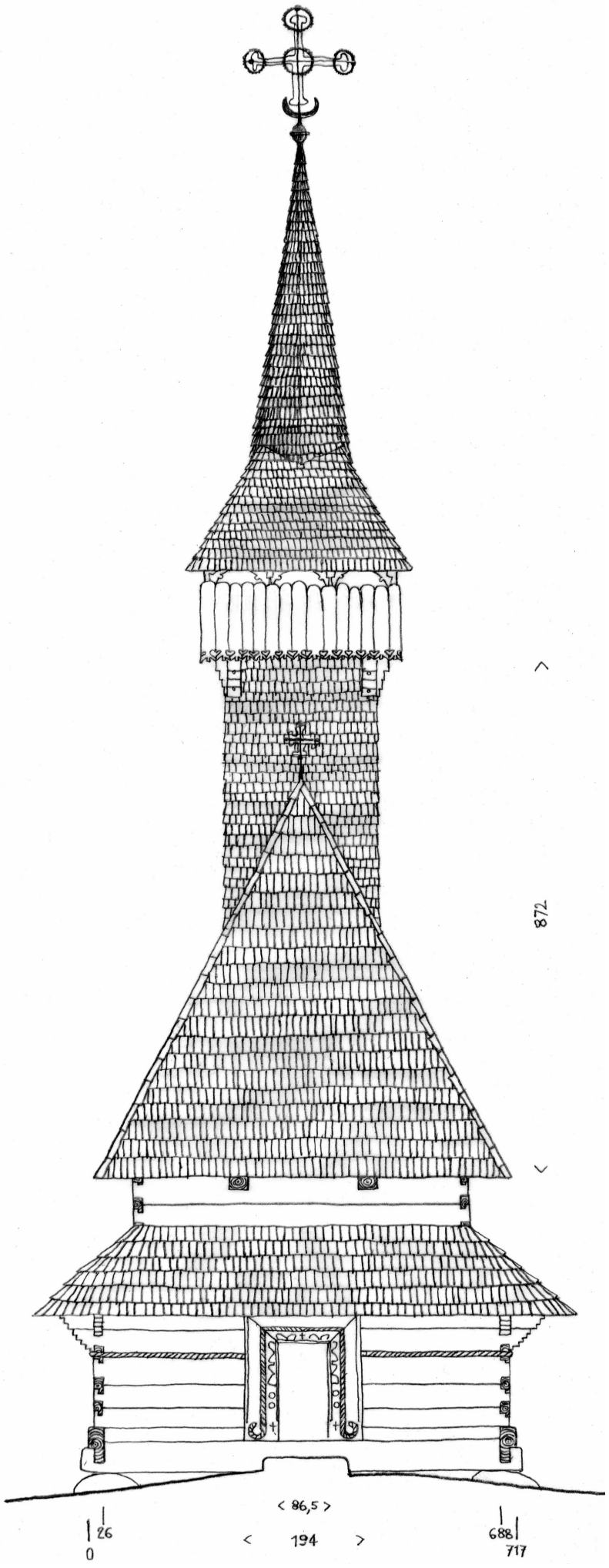
[132] Romulus Vulcănescu, *Mitologie Română*, 415, Bucureşti 1987; Eliade 1992, 168.

Sârbi Josani

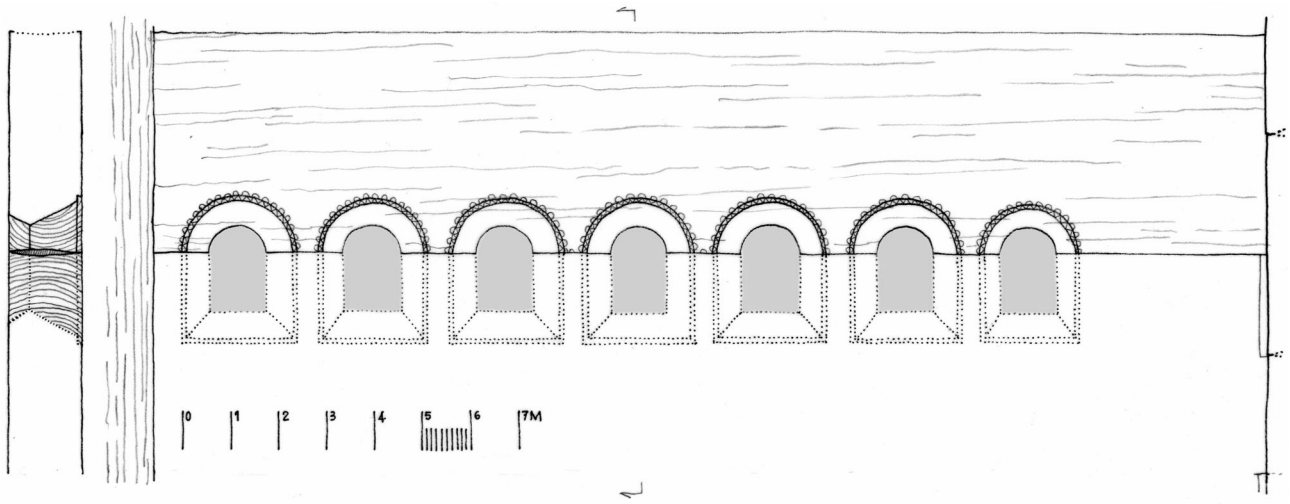
The next surviving work was built a few years after that from Hărniceşti, and the carpenter possibly worked in other places before he started the parish church from Sârbi Josani around 1685 (**102**, **185**). This church was planned for a middle community dominated by the noble Dunca de Sârbi family. The church is exceptionally well preserved, displaying some of the first original openings in the wall between women and men. They might have existed even in Hărniceşti, but there the inner wall was entirely demolished in 1893.

In Sârbi Josani we recognize many features earlier presented in Hărniceşti. The church carpenter used the same *tabled* joints at the corners and drew in the same way the upper eaves purlins inside as springs of the vault. The plan of the church was earlier remarked for its clear division in 5+5+2 R y along the long sills (**111**, A)). The neck of the tower, about 3 R y wide and 10 R y long, followed closely the length of the narthex. Actually, the entire frame of the tower and even the assembling marks resemble those from Hărniceşti. Moreover, the Cyrillic letters "ꙛ" and "χ" as well as the repeated lines representing numbers (**134**) remind even more of the working notation from Văleni (**183**). In comparison with Hărniceşti, inside the gallery of the tower from Sârbi Josani it survived the inner structure supporting the bells.

Regarding the two entrances we should remark that the old doors initially had hinges and bolds of wood, reminding the church from the upper part of the village, in Sârbi Susani. I wonder if these old details mixed with new ones were not demanded by the clients. In any case, we should notice their presence along with the fashionable large aperture at the entrance inside the church (**187**, B), 1 R y wide and 2 R y high (86.5 cm x 166.5 cm). The main elements of composition from the first portal remind on the first hand of the earlier work in Hărniceşti while on the other hand of some figures from the portal of the upper church in Sârbi



185 *Sârbi Josani*. Western façade. Scale drawing: August 1997 and October 2000.

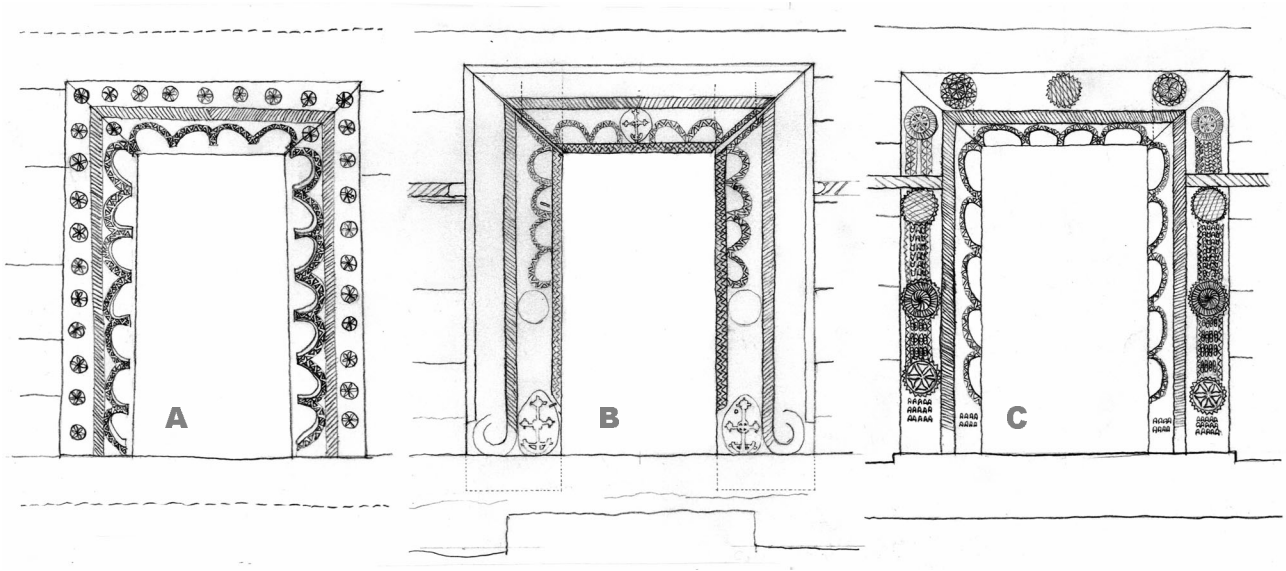


186 *Sârbi Josani*. The oldest openings in the wall between women and men can be found in the church from Sârbi Josani. Despite their small sizes, these "eyes" marked a major break in the former isolation of the women in the narthex, enabling them to see the priest and follow the service. Scale drawing: October 2000.

Susani. The triple cross was obviously borrowed from the upper church but less ample and placed at the bottom of the jambs. The other borrowed features were the ends of the straight mouldings turning round outwards at the bottom of the composition, the zigzag pattern of the running water around the aperture and the elaborated rosettes above the crosses. Evidently, the most characteristic element of the carpenter mark along with the moulding ropes was the unmistakable rampant arch resembling the rainy clouds.

The first portal was assembled with the fashionable lintel flaring upwards, while the second portal retained the traditional lintel flaring downwards, an identical shift as in Hărniceşti. Even the leaf of the doors was identically assembled from two massive planks with a simple overlapping joint. There are many other similar details to observe as for example the moulding surrounding the walls outside softening their plainness, but also differences. The church from Sârbi Josani was larger than its sister from Hărniceşti and therefore the lateral walls were necessarily broken by inner consoles. The resulting inner narrowing of the main room was refined by the carpenter with a moulding rope, similar those outside.

The most remarkable part is the transverse wall separating the women from men. In this it was retained the upper part of the small openings or *eyes* allowing the women to have visual contact with the nave and improving hearing in their otherwise severed room (**186**). The arches above these eyes are treated with a filigree indented motif as the rampant arches at the entrance. Since the women stood for fertility and regeneration this motif was well in place there.



187 The entrance portals from Hărniceşti (A), Sârbi Josani (B) and Vişeu de Jos (C). Scale drawings 1997.

About two decades later

The itinerary localized in Văleni, perhaps Corneşti, Hărniceşti and Sârbi Josani, in the late 1670s and early 1680s, continued unexpectedly at the turn of the 17th century in Vişeu de Jos and Sat Şugătag.

The wooden church from Vişeu de Jos was in all probability dated by an inscription from 1699,[133] which means the church carpenter finished his work in that year, before the final consecration. Vişeu de Jos is situated in the Vişeu Valley, quite far from the villages in the Cosău district, but actually not so far from Cuhea, the village from which the church carpenter moved the abandoned monastery church. We are therefore not surprised by his engagement in this part of the region, about two decade later. The church from Sat Şugătag was, in exchange, dendrochronologically dated from 1700 and the construction work probably started that year or the following ones. Sat Şugătag is situated in the Mara Valley, just the next village downstream from Hărniceşti, and it is possible the parishioners were accustomed with the itinerant church carpenter from the time he worked there. The long distance between Vişeu de Jos and Sat Şugătag, about 60 km, and the period of 1-2 years between their construction made possible a third church to be built in between them. If we follow some late church records, that intermediary church might have been the large parish church from Bârsana, erected around the year 1700.[134] The parish church from Bârsana was demolished at the end of the 19th century, soon after a new masonry one was finished. The other two wooden churches are still standing; of which the one from Vişeu de Jos was transferred in 1899 in the village of Botiza.

Unlike in the second itinerary, where we were limited to study a later work in the particular state of the church from Strâmtura, we have this time two well preserved later churches to go thoroughly into and compare with the earlier ones. I am therefore especially interested in: How much it changed the work of the church carpenter and what representative features did he retain after such a long time?

188 *Hărniceşti*. Detail from the portal: rosettes (a), the moulding rope (b) and the rampant arch (c). Photo: August 1997.

[133] On the southern wall of the narthex, outside, there is an indecipherable Cyrillic inscription which might have been the source from which it was regularly dated from 1699. The exposure to the direct sunlight appears to be the main reason of its degradation.
[134] ASM, fond 148, 1/1832-1860, 7.

189 *Vişeu de Jos*. The largest wooden church from the third itinerary, built in 1699 on the order of the noble Pop Ştefan in the noble village of Vişeu de Jos, was donated to the parish of Botiza where it stands since 1899. Photo from the rear: October 2000.

A large work

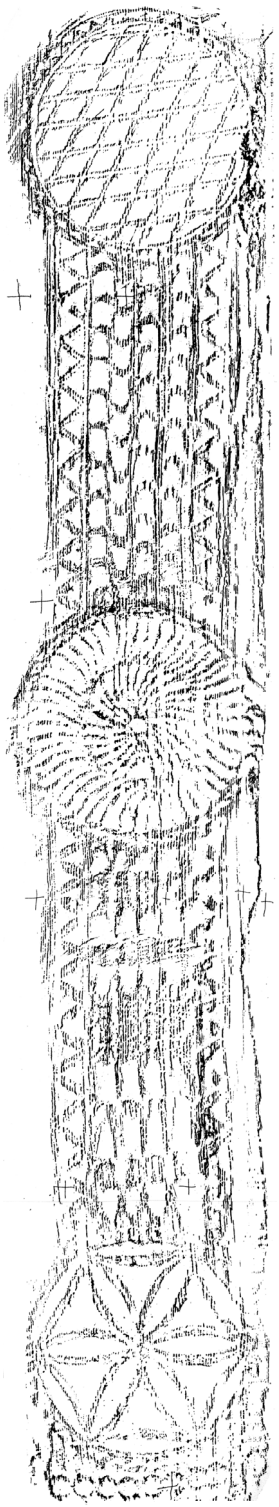
The church from Vişeu de Jos was built for a large community of nobles, lead by the ambitious founder Ştefan Pop (**189**).[135] The fabric was built of squared logs of fir forming plain walls and flush corners. At the corners, the church carpenter made use of the newly introduced and highly fashionable *dovetail* joints, provided with a hidden cog inside, demonstrating the church carpenters could shift among different types of joints. Although the log structure was entirely built of fir, the walls were ennobled with a median relief moulding rope all around, which is quite unexpected for this soft essence of wood.

One of the details we have continually followed for its importance in the resistance of the roof was the position of the upper eaves purlins, which in this case were located exactly like in the two sister churches from Hărniceşti and Sârbi Josani. Thus they were placed above the wall to support both the outer roof and the inner vault.

The main room was dimensioned a bit elongated and visibly lofty, endowing the interior of the church with a sense of monumentality. The light was let inside through numerous small windows both inside the nave and the narthex. We are unable to know if the present openings in the transverse inner wall enlarged some small earlier ones or just opened a blind wall. The narthex was only about 1 R ft longer than in Sârbi Josani and the base of the tower was sized about as much wider, but the height of the neck was built as one of the highest ever in Maramureş, no less than 3.5 R fa (1011.5 cm), accentuating the monumental appearance outside. The structure of the tower does not differ from those we find in Hărniceşti and Sârbi Josani. Moreover, inside the gallery of the tower it survived the separate structure hanging the bells, similar that from Sârbi Josani.

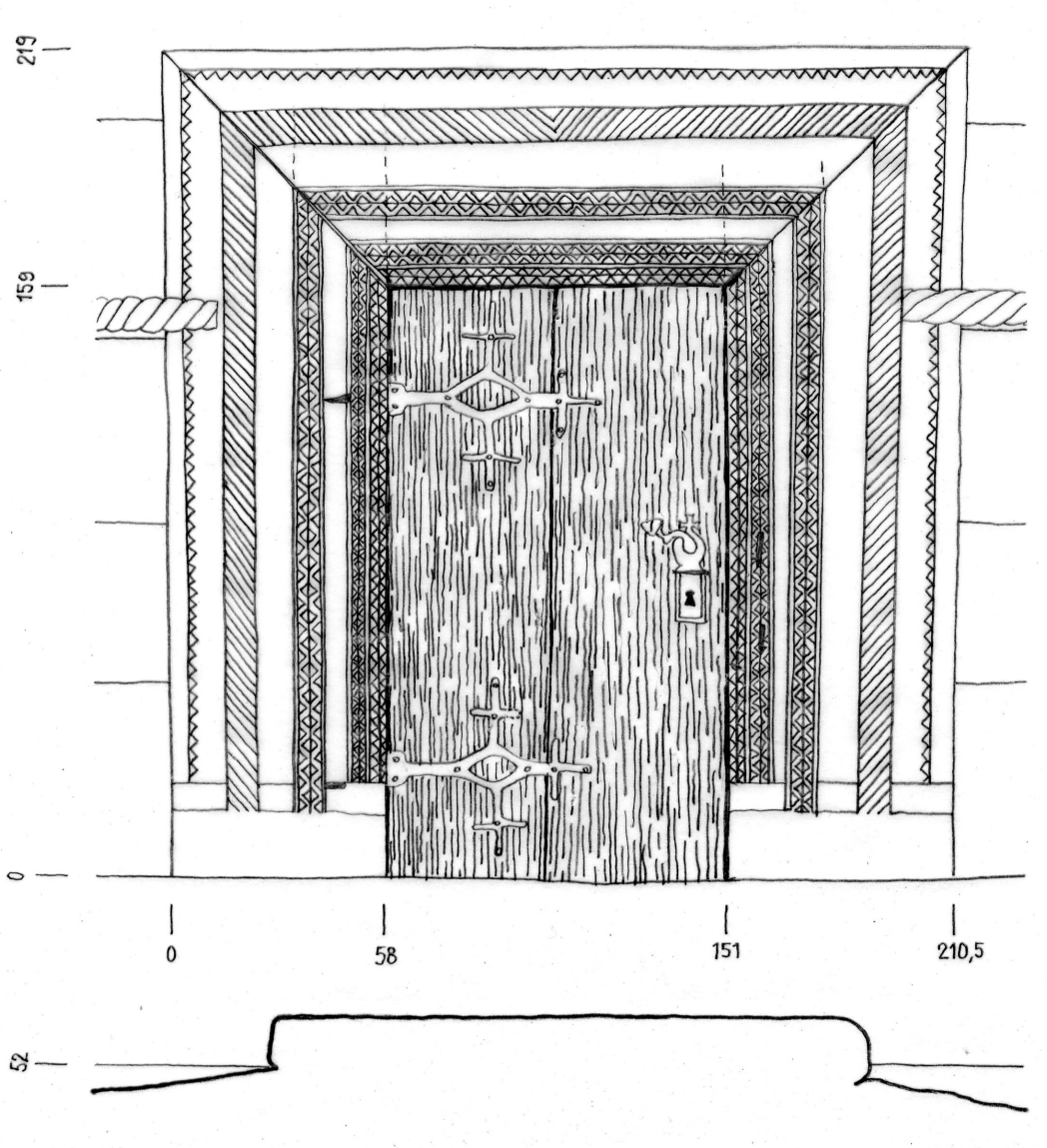
As in the first part of the itinerary, the assembly marks were combined, using the Cyrillic signs to designate the sides of the tower and the simple *carâmb* numbers to mark the order the joints were assembled (**134**). We should notice, however, the Cyrillic signs were the first four letters of the alphabet, indicating a much clearer order among the sides of the tower framing. Another significant particularity is the spontaneous shift in a few places from basic Cyrillic letters to reversed forms reminding of those from Văleni.

In Vişeu de Jos the second portal was no longer cut after traditional lines but identical with the fashionable one at the front, i.e. with a lintel flaring upwards. The portal of the entrance is the strongest evidence for the participation of the same church carpenter (**187**, C). We recognize the unchanged technique to dimension, cut and assemble the three pieces and nevertheless the characteristic linear composition surrounding the large aperture. While in Sârbi Josani we observed a clear inspiration from the beautiful portal of the upper church in the same village, in this one we rediscover the simple scheme displayed in Hărniceşti. Accordingly, the portal greet us with the distinctive rosettes along the outer margins, the straight relief moulding ropes in the middle and the rampant arches around the edge of the aperture. Obviously, the church carpenter used this time less and larger rosettes with shifting intricate patterns, but he accentuated their linear relation with small filigree cuts linking them together at sides like in a belt (**190**). Without any doubt, this is the most representative portal surviving from this itinerant church carpenter, and its continuity over two decades confirms the master chose it as a significant mark of his work.



190 *Vişeu de Jos*. Detail from the right jamb of the portal. Tracing: April 2002.

[135] MOL, C-99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 45.



191 *Sat Şugătag.* The portal at the entrance. Scale drawing 1:20, June 1996.

What happened next?

The church from Sat Şugătag offers us one of the most unexpected surprises. From the first contact with the portal of the entrance we become alerted by the significant brake with the earlier compositions (**191**). We are therefore fully entitled to ask ourselves if we deal with the same church carpenter or not.

The straight walls softened by a median moulding rope seem familiar from the earlier churches of this itinerary (**192**). The significant position of the eaves purlins tells us the same thing. If we then focus on the corner joints we recognize the same fashionable dovetail hook and hidden cog as in Vişeu de Jos. Moreover, the division of the rooms along the long sills is identical with that from Sârbi Josani, 5+5+2 R y (**111**, B). In addition to this, the tower framing (**113**) follows closely the structures earlier described in Vişeu de Jos, Sârbi Josani and Hărniceşti. Furthermore, the use of Cyrillic signs for sides and *carâmb* lines to numerate the joints speaks of the same working routine (**134**). And exactly like in Vişeu de Jos, the Cyrillic signs are the first four letters of the alphabet. Their character is also identical unveiling the same hand behind. How can all these constructive features speak so clearly for continuity while the composition of the entrance portal, the very mark of the church carpenter, not?

192 *Sat Șugătag*. The church is preserved in good condition. One of the specific features is the mouldings surrounding the log fabric on two levels, above both rows of windows. Wherever the horizontal mouldings appear they are cut above apertures indicating a symbolical distinction between the earthly world and the one above. Photo: April 1994.

It is true that the three pieces of the entrance portal were assembled with the same fashionable joints as those from Vişeu de Jos, Sârbi Josani and Hărniceşti, with a lintel flaring upwards. It is also easy to follow the basic linear character of the composition as in the previous ones. However, the earlier rampant arches and the round rosettes disappeared completely for the sake of a very straight move, following strictly the rectangular aperture. The only decorative element retained was the relief moulding rope. Parallel with the straight ropes, there were cut four other strips with small indented patterns. The indented strip along the edge of the aperture reminds, though, of the portal from Sârbi Josani, where it was borrowed from the portal of the upper church in the same village. In other words, the symbols were reduced to the binomial snake-running water, which were in fact still linked to the moon and bearing the same message but in an increasingly austere and veiled form.

Who was this carpenter who, although worked in the same way, wished to signal a new identity? And this change took place only the next village from Hărniceşti, where we have the oldest surviving portal from this itinerary. In my opinion, on the long way from Vişeu de Jos to Sat Şugătag, possibly via Bârsana, it took place an important shift of generations, probably from father to son. In this case we are as close as we can come to such a significant transfer of knowledge from one generation to another and the moment the new master took over the responsibility and expressed his status and individuality through a distinctive mark. Although we are not that close in the first itinerary, from Sokyrnytsia to Krainykovo it could have happened about the same thing.

If we accept the shift of generations in Sat Şugătag, than we also have to consider the father and the son worked together for some time. This means the church from Vişeu de Jos was built together. In this case, although the portal signal the responsibility was still held by the old master, we might suppose the shift from the earlier *tabled* joints to fashionable *dovetail* ones as well as the clear order of Cyrillic letters on the frame of the tower were caused by the younger master. Indeed, both features are found in the churches from Sat Şugătag and Vişeu de Jos, but not two decades earlier when the new master was probably too young to participate.

In conclusion, within the third itinerary we became acquainted with another two related church craftsmen. By following in their footsteps we have the unique chance to come as close as we can to understand the important shift of generations and transfer of knowledge, so vital for the continuity of the particular local art of building wooden churches. In this case, the transfer was not dramatic, since the new master had a role to play and a place to prove new fashions even before he completely took over the responsibility of building. He seems to have learned and proved his skills under the guidance of his predecessor and when he started alone it was just to create a personal mark.

The church carpenters involved in the third itinerary were without any doubt experienced craftsmen, able to build from small to large churches, harmonious in their balanced proportions and, as in Vişeu de Jos, even monumental. To the technical difficulties at the upper eaves they responded with one of the most consistent solutions: the eaves purlins were placed above the longitudinal walls to support the roof outside and the vault inside. With this location they on one hand solved the problem with bends in the eaves purlins and on the other hand maintained the traditional interdependence between the inner vault and the outer roof. They were probably not the first ones to use it, yet they embraced it and cleverly applied it. Obviously, the result was reduced protective upper eaves, but the basilical type of church had always a second skirt of roof beneath to rely on for the protection of the sills. This secondary skirt could easily be dimensioned large

enough to protect both the log fabric and the worshipers standing around the church.

The unmistakable open attitude of these church carpenters towards fashions and changes inside the church is well mirrored by the use of lintels flaring upwards in their portals, high apertures, dovetail joints in the later churches and nevertheless by the use of openings in the wall separating the women from men.

Although they were open for constructive improvements and fashions, their marks on the entrance portals display a quite traditional linear decorative composition, with large use in the vernacular art, reminding of the local art of making carpets.

Finally, their works indicate the church carpenters were from the southern part of Maramureş. Although we do not have a surviving work from the Iza Valley, it seems to me that they came from this part. The familiarity with the oak and the constant use of median decoration on the walls indicate again their possible origin from the lower part of the Iza Valley. We can not establish a sure connection with the master of the first itinerary, although we remarked their successive activity in almost the same region and the similar messages of their portals at the mythological-vernacular level. They might have belonged to the same family school but not necessarily from the same ramification of it.

193 *Sat Şugătag*. The motif of the cross inscribed in a sun disc, often found on the portals, was also used for crosses in the cemetery around the parish church from Sat Șugătag; this one dated from 1930s. Photo: April 1994.

2.3.4 Other itineraries

The three long itineraries established here represent only a few of the numerous threads in the local church architecture. The extant wooden churches suggest even other numerous shorter fragments of itineraries. Such short itineraries can be further studied in:

1. *Botiza (1594) and Ieud Deal (1611-21)*. The fragments of the old church from Botiza indicate in a high grade a church similar that from the neighbouring Ieud Deal, only about 10 km away over the hills. The church from Botiza[136] was quite small but it displayed a similar sculptural treatment of the inner consoles and of the spring of the vault as in Ieud Deal. These refinements, actually characterize the otherwise restrained later church. Both churches were built with covert corner joints. As some of the oldest known churches, it is very tempting to consider their church carpenter a predecessor of the daring master Gozdă from the second itinerary. More documentation and comparative work must be done, however, to verify this possibility.

2. *Onceşti (c. 1621) and Valea Stejarului (1615-20)*. Master carpenter *Gavril* seems to have been commissioned to build both parish churches, one right after the other. They represent the two typical models of local churches, one ample with two levels of eaves in the noble village of Onceşti and the other resembling a house, devoid of tower with an ancient roof structure and perhaps covered by thatch. Despite this formal distinctions dictated mainly by different social conditions, the quality of execution is pretty much the same. We should especially remark the tabled corner joints used in both churches, the oldest known in Maramureş, apart from the church from *Corneşti (1615)*, which was possibly built by the same church carpenter Gavril. If master Gavril was as skilful in covert joints as in the tabled ones he could have also built the parish churches from Ieud Deal and Botiza. However, the last two churches could have been constructed by a closely related team, as well.

3. *Moisei Monastery (1672) and Săliştea de Sus I Nistoreşti (1680)*. These two churches give the first impression to be built by different masters, though their hidden tower framings suggest the opposite. Between the two churches there are only 18 km along the old county road. Their different purposes led naturally to different approaches, yet, both of them are austere in their appearance. We can also accept a traditional tabled corner joint in the monastery and a more fashionable dovetail one in the parish from Săliştea de Sus I Nistoreşti.

4. *Giuleşti Monastery (1692) and Bârsana Monastery (1711)*. These are two very similar churches with many distinctive features.[137] The different models, one with a single level of eaves and the second one with two, should not blind us from the true features witnessing the work of the same carpenter. In plan, these two churches are almost identical. One of the most specific features for both churches is the gallery opened on both sides of the inner wall separating the women from men. They were not simply cut from the wall timbers but built up of posts and angle ties in the space left by excluding one row of timbers, explaining the missing wall joint at that level. In both churches the walls were built of slender squared timbers obtained from wide split logs. The missing heart wood combined with the high and slender sections led to the specific slight bending in the wall timbers. We don't know if the church carpenter was unaware or purposefully avoid making grooves in the underside of the walls. To improve the imperviousness, the spaces in between

[136] Baboş 2002:b, 230-248.
[137] Baboş 2000, 104-112.

the wall timbers were later closed in some places by means of slender pieces of wood and shingles.

From the former *Ieud Monastery (1709)* we have an idea of its plan, which resembled those from *Giuleşti* and *Bârsana*. Unfortunately, we know nothing of its wooden structure.[138] However, we can presume the same church carpenter behind all three wooden monastery churches.

5. *Rozavlea (1717-1720), Săliştea de Sus II Buleni (c. 1724) and Dragomireşti (c. 1722)?* One of the itineraries that needs more research includes the wooden churches built in a series after the Tatar army retreated through the Upper District in September 1717. The Tatars set on fire numerous villages and their churches and therefore the need for new constructions was acute in the following years, mobilizing not only the local carpenters but also others from the neighbouring villages to assist them. Consequently, we should not be surprised that these three churches appear to be built by the same church carpenter. The resemblance between the first two churches is obvious and there are many common characteristic features to be named. In plan and elevation they follow similar principles. The corner joint is the fashionable dovetail joint, which was quite rapid to make. Their tower framings retain similar structures and assembly marks. In their very austere appearance the constructions were sculpturally softened only along the spring of the perfect semicylindrical vault. Their portals are very simple, with minimal decoration in Săliştea de Sus II Buleni.

To link Dragomireşti without reservations with the first two churches requires more research in details. The spring of the vault was replaced in 1936 and therefore we lost one of the possible common features. The tower was repaired with the same occasion and several assembly marks were lost, too. We need to continue our research around the assembly marks from all three churches and the result will probably become more convincing. The plan and the elevation are in general very similar, though, with an increased monumentality character in Dragomireşti.

In addition, the church from Dragomireşti shows some similarities with the church from *Ieud Şes*, which could have been an early work of the same master carpenter in this area. The same austerity and accentuated monumentality characterize both constructions. The plain walls timbers were interlocked with fashionable dovetail joints and pierced by small pointed windows to let the light inside. The portal of the entrance from Ieud Şes retains a decorated lintel from a former church,[139] otherwise it displays the same simple plain face as in Dragomireşti. A significant detail is the shape of the iron hinges from the inner doors of both churches which were by all probabilities made by the same smith. Further research may infirm or strengthen the picture of an active church carpenter in the upper Iza Valley before and after 1717, with a significant role in rebuilding the communities after the devastating Tatar retreat through the area.

Finally, the church from Ieud Şes opens the way for comparative analyzes with the church from Vişeu de Jos and thus a possible link with the entire third itinerary.

6. *Bushtyno (1776), Danylovo (1779) and Steblivka (1797).* In the oral tradition from Bushtyno it is remembered the local church was built by two carpenters from the neighbouring village of Steblivka assisted by 6 local carpenters. I suppose the rivalry between these villages made this valuable information survive. The vague outline of the vanished church from Bushtyno is known from an old picture and it seems to remind the one from Steblivka. The church from Steblivka burned in 1994 and only the rests can still be studied. The only surviving church of this group stands in Danylovo and it was erected soon

[138] Baboş 2000, 112.
[139] This is a curious feature, which can be observed even in Deseşti and Suciu de Sus.

after that from Bushtyno. The church from Danylovo and Steblivka represents two late versions of the model with eyes in the antechurch, reminding those built in the first itinerary in the same area by the Alch family. It is possible the two masters from Steblivka inherited or copied from them this particular model that gave some of the most beautiful wooden churches in the region. These carpenters used Latin and Cyrillic for inscriptions on the portals and Latin letters for the assembly marks on the foot of the tower from Danylovo. The former blind wall separating the women from men, opened probably for the first time by master Marco Alch, was further opened by the masters from Steblivka in the last two known churches.

All these short fragments of itineraries strengthen the general picture given by the first three long itineraries. The carpenters travelled and worked intensively along a valley, in a district or right across the region. Their presence in one area seems to have often generated a series of new constructions in the parishes around. From this perspective, we can understand why some archive data points out certain wooden churches from a limited area were built one after the other. Such possible further series can be presumed in:

1. *Lower Talabor Valley and around*: Zolotarovo (1692), Kopashnevo (1696), Drăgoeşti (Drahovo, 1703), Drăgoeşti Monastery (1705), Criciova Monastery (1706) and Ciumuleşti (Chumalovo, 1709). Starting from the vicinity of Nyzhnie Selyshche, this seems to have been another itinerary of the Alch family, reaching the noble parishes in the Talabor Valley.
2. *Lower Black Iza (Rika) Valley and around*: Pryborzhavske (Zadnia, 1724), Breaza (Berezovo, 1724), Herinceni Monastery (1724), Herinceni (Horinchovo, 1725) and Vuchkove (1728). This itinerary seems to continue the earlier one, quite in the vicinity of Nyzhnie Selyshche. Thus, the Alch family was very probably responsible for these wooden churches, too.
3. *Upper District after the Tatar retreat in 1717*: Rozavlea, Sălişte a de Sus I Buleni, Dragomireşti, Săcel I, Săcel II, Moisei I, Moisei II, Borşa I and Borşa II. With some reservations, the first three churches were already mentioned to be the eventual work of a single church carpenter. In addition to these it is possible that some of the other ones were also built by him. In Borşa II din Jos, instead, the church appears to have been built by a distinct church carpenter or crew.
4. *Tisa Valley*: Biserica Albă (Bila Tserkva, 1740), Peri (Hrushevo, 1740), Kobyletska Poliana (1741). This seems to have been an itinerary of the church carpenters from the south.

From the old master in the third itinerary we learned the church carpenters were also involved in the transfer of the old wooden churches. Moreover, apart from transfers who were comparatively rare, they must have been involved even in repairs. The wooden churches needed repairs from time to time at the roof and tower, sometimes replacements of sills, enforcements and additions. These interventions could range from limited to difficult enterprises, with high importance for the survival of the wooden churches. Indeed, it was needed a church carpenter with great experience who mastered the advanced techniques and the elaborate or possibly secret principles involved in such complex constructions. The written sources from the 18th century give a picture of astonishing numerous repairs, which must have involved the experienced itinerant church carpenters and many more local ones.

It is possible that some of the church carpenters specialised themselves only in repairs. Their existence and itineraries would probably remain for the most part unknown to us. We have some signatures and information about them almost only from the 19th century.

2.4 The role of the church carpenters

The present research enabled some new perspectives in the organizational structure of the local church carpenters and their contribution to the local church architecture especially during the 17th century and the first half of the 18th century. The surviving wooden churches unveiled the existence of two important family schools, one around Hust, of the Alch family from Nyzhnie Selyshche, and the other one in the south, most probably in the lower Iza Valley. The Alch family seems to have worked in the lower part of the Lower District, in the neighbouring county of Ugocea in the villages close to Maramureş and perhaps in more places from the Sighet district than the parish church from Rona de Jos point to. The southern family school seems to have been ramified during the early 17th century covering the Cosău, Upper and partially the Sighet districts. If there was a third family school it might only have existed in between the two schools, eventually around the centre from the Peri Monastery. Unfortunately, the oldest wooden churches from this area are almost entirely vanished and the churches in the Apşiţa Valley belong to the southern school.

The number of itinerant church carpenters active in the region at the same time is difficult to determine. The unexpected tight series of churches in the first itinerary gave us a sense of how much time and energy it took an experienced master to build a new wooden church. I presume about 3-4 church carpenters or crews were constantly necessary to cover the vast region of *old Maramureş*[140] in the 17th century and certainly more during the next one. Within an active life of 20 years they could renew together about half of the wooden churches from more than 100 Eastern communities. However, as already mentioned, there was a great need for maintenance and the church carpenters must have been also involved in this almost as demanding process.

A wooden church was not built by a single craftsman. Master Marko and master Gozdă signed alone but they might have had someone from their families to assist them. The masters from the third long itinerary worked together in Vişeu de Jos and the oral tradition from Bushtyno suggests two related church carpenters worked together. In each case there was only one leading while the other following one or two were assisting and probably learning. Nevertheless, the contribution of the local carpenters for the rough work was essential, and the reminded participation of 6 local carpenters in Bushtyno can be close to former realities.

The great homogeneity among the wooden churches from both schools indicates the church carpenters worked in a single regional tradition. At least from the turn of the 16th century to the first half of the 18th century, the knowledge of building wooden churches was seemingly maintained within the family, transferred from generation to generation with small changes and variations. Whenever the individual masters were able to be personal, they created own marks and small particularities that distinguished their works from others. We can follow them with more reliability along 2-3 generations, but, they give the impression to have created during several generations threads like family schools through the sacred local architecture. No wonder that the basic features of the church with *eyes* from Rona de Jos can be recognized almost entirely more than one and a half century later in Steblivka. The extended thread of this particular family school appears to have persisted along 7-8 generations, while the churches survived from only 3 or 4 of them. The ramification of the family school in the Southern Maramureş, although it complicated our search for shifts among church carpenters, it also contributed to

[140] Verkhovyna and the mountainous part of the Sighet District were covered by other church carpenters working in a partially different tradition.

that homogeneity which so strongly characterise the churches from this part of the region.

Throughout the established itineraries we discovered that the multiple valences of a church carpenter can't be entirely defined by one work. Who would have earlier imagined that master Gozdă, after a modest church with many ancient details, would dare to engage next time in one of the largest ever built in Maramureş? Time and again, the itinerant church carpenters demonstrated to have been malleable to local conditions. Just like master Gozdă, master Marco, master Gavril and the one building the monastery churches in Giuleşti, Ieud and Bârsana, seem to have shifted from one model to another in reaction to local conditions and preferences. Whenever necessary they could overcome the lack of resources or respond carefully to particular conservative demands. For example, they were ready to replace iron pieces like hinges, door bolts, crosses and even glazed frames with wooden made ones. The same thing can be said about the use of old types of roofs, the southern entrances or the number of doors to the sanctuary, which must have been demanded by the clients. The itinerant carpenters had to be receptive at the various requests of the more or less ambitious local founders. Accordingly, the use of fashionable or ancient features could rather indicate the general taste of the customers, their resources and not the initiative of a church carpenter in the first hand.

The role of the church carpenters in the construction of the local wooden churches was, however, not minimized by how wealthy or ambitious the customers were. On the contrary, they stood entirely for the excellent skills and the high knowledge that was required to erect these churches. Along the centuries they rationalized their work and refined their art to become as effective and perfect as possible, achieving true works of art in their craftsmanship. Both as carpenters and artists they showed evident preoccupations to be in contact with the available experiences, improvements, ideas and fashions in their times and their part of the world.

If we should concentrate in a few words some of their most important professional principles than we should refer to:

1. *The proper selection and treatment of the material* for the right purpose.
2. *The sun* as the reference for the orientation and direction of moves in their work and their created sacred rooms.
3. *The starting width* as the measure for all the main sizes, proportions and the capacity of the rooms.
4. *The flush corner joints together with the plain and well sealed walls* as the most secret and refined technical features and nevertheless the major signs of distinction between the sacred and the profane in the local architecture.
5. *The position of the upper eaves* as the key to prevent the technical complications caused by large, heavy vaults and roofs.
6. *The erection of the tower* in a distinct timber frame technique above the log structure of the narthex and eventually the porch, to work as a single body.
7. *The decoration of the portal* as a symbolical message to the worshipers and a mark of identity and high status of the church carpenter. The carpenter could eventually sign it by using the title of his profession, i.e. carpenter or master.

The church carpenters were some of the most dynamic and most respected rural craftsmen in Maramureş. They possessed knowledge in their craftsmanship out of the ordinary profane one, at the highest level circulating throughout the rural Europe. From this perspective, their role in the construction of the local wooden

churches was essential. Nevertheless important was their grade of education, literacy and by all probabilities of deep initiation in the mysteries of the sacred rooms they built. This was almost necessary even for the simplest local Byzantine churches. Their professional formation occurred practicing in the family or as an apprentice of a master while the religious education might have taken place for a time in some monasteries.

The activity of professional itinerant church carpenters in Maramureş until the turn of the 18th century was not unique. In Transylvania we can distinguish church carpenters like Fleanţu Nicoară from Agrij or the family of church carpenters from Chendrea, active in the regions of Sălaj and Bihor in the first half of the 18th century.[141] Further on the continent, the builders of the medieval wooden churches from Little Poland[142] and Sweden[143] as well as of the wooden churches from the 17th and 18th centuries in Norway, Sweden and Finland[144] were also rural church carpenters with high competence and training, distinct from the numerous common ones. These similarities throughout rural Europe indicate the existence until the turn of the 18th century of a specialisation in sacred log constructions separate from the regional vernacular one. The church carpenters were characterised by high competence and special training. Their advanced knowledge had a general sacred purpose and essentially consisted in building straight, plain and well sealed walls with flush corner joints. This basic knowledge seemingly originated from long back in the Middle Ages and was probably very sparingly used in secular constructions until it was gradually transferred to secular building at the end of the 18th century and later. A considerable transfer like this might have occurred during the gradual shift from traditional churches erected by specialised church carpenters to fashionable or standard churches designed by learned architects, as it appears to have been the case in Maramureş, Ukraine and Scandinavia.[145]

Before we close this chapter dedicated to the church carpenters from Maramureş we should conclude that despite inevitable limitations we have identified two local family schools and recovered important traces from the activity of some of the most important and productive church carpenters ever active in this region. Their essential role for the high technical standard and artistic refinement was also emphasized. This would never have been possible without the testimony of the surviving constructions.

[141] Frenţ or Fleanţu Nicoară from Agrij signed the wooden churches from Fildu de Sus (1726), Ban (1726) and Valea Neagră de Jos (1738) together with carpenters from Chendrea (by origin from Abrud?), who were by all appearances also responsible for the churches from Brădet (1733), Rieni (1754), Nadiş (1738) and Horoatu Cehului (1747); Ghergariu 1973, 256; Godea 1996, 169-177, ill. 4, 5, 19; *Monumente istorice bisericeşti din Eparhia Oradei. Bisericile de lemn*, 328-329, 350-351, 219-222, Oradea 1977.
[142] Brykowski 1981, 310-311.
[143] Sjömar 1988, 286-290.
[144] Sjöström, Terttu Knapas and Storsletten 2000, 17-33.
[145] Hewryk 1987, 86; Sjöström, Terttu Knapas and Storsletten 2000, 17-33.

3 The founders

194 *Cuhea*. The unique portraits of the founding pair Vasile and Ivona Săpânţan from 1754, both of about 50.5 x 59 cm. The portrait of Vasile (above) stood on the right side, nearby his armchair. The painting representing Ivona (bellow) stood on the opposite side and was affected by a lightning that damaged the north-eastern corner of the nave. Photo, June 1998.

The founders

In the earlier chapters it was revealed that from the 16th until the 18th century the wooden churches from *old Maramureş* were built by highly trained itinerant professional church carpenters. It was also underlined their high technical performances, breathtaking courage to engage in some large constructions or meticulousness and sensibility in the smallest decorative details. It remains here to ask: For whom did they build these churches? Who were the customers? What can we learn about them? And how did they influence the construction of the local wooden churches?

This chapter aims to shift the perspective inside the local sacred wooden architecture from those who built to those who commissioned and used the numerous Eastern churches. Therefore, it is essential to identify them and read from their foundations what their tastes, intentions and ambitions were. In the end I hope to discover how their social status in the unique local conditions influenced the character of the wooden churches.

3.1 The foundation and protection of churches

In order to approach the founders and learn about their involvement in the construction of houses of worship in Maramureş, I firstly wish to explore the customary relationship between founders, patrons, benefactors on one side and churches on the other side, in the limits of the available sources and of the relevance for the local church architecture.[1]

The term of *founder* (*ctitor*) was largely used throughout the region. In exchange, the term *patron*, indicating the founder or the heirs of the founder who took care of the foundation, was probably seldom if ever mentioned in the documents concerning the Eastern Church of Maramureş until the beginning of the 18th century, as far as the historical sources are available, although the conducts of the local landlords point out they plainly used their rights of patronage. Some of the first consistent records of patrons were made towards the middle of the 18th century, after the Uniation,[2] yet not for a long time since the patronage was brought to an end, probably at the turn of the 18th century. In the next century the only patron of the local Eastern churches remained the Aerario, i.e. the royal treasury, but limited to the villages in its possession. The other churches were transferred in the common protection of the community whoever the village owners were.[3] In these conditions our main documentation in the local patronage

[1] The historical research concerning the relation between founders, patrons and Eastern churches in Transylvania and Maramureş is much reduced, the main problems being recently examined by the Romanian historian Adrian Rusu (1997, 54-62).

[2] The interest for the patrons after the incorporation of Maramureş in the Uniate diocese of Mukachevo can be explained by the increasing demands raised by the majority of the Uniate clergy, who was of serf condition, to emancipate from their tutelage, reach an economical security and ascend to a privileged juridical status. Inevitably, the patrons or, in other words, the landowners were the part these demands were addressed to. They were expected to allocate parish lands from their estates and exempt the clergy from their serfdom. These privileges were generously granted by the Habsburg emperors, but they were not able to control either the local landowners or the county assembles. For this reason, the central authorities had to make use of all the political, administrative and juridical means to continually enforce the imperial decisions. The other part of the clergy, from the noble villages, was for the most part of noble condition and therefore not affected by the imperial reforms. Ghitta 2001, 155-203; Pekar 1992, 32-33.

[3] In the villages not owned by the treasury, the parishes were maintained either with the free ordinary contribution of the community (*Liberae Ordinarii Collationis*) or with the Episcopal support (*Liberae Collationis Episcopalis*); *Shematismus* 1822, 41-78. The end of the right of patronage certainly deserves more research and clarifications in the future.

of parish churches is reduced to a few final decades, but it often refers to much older realities and practices.

In the Hungarian Kingdom, the right of patronage (*jus patronatus*) was a class privilege granted to the nobility, i.e. the feudal lords.[4] This probably meant the patronage was directly linked to property rights. If a worshiper, other than the landlord, founded a church, the right of patronage remained the attribute of the landowner and not of the one directly involved in the establishment. This is probably the reason why the founders were not necessarily the same with the patrons. For instance, in 1774 the patrons of the parish from Cuhea were the noble families Mariş, Bufte and Bizău, while the founder of the beautiful wooden church was the noble Vasile Săpânțan and his family (**194**).[5] Moreover, not only a noble family could become a founder, but even the serfs and any poor contributor, whether they possessed land in that village or not.[6] However, the specific condition from Maramureş, where there lived numerous landed families of Eastern rite, made often possible that the landowners and patrons were also founders of their churches.

For a landowner, to build a modest rural church was a minor problem compared to the necessity to maintain a priest. That is considered to have been the main reason the patronage was needed.[7] Consequently, the patron was in the first hand entitled to appoint and maintain a priest, and subsequently contributed to the erection, endowment, protection and maintenance of a house of worship.[8] Not surprisingly the priests in the noble villages were often from the noble families and in the serf villages from among the tenants. Probably with the intention to avoid conflicts, the patronising families of Eastern rite from a certain noble village often preferred to maintain 2 or more priests in a parish, one from each main noble family.[9] In Ieud, for instance, the three families with right of patronage in 1774 were Balea, Damian and Flore and the priest recorded in 1751 were Lupu and Alexius Balea, Ionaş Damian and Teodor Flore. In Şieu the patron families were Dunca, Man and Vlad and the priests were Ioan Dunca, Gheorghe Man and Nicolae Vlad.[10]

In the catholic Hungarian Kingdom, the Orthodox Church did not enjoy official recognition and therefore was not protected by law. The existence of the Eastern churches was tolerated only by the right of the landowners to build whatever they pleased on their own estates.[11] As a consequence, they could dispose of them as assets without coming in conflict either with the juridical laws or with the church canons. This was certainly the case in 1516, when among the disputed properties in the villages of Ruscova, Rozavlea and Poienile Izei there were also named the parish wooden churches.[12] From this perspective, the special status of Maramureş in the former Northern Hungary comes plainly forward. The numerous nobles and landowners of Eastern rite from Maramureş had the resources, the rights and the best motivations to take care of and lead their own church, both at the local and regional level.

The realities from the 17th and 18th centuries speak of various founders, from wealthy individuals who were able to donate land to the church or built churches

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[4] Jean Bérenger and Daniel Tollet, "La genèse de l'État moderne en Europe Orientale: Synthèse et bilan", *Genèse de l'État moderne – Bilans et perspectives*, 47-48, CNRS Paris 1990.
[5] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 54.
[6] The dedicatory inscriptions published by Ioan Bârlea (1909) contains numerous serf founders.
[7] Rusu 1999, 236.
[8] Rusu 1999, 236; Ghitta 2001, 164-165.
[9] Bud 1911, IV.
[10] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 56-57 and DAZO, 151, op 1, 839/1745, 4.
[11] Rusu 1997, 54-55.
[12] Entz Géza, "Mittelalterliche rumänische Holzkirchen in Siebenbürgen", *Omagiu lui Gheorghe Oprescu*, 168, Bucureşti 1961.

and pay for the murals to collective donors of necessary church books, chandeliers or wax candles. All these were founders. Was there a differentiation among deeds? How were the rights distributed among the founders and transferred to the next generations?

The records of founders and deeds on only a small amount of items from what was once preserved in the churches throughout Maramureş surpass any expectation. The founders seem to have strived to sign from the smallest to the most significant acts of endowing.[13] In order to understand the right significance of each act of endowment we need to find the customary local hierarchy among them. All donations were welcomed but some were valued more than others and thus even the role and the status of the founders derived from them was distinguished.

One of the significant documents in this sense is a diary from the parish of Bocicoel, referring to events probably from the second half of the 18th century. In the chronology recorded there, the first and most important founder was the noble Zah from Onceşti because "*he bequeathed the land under the church*". The second founders were "*Gogotanii, because they were the masters building the church, being also helped by the villagers*". These masters also made some necessary donations of church books and sacred vessels. The following founder was Gogotă Dumitru who "*painted the catapetesma*". Thereafter it followed Gogotă Simion who bought a missal, his wife Ierină who bought a surplice, Habotă Vasilie who bought robes and wax candles, Radu Toader who bought a Gospel and Triodion and so on. Among the last ones but nevertheless important, Sima Costan humbly named himself as the parish priest.[14] Before we go through this hierarchy, we should note that the two major landowners of the village with right of patronage in 1774, the nobles Ionaş Săpânţan and Mihai Balea, were missing from among the founders.

This description of contributions displays both general and particular situations. For the first it is important to notice that Bocicoel was a serf community, and here, more than elsewhere in the noble villages around, the necessity to convince a landowner from outside the community to grant a piece of land in return for the recognition as the main founder or eventually patron clearly comes forward. For the rest, the villagers took care themselves. Hence, the first and most important founder in Maramureş was the one who donated the land and eventually even the necessary timber. The condition of the Gogotan carpenters as the second founders is particular in this village for the simple reason that the commissioners happened to be also carpenters themselves. And they not necessarily built a new church, since the local tradition indicated that the old church was transferred from the neighbouring village of Vişeu de Jos.[15] In general, the second place seems to have been reserved for those who commissioned and paid the master carpenters and not for the master carpenters themselves, who were itinerant. Thereafter it was the natural place for those who invested in the murals, iconostasis, Royal Doors and icons. The church books, bells, sacred vessels, altarpieces, robes, furniture were also expensive and the contributions highly necessary. Last but not least, the priests were often the true enterprisers who urged one or the other to make offerings to the church. For this reason the priests were present in diverse types of dedicatory inscriptions and records. Eventually, the entire parish was involved in various degrees or, on the contrary, one founder

[13] The priest Ioan Bârlea (1909) carefully transcribed and published a great number of those existing in the Romanian parishes at the beginning of the 20th century. The continual decay and loss of heritage that characterized the entire 20th century makes his effort a prised gift to any research in the local history. Similar attempts, though limited in relation to the vast material at hands at that time, were made by Iavorskij (1931) and Sakhanev (1932) on the Ukrainian side.
[14] Bârlea 1909, 13.
[15] Bud 1911, 27.

could cumulate several deeds, from the granted land to murals and church books. The implication of the founders varied from parish to parish and only the saved records on their deeds can give us today an idea of it. Last but not least, the poorest ones who could not make donations could contribute working with their bare hands, which, in fact, was also considered an act of foundation.

195 *Ieud Deal*. A group of worshipers at the Last Judgement have to pass a difficult trial. They are accused by a devil for quarrels in the church but the guiding angel defends them invoking their repentance. This mural was made sometime after the repairs from 1765 by Alexandru Ponehalski (Pop-Bratu 1981, 32-42) and aimed to remind the worshippers the difficult tests that await those who disputed for places or for other reasons inside the church. Church records from the first half of the 18th century often recorded conflicts for places inside the churches. Photo from the wall separating the women from men: July 1997.

The benefices resulted from contributions were directly mirrored in the places partitioned to each family inside the church and the cemetery around. The worthiest ones deserved the first places in front of the iconostasis. The great prestige gained from the place within the community inside the church during mass must have urged the potential founders to plan their contributions long in advance and maybe even negotiate it with others and establish the future order before the work started. The only ones apparently excepted from these concerns were the clerics, who had their established places, but even they had to think for their descendants and not least care for the salvation of their souls and of their ancestors. If we follow the recorded deeds than we often find them dated around the moment the church was erected or suffered a major repair. [16]

Things could complicate a lot in mixed communities of nobles and serfs. Was a serf able to stand inside the church before a noble one, on the strict basis of his contribution? We have a significant example from Bârsana, from late in the 19th century, when the present large parish stone church was finished. One of the

[16] It would have been interesting to study, if the arrangements changed or not after new major deeds. What happened when the old church had to be replaced or suffer a major renovation?

poorest inhabitants with his two daughters contributed along many years working at the construction of the parish church more than anybody else. When the church was finished, one of the richer parishioners protested because the poor man stood before him, probably recalling old customs. It needed the firm intervention of the parish priest Michail Kökényesdy to solve the conflict. The priest promised the poor man a place inside the sanctuary if he was not allowed to maintain the worthy place he earned inside the church.[17]

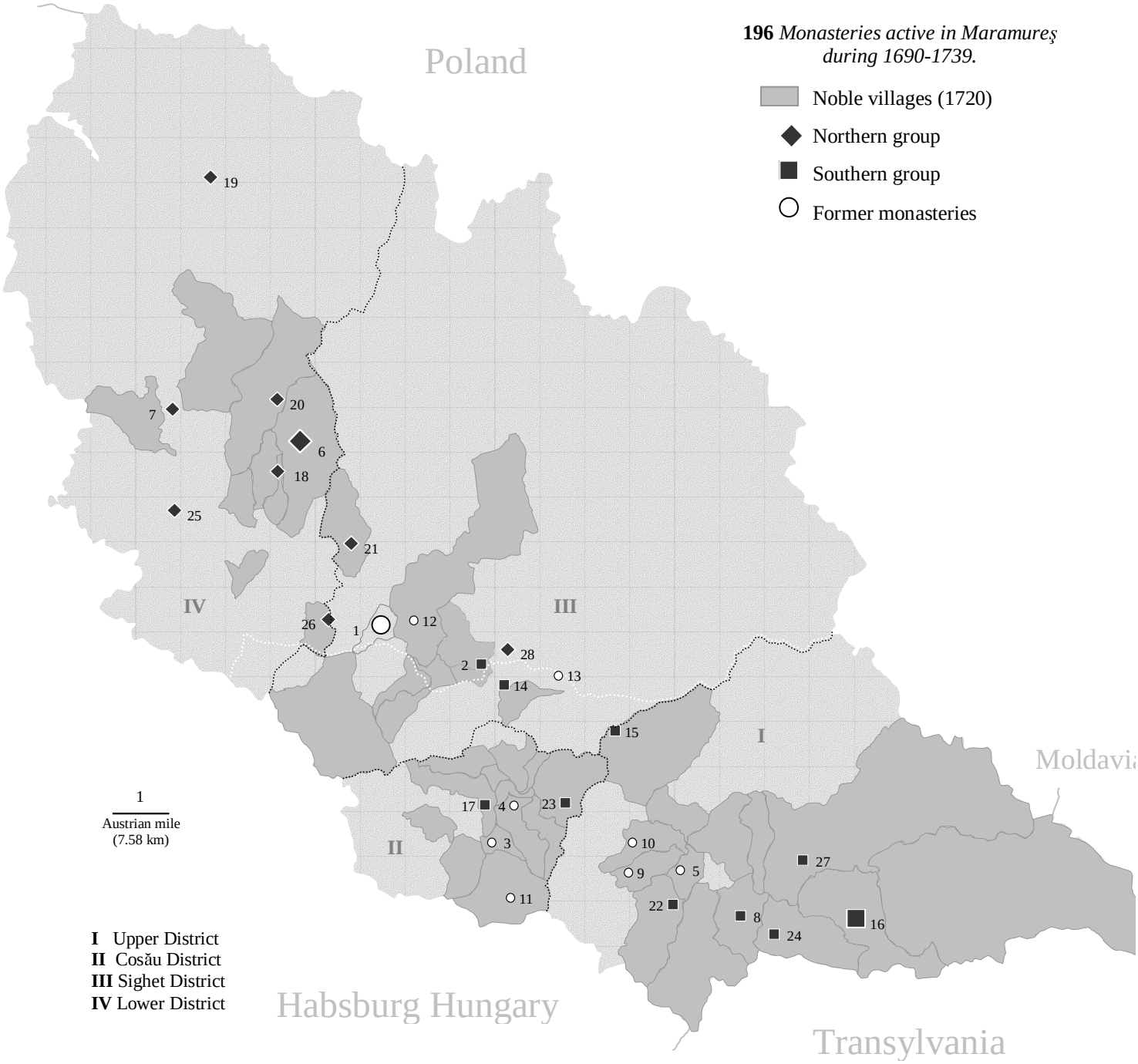
Thus, the places inside the churches were partitioned among the parishioners according to their contribution and probably rank. They were written down on letters and used in any conflict of inheritance according to strict rules. From the turn of the 17th century and the beginning of the next one, there are several reports of actions at law between noble families competing for places inside the churches (**195**).[18]

Not only were the places inherited but the right of patronage, too. We have clear indications of how the descendants cared for the foundations of their ancestors. For example, when Dunca Şimon donated a book with the Acts of the Apostles (*Apostol*) to the church of Sârbi Josani, in 1757, he made it not only for the remembrance and salvation of himself and his wife Rădnicu Maria, but also for his father Văsiu, grandfather Ionuţu, grand-grandfather Ionce, and his uncle Ionci Simion,[19] who were by all probabilities the former patrons of the church. The church itself was probably founded by his grand-grandfather around 1685. Even in 1786 the only patron of the church was Petru from the same Dunca de Sârbi noble family,[20] most probably a direct descendant of Şimon.

The authority of the noble founders and their descendants was so great and their right of patronage so uncompromising that no outer interference was allowed. A memorably incident took place in Ieud in 18th July 1755 between the archimandrite Manasse Pukats from Bedeu Monastery and the main patron of the Ieud Monastery, the noble Mihai Balea, the future assistant prefect of Maramureş. The archimandrite wanted the patrons to transfer the monastery in a better place. This suggestion made the patron so furious that he threatened to toll the bell and call the villagers to beat him and drive him away if he tried to encroach on his rights. Mihai Balea also firmly added "*hic mihi nemo imperabit, nos sumus Domini*", i.e. "*here nobody will command me, we are the masters*".[21] This unique episode plainly reveals the firm attitudes of the noble founders and patrons towards their own or inherited establishments.

The hierarchy among the founders we drafted here and the potential rights derived from it would further help us to distinguish the major figures behind the Eastern churches and understand their role. Therefore, the next step is to come closer the foundations, identify their founders and learn about their intentions and means to achieve them. A necessary distinction would be further made between the rigid structure of parishes and the relatively free monastic establishments. The different conditions in the noble and the serf villages also require separate discussions.

[17] Inf. Nuţu Roşca, 1997.
[18] In Ieud, Săpânţa (1689), Berbeşti (1698), Sarasău (1699, 1704); Iorga 1906, 233; Cziple 1916, 308-311, 314, 316-321; Filipaşcu 1997, 107.
[19] Bârlea 1909, 181/650.
[20] MOL, C 104, A 54/1786-1789.
[21] Aleksei Petrov, "Staraia viera i uniia v XVII-XVIII vv", *Sbornik statei, posviashchennykh pochitateliami*, II, 972, n. 3, St. Petersburg 1908; Kinah 1930, 433-434.



196 *Monasteries active in Maramureş during 1690-1739.*

Medieval monasteries

1. Peri (1389)-1660s
2. Biserica Albă -1788
3. Sârbi -1660s
4. Călineşti (1390-1414)
5. Cuhea (1411)-1660s
6. Uglea (1552)-1788-
7. Herinceni (1548)-1717

Monasteries founded before 1690

8. Săliştea de Sus 1650? -1751?
9. Şieu
10. Rozavlea -1667
11. Budeşti (1647?)
12. Apşa din Jos (1555)
13. Lunca
14. Rona de Jos (1652)
15. Petrova 1643-
16. Moisei 1672-1855-

Monasteries founded during the revived bishopric of Maramureş 1690- c1739

17. Giuleşti 1692-1788
18. Criciova 1693-1767
19. Soymi 1698-1741
20. Drăgoeşti 1705-1756-
21. Ialova 1708-1749
22. Ieud 1709-1788
23. Bârsana 1711-1788
24. Săcel -1716-1748
25. Barania 1716-1788-
26. Bedeu 1719-1788
27. Vişeu de Sus 1719-1762
28. Bocicoi 1719-1751

197 *Bârsana.* Pop Nuțu *de la chiliuță* gave us a recent example of how monastic establishments could spontaneously appear once in Maramureş. While World War II was still ravaging the world he was urged in a dream to establish a monastery dedicated to the peace of the world. In the vision he had, an overwhelming score of angels of light surrounded two churches and sung chants dedicated to the Mother of the Lord. A rainbow led him to the site and he built with limited resources the churches after the images in his dream, the one in the foreground in the summer of 1944 and the second one a few years later. Photo: July 1997.

3.1.1 The monasteries

In Maramureş, the Orthodox private monasteries formed a separate structure among the parishes. While the parishes had their natural place in the heart of the communities, the monasteries were intentionally located in secluded places, far from the human settlements. Despite their isolation, the monastic establishments played a leading role in the religious life of the Orthodox natives. The main monasteries were meant to be the spiritual and cultural centres of the region and, whenever they became residences of the church heads, they turned into centres of the religious administration. In need, they could also become peaceful places to take refuge or retire.

The cultural role of the monasteries from Maramureş in certain moments was not at all peripheral as it might seem. In some of these centres occurred the first translations into vernacular Romanian[22] and were probably written some of the earliest historical and chivalrous creations regarding the Romanians.[23]

Those who engaged in the foundation of these monastic establishments were those who expressly assumed to protect the very essence of the Orthodox confession, involve in and influence its fate at the regional scale. Who were those founders and what were their intentions?

[22] Panaitescu 1965, 68-70; Vetişanu 1995, 84-111; Rusu 1999, 312-314.
[23] Ovidiu Pecican, "Literatura Cavalerească în Maramureşul românesc (sec XIV)", *Viață privată, mentalități colective şi imaginar social în Transilvania*, 109-112, Oradea, Cluj 1996.

A religious centre

Peri Monastery should be remarked as the most significant Orthodox ecclesiastic establishment known in the past of Maramureş. Its importance comes from the end of the 14th century when it was granted with direct patriarchal protection, providing its ecclesiastic authority, and was endowed with large possessions, securing its economical basis. On these two bases it grew not an ordinary monastery but a spiritual and cultural centre for the region. Who made this possible and why? The letter of protection from the Byzantine Patriarch Antonie, dated 14 August 1391,[24] and a confirmation from 1 May 1404 of the donation were fortunately saved, revealing the founders and some of their intentions.[25]

The Patriarch's main decision was to take the Peri Monastery under the patriarchal protection. What did this mean for the monastery? According to the Byzantine practice, the hegumen of the Peri Monastery became an exarch, a deputy of the patriarch with a qvasiepiscopal supremacy over Maramureş and large Transylvanian domains pertaining to the founding family. The attributes of the new exarch were to lead, learn, judge and correct the priests and laymen in all spiritual matters, as well as to consecrate churches in the name of the Patriarch. To perpetuate this privilege the Patriarch invested the founders with the right to elect the Hegumen in agreement with the monks of the monastery. [26]

As the Patriarch acknowledged, he made this decision at the request of the noble Drag and his brother voivode Balc, who inherited the monastery from their forefathers. Such an initiative could not come from any noble who owned a monastery in the region and therefore both the founders and the Patriarch were well aware of the circumstances and the consequences of their decisions. Drag himself visited Constantinople to make this request. Drag and Balc were descendants of the noble Dragoş family originating from Maramureş. Although they were Romanian nobles of Orthodox confession, they were at that time some of the wealthiest and most influential magnates in Northern Hungary. Their hierarchical position and large possessions permitted them such an important initiative.[27] But, no matter how wealthy and influent they were, the later attestations indicate they made this important foundation in agreement with the Romanian elite of Maramureş. By this foundation they wanted to change entirely the situation of the local Orthodox Church. From that moment Maramureş no longer depended religiously on seats outside the region, but got a centre of its own.

Following the death of the founding brothers and the dispossession of the Dragoş family from its estates in Maramureş by the king, the Peri Monastery remained under the collective protection of the county nobility. In 1404, the donation to the monastery was attested by the assistant prefect Radul and 8 nobles from the neighbouring villages. They all confirmed they had been present both when the founders made the donation and when their heirs reconfirmed it. At that time, the monastery owned three villages, Peri, Taras and Kryve, of which the last two were lost soon thereafter.[28] A few decades later, in 1442, the property over the village Peri and a mill was finally confirmed to the monastery as a new donation by the king, at the request of the county nobility, led by Mihai son of Tatul de Ialova.[29] In 1494, in a translation of the Patriarchal letter, the right to appoint the

[24] Rafiroiu 1934, 45-48; *Izvoarele istoriei României*, IV, Scriitori şi acte bizantine, sec IV-XV, 231-233, Bucureşti 1982.
[25] Petrov 1998, 124-125; Popa 1980, 32.
[26] Rafiroiu 1934, 45-48; Popa 1970, 251-253.
[27] Popa 1970, 251-253.
[28] Popa 1970, 144, 218, 251-254; Popa 1980, 32.
[29] Diaconescu 1997:a, 34-35 and 60.

Hegumen was attributed even to the assembly of the noble laymen, acknowledging their vital protection.[30]

From the end of the 15th century this centre was competed by and periodically subordinated to the Episcopal seat established in a monastery near Mukachevo.[31] In the middle of the 16th century the possession over the monastery and possibly also its patronage returned for a few decades to the descendants of the Dragoş family and during this time it was recorded the first local Romanian bishop residing in Peri.[32] Soon thereafter the village was lost to various foreign owners, the monastery being able only occasionally to regain its possessions.[33] As late as 1646 the entire community of priests urged the county nobility to recover the possessions of the monastery from the Transylvanian prince, being ready to pay the compensation.[34] The hopes to regain the properties and to restore the status of the monastery were brought to a sudden end in the 1660s when it was completely devastated.[35] During the last period the monastery still existed, the nobles were entitled to nominate or confirm the bishop of Maramureş with its probably symbolic residence in Peri. The bishops of Maramureş could come either from seats as far as Mukachevo, Vad and Alba Iulia or from among the priests of the county. They were expected to name every year the archpriests of the four districts in the presence of the county assembly,[36] to visit the churches and control the priests,[37] to consecrate priests and churches,[38] to inform, guide and judge in religious matters,[39] to respect the rights of the nobles[40] and so on. After the disappearance of the monastery, its possessions and assets were taken over by different owners until they were bought by the Aerario in 1756.

Under the three centuries of its existence, the Peri Monastery was, beyond any doubt, the most important spiritual and cultural Orthodox centre in Maramureş. The historical sources clearly indicate a long religious autonomy revolving around it and a notable collective preoccupation of the Romanian nobles for its survival. Despite its importance we know little about its cultural role in the region. However, Peri Monastery could have been the main location for the first translations to vernacular Romanian.[41] Moreover, there are several unconfirmed attempts to localise a printing house in the monastery at the beginning of the 17th century.[42] A theological school was also indicated there about the same time.[43] Further research may reveal more clearly the role of the Peri Monastery in spreading culture around the region and, eventually, in new creations.

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[30] Popa 1970, 220.
[31] Cziple 1916, 249-282; Diaconescu 1999:b, 175-178.
[32] Between 1553-1555, an "*episcopum valachorum*" was recorded in the monastery; Diaconescu 1999:b, 179.
[33] Diaconescu 1999:b, 180-181; Cziple 1916, 288-289/7.
[34] Cziple 1916, 295/21.
[35] The disappearance of the Peri Monastery is still a mystery in the local history. According to the testimony of the local serf Francisc Szilagyi from 1760, the monastery was plundered and set on fire by soldiers during the prefect Rhédey Ferencz (1648-1665). In 1668 the former possessions of the monastery were ceded by the prince Michail Apafi to Ştefan Frater, captain of the Hust fortress. The entire property consisted of one mill with two wheals, one inn, 182 *juger* fertile lands and 3573 *juger* of forest and was valued to 1,000 Rh fl in 1669 and 1,500 Rh fl in 1756; Pâclişeanu 1931, 334. 1 *juger* (*hold*) = 5,754 sq m (Bogdán 1987, 67-68); thus the entire village was about 21.6 km^2. The possession was sold with 3,500 Rh fl in 1756 according to Bud (1891, 22).
[36] Cziple 1916, 305/29.
[37] Cziple 1916, 295/20.
[38] Cziple 1916, 290/10.
[39] Cziple 1916, 305/29
[40] Cziple 1916, 298/22, 304/29, 311/37, 314/43.
[41] Panaitescu 1965, 68-70.
[42] Rusu 1999, 170; Pâclişeanu 1931, 334-335.
[43] Pâclişeanu 1931, 334.

198 *Moisei Monastery*. After the disappearance of the traditional centre from Peri Monastery the strategically positioned Moisei Monastery took over as an important bridge between Southern Maramureş and Moldavia. The small sizes of the wooden church speak of the initial modest resources and the founder's uncertainty in its future. Photo: July 1995.

A regional rivalry

After the destruction of the Peri Monastery,[44] one of the last ancient and relatively wealthy monasteries from Maramureş survived in the village of Uglea. The monastery was situated isolated long outside the village on the Mala Ugolka Valley under the Chicerel Hill and was therefore known as Chicerel or Zanov Monastery, at least from 1552 onwards.[45] This monastic establishment was landed and protected by a strong community of Romanian nobles.[46] We don't know how the situation was before the disappearance of the Peri Monastery, but the Uglea

[44] The monastery from Peri was not the single one who vanished at that time. The monasteries from Sârbi, Rozavlea and Cuhea also disappeared then, judging from the fate of their churches, and we never heard again of the monastery from Budeşti after 1660s.

[45] For a visit description in Uglea Monastery in 1552 see Vasili Ilko, "Dejaki pytannja istorii Maramoroshchyny doby feodalizmu", *Relaţii româno ucrainiene, istorie şi contemporaneitate*, 207-208, Satu Mare 1999.

[46] In 1774, the languages used in the village were Ukrainian, Romanian and some Hungarian. The 7 noble landowners were all Romanian or of Romanian origin: Gabriel Darvaj, Nicolaus Racz, Ladislaus Erdö, Ladislaus Fehér, Michael Fehér, Petrus Lucsko and Petras; ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung 1767, 323.

Monastery evidently increased its position as a new centre in Northern Maramureş after that. Probably, it was not an accident that Joannykij Zejkan, the Orthodox bishop of Mukachevo, settled there in 1665. He was forced to leave his seat from Mukachevo Monastery to a Uniate bishop and, after a short period in Imstychevo Monastery, moved to Uglea Monastery where he resided until 1686.[47]

About the same time Zejkan resided in Uglea Monastery, the southern part of Maramureş refused his authority and acknowledged that of the Transylvanian metropolitan from Alba Iulia. What the communities from Southern Maramureş needed, if they did not want to depend on the centre in Uglea Monastery, was a centre of their own; and that centre was created in a new monastery, in Moisei.

The monastery from Moisei is one of the most fortunate and interesting examples in the region. From its foundation in 1672 to the present, the monastic life has survived there with few brakes. Moreover, the old monastery church endured the time (**198-199**) and the foundation letter is partly known from later copies.

The short written deed is known only from a transcript enclosed in the official confirmation[48] and should not be confused with a Western foundational chapter or a Byzantine *typikon*. Its content is however exceptionally important to examine the intentions of the founders. This letter was written with the occasion of the consecration of the monastery, in 12 November 1672. The letter begins with: "*We, both the poor and the rich of Moisei, unconstrained and of our own free will, gave, settled and founded the Holy monastery that was built within the limits of our village by the archpriest Mihai on his ancestral possession and property …*" From the text, the true founder appears to be the archpriest Mihai, yet the community also contributed to the establishment, probably with more land, in a collective donation. The territory was festively surrounded, delimited and donated "*by all the nobles of Moisei from the small to the big*" accompanied by the officials and the priests of the Upper District. An enormous penalty of 2,000 Rh fl was introduced by the donors for any of their heirs or descendants of their heirs who would have tried to contest the donation. Finally, the deed was signed and sealed by 14 nobles from Moisei in the name of the entire community, demanding the county representatives to attest their decision. The legal confirmation was signed and sealed in 1694 by the assistant prefect and the 4 district praetors in the presence of the main county notary, at the request of the founding priest and noble Mihai Popa de Moisei.

As the foundation letter illustrates, this was not an ordinary act of founding, since it implicated more or less the entire elite of the Upper District. What was the intention of the archpriest Mihai with this monastery? Why did he need the participation of other nobles? And why were so many willing to get involved in this project?

Naturally, this monastery would have survived like many others for some generations as a private monastery under the sole protection conferred by the noble rang of the founder. However, the founder was determined to encircle its foundation with larger layers of authority and protection, from the village community to the nobles of the district. Moreover, as archpriest, the founder also anchored his establishment in the ecclesiastic structure of the district. All these initiatives suggest this monastery was planed as a spiritual centre of the Upper District. The destruction of the Peri Monastery, probably in 1660s, created the necessity of a new spiritual and cultural heart, at least at the district scale. From this perspective, the intentions of the founder, village nobles, and the district nobles and priests become more intelligible. The series of deacons and teachers

[47] Pekar 1992, 64 and 180-181.
[48] Bud 1911, 91-94.

who learned at the Moisei Monastery in the 18th century[49] point out the importance this monastic establishment played after its founding.

Although the content of the founding letter is now clear there are still some important details missing. Why did the main founder not sign the donation? Why was Sava Brancovici, the metropolitan of Transylvania and bishop of Maramureş, not mentioned among the present notable persons without whom the consecration couldn't take place? And something apparently not significant: why was the document silent about the presence of two monks coming from the Putna Monastery in Moldavia?

The absence of the founder Mihai among the signing donors might be compensated by the express reference in the text about his key role. Regarding the second question, the answer can be found in the tragic fate of the bishop Sava Brancovici after the consecration of the monastery. In 1680 the bishop was sentenced to prison for his opposition to reformat innovations in the Orthodox Church of Transylvania and died exhausted in 1683.[50] For this reason, he might have been excluded from the transcript of the official confirmation from 1694, the only source we have about the foundation of the monastery.

The connection of the Moisei Monastery with the Moldavian Monastery of Putna is confirmed by a letter from 1759 of the hegumen from Putna. He referred to Moisei Monastery as a hermitage subordinated by the founders to Putna Monastery, and in this position appointed a new archimandrite there.[51] When did this happen and why? To dedicate a local monastery to another one from a neighbouring country was too important to exclude from a foundation letter. And if such a decision was not sanctioned officially how would the founders expect to be accepted? For this reasons, I suppose the dedication occurred long after the consecration and even after the confirmation, although the presence of the monks from Putna suggests early contacts between the two monastic establishments. A good reason for such an initiative could have been the pressure on the Orthodox Church of Maramureş to unite with Rome, especially after 1700, when Maramureş remained the last Orthodox stronghold in the Northern Hungary. The relations with Moldavia, where the Orthodox Church was the official religion, must have been intense and what earlier was difficult to imagine might have become accepted by the reformat rulers of Transylvania. In these special conditions, the founders could put their monastery under the spiritual protection of the rich Putna Monastery, and consequently even under the metropolitan of Moldavia. Consequently, the founders enveloped once again their foundation in a new layer of protection which lasted long after the stubborn regional Orthodox Church was incorporated in the Uniate diocese of Mukachevo.

The noble founder Mihai Pop Coman[52] proved to be a good tactician and probably had a good hand in the administration of the monastery. The possessions were estimated to about 1.15 sq km,[53] about 20 times smaller than that of the Peri Monastery, but, despite that, the monastery gained much attention in Southern Maramureş. Mihai Pop Coman founded the monastery after he became a widow and lived in the monastery as an archimandrite until sometime after 1713.[54] He was succeeded by his son Iorest who was also archimandrite until he died in 1739. In the next years, in the monastery lived the deacon Laurenţiu Lupu who seems to have been appointed as successor by Iorest.[55] In 1759, the archimandrite Teofan

[49] Horea 1994, 46-47.
[50] Horea 1994, 25-26.
[51] Cziple 1916, 375-376.
[52] The Pop Coman was one of the leading families in Moisei, founder and protector of the lower parish of the village (Bud 1911, 49).
[53] Bud 1911, 95.
[54] Bud 1911, 99.
[55] Kinah 1926, 119; Kinah 1930, 441.

199 *Moisei Monastery*. Despite the small sizes, the vaulted nave (*at left*) appears quite roomy. The interior was refurnished and repainted sometime in the 19th century and with that occasion the iconostasis and the sanctuary behind seem to have been consistently transformed. The murals from the time of its consecration survived only under the icon screen. In exchange, the narrow and dark narthex (*bellow*) maintained much of its initial austere appearance. Photos: July 1996.

was send from Putna at the request of the heirs of the founders.[56] Calistrat, the hegumen of the Putna Monastery, was well acquainted with the wide protecting construction left by the first founder and therefore addressed his letter of nomination not so much to descendants as specifically to all the Uniate priests and their hierarchs asking them to respect the Orthodox monastery and also to the nobles of the county who felt responsibility towards and received spiritual benefits from it. In 1777 there were no monks living in the monastery and the possessions were therefore temporary used by the descendants of the founder (the patrons).[57] The visit of the archimandrite from the Moldavian monastery of Moldovița in 1779 and the donations from 1775, 1787 and 1809[58] suggest, however, that the monastery continued its course established by the founders. In 1873, when the monastery crossed a new period of inactivity and risked to be confiscated, the land of the monastery was partly used by another generation of descendants of the founder.[59] In that year it was mentioned for the first time the pilgrimage to the monastery[60] which, although we don't know when it started, further increased the fame of the place.

The monastery of Moisei is an unparalleled creation, anchored from the very beginning outside the family circle and beyond the limits of a community. It successfully assumed the role of a new spiritual and cultural centre at the scale of an entire district, after the heavy loss of the traditional centre from Peri. In competition with the rivalling centre from Uglea Monastery it might have played a leading role even for the entire southern part of the province, although the Uglea Monastery remained the seat of the local bishops. The later subordination to the prominent Putna Monastery appears as an attempt to oppose the Uniation under the spiritual protection of the much stronger Moldavian Orthodox Church. Behind these strategies seems to have stood the noble founder, archpriest and archimandrite Mihai Pop Coman followed by his first successors.

To summarize, by the end of the 17th century the local Eastern Church, the clerics, the nobility and the laymen in general were gathered around two centres, one pro Slavonic in the north and one pro Romanian in the south. This bipolarization started long before the loss of the prestigious but weakened centre from Peri Monastery and ended in a definitive separation in 1853. The sudden disappearance of the Peri Monastery forced the two rival sides to establish their own separate centres. This complex process remains, however, the subject of another research.

200 *Moisei Monastery*. The calm ambience surrounding the old wooden church convinced a wagtail to nest in between the sills of the nave and sanctuary. Birds like crows, magpies, swallows, pigeons and sparrows are also willing to make a home in the tower, under the roof or at the eaves of the isolated wooden churches. Photo: July 1996.

[56] Cziple 1916, 375-376.
[57] Pâclișanu 1936, 396.
[58] Bârlea 1909, 131-136; Horea 1994, 30 and 43.
[59] The last monk known then was Zerkey, who died in 1855; ASC, 149, 2591/1873, 1-2.
[60] ASC, 149, 2591/1873, 9.

The small monasteries

The Orthodox nobles of Maramureş founded numerous other monastic establishments of more or less local importance. Of 44 noble villages approximated in 1767 about 22 had a monastery once in their past.[61] The historical sources linked to some of these monasteries provide us with rich, diversified and sometimes unique information about the noble founders and their intentions.

Medieval monasteries

Apart from the monasteries from Peri and Uglea, at least 5 other monasteries could be traced back to Middle Ages, like Cuhea, Călineşti, Sârbi, Biserica Albă and Herinceni.[62]

Among the ancient monasteries, we know a few things only about that from Biserica Albă which survived until the end of the 18th century. According to the tradition maintained in the monastery, the founders were Drag and his sister Milița, who were told to have been also the founders of the Peri Monastery.[63] Drag can be thus identified with the voivode who visited Constantinople in 1391 to obtain the religious autonomy of Maramureş or a forefather to him. This monastery was endowed with a chalice from the Romanian prince of Walachia Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714). After about four centuries from its foundation, in 1779, the monastery was in an abandoned state and its properties were careless administrated from Mukachevo, a situation that urged the villagers to write a touching letter to the emperor.[64] The entire community, serfs, poor villagers and nobles, used its collective right to claim the properties of the monastery for the benefit of their parish church if the bishop would not appoint a new monk, because the monastery belonged to their ancestors. According to the villagers the monastery had enough possessions to sustain a monastic life. But they, like their forefathers, expected spiritual benefits from it. If these benefits were neglected, they felt entitled to recover what they considered to belong to them by right of inheritance. Accordingly, this is a relevant case in which the village community as a whole assumed the right of patronage in the name of the founding ancestors, even after 4 centuries.

Late monasteries

From the middle of the 17th century onward there is more detailed information available. The donation act of the monastery from Petrova (1643) and the visitation protocols from the monasteries in the 18th century are particularly useful to examine the founders of the small local monasteries.

In 1643, the entire noble family Petrovay from Petrova donated the plain along the Bistra River to the monks established there with their permission. The donation letter ends with the formula: "*… if any of the members of the Petrovay family would intend to destroy this donation should pay 100 gold coins in penalty*".[65] It is intriguing why such a prestigious family would need to guard its establishment against itself or its own descendants to insure its permanence. Actually, they knew they had the right to claim back their donations whenever

[61] Petrova, Vișeu de Sus, Moisei, Săcel, Sălișstea de Sus, Cuhea, Ieud, Șieu, Rozavlea, Giuleşti, Budeşti, Sârbi, Călinești, Bârsana, Rona de Jos, Biserica Albă, Apșa din Jos, Ialova, Bedeu, Uglea, Criciova and Drăgoești (Baboș 2000, n. 121).

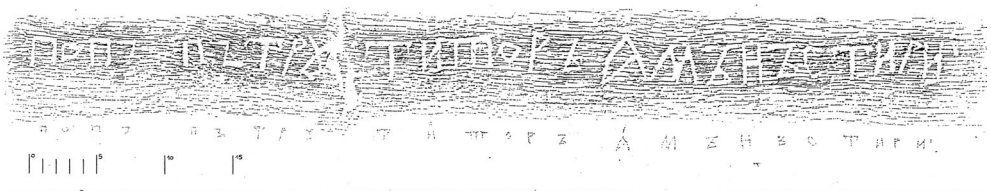
[62] More details about *Cuhea* in Popa 1970, 217 and Baboș 2000, 29; about *Sârbi* in Baboș 2002, 268, n. 10; about *Călinești* see Baboș 2000, n. 53; and for the first note of *Monastyrets* near Herinceni (1548) see Bélay 1943, 144, 175.

[63] Baboș 2002:c, 268, n. 13.

[64] MOL, C 40, 127 cs, Q, fasc 164/1779, 3; document identified by Ovidiu Ghitta, whom I thank here for his generosity.

[65] Bud 1911, 103.

201 *Giuleşti Monastery*. The Romanian inscription with Cyrillic letters on the eastern wall of the sanctuary reminds: "*Pop Pătru founder of the monastery*". From this firm statement we may suppose that Pătru was the Christian or the adopted monastic name of the founder Pop Lupu. Otherwise, who would have been allowed to change the identity of the real founder? In about the same place it was said to have been also carved the year of the foundation: 1692. From the monastery it survived only the small wooden church and the name for the entire settlement around. Tracing (scale 1:5) and photo from April 1994.



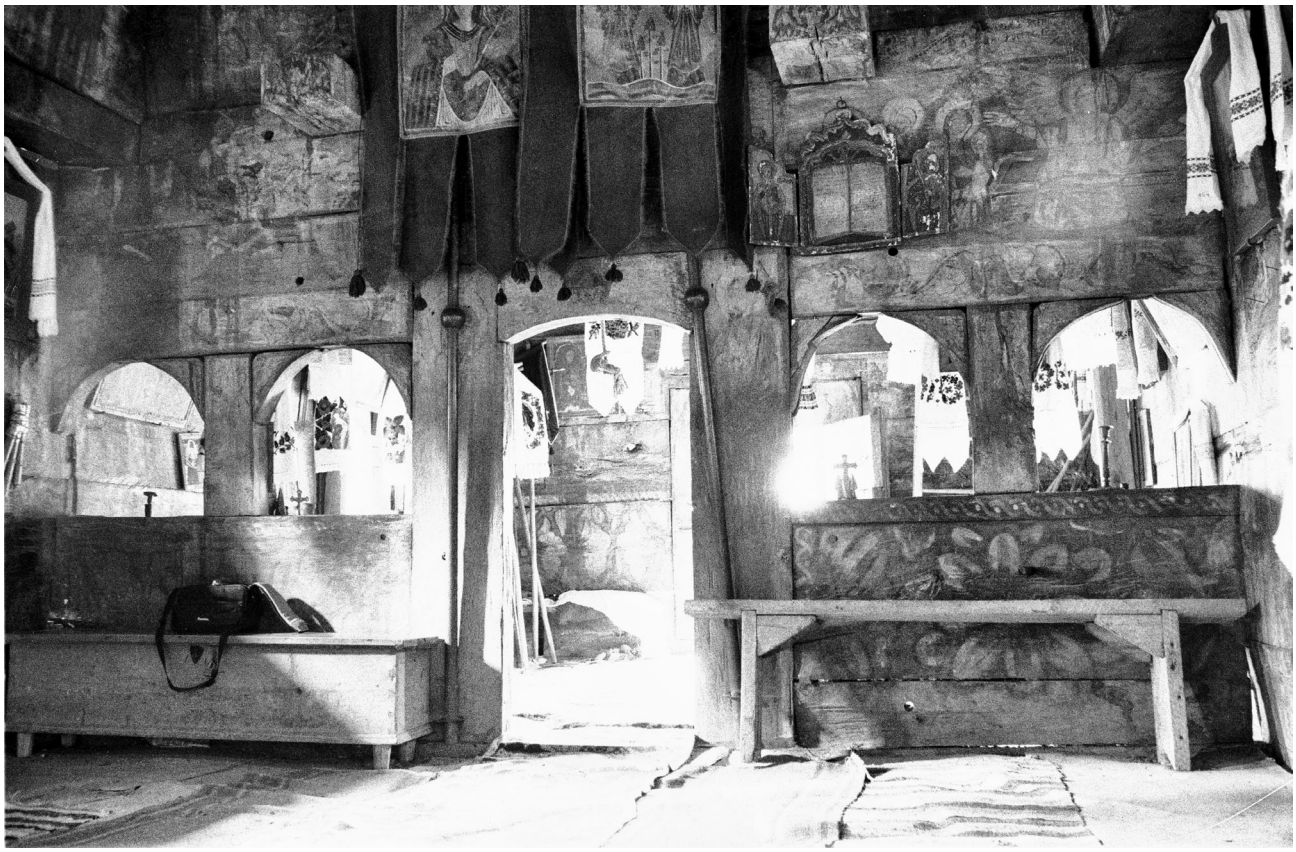
thereafter, and, if some of them would have defected from the Orthodox faith, the monastic establishment could easily disappear. I suspect such a situation really had happened elsewhere in Maramureş and for this reason the founders tried to secure their deed. The fate of this monastery would be interesting to follow if the present lack of historical sources would not veil it in mystery.

The series of small monastic establishments continues with the Giuleşti Monastery, which is relevant for how the local Romanian nobles founded a private monastery and saved their property rights after its transfer to collective protection.

202 *Giuleşti Monastery.* The movable icons above the doors to the sanctuary were said to have been donated in exchange for pray by a repentant donator. Unfortunately, they were stolen a few years ago together with the Royal Doors in the middle and the Royal Icons at sides. Photo: July 1995.

The widow priest Pop Lupu Sr de Giuleşti (1655-1731) erected a monastery in 1692 on his estate and lived there as a monk (**201**-**205**).[66] The monastery was consecrated by Iosif Stoica de Ciumuleşti (1690-1711), [67] the first bishop after the re-erection of the bishopric of Maramureş. Being a private foundation, the founder disposed of the monastery as an ordinary property, selling a piece of its land and bequeathing the remaining part to his descendants. By all probabilities the stone in front of the royal doors inside the small wooden church, dated from 1731, marks the privileged place where he was buried. In 1749, his son, priest Ştefan, and a nephew, deacon Andrei, offspring of a second son, Nicolae, continued to live in the monastery.[68] Andrei and the other direct descendants of the founder must have donated the monastery to the community of Giuleşti in 1753, yet, with the strict condition to recover their estates in case it would become abandoned.[69] As a result, after 6 decades and 2 generations, the monastery finally became a collective establishment. Thanks to this wider village protection the monastery was repaired in 1763,[70] even before the necessary extension and repairs of the medieval parish

[66] Kinah 1926, 116-117. Pop Lupu was 50 years old in 1705 (Bud 1911, 82) and the stone above his possible grave was engraved in 1731. It is interesting to remark that he was placed in front of the *Royal Doors* as a founder and priest of the church, while Teodor Dubanovici was buried in the Bedeu Monastery in front of the *Deacon's door* since he was both its founder and deacon (Kinah 1926, 113-114).
[67] Kinah 1926, 116-117.
[68] Kinah 1926, 116-117.
[69] Pâclişeanu 1936, 395-396.
[70] ASM, Rednic, 107/1763.



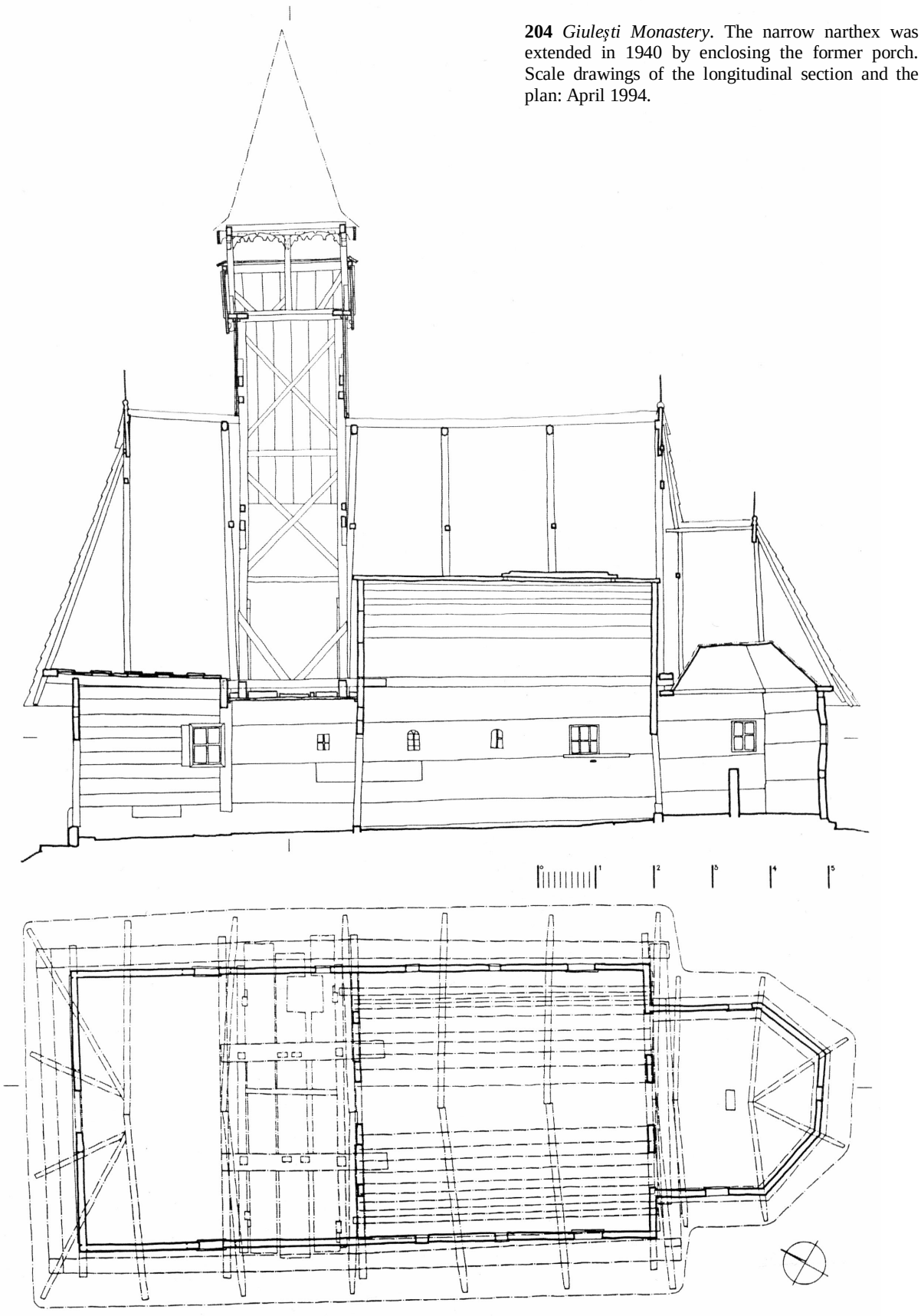
203 *Giuleşti Monastery*. The small narthex was provided with for that time generous openings in the inner wall. Photo: July 1995.

church, which were completed in 1768.[71] The reservation introduced in the donation proved salutary sooner than expected. During the reign of Joseph II (1780-1790) most of the monasteries from Maramureş were closed and their possessions confiscated by the treasury. In Giuleşti, instead, the descendants were able to fully recover their properties.

The Giuleşti Monastery actually opened a new, unprecedented series of small monastic establishments in Maramureş. Within less than 3 decades there were established at least 11 new monasteries to supplement those already existing. The only explanation for this remarkable initiative appears to have been the revival of the local bishopric (1690-c1739). The reformat Transylvanian leaders accepted the Orthodox Church of Maramureş to regain its traditional autonomy and to organize itself against the incisive movement to Union.[72] In consequence, these monasteries were not planed only as private or collective acts of devotion and salvation, but seemingly as small centres of religious resistance.

As we have remarked, when Maramureş lost its prestigious Orthodox centre from Peri Monastery, the local church seems to have organized itself around two centres: the monasteries from Uglea in the north and from Moisei in the south. Reading the disposition of the new monasteries established after 1690, we continue to find new indications of the authority exercised by the two centres. On one side, the monasteries from Criciova, Drăgoeşti and Ialova were built like satellites around the Uglea Monastery, in a pocket of still noble villages, and on the other side we find the monasteries from Ieud, Săcel, Săliştea de Sus and Vişeu de Sus gravitating around Moisei Monastery. Moreover, even the further monasteries might have created secondary belt like structures around the two poles.

[71] Baboş 2002:c, 277-278.
[72] Ghitta 1996, 211-223.



204 *Giulești Monastery*. The narrow narthex was extended in 1940 by enclosing the former porch. Scale drawings of the longitudinal section and the plan: April 1994.

Around Uglea Monastery. The first of the monasteries around Uglea was erected in Criciova by the brother of the bishop Iosif Stoica, the noble parish priest Petru Stoica. Another noble, Grigorie Râşcu from Drăgoeşti, donated first a house and with the participation of the nobles from Ciumuleşti, Criciova and Darva the new monastic establishment was delimited in 1693. The wooden church was built only in 1702 with various donations. Among donators it was mentioned an unnamed warrior who donated 200 Rh fl and was buried like a founder in the church.[73] This monastery was abandoned after 1756 and the wooden church, where several miracles occurred, was asked for a new parish in Câmpulung in 1767.[74]

The second monastery was founded in Drăgoeşti in 1705 by the noble community, on the possession of the noble family of Râşcu, and was consecrated by the same bishop Iosif Stoica de Ciumuleşti.[75] This monastery, too, lost its importance once the Union won over Maramureş and disappeared unnoticed after 1756.

While the bishop Iosif Stoica stood imprisoned in the fortress of Hust, in 1708, the noble community of Ialova supported the priest Ioan Zubritsky to erect the third monastery around Uglea. This monastery was consecrated by Dositei, the archimandrite of Uglea Monastery, who substituted the bishop and was by origin a noble priest from Ialova. Dositei Teodorovici de Ialova (1648-1733) succeeded in 1718 to become the next orthodox bishop of Maramureş.[76] The Ialova Monastery was closed some time after the founding generation past away; in 1749 the small wooden church was transferred to Teceu for a new Uniate parish.[77]

The second belt around the Uglea Monastery was formed by the monasteries from Bedeu, Boroniava, Herinceni and Soimy. The monastery from Soimy was strategically placed in the northern corner of Maramureş, in Verchovyna, in a place where the local roads, descending along the rich tributaries of the Black Iza River (Rika), gathered reaching the main village of the area, Mizhhiria (Boureni). The Soimy Monastery was erected in 1698,[78] but, thus far, it is unknown who founded it. The monastic life might have survived there only a few decades, because the wooden church was moved to Bukovets in 1741 and the house to Repynne.[79]

A monastery with roots in the Middle Ages functioned near Herinceni until the Tatars suddenly burned it during their raid from 1717.[80] The monastery was probably founded in a time the village was still inhabited or owned by noble of Eastern rite and survived as long as there were descendants to protect it.

Some more information was saved about the monastery established by the priest Ioan Kozak in Boroniava, in 1716.[81] Ioan Kozak was at that time a parish priest in Nyzhnie Selyshche and Kopashnevo and he bought the land with 40 Rh fl from some landowners in the town of Hust. The monastery was only a half mile outside the town of Hust, where it strategically served the villages pertaining to the Hust domain. The founder retired as archimandrite in the monastery and in 1727 was still involved to obtain the right to build a water mill from the magnate Teleky.[82] The monastery survived the death of its founder until 1788 when its assets were confiscated by the treasury.[83] However, the monastery continued to function even afterwards as a parish for the small community formed around it. In

[73] Kinah 1930, 437-438.
[74] DAZO, 151, op 1, 2078/1767, 8v-9.
[75] Kinah 1926, 108-110; Kinah 1930, 436.
[76] Kinah 1926, 112-113; Cziple 1916, 276 and 315/43.
[77] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 85v.
[78] Syrokhman 2000, 492.
[79] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 12 and 24.
[80] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 95v.
[81] Kinah 1926, 107-108.
[82] Pâclișeanu 1936, 396-397.
[83] Syrokhman 2000, 399-401.

1789 the church was in the care of the monks from Uglea.[84] In particular, it is worth to verify if the bishop Iosif Stoica owned or not a large possession in that part of Hust before he was imprisoned in the nearby fortress.[85] If he did, than the idea of a monastery there might have come from him.

One of the last, but not least in the second belt of monasteries around Uglea, was the monastery established by the strong community of nobles from Bedeu. They delimited a possession and erected the monastery in 1719, in agreement with the deacon and future monk Teodor Dubanovici, who under many years learned their children. According to an inscription, the deacon was buried inside the church in 1745, near the deacon's door to the altar.[86] The monastery survived until 1791 when it was listed among the closed ones.[87]

205 *Mănăstirea Giuleşti*. The triptych of the founders, now disappeared, was probably commissioned by Boer Vasile from Săcel at the beginning of the 18th century and it might have come from Săcel Monastery. Photo: July 1995.

[84] The parish was then 50 years old. MOL, C 104, A 54, Pfarr-Regulierung, Munkacs, Maramoros, 9.
[85] Cziple 1916, 266.
[86] Kinah 1926, 113-114; Kinah 1930, 439-440.
[87] Pâclişeanu 1936, 396.

Around the Moisei Monastery. One of the first near satellites of the Moisei Monastery could have been erected in 1709 in Ieud. This monastery was established by the notorious noble family Balea, namely Lazăr Balea, Nicolae Balea and others, outside the village, in *Recea*, not far from the parish church belonging to the same family.[88] This monastery survived under the collective protection of the village nobles until the end of the 18th century when the assets were confiscated by the treasury. The possessions remained, however, in the property of the parish.[89]

The second monastery around Moisei functioned in Săcel. Since this was closed before the detailed visitation of the monasteries from 1749, we do not have the same precision in dating it. We know, however, that the monastery received in 1716 a chalice from Ştefan Cantacuzino, the prince of Walachia.[90] By tradition this monastery was established by a repentant noble, and was in the care of the noble Magdău family.[91] By unknown ways, a triptych of Vasile Boer de Săcel offered for the salvation of his soul possibly to Săcel Monastery might have arrived in Giuleşti Monastery (**205**).[92] This noble was the praetor of the Upper District in 1722 and the main founder of probably the upper parish church from Săcel in 1728.[93] If Vasile Boer was the repentant founder, the monastery was one of the recent monastic establishments, whose existence ended soon after the departure of the founder. In 1748, the monastery church was transferred to Sighet for the use of the new Uniate parish and consecrated next year by the Vicar residing in the town.[94]

Another monastery near Moisei, who almost disappeared unnoticed by documents, existed in the noble village of Săliştea de Sus, in *Gruiu Cioarii*. According to tradition it was established in 1650 and burned by the Tatars in 1717.[95] Although the detailed visitations of the monasteries from Maramureş in 1749, 1755 and 1756 never included it, the monastery was mentioned by chance during the parish visitation from 1751 of the Uniate bishop Manuel Olsavszky of Mukachevo.[96] We do not know who built it and if it was still active or abandoned in 1751.

The fourth monastery in the proximity of Moisei was erected in 1719 far outside Vişeu de Sus, in *Valea Scradei*, by the local noble Vasile Grad. The establishment seems to have been consecrated by the bishop Dositei, probably in 1723. In 1749 the monastery was administered from Moisei,[97] while in 1755 it was abandoned and the church damaged by bears.[98] This monastery probably lasted only as long as the main founder was in life. The community transferred the church inside the village in 1762[99] while the possessions were probably claimed back by successors.

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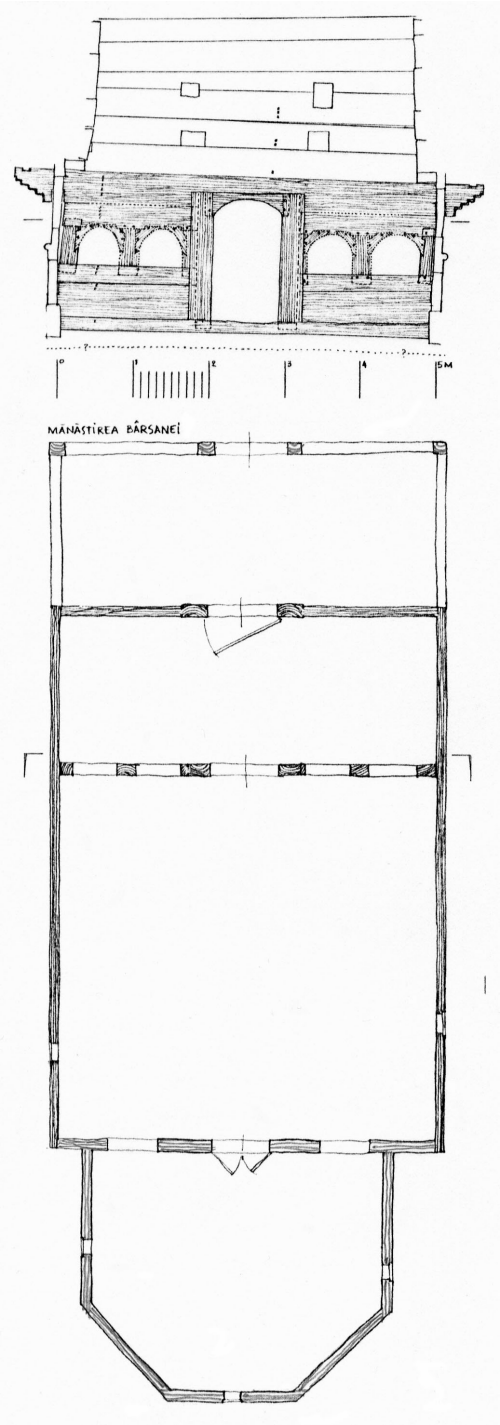
[88] Kinah 1926, 118-119
[89] Bud 1911, 47 and 101.
[90] Bârlea 1909, 165.
[91] Păcurariu 1979, 242; inf. Grad 1998.
[92] Bârlea 1909, 130/467.
[93] Filipaşcu 1997, 202; Bârlea 1909, 165/597.
[94] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 140; Pekar 1992, 70.
[95] Teodor Coclici, *Cronica parohiei*, 4, mss in the parish archive from Săliştea de Sus II dos.
[96] It is interesting to notice that the parish church rebuilt soon after the Tatar raid was consecrated by the archpriest Iorest, nobody else than the archimandrite of the Moisei Monastery. The note mentioning the monastery refers to a conflict in which the old priest Lupu Vlad was involved and who was severely punished by a vicar (DAZO, fond 151, op 1, 839/1745, 6). This could have been the Piarist Father Superior Crisostom, serving as a Uniate vicar in 1730, notorious for his severe punishments (Filipaşcu 1997, 118). Thus the Săliştea de Sus Monastery could have been active around 1730.
[97] Kinah 1926, 120-121.
[98] Kinah 1930, 434.
[99] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 48; ASM, 229, 2/1810, 2-2v.

206 *Bârsana*. The former monastery church was brought inside the village, on Jbâr Hill, at the turn of the 18th century and it has been used after that as a chapel for the cemetery around. Photo: November 2002.

The monastery in Moisei might also have had a second, further belt of monasteries. Apart from those already mentioned in Giuleşti, Biserica Albă and eventually in Petrova and Rona de Jos,[100] we can add the monastery established in Bârsana in 1711. The initiative to build this monastery came from the noble parish priest Ioan Ştefanca, together with his sons Ioan, Roman and Alexa as well as with the poor and the rich nobles of the village, to prise God because they survived the Great Plague from the previous year. The establishment was consecrated by the orthodox bishop of Maramureş Serafim Petrovan de Petrova (1711-1717).[101] The monastery was first build retreated in *Valea Slatinii*, but around 1739 it was moved close to the main country road linking the Cosău District with the Upper District.[102] This change of location happened about the same time the last Orthodox bishop of Maramureş, Gavriil Ştefanca de Bârsana, appears to have resided there or in the parish.[103] In the middle of the 18th century, the monk

[100] The monastery from Rona de Jos in *Irişţea* was said to have been dedicated to a monastery in Suceava; Păcurariu 1979, 243.
[101] Kinah 1930, 440-441.
[102] Baboş 2000, 105.
[103] "*Episcopus Gabriel ex Barczanfalva … 1739*"; Mihaly 1900, 108, n. 11; Cziple 1916, 280; Păcurariu 1979, 240-241; inf. pr. Urda Gheorghe (1951 Leordina) 1997. During the canonical visitation of the Uniate bishop Manuel Olsavszky from 1751, one of the two parish priest from



Pahomie and the widow priest Grigorie Hodor residing in the monastery wandered in the parishes around, copying, buying and selling Romanian church books from Walachia and possibly even icons.[104] The monastery functioned until 1788, when it was closed, and in 1791 the properties were transferred to the Basilian Order from Mukachevo Monastery.[105] The wooden church and refectory were transferred in the village in 1795, while the monks were said to have settled in a Moldavian monastery.[106]

Like the Moisei Monastery, the smaller monasteries around were oriented towards and sought the support of their coreligionists from the Romanian principalities, a characteristic especially indicated by the circulation of monks, the offerings and the comprehensible number of church books brought from there.[107]

Bocicoi Monastery. Possibly the last in the series of new monasteries was built in 1719 in Bocicoi. I do not know who was with the initiative, but the monastery was strategically placed in the main village of the large Bocicoi Domain. Curiously enough, this was consecrated only 3 years later by the Basilian monk Prokopij Hodermarszky, just before he became the first Uniate Vicar of Maramureş (1723-1726). Since the Domain belonged to the catholic emperor it is not excluded that the monastery worked as a Uniate response to the fortified Orthodox construction. I am however unsure if these were the intensions of the founders, which, somehow unnaturally, were not remembered in 1749.[108] The monastery was visited by the Uniate bishop Manuel Olsavszky in 1751 when it was in need for care,[109] and after 1755 it was no longer mentioned.

207 *Bârsana*. Section in front of the wall separating women from men and plan. The openings in the wall are reconstructed after surviving traces. Scale drawing: July 1997.

Bârsana was: "*Georgius Steffanka ordinates a Dossoftheo* (Dositei) *Eppo et aprobatus per Bizantie Eppum*" (DAZO 151, op 1, 839/1745, 9), who seems to have been a descendant of the founder.

[104] They signed or were referred to in connection with church books in Dragomireşti, Poienile Izei, Năneşti, Sârbi and Budeşti in between 1743-1757 (Bârlea 1909, 20/68, 57/198, 149/546, 92-93/326, 141/512, 152/554, 181/651, 183/661 and 196/713). Pahomie died in 1747 (Kinah 1926, 117-118).

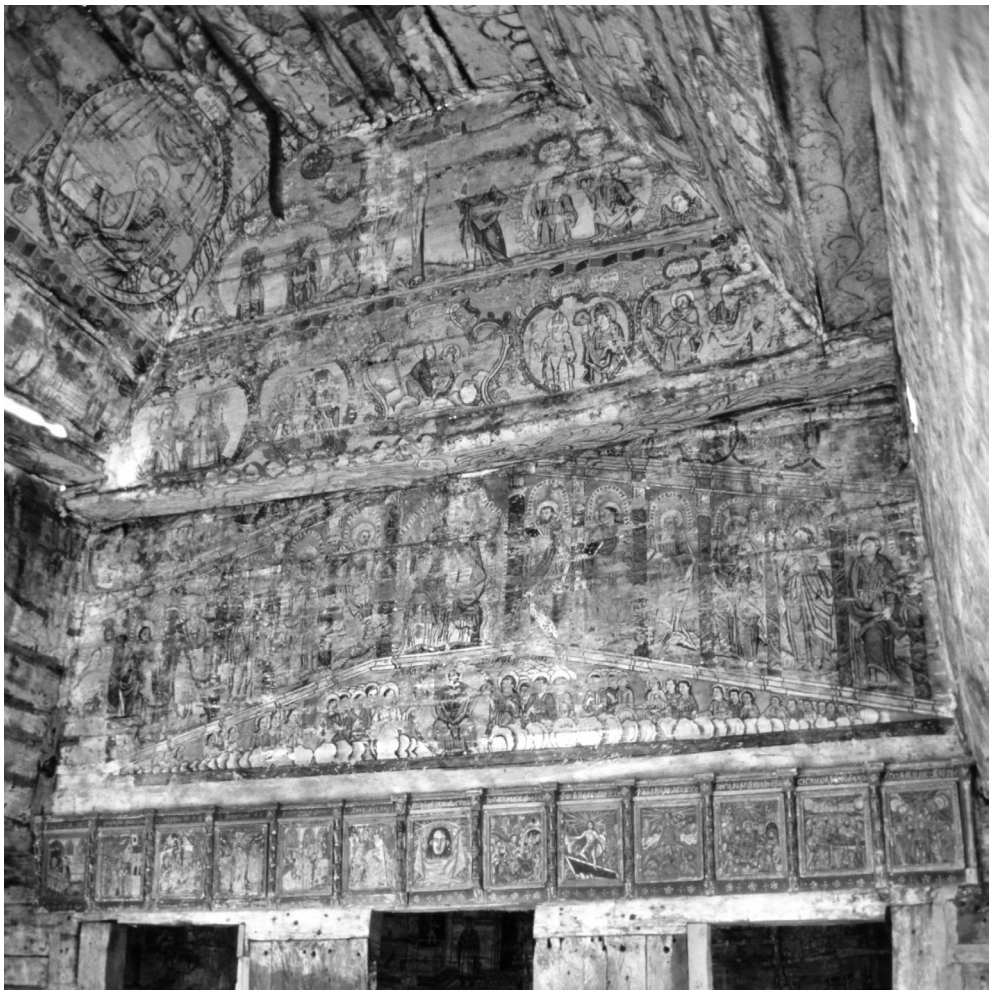
[105] Pâclişeanu 1936, 394-395.

[106] Păcurariu 1979, 241.

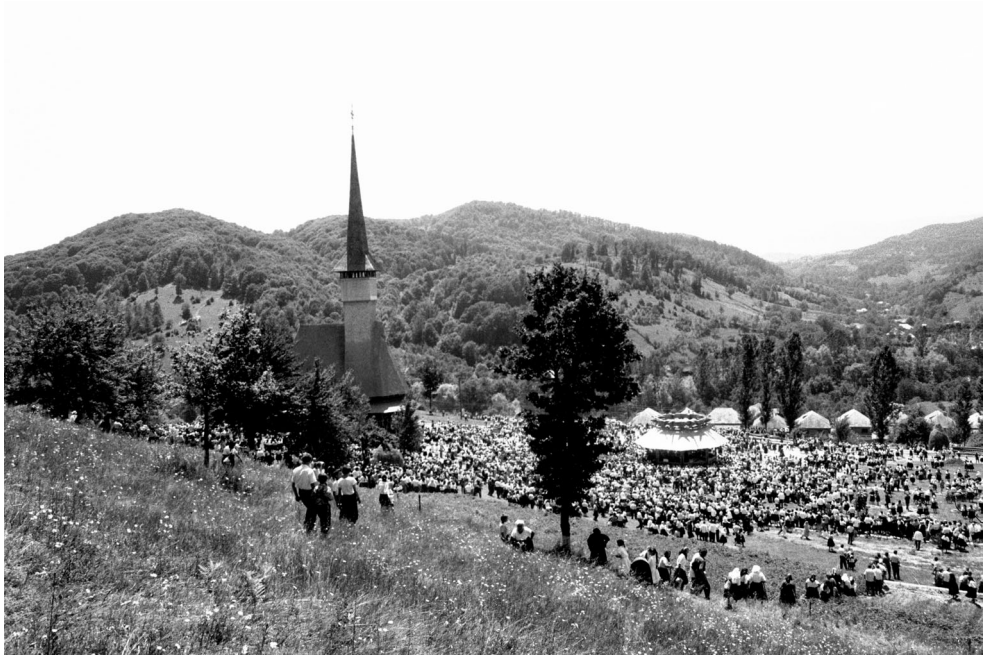
[107] Filipaşcu 1997, 145; Aurel Socolan, "Circulaţia cărţii vechi româneşti în nord-vestul Transilvaniei", *Marmaţia* I, 29-32, Baia Mare 1969; Marius Porumb and Ioan Aurel Pop, "Legături artistice şi culturale între Ţara Maramureşului şi celelalte ţinuturi româneşti în secolul al XVIII-lea", *Marmaţia* V-VI, 513-518, Baia Mare.

[108] Kinah 1926, 115-116.

[109] DAZO, 151, op 1, 839/1745, 8v-9.



208 *Bârsana Monastery*. After its transfer from the old site outside the village (*bellow*) the church was refurnished and repainted. Due to rare use of the church the murals maintained much of their original colours (*above*), one of the main reasons this church was inscribed on the World Heritage List. In the last decade, a new monastery for nuns arose on the old site attracting during feasts crowds from near and afar. Photos: July 1997 (above) and June 1997 (bellow).



The minsters and their commissioners

The founders of monastic establishments were in general, both in the north and the south, either individual nobles, noble families or communities of nobles and in the particular case of the Moisei Monastery all the three levels supplemented by the entire assembly of nobles of the district. The Peri Monastery was the highest level of foundation, which, although was founded by a particular family of voievodes, *Drăgoşeştii*, came for a long time under the protection of the whole county nobility of Orthodox rite. The nobles of Orthodox confession played the central role in almost all the known foundations of monasteries, and they protected them as their own properties. Most of them survived only one or two generations, whereas a few under several centuries, although even these experienced periods of inactivity. The initiative often came from a cleric but even the clerics were in most of the cases nobles themselves.

The number of monasteries in Maramureş was in various periods of time extremely high in comparison to the other counties in the Northern Hungary densely populated by communities of Eastern rite. Among the 23 monasteries from the 10 counties under the authority of the Mukachevo bishopric mentioned by Hlib Kinah, probably for the middle of the 18th century, 14 were found only in Maramureş.[110] This exceptional situation can be explained only through the major involvement of nobles of Maramureş, who, although they were poor, used their privileges to sustain an active monastic life.

The monastery churches were in general of wood and very small. The only known notable exceptions were those built of stone at the command of the Dragoş family in Peri and Biserica Albă and one we know very little about in Sârbi. All these three foundations were made in a time the local elite was more powerful and wealthier than in the successive centuries. Of the numerous monastic wooden churches only 3 survived in good conditions, in Moisei (1672), Giuleşti (1692) and Bârsana (1711). They illustrate a minimal and austere attitude for the monastic sacred room (**198-208**). The main concern of the founders might have been to ensure the survival of their foundations in the first place and abstain more or less from emphatic adornments in the churches. In comparison to the large constructions of the Moldavian monasteries one may wonder: How could the small wooden church from Moisei Monastery and the probably even smaller one from Uglea draw so much attention, local energies and hopes around them?

It is interesting to notice that in most of the late cases it was not a layman who commissioned the construction of a monastery church, since the founder was a cleric and quite the one who intended to serve in it. In Moisei, the church was commissioned by archpriest Mihai Pop Coman, in Giuleşti by priest Pop Lupu and in Bârsana by priest Ioan Ştefanca. The intentions of these founders seem to have been rather to create a modest retreat than overpass the wooden parish churches. In Giuleşti, the single decoration the noble founder considered necessary was a cross sided by his coats of arms marking the entrance. In Bârsana, Ioan Ştefanca was little more ambitious when he allowed the carpenter to ornate the lateral walls and the portal of the entrance with moulding ropes. Compared to the other two, the church from Bârsana Monastery was even built with two levels of roofs. In contrast, from the technical point of view, the church from Bârsana displays the lowest level, indicating the work of a less skilful carpenter. The three churches were after some time painted and adorned with numerous icons and necessary vessels, probably as endowments from other donors.

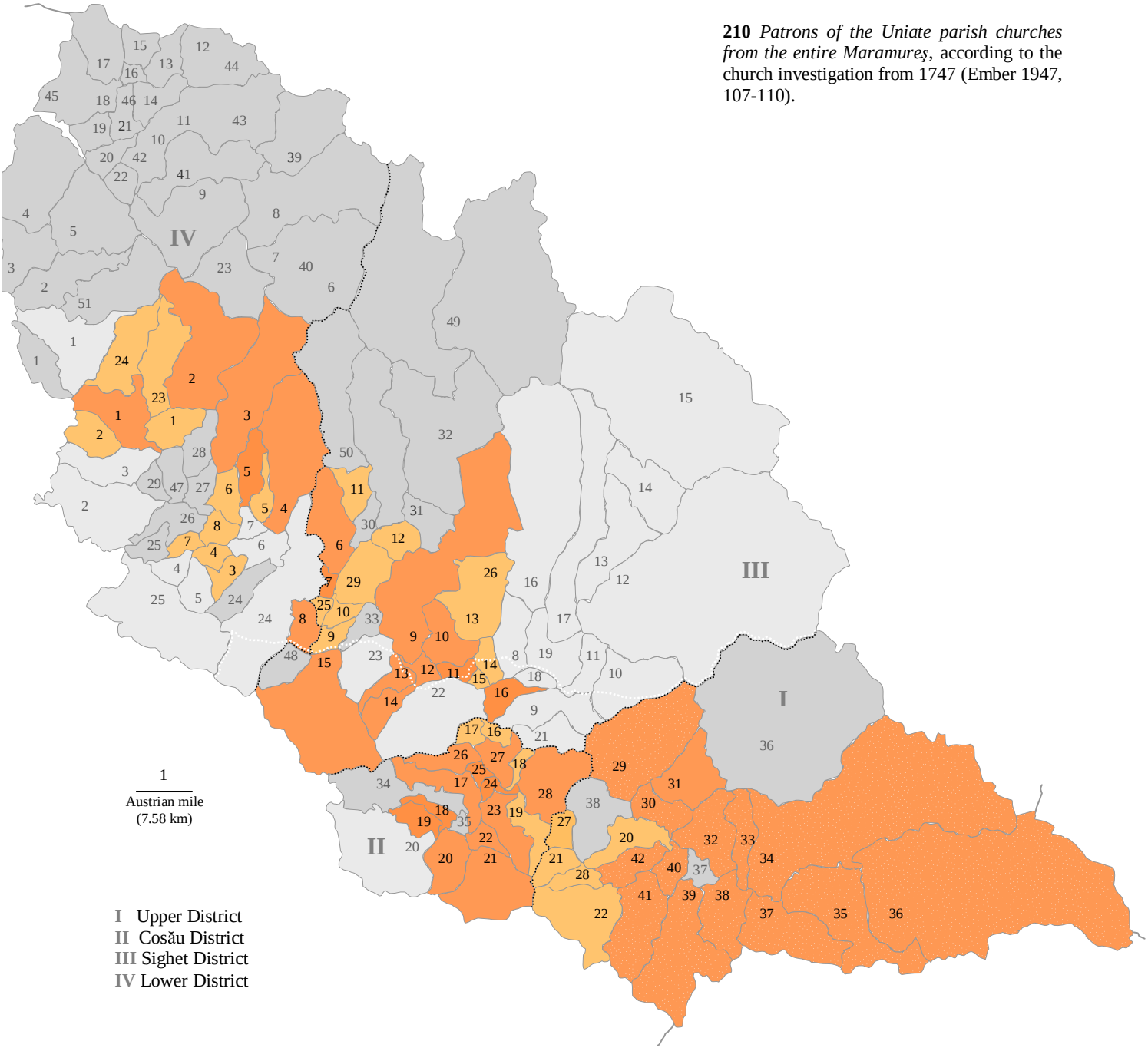
The monastery wooden churches formed a group apart of very modest enterprises. Their appearances reflect their uncertain perspectives to survive their

[110] Kinah 1926, 105, n. 1.

founders. As the monasteries formed a second structure among the parishes, their properties were easily claimed by successors or confiscated by authorities,[111] with brakes in the monastic life or definitive abandonment as a result. The survival of certain monasteries along 3-4 centuries was a rare performance, and it needed the commitment of an entire community of nobles along uncounted generations, and in some more significant cases the firm protection of a part or of the entire county nobility. From this perspective, we have to be happy for the survival of 3 small monastery wooden churches.

209 *Bârsana Monastery*. Holy church fathers depicted as monks on the wall inside the sanctuary by Toader Hodor from Vişeu de Mijloc in 1806. Photo: August 1997.

[111] Most of the last monasteries were closed following a decree from 1787 of the emperor Joseph II (1780-1790); Filipaşcu 1997, 134.



210 *Patrons of the Uniate parish churches from the entire Maramureş*, according to the church investigation from 1747 (Ember 1947, 107-110).

Local nobles: 1 Lipceni, 2 Breaza, 3 Drăgoeşti, 4 Uglea, 5 Criciova, 6 Ialova, 7 Neagova, 8 Bedeu, 9 Apşa din Jos, 10 Apşa de Mijloc, 11 Biserica Albă, 12 Slatina, 13 Sarasău, 14 Iapa, 15 Săpânţa, 16 Rona de Jos, 17 Giuleşti, 18 Hărniceşti, 19 Deseşti, 20 Breb, 21 Budeşti, 22 Sârbi, 23 Călineşti, 24 Cornești, 25 Fereşti, 26 Berbeşti, 27 Oncești, 28 Bârsana, 29 Petrova, 30 Leordina, 31 Ruscova, 32 Vişeu de Jos, 33 Vişeu de Mijloc, 34 Vişeu de Sus, 35 Moisei, 36 Borşa, 37 Săcel, 38 Săliştea de Sus, 39 Dragomireşti, 40 Cuhea, 41 Ieud and 42 Şieu.

Local nobles and magnates: 1 Herinceni, 2 Kosheliovo, 3 Voineşti, 4 Novobarovo, 5 Darva, 6 Ciumuleşti, 7 Crăiniceşti, 8 Săndreşti, 9 Taras, 10 Kryve, 11 Novoselytsia, 12 Gănești, 13 Apşa de Sus, 14 Crăciuneşti, 15 Tisa, 16 Valea Stejarului, 17 Vad, 18 Năneşti, 19 Văleni, 20 Rozavlea, 21 Glod, 22 Botiza, *23 Monastyrets, 24 Lypetska Poliana, 25 Cetatea Albă, 26 Apşiţa, 27 Slătioara, 28 Poienile Izei and 29 Târnova.*

Magnates: 1 Pryborzhavske, 2 Kushnytsia, 3 Keretsky, 4 Bereznyky, 5 Lysychevo, 6 Kolochava Stare Selo, 7 Kolochava Imshad, 8 Synevyr, 9 Mizhhiria, 10 Repynne, 11 Maidan, 12 Pryslop, 13 Novoselytsia, 14 Holiatyn, 15 Liskovets, 16 Rekity, 17 Studeny, 18 Izky, 19 Bukovets, 20 Richka, 21 Kelechyn, 22 Tiushka, 23 Vuchkove, 24 Ruske Pole, 25 Sokyrnytsia, 26 Danylovo, 27 Zolotarevo, 28 Kopashnevo, 29 Nankovo, 30 Neresnytsia, 31 Kalyny, 32 Dubove, 33 Peri, 34 Sat Şugătag, 35 Hoteni, 36 Poienile de sub Munte, 37 Bocicoel, 38 Strâmtura, *39 Szynevyrska Poliana, 40 Kolochava Negrovets, 41 Soymi, 42 Sukha, 43 Verkhnii Bystry, 44 Torun, 45 Podobovets, 46 Obliaska, 47 Nyzhnie Selyshche, 48 Remeți, 49 Lopukhovo, 50 Shyroky Luh and 51 Bronka.*

Aerario (Royal Treasury): 1 Dolha, 2 Hust, 3 Iza, 4 Steblivka, 5 Bushtyno, 6 Tereblia, 7 Dulovo, 8 Bocicoi, 9 Rona de Sus, 10 Bily Potik, 11 Trebushani, 12 Akna Rakhiv, 13 Bocsko Rakhiv, 14 Kvasy, 15 Yasinia, 16 Kobyletska Poliana, 17 Kosivska Poliana, 18 Lunca, 19 Rosishka 20 Crăcești, 21 Costiui, 22 Sighet, 23 Câmpulung, 24 Teceu and 25 Visc.

211 *Hărniceşti*. The Eastern parish churches were put under the earthly protection of the local nobles and heavenly protection of the angels and saints. The spiritual patron's day is still festively celebrated all around Maramureş. Photo: June 1996.

3.1.2 The parishes

A parish was the basic unit of religious organization addressing to all the members of a community. In order to form a regular parish a community needed a piece of land for the church and the cemetery and nevertheless a priest. To sustain the priest was a constant problem and therefore those communities who could not afford alone to sustain a priest, functioned as a branch of another parish.

The parishes in a district formed a higher level of organization led by an archpriest, elected from among the priests every year.[112] In Maramureş, the four districts were gathered in a bishopric and were led first by a hegumen and later by a bishop residing in Peri Monastery or eventually in various other places. At this highest level the two local structures, parishional and monastic, were unified. During the difficult years to incorporate Maramureş into the Uniate bishopric, the bishops of Mukachevo acknowledged the local tradition of autonomy by establishing in 1723 a Vicariate of Maramureş with the seat in Sighet, the main centre of the county.[113] This Vicariate took progressively over the local organization and maintained it until 1771. Some major administrative reforms could occur only after 1771, when the Uniate Eparchy of Mukachevo was canonically erected and officially recognized.[114]

The number of parishes in the entire county was significant already in the Middle Ages, possibly around 100, as many as the number of villages documented at the beginning of the 15th century.[115] Some of the parishes were dated imaginary or not much older, back to 1162 in Giuleşti, 1122 in Lunca and even 1084 in Bocicoi.[116]

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[112] In 1735, the parishes belonging to the royal domains of Hust and Bocicoi were organized in separate districts with separate archpriests. MOL, C 40, 152 cs, fasc. 13, no. 97, 490-490v.
[113] Pekar 1992, 69-70.
[114] Bud 1911, 6; Pekar 1992, 36-61.
[115] Popa 1970, 219.
[116] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 74v, 206 and 208.

The first general account we have from 1735, when there were enumerated 130 parishes of which 96 in the *old Maramureş*.[117] Two decades later, in 1747, during the first large church investigation, there were accounted 122 parishes and 25 branches of which 102 in *old Maramureş*. With this occasion the patrons were recorded in 127 villages and towns, providing a schematic but unique general picture over the entire county (**210**). The general distribution among local nobles and magnates as patrons mainly depended on the presence or absence of Orthodox nobles in the villages. [118]

In 1751, the Uniate bishop Manuel Olsavszky visited about 126 parishes and 4 branches in Maramureş.[119] An account much closer to the realities in the territory was made in 1774. At that moment there were recorded 153 parishes and branches,[120] of which 106 in *old Maramureş*. The 172 churches standing at that time in the villages, of which 117 in *old Maramureş*, revealed the true number of congregations. Since long time ago many communities lived separated in 2, 3 and even 4 distinct congregations, although they figured as a single one.[121] This time the patrons were recorded everywhere, though with significant inconsistencies from one district to another.[122]

In 1789 the number of congregations grew to 134 parishes and 48 branches (132 in *old Maramureş*), reorganized before 1806 in 129 parishes and 49 branches (125 in *old Maramureş*).[123] In 1786-89 the patronage situation was traced quite sparing in 77 of the 132 parishes,[124] while in 1822, the patronage was maintained only where the landowner was the Aerario, i.e. the royal treasury.[125]

A parish church was not only the most important construction but also the most sacred and most respected place in a village and therefore concentrated the consideration and protection of the entire community. Those who invested in the parish church marked their natural belonging to and their status within the community.

The picture of who erected and protected the parish churches in *old Maramureş* is complicated by the complex ownership of the villages and the right of patronage implied. At least in the 18th century the owners of the villages shifted from local Orthodox nobles, mixed owners of different confessions to magnates and the royal treasury. In these various situations who commissioned their churches? Who took responsibility and protected the religious life of the Orthodox communities? And what influence did they have over the construction of parish churches?

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[117] MOL, C 40, 152 cs, fasc 13, no 97. The document was identified by Ovidiu Ghitta, whom I thank here for his generosity to provide me a copy.

[118] The church investigation was available here only in a concentrated published form; Ember 1947, 107-110. Of the 20 branches where the patron was not mentioned I suppose that in 7 of them the right of patronage was exercised by local nobles and magnates together, while in the other 13 by the magnates alone.

[119] Hadzhega 1922 and DAZO, 151, op. 1, 839/1745. The protocol named the landlords of 26 parishes. In Bukovets, the patrons were the Szent-Pal and Ujhely families.

[120] 8 were formed after the Uniation in Sighet (1722), Coştiui (1734), Teceu (1749), Vişc (1751), Brustura (1754), Berlebaş (1762), Repedea (1769) and Câmpulung (1770); MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774.

[121] The large village Kolochava was made up of 5 small settlement with 4 churches, the village of Studeny had three different congregations and there were numerous other villages separated in two communities (MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774).

[122] The officials working in the Cosău District were extremely scarce in information, probably gathered through an intermediary, compared to the often interesting narratives from the site left by those who visited the villages in the Lower District.

[123] MOL, C 104, A 54, Pfarr-Regulierung, Munkacs, Maramoros. From 1806 I excluded the parish of Huklyvy with the two branches since they were incorporated from the Bereg county; Udvari 1990, 103-109.

[124] MOL, C 104, A 54/1786-1789.

[125] Schematismus 1822.

212 *Sârbi Susani*. The protecting sexton Gheorghe Şandor *a lu Ciâciău* with the large picture from 21 February 1760 of Saint Paraskeva, the spiritual patron of the church. Photo (partially cleaned): Spring 1995.

213 *Ieud Șes*. During the land survey from 1767 the noble village of Ieud was remarked for the good condition of the buildings (ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 70). One of the few constructions that survived from that time is the elevated wooden church from Ieud Șes. Photo: October 2000.

Noble villages

The available documents are almost unanimous to emphasise the major role of the local nobles of Eastern rite in the parish life of the noble villages and the situation could not have been otherwise. The noble villages were, as earlier mentioned, those inhabited and owned entirely or partly by Orthodox nobles. They lived among their serfs and formed a consistent part of the community. Their number was approximated by the historian Vilmos Bélay to over 34 in 1600[126] and I approximated to 44 in 1767-70 (**26**).

[126] Bélay 1943, 102-103.

Founders

The identity and the contribution of the noble founders survived most often through their dedicatory inscriptions on the walls, the entrance portals, murals or triptychs. Most of them were altered by renovations or by exposure to weather conditions.

The oldest known one was copied in 1809 from a ruinous medieval stone church in Biserica Albă and it was written in Church Slavonic with Cyrillic letters:

рабинѣ Драгоми
Жица Генваріа вї
при вговѣрнѣмъ Стефанѣ воєводѣ
създа цркковъ сію р. Ѯ.
нѳ

In translation it says: "*Drag's wife / month February 12 / during the government of voivode Ştefan / the church was consecrated in the year of God / ..59*".[127] The year is thus fragmentary rendered without knowing if it was incomplete, not read by the hegumen Avram Kolesar from Krásny Brod Monastery, or it was indecipherable for Hlib Kinah, the publisher of the visitation. The Byzantine year could have been 6859, i.e. 1351 AD, when, indeed, the Land of Maramureş might have been led by voivode Ştefan son of Iuga.[128] The founder appears to have been the wife of a wealthy leader Drag, a *cneaz* who was mentioned even in the foundation of the monasteries from Biserica Albă and Peri,[129] built probably in succession. Since Peri Monastery was the well known foundation of the Dragoş family, it is not excluded that the founder of the parish church from Biserica Albă was the wife of a member of that prestigious family.[130]

The wife of Drag was not the single female founder remembered in the medieval history of Maramureş. A noble woman living in Moldavia, by origin from Giuleşti, was linked with the addition of a tower in 1509 to the much older stone church from Giuleşti,[131] and another noble woman, this time from Sarasău, was probably responsible for the erection of the medieval stone church from Sarasău.[132]

The majority of the extant wooden churches built in the noble villages were provided with dedicatory inscriptions. In Onceşti, the dedicatory inscription was lost with the enlargements of the doors. The names of some significant contributors survived on the Royal Doors, dated by two small inscriptions about the same time with the fabric.[133] According to the message of the inscriptions, the Royal Doors were bought by Ştefan Godja and Nicoară Vancea in 17 August 1621 to be remembered with their family members.[134] We do not know if these two nobles were also involved in the construction of the church or not.

Maybe the oldest known dedicatory inscription on a wooden church from Maramureş is that from Budeşti Josani, copied and published by the cleric Ioan

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[127] Kinah 1930, 446. This translation was made with the support of Ovidiu Ghitta.
[128] Popa 1970, 201, 204, and 237.
[129] In 1751 the parish church was mentioned to have been built by an unknown wife of Drag 700 years earlier, which means they read or approximated the year of the inscription from 6559, i.e. 1051! The church from the monastery of Biserica Albă, visited in 1749 by the archimandrite Ghedeon Pazin, was said to be built by someone Drag and his sister Uiți or Milița (Pâclișeanu 1936, 395), who also founded Peri Monastery (Kinah 1926, 115).
[130] Due to the double foundation of the Drag family (with the participation of Drag himself, his wife and his sister) in the parish and monastery of Biserica Albă, we might suppose its initial or at least temporary residence was there. This might be a useful indication for the ample research around the origin of this eminent family (Diaconescu 1997:b, 77-90).
[131] Bud 1911, 43; Popa and Zdroba 1969, 267-285; Baboş 2002:c, 267-288.
[132] Bud 1911, 61-62; Popa 1971, 623-624; Baboş 2002:a, 703-721.
[133] Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, 47.
[134] The dedicatory inscription of the Godjea family is on the left leaf and of the Vancea family on the right leaf.

Bârlea before its alteration in 1923 and partly verified and completed by me in 1999, when the fragments of the old portal were uncovered (**178**). The inscription informed that: "*This church in the days of the priest Tincu and priest Grigorie was made by the noble Ştefan Atanasie, Budeşti 1643.* [*It was paid by*] *Lupea and Ana … Rednic Ionaş, Oniţa Marincaş; it was Gozda* [*master*]."[135] According to the inscription, the main founder of this wooden church, the largest known in Maramureş at that time, was the noble Ştefan Atanasie, who, by all appearances, donated the land. A few others, both males and females, covered the costs of the construction. The list of contributors is, however, not complete without the remarkable presence of the two parish priests Tincu and Grigorie. As they are the first to be mentioned, the construction might have started at their initiative.

In Maramureş, some founders or initiative takers were recorded in order to be remembered only after their departure. This seems to have been the case in Rona de Jos (**76**, **93**, **124**, **150** and **155-156**), where two separate inscriptions in the western loggia, from 1653 and 1661, by all appearances chronicled the death of deacon Andrei and Ştefan. The church was built around 1637 at the initiative of probable a wealthy noble family, on their land and close to their manorial residence (*curtea Popenilor*).[136] Later, probably after a repair or a new donation in the church, a noble signed among the founders on the same wall in the loggia: "*Ego Ligset Samuel; ano 1720, die 22 Mai*".[137]

A valuable dedicatory inscription from 1659 was saved on a portal of the church from Apşa din Jos (**213**). The two noble priests, Gheorghie and Păpşa, must have urged the community to build that grand wooden church (**118**, **122** and **125**). In fact, this was only the second portal, to the nave. On the first portal, which is unfortunately altered, there are still visible some letters from a long text on three lines above the entrance. This was the main dedicatory inscription that could have specified the contributions of the true noble founders.

Another grand church, which stood until 1899 in Vişeu de Jos (**189**), was said to have been founded in 1699 "*per pie defunctum Perillustrem ac Grossum Dominum Stephanum Papp* (Ştefan Pop)".[138] The church, now standing in Botiza, presents even today an almost wiped inscription on the south wall, outside, probably the one who maintained for posterity the name of the founder after his departure.

The former parish wooden church from Dragomireşti (**20**, **112**), built soon after the Tatar raid from 1717, retains on the entrance wall a short notice, deteriorated by weathers, which reminds one of the founders after his departure in 1722. As far and correctly as I could read, it states: "*... прес м҃а раба ... ѱефан сиѣца † вали м҃ѳ аѱкѫ*".[139] Ştefan Steţ (?) was probably either an important giver or a leading cleric if he had to be remembered soon after the church was finished.

According to a triptych in the wooden church from Sălişte a de Sus Buleni (**222**), this parish church was rebuilt in 1724, after the devastating Tatar raid from 1717. The oral tradition consider as founder a noble Pricopu Baciului who used 6 pairs of oxen to transport the logs for the church and later sold them to pay the carpenters. For this reason the church is named either after the founder, "*a Băcienilor*", or after the small *Buleaua* River along which this part of the village was settled, "*a Bulenarilor*".[140]

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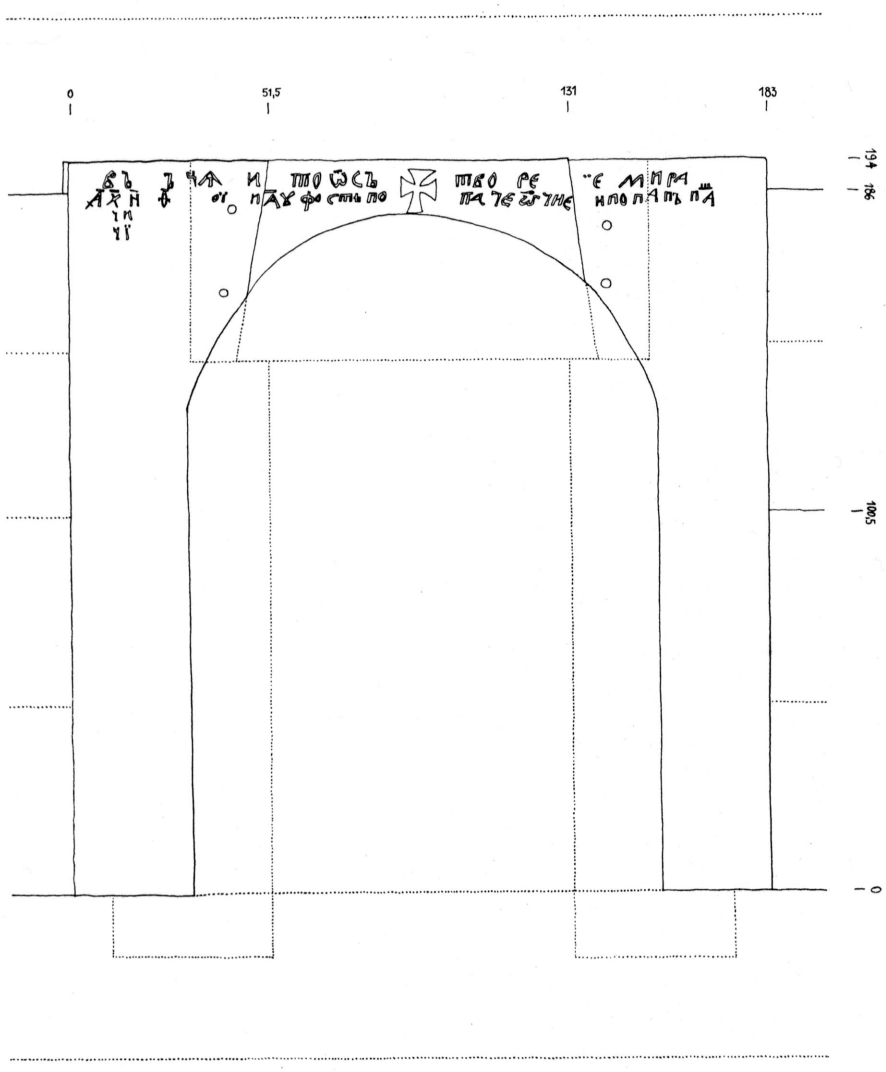
[135] Bârlea 1909, 60/206.
[136] Inf. Marina 1998.
[137] Bârlea 1909, 157/576.
[138] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 45.
[139] The first part of the inscription was published by Atanasie Popa (1938, 154) and it was mentioned but not copied by Bârlea (1909, 100/354-39).
[140] Bârlea 1909, 166/604; inf. Chiş 1998.



213 *Apşa din Jos*. The dedicatory inscription on the portal to the nave is in Church Slavonic and Romanian with Cyrillic letters and states: "*The year 1659, month November, number 13, to the Father, the Creator of the world, and it was the priest Gheorghie and the priest Păpşa*". Tracing and scale drawing 1:20, June 1998.

In Săcel, just like in Dragomireşti and Sălişte a de Sus Buleni, the two parish churches were built after the Tatar raid from 1717. Vasile Boer, the noble founder of one of the parish churches, probably the upper one hold by the noble Magdău family, wrote his deeds on a triptych in 1728 and, together with numerous others appearing on a list of Christian names, asked to be remembered and honoured by beneficiaries, to be forgiven by God and mentioned by priests in their prays. His nephew, the priest Ionaşcu Magdău and his wife Ileana continued the deeds of the family buying a church book, sometime in the middle of the 18th century.[141]

[141] Bârlea 1909, 165/597 and 160/587; DAZO, 151, op 1, 839/1745, 6v.

In our search for founders in noble communities we should come to a fourth parish affected by the Tatar raid in 1717. The wooden church from Cuhea was erected, painted and furnished at the commission of the district praetor Vasile Săpânțan and his wife Ivona in the middle of the 18th century. The quality of the wood work, the daring proportions, the beautiful painting, the richly decorated iconostasis with unusual effects of perspective, and the chandelier with birds symbolising the human virtues, all these and several other details reveal the participation of some of the best professionals. The sought result could only have been one of the most imposing foundations in Maramureş at that time (**109**, **131** and **215**). Inside the church there are maintained the armchair of the noble founder and two portraits, one of Vasile and the other of Ivona. This is the only known parish church in Maramureş where a founder emphasised his status and place in the interior of the church by an ornamented armchair (**214**).[142] Also unique, as far as we know, it is their ambition to be remembered by commissioning an artist to immortalise them in portraits (**194**). According to the dedicatory letter around the portrait of the founder Vasile "*for the remission of his sins and his deceased parents, Anno Domini 1754, the nobleman Vasile Săpânțan together with his wife Ivona and their sons made and painted the house of God*". Around the portrait of Ivona we can still read this fragment: "*… the blessed Ivona of Vasile Săpânțan and their sons, the nobles Gheorghe and Ionaşcu*".[143] This parish church was built about the same time with that from Coştiui (1754), a village belonging to the royal treasury, but where the benefactor was the same noble Vasile Săpânțan.[144]

214 *Cuhea*. The richly decorated interior and the armchair of the founder. Photo: July 1998.

[142] It is interesting to notice that in the church from Cuhea there is a second armchair that stood on the opposite (left) side of that of the founder. The elders said it was made for Grosu Boşăncii from the noble Bizău family, sometime in the 19th century. As the nephew (born around 1900) of the owner defected to a free church, it was occupied by the village magistrate Toader Mariş Şorloc. A third armchair, identical with the second one, is in the loft under the roof and it was once used by the first deacon Ştefan Mariş; Inf. Dancuş 1998.
[143] Pop-Bratu 1981, 122, n 55; Baboş 2000, n 162.
[144] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 191.

215 *Cuhea*. A sunny Sunday morning, just before the service. The women pray around the walls before small icons hanged under the eaves representing the Passion of the Christ, a practice maintained from the former Uniate Church. This wooden church was one of the most elevated Eastern churches of its time in Maramureş. Photo: July 1993.

216 *Berbeşti*. The entrance portal with the signature after a drawing of Franz Schulz from 1862. The six-winged seraph in the aperture was actually a chandelier inside the nave, usualy hanging in front of the iconostasis. KÖH, Térvtar 2004/13175.

In the vanished parish wooden church from Berbeşti (**3**-**4** and **8**) there was an inscription on the portal of the entrance with the following content: *"SAM Andreas fecit eclesia. Anno Domini 1758"* (**216**).[145] Who was this Andreas? Things are complicated by a similar inscription on the portal of the church from the serf village of Kalyny: *"Faciat ecclesia Andreas 1756"*.[146] Was he an itinerant carpenter or a noble founder? For the first, as we already remarked, a carpenter used to sign with the term of his profession after his name, i.e. carpenter or master. For the second, the different techniques in which the two churches were built speak, too, against the signature of a single carpenter. The church from Berbeşti was built with the most refined professional details while that from Kalyny presented quite roughly squared timbers with projecting joints. Accordingly, we might have one or two different noble founders with the name Andreas or Andras signing in both places.

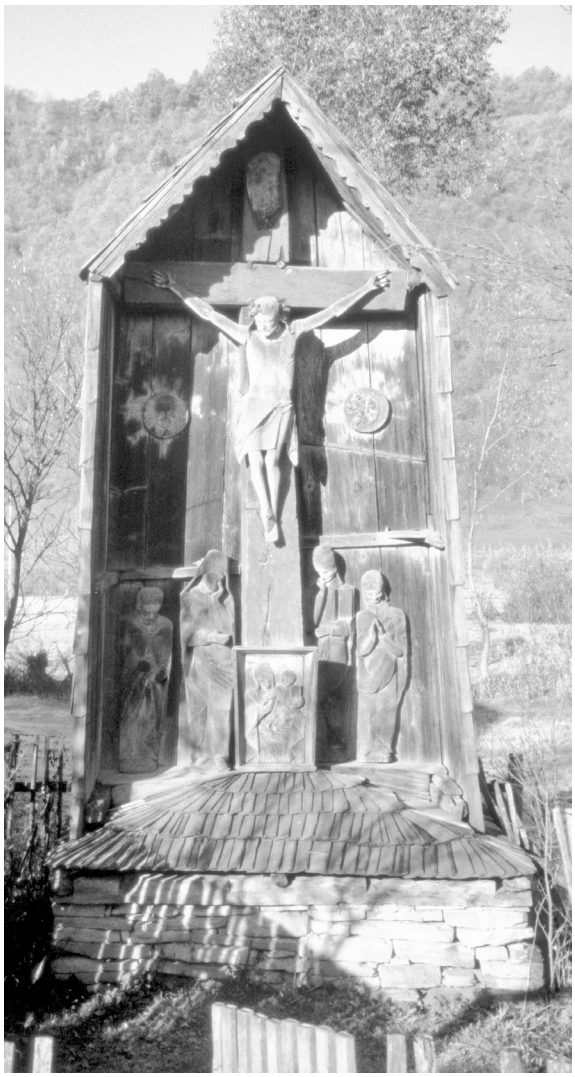
In Berbeşti, the noble founder might have been the archpriest Andrei Pop Rednic from the nearby village of Giuleşti.[147] The archpriest Andrei, together with his brother Atanasie, the Uniate bishop of Transylvania, and his cousin Ştefan, the assistant prefect of Maramureş, belonged to the noble Rednic family, prominent not only in their home village Giuleşti, but also in the entire Mara Valley. [148] At the margins of Berbeşti stands even today a beautiful cross of the Rednic family, who signalled those who entered the valley the great authority of the noble family in this corner of Maramureş (**217**). By all probabilities, the archpriest Andrei Pop Rednic was also involved in the repairs at the monastery (1763) and the extension of the

[145] Bârlea 1909, 21.
[146] Zaloziecky 1926, 121, n. 31.
[147] He used to sign either as Andreas Pop, Andreas Pop Rednik, Andreas Rednik or Popa Andras; Iorga 1906, 239-248.
[148] Filipaşcu 1997, 73.

parish church (1768) from Giuleşti. His potential involvement in Kalyny must be, however, further verified.

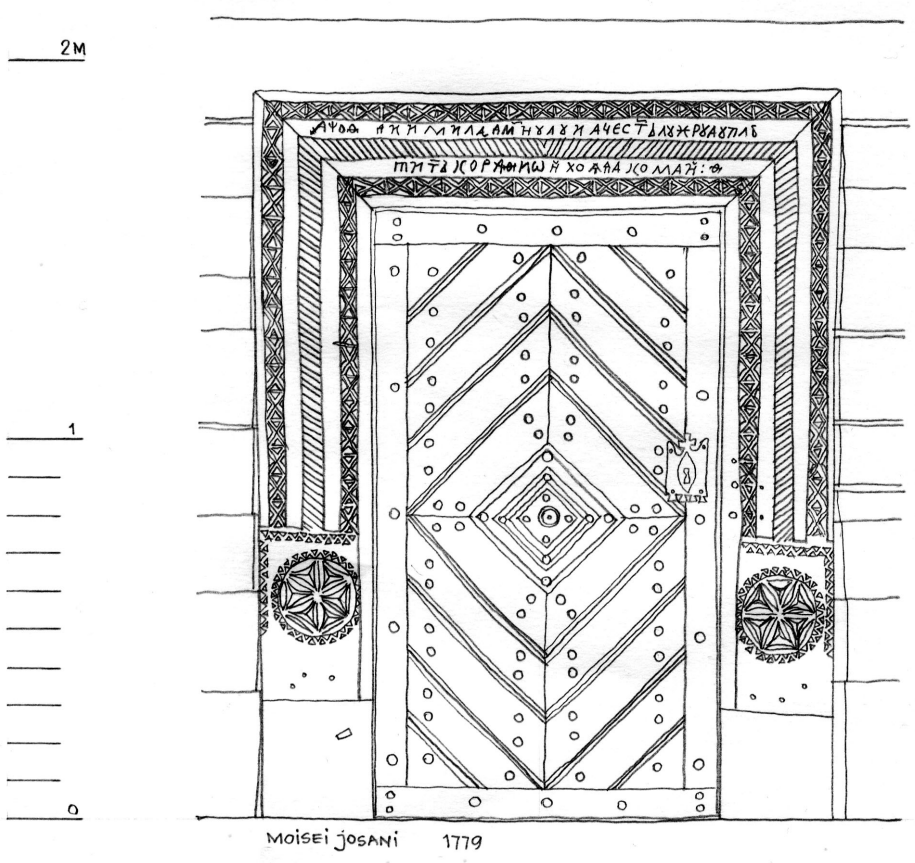
A decade after the erection of the new parish church from Berbeşti, in 1769, "*the leader of the local nobles Ştefan Potacu, the village magistrate Gheorghie Avremescu and all the nobles of the village together, as they made the contract with the painter Alexa, embellished the holy church for the glory of God, to be as their alms and remission of the sins of their departed ancestors*'".[149] Another significant donor in Berbeşti was the noble priest Toader Codrea who offered together with his wife Nastasie the murals inside the sanctuary.[150]

Some time in the 1750s, the founders of the new parish wooden church from Budeşti Susani seem to have remained quite silent about its construction, yet, only until the murals were finished. By all appearances, a parish church was accomplished at that time only after it was covered by murals, as already suggested by the dedicatory inscriptions from Cuhea and Berbeşti. Indeed, in Budeşti Susani, when the mural paintings were finished, the founders finally felt entitled to be remembered. The dedicatory inscription above the iconostasis mentions: "*By the compassion of God and the gift of the Holy Spirit, God had the generosity to urge for the painting and completion of this church through the call of the priest Ionaş and the work of the painter Alexandru Ponehalski, for the glory of God, the salvation of the Christian souls and of the entire village, we, the founders, Pop Ionaş, the priest of the village, together with his noble wife Iura Măricuța and their sons Vasilie, Toader, Grigorie and their daughter Ioana; and Bud Toader, Opriş Vărtic, and Bătă Ştefan. The year 1760, month November, 8 days.*"[151] Thus, the commissioners of the painting completed the church and assumed the role of founders. Actually, we are not entirely certain if this group was also responsible for its construction a few years earlier. Nevertheless, we have to distinguish the main emphasis on the noble parish priest Ionaş Pop and his family. It is not excluded that he had a central role even in the erection of the house of worship.



217 *Berbeşti*. The roadside cross of the Rednic family at the entrance in the village and the Mara Valley coming from Sighet. Photo: October 1997.

[149] This was a dedication letter along the iconostasis; Bârlea 1909, 19-20/63.
[150] Bârlea 1909, 19/62.
[151] The inscription in Romanian with Cyrillic letters was earlier published by Bârlea (1909, 66/220) and Pop-Bratu (1981, 100, fig. 10 and n 18).



218 *Moisei Josani*. The portal is surprisingly well preserved after two transfers, the last one to Ruscova Oblaz in 1954 heavily modifying the initial church. Scale drawing and tracing: May 1995.

The next example comes from the lower parish of Moisei, where the right of patronage belonged since at least one century earlier to the Pop Coman family. One of the well known members of this family was the former parish priest, archpriest and archimandrite of the Moisei Monastery Mihai Pop Coman, who offered a triptych in the lower parish church.[152] In the second half of the 18th century, the family decided to build a new parish church in the lower part of the village. According to a dedicatory inscription on the portal of the entrance in "*1779 with the compassion of God this work was paid by the curator Ion Hojda Coman*" (**218**).[153] This important noble founder also donated, together with other members of the Pop Coman family, a church book in 1782.[154]

The participation of the noble families at the foundation of their parish churches can further be recorded in Deseşti (**219**). Here, the year of construction is not known but it was probably built just a few years before the murals covered its interior. As we enter the narthex, we find the inscription from 1780 of the noble wives who commissioned together the painter Radu Munteanu to embellish their separate church. The iconostasis and the mural above was paid with 37 Rh fl by the noble Pop Ianoş Părşinar with his wife Marica, their son Ştefan and their elders Grigorie and Axenie Pop. And finally, in the sanctuary, the expenses for the murals were covered by the nobles of the village in the days of the parish priest Moisei Dunca and the deacon Todor Drăguş.[155]

[152] Bârlea 1909, 138/500.
[153] The church was moved at the end of the 19th century in Ruscova and since 1954 heavily modified in Ruscova Oblaz; Baboş 2000, 146.
[154] Bârlea 1909, 137/495.
[155] Bârlea 1909, 90-91/317, 322, 323; Brătulescu 1941, 15-19; Pop-Bratu 1981, 109/n 31, 117/n 41.

The parish church from Văleni, brought from a monastery in Cuhea in the late 1670s, was at the turn of the 18th century in great need for repairs and refreshment. The initiative came from the old parish priest Ananie Stanca, his sexton Nemiş Vasile a Raţului and the representative nobles of the village "*as a good deed*", as they mentioned it. In 1796 they replaced the sills and in 1807 they invited the painter Hodor Toader from Vişeu de Mijloc to cover the interior with new murals.[156]

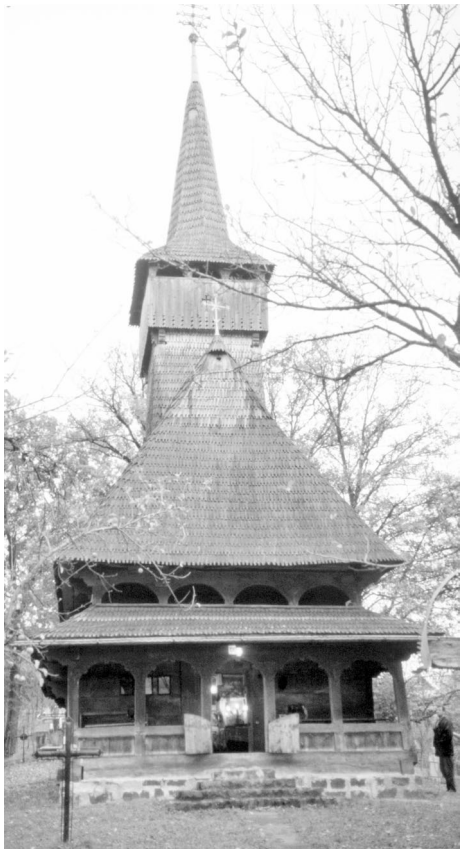
The last example concerning the implication of the nobles in their parishes comes from a church erected at the end of the 18th century in Fereşti (**100** and **220**). The church was built by German carpenters in 1798 and painted a few years later by Falukevici from Baia Mare, "*commissioned by Vasalie Ţâplea and all the villagers … as they were helped by God, to remain as alms generation after generation*."[157]

From these numerous examples, especially along the 17th and 18th centuries, comes forward the significant role of the village nobles in the foundation of their own parish churches. The initiative could come from an individual noble, a particular family, a group of various nobles and even the entire community of nobles. A remarkable aspect is the almost equal involvement of the local noble women. Nevertheless, we should notice the major role played by the noble clerics. In their triple role as landowners, patrons and clerics, the noble priests could have been the most motivated to start the construction of new churches, whenever it was necessary. This is perhaps the main reason why they appear in several inscriptions as founders or at least as those who urged the founders to build.[158]

The great number of dedicatory inscriptions indicates the great prestige within the communities derived from such deeds. However, not all the founders were ambitious to be remembered, since numerous inscriptions appeared after their departure at the initiative of a family member or maybe as post-mortem recognition from the community.

The role of certain noble families in the construction and protection of parish churches was obvious in the communities which separated because of local competition. In these situations the parish churches took the name after the founding and protecting families. For instance, in Ieud the church from the hill belonged to the *Balea* family and therefore was named *Bale* or *Balcu* church, in Săliştea de Sus (**221**-**222**) the two parish churches belonged to the *Nistor* (*Roanii* or *Iujeştii*) and *Baciu* (*Bulean*) families, in Săcel *Răţănii* (*Grad* family) and *Măgdăeştii* had their own parish churches, in Moisei the community was separated in two congregations by the *Pop Coman* and *Vlonga* families, and finally the oldest parish from Călineşti belonged to the *Bandrea* (*Şerba*) family.[159]

219 *Deseşti*. The church can no longer receive all the women and therefore most of them gather around the walls outside Photo: April 1994.



220 *Fereşti*. After a steep path leading from the gate of the precinct, the church greets the visitor with its double porch from where a beautiful view opens over the surroundings. Photo: October 1997.

[156] Bârlea 1909, 204-205/755-759.
[157] Baboş 2000, 143, n 175.
[158] As a group, the priests, their archpriests and bishops could make pressures on communities to take care of their parish churches. For instance, in 1706, the 4 archpriests of the county asked the help and the authority of the county assembly to act against those who opposed the repair of the churches. Cziple 1916, 326/59.
[159] Bârlea 1909, 71-72, 120-121; Bud 1911, 49; Dăncuş 1986, 146-158; Pop 1983, 16; inf. Grad 1998; Baboş 2000, 116, n 79.

221 *Săliștea de Sus Nistorești*. The village of Săliștea de Sus was separated in two competing parishes with the construction of the church of the noble Iuga (Nistor) family on the left bank of the Iza River around 1680. In 1774 the church was patronized by the Iuga and Vlad families (MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 52). Photo: October 2000.

Patrons

The parishes from the noble villages were protected by local nobles in 1747, 1774 and even in 1786. Even in the Lower District, where the patronage was sometimes said to lack, there were in reality many nobles collectively implicated in the protection of parish churches. An illustrative example was the parish from Ciumuleşti, where in 1774 nobody pretended the right of patronage alone, yet, by right of inheritance the noble families Stoica, Râşcu, Criciovan and Benţa were entitled to it. The Stoica family, who was the most numerous in the village, even wanted to assume alone the right of patronage but this was contested by the contributions of the other families.[160] The situation was similar in Voineşti, Criciova, Drăgoeşti, Uglea and Darva, where the parish and the church were in the common care of the local nobles, none of them being able to pretend alone the right of patronage. In 1786, in the Lower District 5 noble parishes were still patronised by the local nobles. In the other 4, the local nobles no longer exercised their right of patronage, which probably means the entire community was entitled to it and therefore no particular patron could be distinguished.[161]

It happened, however, that a part of a noble village entered in the property of a foreign noble or magnate of reformat or catholic faith as it happened with Rozavlea after 1711.[162] In this case the local nobility seems to have lost the full responsibility over the parish, at least officially. In 1747 Rozavlea was listed among the parishes patronised by local nobles and magnates, in 1774 the right of

[160] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 104v.

[161] In the noble villages to have or not the local nobles as patrons made no difference since they were both landowners and parishioners, but in the serf village the absence of the patron left the parish without a necessary support in exchange for a greater liberty in religious matters.

[162] Filipaşcu 1997, 122-123.

222 *Săliştea de Sus Buleni*. After the Tatar raid from 1717 and the destruction of the older church from Buleni the villagers from Săliştea de Sus were forced to use together the surviving church of the Nistor family, but open conflicts for supremacy, worsened during an Easter ceremony, led the nobles from Buleni to rebuild their own parish church. In 1774 the church from Buleni was patronized by the Vlad and Kiss families (MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 52v). Photo: October 2000.

patronage was shared among the treasury, Ladislau Teleky, Joseph Patay and the local branch of the Petrovan family, whereas in 1786 the treasury remained the single mentioned patron.[163] Despite these changes the local noble families continued to play an important role in the fate of their parish.[164]

The opposite situation occurred when some noble families settled in a serf village. Then the parish improved its status by having a noble member. In case the noble family moving in possessed the entire village, the parish could appear in the investigations as patronised by local nobles, just like any noble village, as the circumstance might have been in Hărniceşti and Ruscova in 1747 as well as in Hoteni and Valea Stejarului in 1774. A shared patronage among local and foreign owners could appear either as earlier exemplified in Rozavlea or as in the former serf villages Poienile Izei, Slătioara and Glod, where the noble families moving in did not hold the entire village. In Glod, for example, it settled a branch of the noble family Dunca from Şieu.[165] In Poienile Izei in the middle of the 18th century it resided among others Ionaş Coteț, who was also from Şieu by origin, but he shared the right of patronage with the wealthy magnate Mihai Balea from Ieud and the noble Ionaş Saplonczay (Săpânțan).[166] Whether the Uniate nobles formed a majority or only a frail minority in a parish, in the second half of the 18th century, they seem to have assumed its protection partially or entirely, due to their double condition as owners and parishioners.

[163] Ember 1947, 110, no. 101; MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 58; MOL, C 104, A 54, Pfarr-Regulierung, Munkacs Diocesis, Maramoros, no. 35.
[164] In 1823 Simon Pătrovan and his entire noble family paid 90 florins for the mural painting on the gable wall above the iconostasis. It is interesting to remark that the priest paid alone for the murals inside the sanctuary, while the laymen for the rest of the church. Bârlea 1909, 159-160/ 583-586.
[165] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 61.
[166] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 60; Chindriş 1997, 90.

223 *Ieud Deal.* A mural scene inside the narthex painted by Alexandru Ponehalski sometime after 1765 depicts the symbolic wedding of Jesus with the Church where some worshipers come with gifts. The indirect message of the scene might have been that any deed to the church was directed to the Christ himself. The commissioner of these murals was perhaps the noble local Balea family, especially Mihai Balea, the assistant prefect of Maramureş at that time. Photo: July 1997.

Parish churches

Despite the dominance of wooden churches it is good to note first an important number of parish stone churches erected in the Middle Ages in the main residence villages of the local leaders. The parish stone churches erected in Uglea, Domneşti, Bedeu, Sarasău, Biserica Albă, Bocicoi, Giuleşti and Cuhea indicate the earlier regional centres of power. These churches might have been used then as means to express prestige and authority in the local landscape.

During the 18th century, in the 44 noble villages there functioned an almost constant number of 54 parish churches, due to the earlier separation in two communities of 10 parishes. From the 54 parish churches standing at the turn of the 18th century in the noble villages only 3 medieval stone ones were in use, the other ones were more or less late wooden constructions. Of these wooden and stone churches there are 29 still extant.[167] Another four are known from drawings,

[167] 1 Vişeu de Jos (1699), 2 Moisei II Josani (1779), 3 Borşa II de Jos (1717-20), 4 Săliştea de Sus I a Nistoreştilor (1680), 5 Săliştea de Sus II Buleni (1724), 6 Dragomireşti (1722), 7 Cuhea (1754), 8 Ieud Deal (1611-21), 9 Ieud Şes, 10 Şieu (1717-), 11 Rozavlea (1717-), 12 Deseşti (1780), 13 Breb

descriptions, archaeological excavations and pictures.[168] These figures actually indicate the churches survived in greatest number in noble parishes enabling a good understanding of the ambitions of their founders.

The general picture of the noble parish churches is dominated by fashionable wooden constructions of refined technical quality and daring sizes. Among them we find the largest construction of all, in Budeşti Josani (1643), admired by the bishop Manuel Olsavszky during his visit in 1751. The vanished wooden church from Petrova, of the prestigious Petrovan family, was also remembered not only for its dimensions but also for its beauty.[169] Numerous other parish wooden churches from the noble villages ranged among the largest and most representative ones in the county, like those from Borşa de Sus, Cuhea, Dragomireşti, Bârsana, Ieud Deal, Ieud Şes, Apşa din Jos and many others. One of the few surviving medieval stone churches stood at that time in Giuleşti and it filled the locals with much pride, right to its debated demolishing at the end of the 19th century.[170] Accordingly, the wealthiest nobles, in their role as founders, patrons and landowners, seem to have done their best to erect and endow their parish churches with the same prestige as their rank and resources allowed.

In 1786-89, apart from the grand parish churches there were mentioned even small and very small ones in some noble villages from the Lower District, as suggested in Voineşti, Breaza, Uglea, Fereşti, Lipceni, Bedeu, Drăgoeşti, Criciova and others (**120**). We are, however, not able to verify their sizes since they were replaced during the 19th century, except in Darva where the maximal capacity was the double of that mentioned in 1786-89.

One small church did survive in the noble village of Călineşti in the separate part named Căeni (**86**). This might have been a small community of nobles and serfs, known in the 16th century as Iurceşti and probably owned by the Iurca family.[171] The standing church was built in 1629 with only a single level of eaves, with entrance on the south and only two doors to the sanctuary but with a good quality in the wood work. Even in the eyes of the local villagers this church was small, the other parish church was by comparison older and larger.[172] The church built in the upper part of the next village, known as Sârbi Susani or former Baloteşti,[173] presents an even more archaic character, but, again, have an excellent quality of wood work. Close to these parishes, in the village of Breb, a quite roomy and technically refined parish church was built with the most archaic known constructive principles. In Năneşti, too, the parish church shared among the local nobles and numerous serfs was small with a simple roof and a tower added in the middle of the 17th century (**7**). These four churches present ancient forms which not entirely accuse of lack of resources. In this remote corner of the Cosău district, some noble founders might have eventually shared more conservative views than elsewhere around. Whatever the reason was behind their archaic appearance, the works had a high standard indicating the participation of skilful professionals.

To summarize, the parish churches from the noble villages were in the main the most representative sacred rooms consecrated for the Eastern rite in the region.

(1622), 14 Budeşti I Susani (1760), 15 Budeşti II Josani (1643), 16 Sârbi I Susani (1639), 17 Sârbi II Josani (c 1685), 18 Călineşti I Susani (1784), 19 Călineşti II Căeni (1629), 20 Corneşti (1615), 21 Fereşti (1798), 22 Rona de Jos (c 1637), 23 Onceşti(c 1621), 24 Apşa de Mijloc I Susani (1705-10), 25 Apşa de Mijloc II Josani (-1685), 26 Apşa din Jos (1659), 27 Slatina (1790), 28 Darva (XVII), 29 Sarasău (XV-XVI).

[168] 1 Giuleşti (XIII), 2 Văleni (1516-26), 3 Berbeşti (1758), and 4 Moisei II Susani (1717-).

[169] Bud 1911, 54-55.

[170] Baboş 2002:c, 267-288.

[171] Filipaşcu 1997, 85-86.

[172] Bârlea 1909, 71/249, 72/253.

[173] Filipaşcu 1997, 86; inf. Tămaş 1995.

224 *Poienile Izei*. One of the finest wooden churches was built in the former serf village of Poienile Izei. There, several nobles from Șieu built their residences and probably invested in the construction of the parish church. In 1774 the patrons of the church were Ionaș Coteț, Mihai Balea and Ionaș Săpânțan (MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 40) of which only the first one lived in the village. Photo: October 2000.

Serf villages

The serf villages from *old Maramureș* were more or less scattered among the noble villages, most of them concentrated in the plain of the Tisa Valley. What the parishes from these villages seem to share is a common type of church architecture with the noble communities.

The patrons of the parishes in these serf villages were in the middle of the 18th century the major landowners. In the Upper and Cosău districts the patrons were most often the Romanian noble families of Eastern rite from the neighbouring villages, in some places even living in their serf villages as it was the case with a

branch of the Dunca family in Glod, Dunca, Rednic and Pop families in Slătioara, members of the Petrovan family in Ruscova and Rednic family in Hărniceşti, Sat Şugătag and Hoteni. Some individual wealthy nobles like Ionaş Săpânţan and Mihai Balea were patrons in Bocicoel and, together with Ionaş Coteţ, in Poienile Izei (**224**).[174] In the other serf villages, from all four districts, the main patrons were the Hungarian magnates like Teleky, Pogany, Tholdy, Bethlen, Patay, Serencsy, Haller, Marothy and others or families of Romanian origin like Darvay, Stoika and Ioody.[175] In one known case, in Zolotarevo, the right of patronage of the heirs of the former magnate Tholdy was taken over sometime between 1774 and 1789 by the assistant prefect Mihai Balea de Ieud, of Eastern confession, probably due to a change of ownership.

Although there were numerous constructions and repairs indicated during the investigation from 1774, almost the only ones involved were the parishioners themselves. For instance, the village of Kosheliovo had in 1768 no less than 16 different owners of which only one lived there,[176] none of them pretending the right of patronage in 1774. The parish and the church were "*communi opera, et impensi Parochiani curat*". Thus the parishioners took care themselves of the poor parish house and the very small old wooden church, as well as of the necessary expenses. Although the parishioners replaced in 1752 the rotten sills, a larger wooden church was necessary to take in the entire congregation.[177] In 1789 the parishioners and the eventual patrons were urged by the church authorities to enlarge and repair their cramped and weak church.[178] The problem worsened in 1799 when the old church was completely destroyed by a three days long fire. After a decade, in 1809, the parish succeeded to build a new stone church, by all probabilities during the office of the noble priest Mykhayl Markosh from Bedeu.[179] Another example was the parish of Nzyhnie Selylshche where the parishioners were confronted in 1772 with the deterioration of their parish wooden church after a storm. They had to temporarily thatch it until they afforded the proper investments.[180] In Monastyrets, the right of patronage was ignored by the numerous entitled landowners in 1774, while the parishioners had to gather around a very small chapel, built by the parishioners themselves a half century earlier. This chapel was made in 1724 from the beams of a former monastery church, set on fire by Tatars in 1717, probably as a temporarily solution, but it seems to have lasted until 1923.[181]

The serf village of Domneşti gives us an example of limited involvement of the magnates in the Eastern parishes. This village was once resided by wealthy Orthodox nobles who lost their ownership to the Hungarian Pogány family in 1495.[182] The community of Eastern rite used a medieval stone church founded by the earlier Orthodox owners until a flood destroyed it sometime before the visitation from 1751.[183] Unable to renovate it, the parishioners built a new one of wood in 1748 in the affected lower part and repaired a small wooden church from 1693 in the upper part of the village in 1758 (**10**-**11**).[184] According to the investigation from 1774, these works were made on the expenses of the parishioners, without naming any contribution from the landowners. At that time

[174] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 41-82.
[175] Hadzhega 1922, 172-202; MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 83-188.
[176] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 237.
[177] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 124v-125.
[178] MOL, C 104, A 54, Pfarr-Regulierung 1786-1789, Munkacs, Maramoros, no. 88.
[179] Syrokhman 2000, 418.
[180] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 101.
[181] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 96v; Syrokhman 2000, 405, 794.
[182] Filipaşcu 1997, 78; Popa 1970, 81, 192.
[183] The medieval parish stone church might have been destroyed at the same time with the similar one from Biserica Albă and probably even that from Bedeu, ruined by a flood in 1738; Hadzhega 1922, 177, 186 and 191.
[184] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 92v-93.

the two wooden churches were not yet in a perfect state since they still needed some structural improvements. This suggests the poor parishioners tried to manage the matters of their parish alone. However, the reformat landowner Adamus Pogány, maybe urged by his catholic wife, wrote in 14 July 1769 a letter to the Uniate vicar of Maramureş sitting in Sighet asking for permission to demolish the remaining walls of the medieval church and rebuild it in a safer place.[185] Certainly, he was preoccupied by the state of the parish church of his serfs in the quality of patron. We do not know more about this initiative, yet the church was never rebuilt. The two parish wooden churches survived until 1965 when they were demolished by local officials of the Communist party.[186] The inter-war pictures reveal two modest wooden churches with only one level of eaves. The corner joints in the lower church shifted from fine flush ones on the front to projecting ones at the rear, whereas in the upper church the visible joints in front and at sides were made plane with the walls.

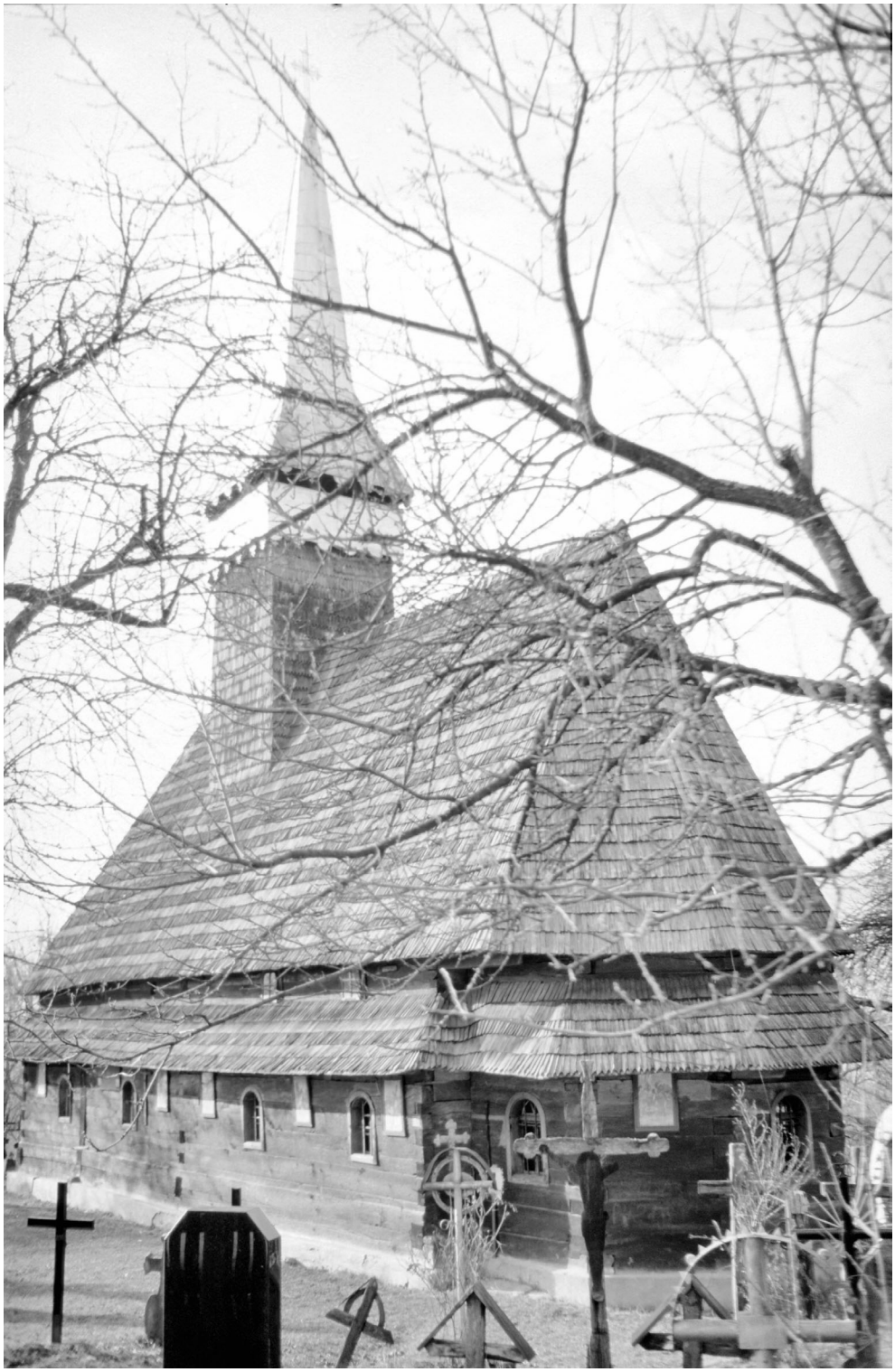
Modest parish wooden churches with only one level of eaves were also built in Repedea in 1769 (**13**), on the property of the magnate Teleky and noble Petrovan family,[187] and as late as 1803 in Apşiţa (**14**), a property of the Pogány family. Both serf churches, in the limits of the available pictures, presented before their demolitions quite good wood works with plane walls and flush joints.[188]

A more significant role in the religious life of the small serf village of Remeţi seems to have played the Catholic bishop of Transylvania Sigismund Antonius Stoika, baron of Szala, who was by origin from the Romanian noble Stoica family from Maramureş. In 1747 and 1751 the parishioners still prayed in a small ruinous old wooden church covered by thatch.[189] The baron seemingly repaired a long abandoned medieval stone minster of the catholic St Paul Order and ceded it to the Uniate community. In 1774, his successor, the baron Ludovic Stoika de Szala, just finished a partial renovation of the church.[190]

An excellent possibility for comparison between the serf villages and the neighbouring noble villages we find in Valea Stejarului which long time belonged to the nobles from Onceşti. At the beginning of the 17th century, the serfs from Valea Stejarului needed a new parish church. According to the local tradition, the founder was a noble widower from Onceşti. The work started sometime between 1615 and 1620 in a forest clearing using the felled trees to construct a very small wooden church. From the technical point of view the wood work was of good quality, and that made the main difference from a common house in the village, because the church had no tower and was perhaps covered by thatch at the very beginning (**50**, **115** and **231**). About the same time with this small foundation, around 1621, the nobles from Onceşti finished a new church in their own parish and the entrusted professional carpenter was in both parishes master Gavril. The church in the noble community was made, however, with two levels of eaves, with a tower and probably was shingled from the beginning (**97** and **137**). The two churches stands even today and give an excellent picture of how the different social conditions could have been expressed in the local church architecture.

Apart from the mentioned examples of modest parish churches built with or without the help of the landowners and patrons, we can add the phenomena of transferring wooden churches from richer to poorer villages, in most cases from noble to serf villages. The serf village from Hoteni obtained around 1758 the old

[185] DAZO, 151, op 1, 2156/1769, 5-6v.
[186] Syrokhman 2000, 528-531.
[187] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 47v.
[188] A picture from Repedea was kindly made available by priest Petru Rahovan; Slobodian 1995, 62-63; Syrokhman 2000, 578-579.
[189] Ember 1947, 108, no. 45; DAZO, 151, op 1, 839/1745, 9v.
[190] Diaconescu 1997:c, 123-132; MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 136.



225 *Slatina*. The wooden parish church from 1790 was taken to pieces and transported by carts to Hoteni after a new stone church was consecrated in 1895 on the expenses of the Uniate bishop Mihai Pavel. In the poor village of Hoteni it replaced another wooden church, transferred in 1758 from Budeşti Vinţeşti. Photo in Hoteni: February 1995.

wooden church from Budeşti Susani, former Vinţeşti. After more than a century the parishioners from Hoteni replaced that church with another one obtained as a gift around 1895, this time from Slatina (**225**). From the noble village of Vişeu de Jos were transported two wooden churches, one to the serf village Bocicoel sometime in the 17th or 18th century, and the second one in 1899 to another poor community, in Botiza (**189**). The parishioners from Berbeşti gave away their old church to the neighbouring village of Vad around 1760. The new Uniate parishes formed in the royal towns of Sighet, Câmpulung and Teceu, all received abandoned monastery churches from the noble villages of Săcel (1748), Criciova (1767) and respectively

Ialova (1749). About a century earlier, in 1667, the nobles from Rozavlea gave away their monastery church to the serf village of Strâmtura (**110** and **180-181**). And the former poor parish of Ruscova, affected by a fire that destroyed around 1883 the church, received a wooden church from Moisei Josani.

However, not all the churches surviving in the villages in the vicinity of the noble ones were built with a visible subordination. There are numerous examples of more or less ambitious wooden churches erected among them, too. The best known ones are perhaps those around the town of Hust, from Nyzhnie Selyshche, Sokyrnytsia, Krainykovo, Danylovo, Oleksandrivka, Steblivka, Bushtyno and Dulovo, with the exception of the last three, all maintained. In the Taras Valley there were known the churches from Shyroky Luh, Novoselytsia, Neresnytsia and Ternovo, all disappeared. In the south we can distinguish the extant churches from Poienile Izei, Hărniceşti, Sat Şugătag and those from Glod and Poienile de sub Munte.

The five parish churches in the south, from Poienile Izei (c 1632?), Hărniceşti (1679), Sat Şugătag (1700), Glod (c 1784), and Poienile de sub Munte (1798), seem to be more or less linked to the contribution of a noble founder who could eventually live in the parish. We have fewer doubts about the churches from Poienile Izei (**224**) and Hărniceşti (**126**, **182** and **184**), which were by all probabilities commissioned by the nobles living in those parishes. Due to the vicinity with the village of Hărniceşti it is possible that the church from Sat Şugătag (**111** B, **113**, **141** and **191-192**) was built in 1700 inspired by it and the professional carpenter seems to have been a successor of the one who built in Hărniceşti two decades earlier. Tit Bud (1846-1917), the Romanian Vicar of Maramureş, born in Sat Şugătag, published a local oral tradition regarding the construction of this church. According to this tradition, a parishioner transported the entire building material with two buffaloes and donated them to the church when the work was finished.[191] A fragmentary inscription inside the narthex has the following content "…мѣ декъаχ Попа Иванъ ЙѰПГ мисец април кѥ",[192] and it recorded perhaps the death of the deacon Ioan Popa in 25 April 1753. Considering its place inside, he could have been an aged noble founder.[193] The church from Glod was built before 1784 when a branch of the noble Dunca family lived in the village and was the patron of the parish.[194] A similar church was built in 1798 in Poienile de sub Munte, where an inscription on the portal of the entrance reminds the noble founder Ioan Dan from Cuhea.[195] These five churches were built with an excellent quality in the wood work and quite fashionable. There are no features to distinguish them from those in the nearest noble villages, most probably owing to the contribution of the patrons living in those villages.

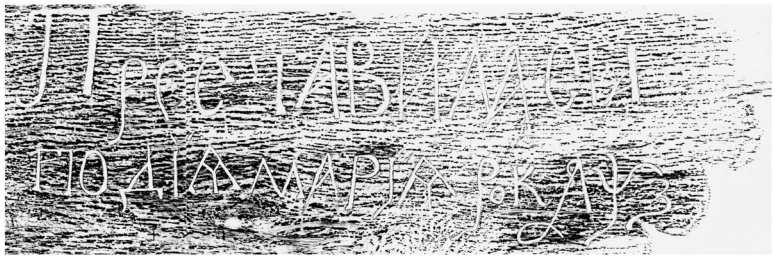
The known parish wooden churches in the Taras Valley, from Shyroky Luh (1785, later moved to Pidpleşa), Novoselytsia (1798), Ternovo (c. 1800), Găneşti (1810) and Neresnytsia (1813; **18**), now all vanished, were built late in the 18th century and at the beginning of the next one, reflecting new realities in the serf parishes. For instance, the villages Novoselytsia, Ternovo and Neresnytsia belonged already to the royal treasury and the parish churches there were built with

[191] Bud 1911, 66. The tradition resembles that from Sălişte a de Sus Buleni.
[192] The inscription was published with a small difference by Bârlea (1909, 177/640).
[193] In 1689, in Şugătag, there lived the nobles Bank Akszenie and Popa Vaszali, the last one probably was the father of the founder Popa Ioan; Bélay 1943, 190.
[194] Baboş 2000, 152-161, MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 61.
[195] Slobodian 1995, 65. The message of the inscriptions must be closer studied if they record the moment the church was built, consecrated or when the founder died. It is possible that the church was built before the parish regulation from 1786-1789 and was one of the two churches mentioned at that time in the village. In that case the itinerary of the Moldavian professional carpenters appears more tight in time, working before 1784 in Glod, ending their major work in Călineşti in 1784 and continuing with Poienile de sub Munte soon thereafter.

its significant support.[196] The earlier parish wooden churches in the serf villages from this area were in 1774 either small chapels or weak old churches incapable to take in the congregations.[197]

226 *Danylovo.* Two inscriptions, one in Latin and the other one in Church Slavonic, indicate the consecration date in 14 March 1779, but there are no references to builders or commissioners. Photo: October 2000.

The beautiful wooden churches in the vicinity of Hust are some of the most interesting and intriguing ones in Maramureş. These are ample churches of high technical quality displaying ambitions and prestige at the level of those from the noble villages. We succeeded to identify the skilful church carpenters from Nyzhnie Selyshche, but a question still remains: Who commissioned them? Were the foreign landowners here so ambitious to compete with those of Eastern rite in the noble villages? Or were the local serf communities, out from the control of Eastern nobles, free to be build as they liked? The churches from Nyzhnie Selyshche (**151**-**154**), Sokyrnytsia (**157**-**160**) and Krainykovo (**161**-**163** and **165**) were built in the 17th century, when the landowners or the patrons were, presumably, the descendants of the Hungarian magnates from the turn of the 16th century.[198] In the middle of the 18th century the villages around Hust were still in the possession of Hungarian magnates. All three churches retained some inscriptions without naming those who participated to its erection. In Sokyrnytsia, however, there is one inscription naming the death of Maria Prodia in 1707. Prodia Maria could have been a noble of Eastern confession (**227**). Since the church was built at least a half century earlier she could at best have been a very old founder if not a later benefactor.



227 *Sokyrnytsia*. The inscription on the northern wall of the antechurch recording the death of a benefactor in 1707:
"Прєставйласи Продїа Марїа рок ѧѰз". Tracing, scale 1: 5, 1998.

[196] Syrokhman 2000, 549-550, 553-572.
[197] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 142-170.
[198] Bélay 1943.

228 *Steblivka.* The parish church from the serf village of Steblivka was provided with richly decorated portals, a sign of costly investments and high prestige. Photo: July 1994.

The parish church from Danylovo was built in 1779, according to the two inscriptions above the portals, one in Latin and one in Church Slavonic (**64**, **68**, **123** and **226**). In 1769 the landowners were the Hungarian magnates Károlyi and Tholdy, as well as the nobles Szegedy, Georg and Nicholaus Chernel. The two magnates did not pretend the patronage in 1774 and the parishioners cared of their parish alone. [199] Their old parish wooden church was narrow, incapable to receive the parishioners and, in addition, its "*deteriorated roof was no longer able to hinder the rain*".[200] A new parish church was thus welcomed. Unfortunately the parish regulation from 1786-89 did not mention the founder or at least if the right of patronage was pretended by someone after the recent construction. We are thus far left to use only our own imagination. It is not excluded, however, that the Hungarian landowners were asked by the parishioner to support them in their enterprise.

The vanished churches from Dulovo (1737-42; **12**), Bushtyno (1776; **6**) and Steblivka (1797; **16**-**17**, **52**, **81** and **228**) were built with the major support of the royal treasury, who was the only landowner and the unquestioned patron in these villages.

The representative wooden churches around Hust give the impression to have had as references if not even competed with those in the noble villages around. There could have been some local factors that are difficult to recover or understand today. The questions concerning the commissioners of the Eastern parishes around Hust remain open to future researches.

[199] ÖStA-KA, K VII K, Beschreibung, 299.
[200] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 110v.

The main commissioners

The nobles of Eastern rite from Maramureş, who lived, owned estates and served as clerics in the 17th and 18th centuries, seem to have been involved in the fate of about two-thirds of the parishes existing in *old Maramureş* and certainly their influence had been much greater further back in time.

It is interesting to notice that in Maramureş the known dedicatory inscriptions hardly mention eventual individual or collective founders of poor serf condition, although they must have been deeply involved in the erection of their parish churches. The same silence covers those of other confession than the Eastern one, even in the villages entirely owned by reformat or catholic magnates. This, however, can not exclude their direct interest in the construction of Eastern parish churches on their estates. A document from 1728 explicitly mentioned the contribution of the reformat leaders to the construction of parish houses, churches and monasteries for the benefit of the Eastern communities.[201] That could easily have happened in the villages they owned and exercised their right of patronage.

Everywhere in the poorer villages in the vicinity of the noble ones the quality of the wood work in the parish churches was if not the best at least good. Nevertheless, they shared the same main characteristics. As also demonstrated by the itineraries, these parish churches were built by the same professional church carpenters. Naturally, the most representative churches were engaged and accomplished in the noble villages. However, with the permission and support of some noble individuals, families or maybe at the initiative of the serf communities alone, several ambitious parish churches were built even in the poorer villages, especially around Hust. Evidently, their main references were no others than the wooden churches from the noble villages.

From all these numerous examples, we distinguish the Eastern elite as the major commissioner of churches and their ambitions as the driving force behind daring results. Their role in establishing the model of a regional traditional sacred room was fundamental until the end of the 18th century in *old Maramureş*.[202]

229 *Corneşti*. The reward for good deeds including gifts to the church was expected to be a place among the righteous at the Last Judgement. A mural scene painted by Toader Hodor at the beginning of the 19th century in the narthex from Corneşti depicts several groups of righteous: the priests, the pious men, the hermits, the monks, the nuns, the pious wives and the righteous men. Photo of the last three groups: August 1997.

[201] Cziple 1916, 365/106.

[202] I excluded here the mountainous northern parts of the Lower and Sighet districts, i.e. Verkhovyna, the villages upstream from Lunca in the Tisa Valley and upstream from Ganychi in the Taras Valley.

230 *Breb*. The distinction among nobles and serfs was partly maintained in the places the families put their baskets to be blessed by the priest after the mass in the Easter day. The baskets in the middle under the tree belonged to the most noble and it was followed in the larger circle by those nearest the church, continuing in sunwise direction. This ancient order still signal the central role played once by the local elite in the life of the parish. Photo: April 1995.

3.2 Models

As the decisive contribution of the elite of Eastern rite from Maramureş in the erection of the most representative rural churches was determined, the next step is to further explore the role of this elite in shaping the local sacred architecture in general. For this reason I will focus on the distinctive features of the local Eastern churches looking at when they might have been introduced and eventually what was their purpose. This is only an attempt to sketch these important issues and open them to future research.

3.2.1 1500-1800

The wooden churches surviving from the 17th and 18th centuries and the few fragments from the 16th century gives us the picture of an already mature wooden architecture. Along the latest two centuries we can more closely follow how the sacred architecture was exposed to new fashions and by necessity or not still maintained some ancient features. Let us see which the basic features were in the 17th and 18th century and what happened during that time.

Basic features

In the extant wooden churches from Maramureş there are two types of features distinguishable, one of *Byzantine* and the other of *Western* character. Apart from these we recognize a *vernacular* artistic approach in decoration.

The *Byzantine* features are easily recognizable inside of the church, mainly in the succession of rooms separating women from men or profane from sacred through passages of different kinds. One of these passages developed in the iconostasis, which in the Byzantine world became not a barrier but a plain revelation of the Heavenly hierarchy and its Royal Doors the very gates to Heaven.[203] The light let inside through small and few openings in the walls also indicated a typical mystical atmosphere so longed inside the Eastern Church.

The *Western* features are plainly visible outside the church, in the mighty western tower and the pitched roofs often ended straight at the gables. The richly decorated portals at the entrance also remind of western fashions, without including the vernacular vocabulary of motives.

The two streams of features appear in Maramureş in a unified but also two-sided model of church closely reflecting the double condition of the nobles of Maramureş. On one side, the Byzantine interior is the very core in the body of the church and reveals the soul of the founders was deeply devoted to the Eastern faith. On the other side, the Western exterior covered the body of the church according to the accepted fashions and norms circulating among the nobles and patrons of the Hungarian Kingdom.

A significant feature that can be attributed to both streams is the vault covering the nave and eventually the sanctuary. They are well hidden by the roofs above and therefore interwoven with the inner Byzantine features of the sacred room. The vault as a log construction, naturally grown from the lateral walls, played a key role in the structure of roofs with trusses lacking tie beams, which in the long run limited the sacred rooms to modest sizes in comparison to Polish wooden churches, for example.

This composite, yet coherent, basic model, *with a simple roof*, displays a later local variant *with two roofs*, also known as *with two eaves*. The wooden churches *with two eaves* from Maramureş approach from outside the Western basilicas, namely through the double eaves, the two rows of windows and the narrowing of the wall, but from inside there is just a simple vaulted room to be found. In this feature the outer appearance seems to prevail, but the brakes in the massive walls also allowed the construction of larger church rooms.

[203] Leonid Uspensky, *Teologia icoanei*, 176-182, Bucureşti 1994; Pavel Florenski, *Iconostasul*, 154-157, Bucureşti 1994.

231 *Valea Stejarului*. The church was extended at the turn of the 18th century with a new sanctuary, a porch and a tower. Initially it looked in general lines just like a common house, *with a simple roof*, maybe thatched at the very beginning. Photo: October 1997.

Late formal changes

The first known wooden church *with two eaves* was firmly dated from the beginning of the 16th century and it was initially erected in Cuhea, where it apparently replaced a ruined Gothic stone church and probably served as a monastery church (**232**).[204] Beginning with the church from Botiza (1594) and especially during the 17th and 18th centuries, most of the new parish wooden churches were built *with two eaves*. Exception made only some poor or conservative parishes and most of the monastic establishments, which retained the simple roofs. The construction around 1621 of a church *with a simple roof* in the neighbouring serf village of Valea Stejarului (**231**) at the same time with one *with two eaves* in the noble village of Onceşti (**97**) reveals how fashionable and also loaded with prestige the second variant might have been at that time.

We do not know of churches *with two eaves* without a tower, but some churches protected by simple roofs could lack the tower even in the first half of the 17th century, as in Valea Stejarului (c 1620) and Sârbi Susani (1639). The oldest known wooden tower was firmly dated from 1530 and it was erected above a narthex in the former parish church of Copăciş (**129** and **135**). In 1629 it was fortunately transferred and reassembled above the church from Breb.[205] In the 18th century the tower seems to have been generalized in all the new constructions.

[204] Baboş 2000, 24-29; Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, 44, table 2, no. 11.
[205] Baboş 2000, 32-33; Eggertsson and Baboş 2003, 44, table 2, no. 2.

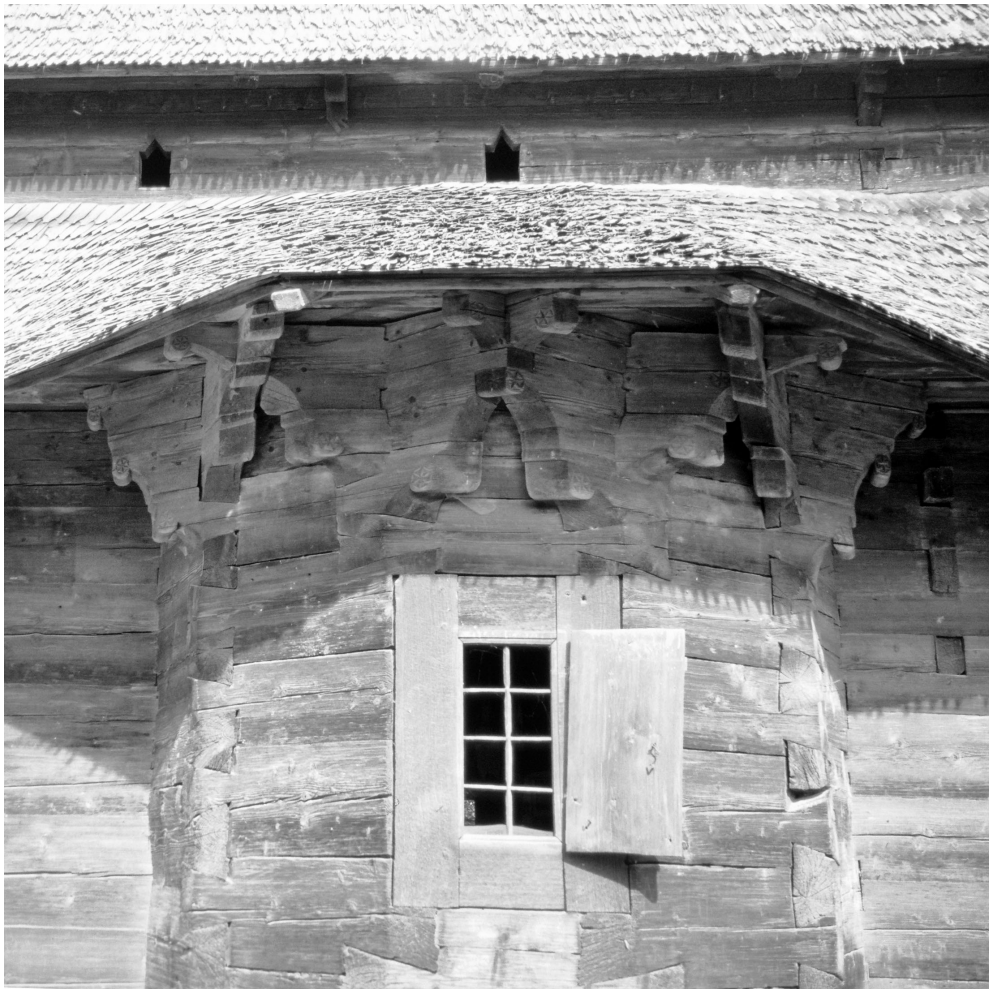
232 *Văleni*. This church *with two eaves* was transferred from the Cuhea Monastery in 1670s and served until 1947 for the parish from Văleni. A half century after its demolition, a few timbers reused in a secondary construction enabled its firm dendrochronogical dating from the beginning of the 16th century, becoming the oldest known wooden church in Maramureş. Photo from 1937 (Brătulescu 1941, ill. 118).

Some of the most daring churches display an increasingly higher tower without loosing the proportional relation with the whole building.

The iron hinges, locks, crosses, the framed glasses and the bells were already by the beginning of the 17th century almost generally used; only the poorest or the most conservative communities could not afford or did not want to invest in such elements of modernity and certainly of status. The expensive iron nails obliged some poor parishes to retain the thatched roofs on their churches until the middle of the 18th century.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, the most ambitious founders invested not only in the outer fabric but also in refined icon screens and costly murals. The icon screens seems to have become more festive and richly decorated under the Baroque influence, beginning slowly in the second half of the 17th century and culminating at the turn of the 18th century. We should also notice the first known fashionable iconostasis with 3 doors at the beginning of the 17th century, replacing those with only 2. Last but not least, from the middle of 18th century a church was no longer complete without murals.

Some changes might have had a different character than of pure fashion. The use of porches or antechurches in the 17th century was pointed here in connection with a change in the practice of the ritual paying respect to the ancestors, which in 1585 was still hold inside the parish church from Budeşti Josani. The porches on two levels enlarged the anchoring base of the tower and become more popular in the 18th century. The heightening of the door apertures, started in the second half of the 17th century, can be put in connection with higher floors and a new perception



233 *Călineşti Susani*. The most curious wooden church was built in 1784 in Călineşti Susani where the lower part indicates a Moldavian connection while the upper part the local tradition. Photos: the southern apse from October 1997 (*above*) and the polygonal western end from August 1994 (*bellow*), both specific in the Moldavian wooden churches.

of the passages from one room to another, as the visitor no longer had to make efforts to step over the massive thresholds. Another example was the openings made in the inner wall separating the women from men that significantly improved hearing and visual contact with the sanctuary for the women, beginning with the last decades of the 17th century. Furthermore, the windows were enlarged in the second half of the 18th century allowing more light inside.

A few changes were in fact technical improvements, closely interconnected with other tendencies in the local churches. One of these improvements was the notable position of the eaves purlins above the walls avoiding bends caused by the heavy roofs. Another significant change might have earlier occurred in the structure of the roof. The oldest examples we have in Breb, Sârbi Susani and Valea Stejarului indicate an older practice until the first half of the 17th century. This ancient type of roof structure might have been connected to a certain symbolism,[206] and maybe even with a thatch covering.

The changes observable and datable from the 17th and 18th centuries played more or less a role in the status and the ambitions of the founders. In the main, they did not alter the basic features of the local church architecture, which were stable already at the beginning of the 17th century.

Those who guarded the traditional model of church to survive until the end of the 18th century were the founders themselves and not the teams of carpenters. One unexpected but relevant case is the church from Fereşti (**100** and **220**), which was built in 1798 by a team of German carpenters. Despite the foreign origin of the craftsmen they built a church entirely respecting the traditional model of wooden church *with two eaves*. An even more relevant case is the wooden church from Călineşti Susani, built in 1784 by an itinerant team of carpenters from Moldavia (**233**). We do not know with whose permission they had started the construction of an unfamiliar Moldavian church with lateral apses, yet, the local tradition remembers the villagers became very upset for this and discharged the carpenters from their started work. Not until they succeeded to build another church, in Glod, more like a local one, they were entrusted to continue their work in Călineşti Susani. After their return, they seem also to have changed the plans, probably in agreement with the founders, and completed the church with the characteristic narrowed superstructure and a tower, like any other traditional church *with two eaves*. The final result was one of the most unusual hybrid wooden churches from Maramureş, with great charm, inspiring builders later in the 20th century. What could have happen with the old family school of church carpenters from the south in the second half of the 18th century is beyond our reach, but even without them the traditional churches could be built. As a consequence, the founders had the decisive role in maintaining the traditional models and in gradually introducing new fashionable features during the 17th and 18th centuries.

[206] See the first chapter, the discussion regarding the church roofs.

234 *Sarasău*. The sole medieval church of stone from an Easter community survives in Sarasău. However, the windows were enlarged and the tower rebuilt during comprehensive renovations in 1937. Photo: July 1994.

3.2.3 Traces in the Middle Ages

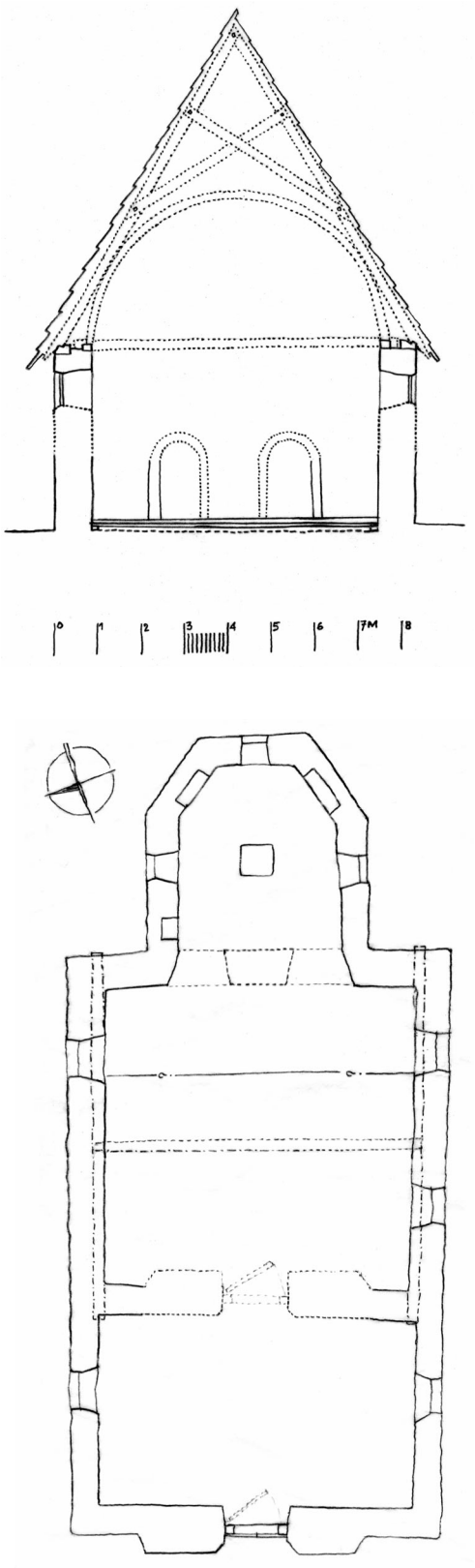
The realities from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries leave outside our reach the time when most of the distinctive features in the local church architecture were adopted. Thus, some important keys to the local sacred architecture must be searched back in the shrouded Middle Ages. When was the high quality of wood work introduced to distinguish the sacred architecture from the profane? In what period and where were the Byzantine and the Western features united? When did the characteristic wooden churches *with two eaves* appear in Maramureş?

For the local realities from the Middle Ages we have only the stone churches to rely on. Some medieval Eastern churches of stone are known in Sarasău, Peri Monastery, Biserica Albă Monastery, Biserica Albă, Bedeu, Domneşti, Uglea, Bocicoi, Sârbi, Giuleşti and Cuhea. One by one, they marked some of the most important local centres of power, their founders being the leaders of the communities around. Unfortunately, except the first one, all the other ancient stone churches ruined or were demolished. There is a great need for archaeological researches in the region, but, despite encouraging results in the 1960s and some limited recent projects, they are almost completely paralyzed. Do we have a chance at this stage of research to imagine what fermented in Maramureş before the construction of the existing wooden churches? What can the medieval stone churches tell us about those who initiated them? How useful references are they for the older sacred architecture?

The medieval stone churches

The single extant medieval stone church stands in *Sarasău*, considerably altered by the renovations and repairs from the 20th century (**234-235**). This seems to be a late medieval church, probably erected between the beginning of the 15th and 16th centuries. Among the known medieval stone churches this is the single one partitioned from the very beginning among women and men, just like the standing wooden churches. The church was planed 14 x 22 Royal ells (8.11 x 12.65 m) for up to 300 worshipers, which allowed the entire community to prey inside until the middle of the 19th century. The narrowed sanctuary was planed 8 x 8 R e with a polygonal outer shape. In elevation the nave was covered from the beginning with a vault of massive timbers and probably even the sanctuary had a small one. The eastern gable of the nave had only two doors to the sanctuary and the wall between women and men was closed by a massive door. Some very small windows let the light inside and the interior was by all probabilities painted. Above the women's church, a wooden tower was probably mounted from the beginning.[207]

The vanished stone monastery churches from *Peri* and *Biserica Albă* were said to have been built by the same founders, noble Drag and his sister Miliţa,[208] while the parish church from *Biserica Albă* by the wife of Drag in 1351.[209] Thus, it is possible that all three churches were built by the same family in the middle of the 14th century. The recent archaeological excavations in Peri revealed the plan of a modest stone church, with a nave of about 8 x 9.5 m. Some rests of fresco also indicated the walls had been once covered by mural paintings.[210] In a report from the site of the ruined monastery church around 1760, among the fragments of stone with decoratively carved figures it was mentioned a column with the inscription "*This column was erected in the honour of the Holy Archangel Michael*".[211] In Biserica Albă, the medieval stone church of the monastery was still standing in 1809 and described in an advanced state of degradation. The southern wall was ruined and the roof destroyed, while the



235 *Sarasău*. The interior was also affected by the renovations from 1937, especially due to the demolition of the inner walls and the enlargement of the windows. Scale drawings of the section through the nave and the plan: October 2001.

[207] Popa 1971, 623-624; Baboş 2002:a, 703-721.
[208] Kinah 1930, 432-446; Baboş 2002:c, 268.
[209] Kinah 1930, 446.
[210] Rusu 1999, 172. Adrian Andrei Rusu believes the uncovered church was a second church, the first one waiting to be discovered on another site.
[211] Pâclişeanu 1931, 334; DAZO 151, op 5, 2351.

wooden tower resisted above in spite of everything.[212] The parish stone church in Biserica Albă was affected by a flood in 1738 and washed away in the 19th century.[213]

The flood from 1738 seems to have affected not only the parish church from Biserica Albă but also those from *Domneşti* and *Bedeu*. In 1751 all three churches were recently replaced by wooden ones. About the stone church from Domneşti we know that it was plundered in 1400 and its bell taken away in a local conflict. The church from Bedeu was occasionally recorded in 1435.[214]

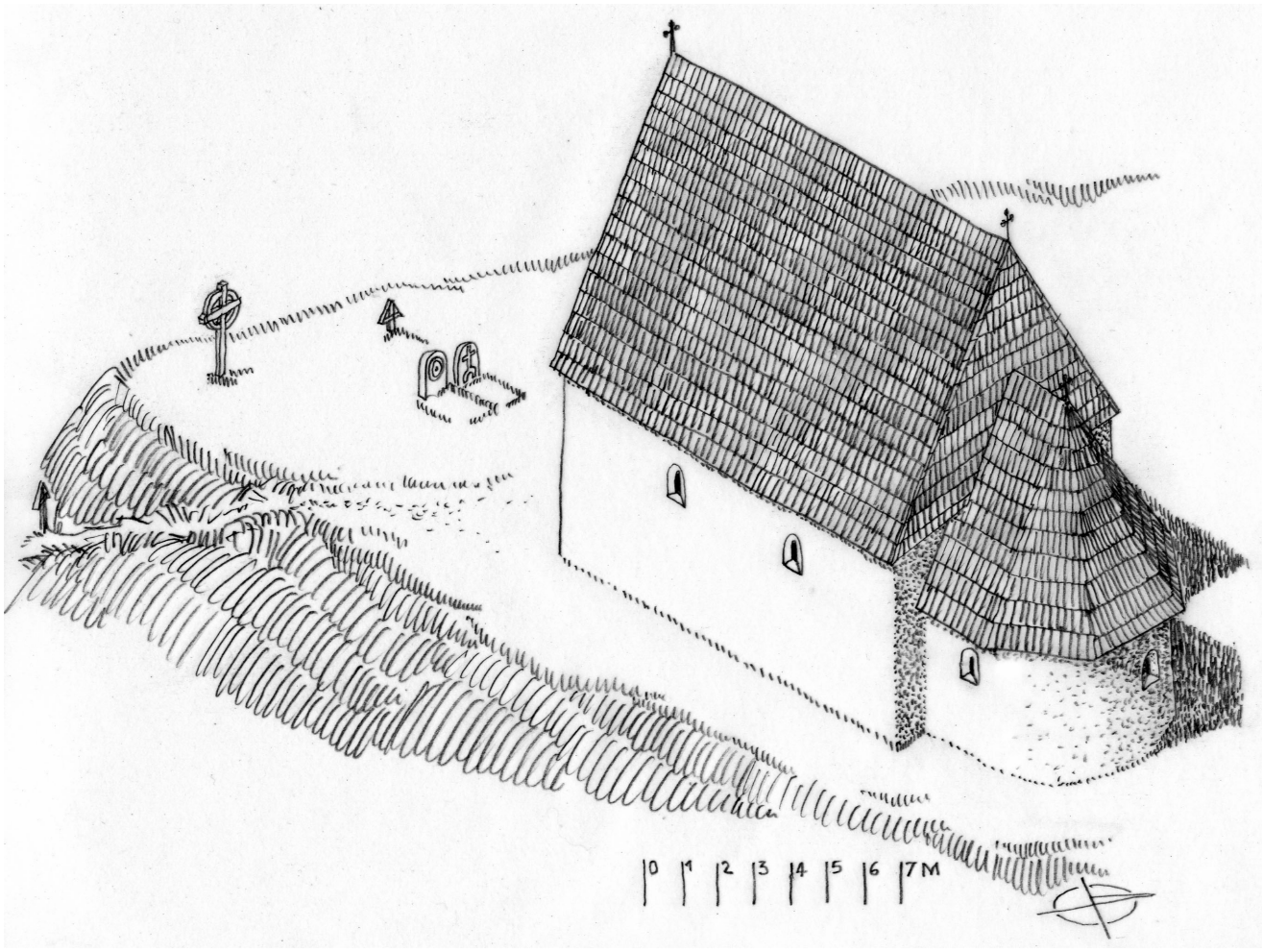
The medieval parish stone church from *Uglea* was mentioned for the first time in 1479.[215] According to a short description from 1774, the stone church had been extended in 1714 because it was incapable to take in the numerous worshipers. Thus, the third added part was of wood, the nave in the middle appeared abandoned and the sanctuary was narrowed but comfortable. The roof was partially destroyed while the stone tower was partly ruined at its upper part. Inside, the windows were reduced, the murals partly wiped partly missing and replaced by separate icons. This church functioned until 1875 when it was replaced by the present one.[216]

From an unfortunate local conflict in 1479 it remained the only record about the vanished stone church from *Bocicoi*. During that conflict, the aggressors made efforts to demolish the parish church. With the same occasion the wax candles and the icons were partly plundered partly set on fire.[217]

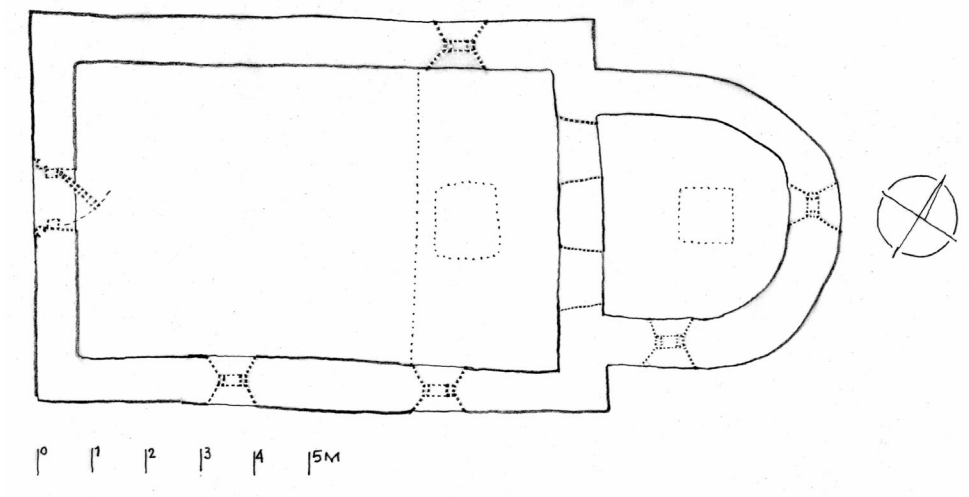
About the stone church from the former *Sârbi Monastery* we know it was situated in *Gruiu Malului* where stones come into view every spring after ploughing and it was destroyed in the 1660s by an army, possibly the Turks in 1661 if not the same who destroyed the Peri Monastery some time later.[218]

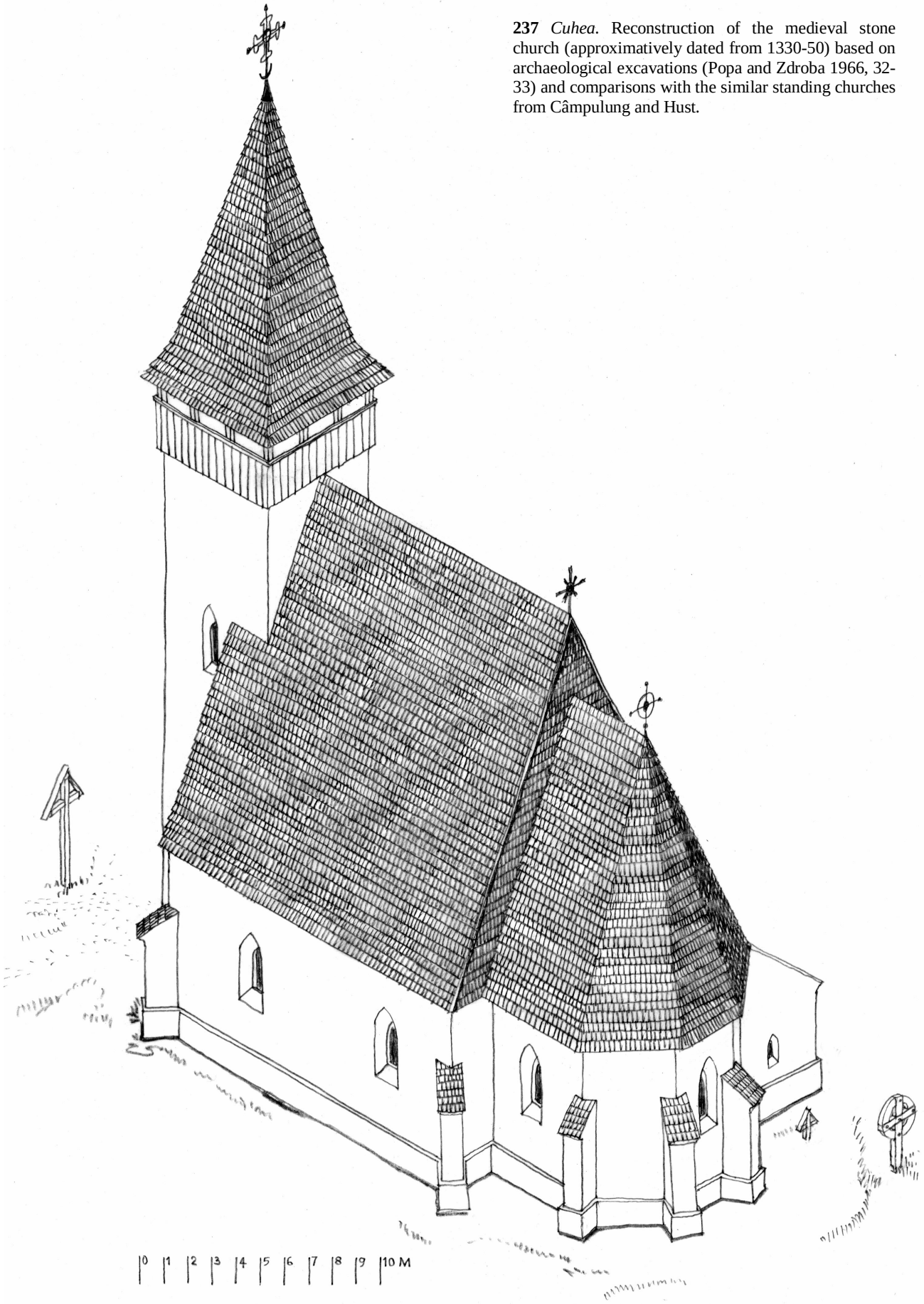
One of the oldest and most precious stone churches from Maramureş vanished in 1884 or soon after that in *Giuleşti* (**236**). Under many centuries it made the pride of the community and only its advanced state of decay caused by landslides and settings convinced the parishioners to replace it with the present one. The vestiges were carefully studied during the archaeological excavations from 1966-68 and dated approximately from the end of 13th century. The foundation revealed an early rectangular nave of 25 x 36 R ft (7.2 x 10.4 m) for up to 200 parishioners and a narrowed sanctuary with a rounded outer shape about 19 x 15 R ft (5.4 x 4.3 m).[219] The initial plan very much reminds of a smaller Romanic stone church (6.7 x 8.36 m) standing in Mănăstirea Mica near Dej, in Transylvania, approximatively dated from the same period.[220] In elevation, the sanctuary from Giuleşti was vaulted and the nave ceiled. In about 1509 a stone tower was added above the western entrance, and in 1768 the church was extended with a separate room for women.[221] This is the only identified Romanic construction from Maramureş and it seems to have preceded all the other medieval stone churches in the limits of our present knowledge.

[212] Kinah 1930, 446.
[213] Mihalyi 1900, 25, n. 1.
[214] Mihalyi 1900, 131, 300; Hadzhega 1922, 177, 186 and 191.
[215] Hadzhega 1922, 156, n. 3.
[216] MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 108v; Syrokhman 2000, 517-518.
[217] Mihalyi 1900, 546-547.
[218] Baboş 2002:c, 268, n. 10.
[219] Popa and Zdroba 1969, 267-285.
[220] Moisescu 2001, 47-48.
[221] Baboş 2002:c, 267-288.

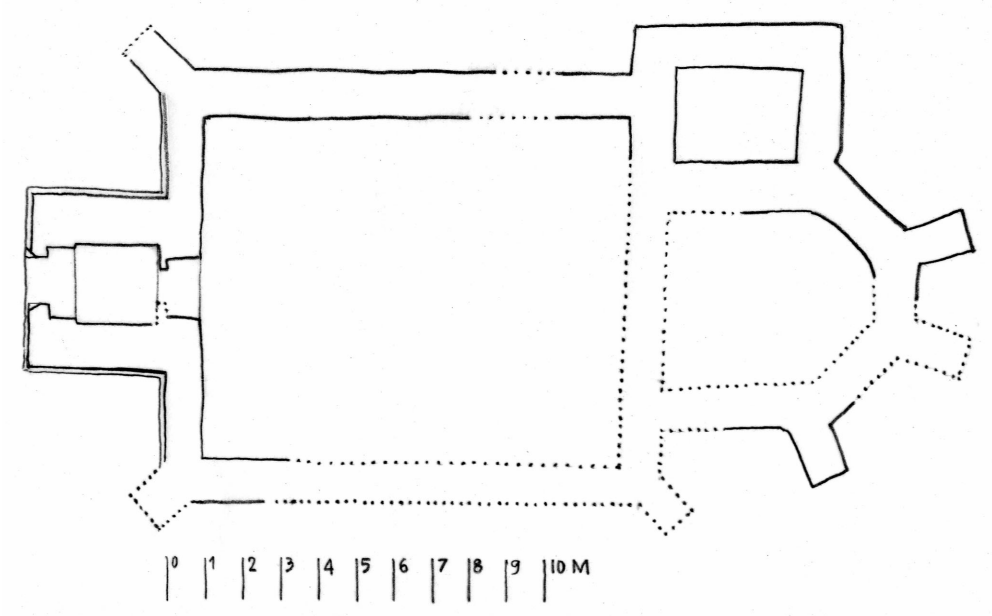


236 *Giuleşti*. Reconstruction of the elevation and the plan based on archaeological excavations (Popa and Zdroba 1969, 267-285) and historical sources (Baboş 2002:c) with proposed positions for the openings.





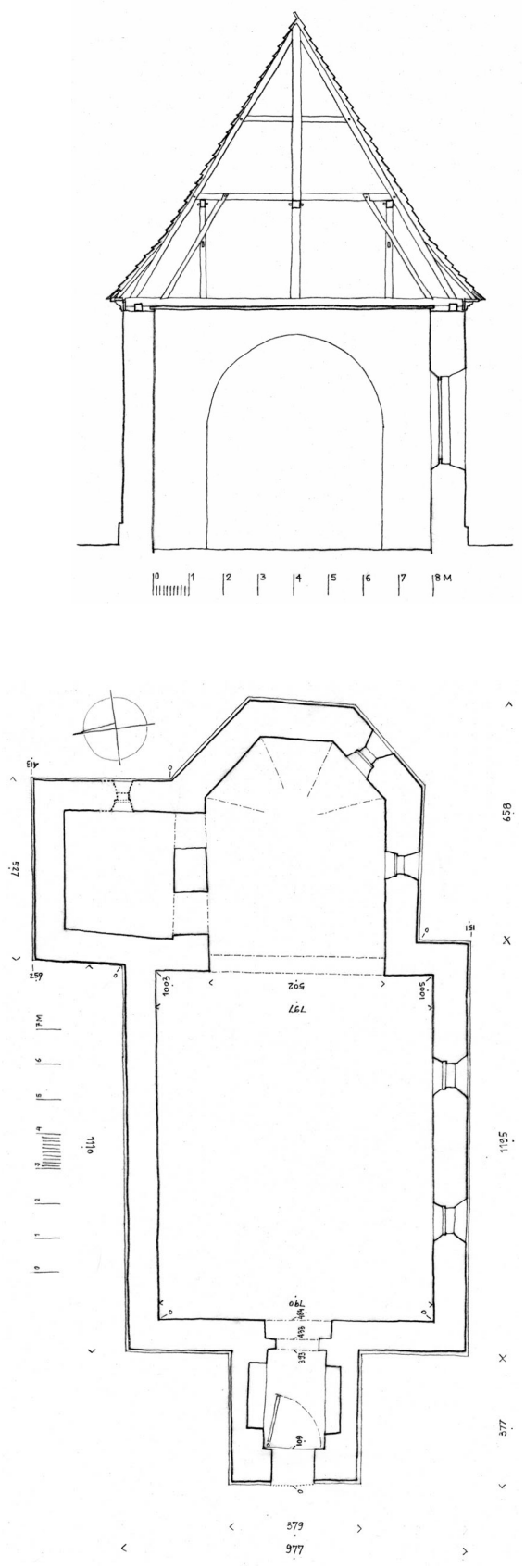
237 *Cuhea*. Reconstruction of the medieval stone church (approximatively dated from 1330-50) based on archaeological excavations (Popa and Zdroba 1966, 32-33) and comparisons with the similar standing churches from Câmpulung and Hust.



238 *Cuhea*. The plan revealed during the archaeological investigations from 1964-65 (Popa and Zdroba 1966).

The last medieval stone church identified in an Orthodox community was unveiled in 1964 during archaeological excavations in Cuhea, the former residence of the voivode Bogdan. The ruins delimit a large nave, about 11.5 x 13.6 m for up to 400 places, and a narrowed polygonal sanctuary of 7 x 6.65 m. It surprises the presence of a vestry in which it appears to have been buried the founders. The entrance was sheltered by a western tower. In elevation, the corner buttresses indicate the nave and sanctuary were vaulted with pointed arches. On the bases of the archaeological findings the church was dated by Radu Popa from 1330-50. Its plan resembles very closely the extant Catholic parish churches of Gothic character in the towns of royal guests from Câmpulung (9.76 x 12 m; **239**) and Hust (10.35 x 13 m; **240**), in Maramureş. These three Gothic churches give the impression to have been built by the same itinerant team of builders in the first half of the 14th century.[222] In comparison with the other two, the stone church from Cuhea seems to have been the largest one, but the sizes of the foundation indicate the heights of the walls and of the tower were at the same level with those from Câmpulung. In Câmpulung the sanctuary was dimensioned 8 x 8 R y in plan and 8 R y (6.9 m) high. This height was also maintained at the nave. In Cuhea, the sanctuary would give exactly the same height of the walls as in Câmpulung. The tower up to the wooden bell chamber in both Câmpulung and Hust was elevated about 4 times its width, a proportion probably maintained even in Cuhea. The Gothic church from Cuhea possibly fell into ruins at the beginning of the 16th century and was replaced by a wooden church.[223]

[222] Popa and Zdroba 1966; Popa 1966, 511-528.
[223] Baboş 2000, 29.



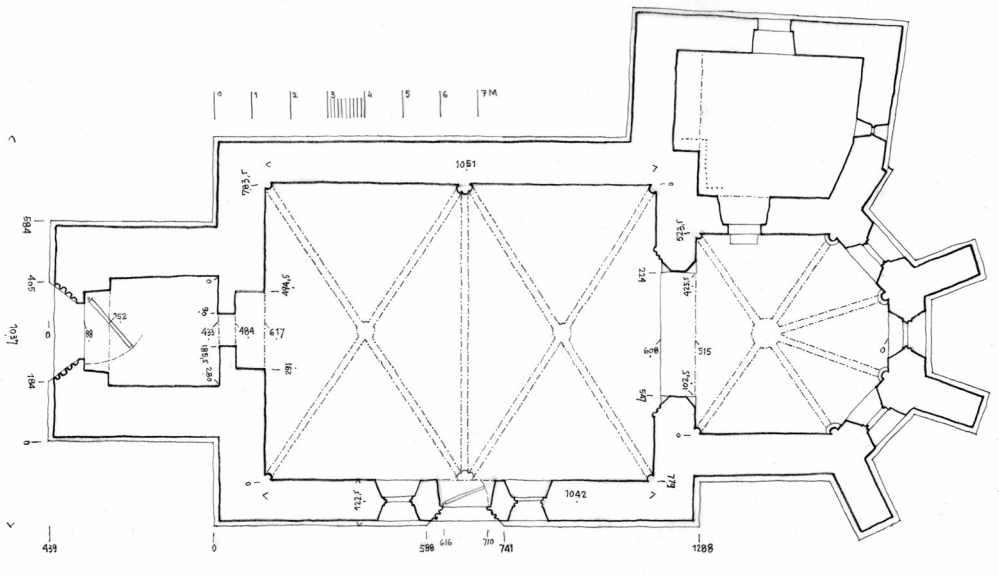
239 *Câmpulung*. The roof structure was entirely rebuilt after a ravaging fire in 1778 (Parish Archive). In plan the church retained its original form. Scale drawings of a section through the nave and the plan: October 2001.

Apart from the Orthodox stone churches and the two Catholic ones from the town of Hust and Câmpulung there were some other erected in the towns of Vişc, Teceu, Sighet and in the Monastery of the St. Paul Order from Remeți,[224] all in the characteristic Gothic style. The Catholic churches from Teceu and especially Vişc impress through ample sizes and large windows. Regarding the construction from Remeți, we do not know until future archaeological researches if that was only the sanctuary of a larger church or it was never larger than it is now.

Among the numerous stone churches erected in the Middle Ages in Maramureş the most monumental and prestigious one was that from Sighet (**243**), the administrative centre of the county. This was ample, about 15 x 22.5 m, allowing inside several hundreds worshipers even if they took places in benches. The most remarkable feature was its basilical structure with a central nave on pillars, lightened by upper windows, and lateral aisles lightened by lower windows. This church was dated from various periods and the parts were attributed to different phases of construction. Unfortunately, the church was severely devastated by a fire in 10 August 1859 and was thereafter demolished. From the valuable construction only the powerful tower was maintained and incorporated in the new construction.[225] In the absence of a thorough archaeological research we are unable to settle the problem of its dating. However, the aisled nave and the tower seem to have been finished in the first half of the 14th century and could already by then dominate the landscape of Maramureş.

After this limited account of the known Orthodox medieval stone churches and the few Catholic ones of the royal guests, we can come to the conclusion that the noble elite in Maramureş invested very early in a considerable number of ambitious churches, some of them at the same level with those from the new royal settlements and towns. At that time, they were wealthy landowners with far more resources and authority than in the following centuries. They afforded to engage foreign itinerant crews of masons in their residence villages. Except for the late church from Sarasău, most of the others might have been built entirely in the distinctive Western stile brought in the region by the royal guests.

[224] Marius Diaconescu accounted another 6 Catholic churches in Hust of which some could have been of wood. Similar Catholic churches also existed in Dolha and Coştiui; Diaconescu 1997, 123-132 and 1999:a, 277-293; Deschman 1990, 163-209.
[225] Petranu 1945, 324-333; Diaconescu 1999:a, 283.



240 *Hust*. The medieval church went through several renovations that altered some of its characteristic features as for example the wooden gallery of the tower and especially the spire with the four turrets that so much inspired the builders of the wooden churches around. However, the original stone fabric survived in good conditions. Photo from July 1998 and Scale drawing of the plan from November 2002.

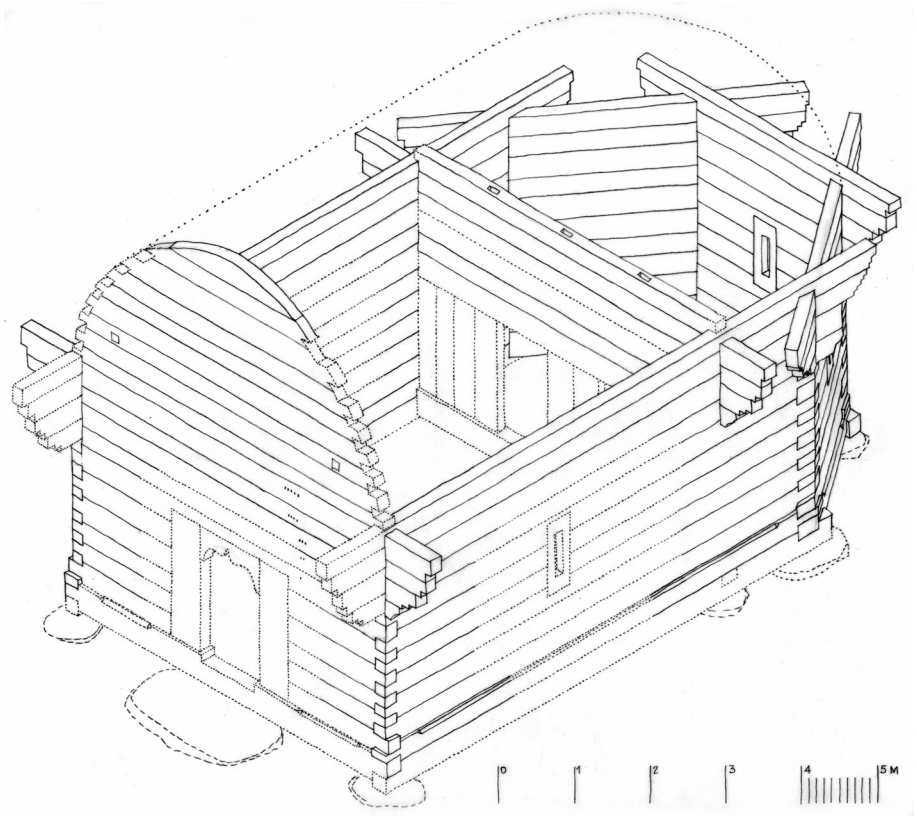
241 *Putna, Suceava County*. The medieval wooden church transferred from Volovăț to Putna Monastery is easy to distinguish from the later additions. The apse in the centre of the photo was added together with the narthex only in 1778. Photo: July 2002.

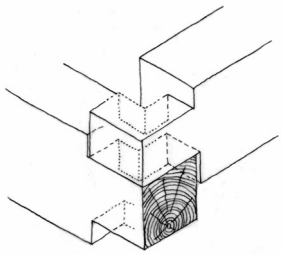
Open in the past

If the Orthodox elites were not troubled to build stone churches of entirely Western character in their own villages why would they be anxious to cloth their traditional Byzantine sacred rooms with some of the external Western features? This was a rather softer compromising attitude which could satisfy both the inner spiritual devotion and the outer ranking ambitions of the founders. Models of churches that could combine these two basic needs of the local elite were certainly welcomed, easier to motivate and must have gradually become attractive in all the ambitious communities.

One key aspect that needs special attention is the good quality of the wood work in the oldest wooden churches. Already in the Middle Ages this must have been much prised and required by the founders as a distinctive differentiation between the sacred and the profane architecture. The church from Văleni (**9** and **232**), the sanctuary from Corneşti (**46**) and the tower from Breb (**129** and **135**) speak of experienced local masters and a long practice at the beginning of the 16th century. The recent dating of the wooden church from Putna Monastery in the neighbouring Moldavia (**241-242**) from the first years of the 15th century[226] is a useful example of how a fine wooden church from Maramureş might have looked like at the same time. From the technical point of view, between the oldest wooden churches from Maramureş and the small wooden church in the Putna Monastery

[226] Baboş and Linderson 2003, 43-59.





242 *Putna, Suceava County*. The medieval log structure was dendrochronologically dated from the beginning of the 15th century (Baboş and Linderson 2003, 43-59). By tradition, this church housed the mortal remains of the noble Dragoş from Maramureş, the first governor of Moldavia. Most of the log structure survived only the openings are for the most part altered. Scale drawings: July 2002.

there are no significant differences. The construction of stone churches in Maramureş indirectly helps us with further insights in the potential quality of the wooden churches. We know from other comparable parts of Europe like Poland and Sweden that a cheaper alternative to stone churches were the well refined log constructions.[227] In other words, where the good masons were welcomed it was also place for skilful carpenters to follow. If Maramureş was as open for new constructive experiences as it appears in the 13th and 14th century in the stone church building, than I do not see any impediment to consider the use of flush joints and straight walls as at least as old in the local sacred wooden architecture, as plainly seen in the Moldavian monastery of Putna. In fact, it could have been even older, because the most skilful itinerant carpenters could have been especially welcomed in areas with long experience of wood like Maramureş and certainly less expensive. In most parts of the continent the stone churches were preceded by wooden ones of good quality. In Maramureş, the situation could not have been much different. Accordingly, the refined wooden techniques that distinguish the local sacred architecture from the vernacular one were probably experienced already in the early Middle Ages.

[227] Brykowski 1981, 299-301; Ullén, 1983; Lagerlöf 1985; Sjömar 1988, 45-46.

Apart from its long age and high quality of wood work, the wooden church from Putna Monastery reserves us another major surprise with significance long outside the region: it lacked a separate room for women.[228] Similar wooden churches were earlier known only from archaeological excavations in Northern Moldavia,[229] but the survival of one of them improves our possibilities to imagine and appreciate their basic features above the plan of the foundation. In Maramureş, at this stage of research, we do not know for certain how the medieval wooden churches looked like, because they are not yet identified. However, we can remark that the oldest stone churches from Maramureş do not present separate rooms among genders. The old parish church from Giuleşti had a wall underlining the presence of an early iconostasis,[230] which means the church was adapted to the Orthodox rite without separating the congregation. Actually, the separation occurred in Giuleşti and Uglea only after the extensions from the 18th century. Taking in consideration the earliest medieval evidences from Transylvania and Maramureş, the churches with a singular nave for the laity seems to have dominated in the regular Eastern communities even on this side of the Carpathian Mountains.[231] Accordingly, it is possible that the earliest wooden churches from Maramureş were built for undivided congregations until sometime in the 14th century, some eventually even later. Such an ancient parish wooden church might have existed in Voineşti before it was extended by a narthex with a tower above in 1727.[232] In view of that, the medieval wooden churches from Maramureş might have been much closer related with the contemporary stone ones than earlier imagined and the later assimilation of the model with separate rooms for genders might have accentuated the links to the Byzantine world.

The basic model of church *with a simple roof* was accomplished only with the separation of genders. In this model the separate rooms for women and men were enclosed in a single rectangular plan. The sacred part was made of an additional small polygonal or rectangular sanctuary, narrowed or not from the nave and secluded from the rest of the church by an iconostasis with 2-3 doors. Other main characteristics can be recognized in the vault covering the nave, hidden under a simple roof, and eventually in a tower above the narthex. This model was widely used in the wooden churches from Transylvania and Maramureş. The only known medieval stone church with separate rooms from Maramureş stands in Sarasău and it is most probably datable between the beginning of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th century. This church marks the process of changes in Maramureş towards what we are familiar to see today. When the church from Sarasău was built, this model, so common today, might have been a real fashion.

The particular local model of house of worship *with double* or *two eaves*, so characteristic for the later wooden churches from Maramureş, resembles in a high degree a basilica.[233] In the wide adoption of this particular model in Maramureş there might have concurred at least two factors. One could have been the erection of the Catholic basilica in Sighet.[234] This church was a real performance in this region (**243**) and it clearly dominated all the other stone churches, fascinating the

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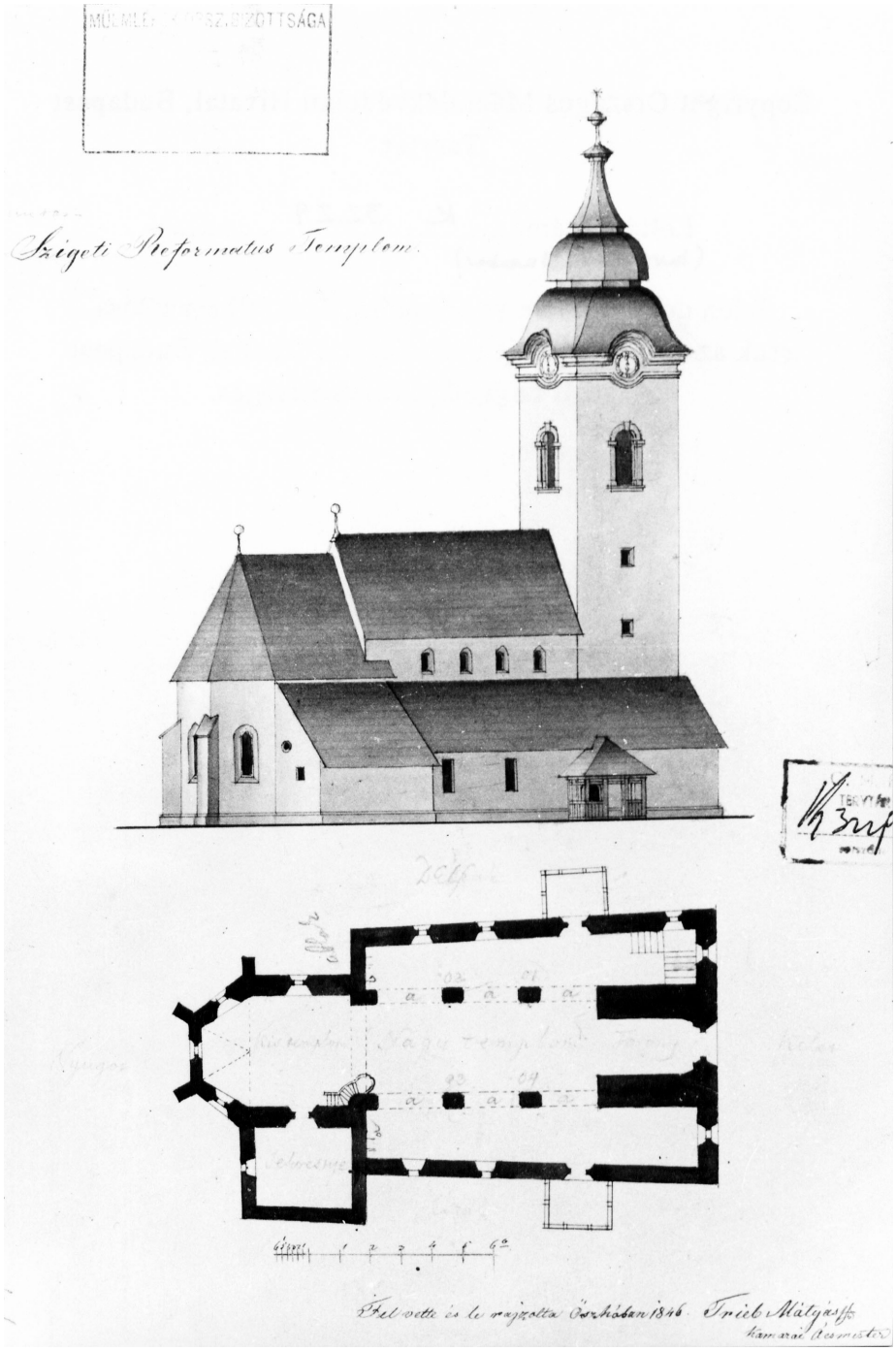
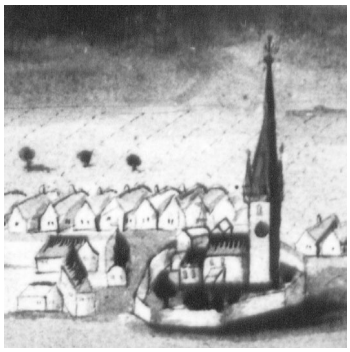
[228] Baboș and Linderson 2003, 43-59.
[229] L. and A Bătrâna, "Contribuția cercetărilor arheologice la cunoașterea arhitecturii ecleziastice din Moldova în secolele XIV-XV", *SCIVA*, T 45, 2, 145-169; Moisescu 2001, 26 and 152.
[230] Popa 1969, 272.
[231] Moisescu 2001, 56.
[232] "*Ecclesia Lignea est, Sancuarium hujus cum parte priore, quo tempore erectum sit, nulla extat memoria, illud constat, quod posteaquam structura illa prior multitudini capiendae insufficiens visa fuisset, sub Annum 1727 addita sit cum Turri Pars posterior, quae nihilominus priori non usque quaque cohaeret, in reliquo totum aedificium satis adhuc firmum est, et commodum. Sanctuaris duntaxat angustius. In renovatione tecti Parochiani actu Laborant.*" MOL, C 99, XI.A, Maramoros 1774, 91.
[233] Petrescu 1974, 48-49, Ionescu 1982, 78.
[234] Petranu 1945, 333.



243 *Sighet*. The former medieval parish church was the most monumental and prestigious church of Maramureş, probably beginning with the 14th century. Scale drawing in Viennese fathoms or *klafters* (1 *klafter* = 1.896 m) by Trieb Mátyás in 1846 (left; KÖH, Tervtár K 3229). A sketch from 1744 captured above the tower a wooden gallery surmounted by an acute spire and four corner turrets (below; MOL, U et C, fasc. 220, no. 22, 511).



nobles gathering here every year for the county assembly and during regular markets. We do not need to search for a local transfer of features from this major stone construction to the modest wooden churches around because wooden basilicas were already known and build since earlier times in other parts of Europe.[235] However, the prestige derived from the monumental stone basilica in the heart of the region might have stimulated the adoption of its wooden variant by the noble leaders of Eastern rite. The second factor might have been, thus, the circulation of a wooden variant of basilica in the sacred architecture from the Northern Carpathians. The most famous wooden churches somehow related with

[235] Brykowsky 1981, 297-311.

those "*with two eaves*" from Maramureş stand in Little Poland, where they are known as aisled wooden churches "*with a plank-box*".[236] Actually, the two names refer to different parts of the same particularity, a particularity connected to the adopted basilical model. The plank-box is the narrowed superstructure of the nave which necessitates the protection of two roofs, one large above and a skirt closing the narrowing or braking part. Hence, the Polish name closely indicates the main structural part while the Romanian one the additional protective part outside. The far larger Polish wooden churches also have pillars unloading the superstructure in between the gables and visually separating the interior in a high central nave and two lateral aisles. Accordingly, the Polish wooden churches *with plank-box* much more closely resemble a typical stone basilica than the similar ones from Maramureş. The Ukrainians around the Northern Carpathian Mountains and from afar also use brakes (*zalom*) in their sacred rooms and they are most often inclined to directly support the covering strips of roofs in between the narrowed walls. As the roofs keep close to the inclined brakes inside, the rooms become easily readable from outside. This is a main characteristic of the Ukrainian wooden churches.[237]

The wooden church *with two eaves* could have appeared in the parishes from Maramureş as a fashionable model sometime in the 15th century. The extant Polish wooden churches with a plank-box are also datable from the 15th century and it is not excluded some exchanges between the two regions during that period. It is necessary to stress once again the formal character of the variant from Maramureş. In the local interpretation, the founders were seemingly not interested in the inner features of a basilica, just in its outer appearance. By further comparing the extant wooden churches from the 15th century from Poland and those from the 16th and 17th centuries in Maramureş, we can also add the strikingly similar vernacular motives on several portals.[238] To the extant references we should also add the potential influence of the former catholic wooden churches of the Germans and Hungarians in the Northern Hungary and Transylvania that are all but vanished.[239]

From the earlier discussions it comes forward the gradual formation of the local models of wooden churches in three distinguishable steps. First it was introduced the high quality of wood work, distinct from the vernacular one, which might have occurred in early impenetrable centuries. In the next step, the basic model *with a simple roof* was created, starting maybe step by step during the 13th, 14th centuries and maturating sometime during the 15th century. The later variant *with two eaves* might have been experimented in the 15th century[240] or eventually before and became more and more used in the following centuries without entirely replacing the basic one. In this gradual process the founders adapted and accentuated to their specific necessities both the Eastern and the Western features. The slow improvements continued and they are plainly documented in the wooden churches from the 17th and 18th centuries. We should also notice the long conservation of ancient features into the first half of the 17th century.

The most ambitious church founders seems to have proved and experimented from one foundation to another, from the Middle Ages until the turn of the 18th century, numerous innovating and fashionable features reaching their world. In certain periods of time and from some levels of perspective the local church architecture might have always had a calm course, but in the main picture, over a half millennium or more, it changed consistently.

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[236] Brykowsky 1981, 297-311.
[237] Buxton 1981, 34-35, 87-188; Hewryk 1987, 30-71.
[238] Brykowski 1981; Brykowski and Ruszczyk, 1993.
[239] Németh, Péter, "Arhitectura religioasă din comitatele Szabolcs şi Satu Mare în epoca arpadiană timpurie", *Medieval Ecclesiastical Architecture in Transylvania*, II, 13-20, Satu Mare 2002.
[240] Vătăşianu (1982, 39) also dated the wooden churches *with two eaves* from the 15th century, probably based on the results and statements of Radu Popa (1970, 230-231) regarding the age of the local stone churches and their potential influence upon the wooden ones.

244 *Călineşti*. Men from the noble village of Călineşti in traditional summer national costumes waiting for the priest. Just like their forefathers for two centuries ago they planned for a larger parish church, this time a modern one of long-lasting material. Photo: August 1994.

3.3 The role of the founders

In our search for the true creators of the wooden churches from Maramureş we looked for their founders. The influential founders were the nobles of Eastern rite, who were the most motivated, had the resources and the rights to lead the local church. The foreign magnates, in their quality as landowners and patrons, had always a potential role to play, which they might have used or not, yet their direct involvement in the appearance of a church for the Eastern rite should have been very limited. The serfs are found among founders at different levels, except for the donation of land that was the attribute of the nobles. Not surprisingly, in the customary hierarchy among founders the most important ones donated or still owned the land where the church was built. The following ones responded for the construction, murals and other necessary endowments. Even the poorest parishioners could remark themselves through their helpful work. The clerics often played a vital role in taking initiative and urging the worshipers to get involved in their churches. Not least, the significant participation of the women was also evident in all times. In the individual cases, the main founders and protectors could have been some particular persons, groups, families, entire communities, sometimes nobles from several communities and in the special case of the Peri Monastery even the entire assembly of nobles from the county. From a general perspective, the most ambitious and dynamic founders in all the epochs were the noble elite of Eastern rite, without neglecting the generosity and the sacrifices of the poorer ones.

The role of the noble elite of Eastern rite from Maramureş in the adoption of a local model of church was decisive. Due to their double condition as part of an Eastern community and members of Western nobility, the Eastern nobility was receptive to impulses coming from both streams assimilating them in their foundations. Their synthesis helped them to integrate in the existing conditions without loosing the very heart of their spiritual identity. And they did it seeking increased prestige and admiration from both sides. They were alert to fashions and changes not only inside their own region but even outside, especially in Transylvania and secondarily in Moldavia, regions with which they were in permanent contact. However, in the adoption of the late variant *with two eaves*, the impulses might have come from both inside and from the Northern Carpathians. In this final combination the local architecture gained a particular regional character, anchored both in the Southern and the Northern Carpathians.

We can not avoid pointing out that the churches from this region plainly mirror the raising and the decreasing potential of the local nobility of Eastern rite, from Middle Ages when their high status and wealth enabled them to erect stone churches in their residence villages to the following three centuries when they became poorer, most of the earlier stone churches being replaced by more modest wooden churches. However, even within the wooden church architecture there were distinguishable differences between the richer and poorer founders or communities, signalling the prestige and the ambitions invested in them.

The various ambitions, resources, preferences, attitudes towards local custom gave different visual results in the local wooden churches, but, since the noble founders formed a homogenous group with common values at the scale of the county, these churches are evidently homogeneous, too. Thus, the wooden churches are a close mirror of a culturally homogeneous landscape composed of various individual creations. The ingredients of this landscape are given by the general conditions of the local founders and protectors, living and acting in between the Eastern and the Western worlds. In the end, the identity of the local Eastern churches is of their founders.

The role of the main noble founders from Maramureş in the local church architecture as well as their customary rights can be encompassed in a few headings:

1. They founded, repaired, endowed and protected their churches with whatever it was necessary to ensure an active religious life inside them.
2. They controlled and disposed of their establishments as their own assets, claiming their rights whenever they pleased, up to the abolition of a foundation as an extreme result.
3. As members of a Western nobility and part of an Eastern community the founders from Maramureş sought an architecture where the two identities could be complemented.
4. They were responsible for the models used, the introduction of small changes and the long conservation of ancient features. In other words, they continually modelled the local church architecture after their own possibilities, ambitions and identity.
5. They selected the craftsmen capable to respond to their high expectations, contributing to the formation and maintenance of local specialised itinerant church carpenters, whose activities created two important family schools during at least the 17th and 18th centuries.
6. They made use of dedicatory inscriptions on portals, walls, triptychs, paintings and various deeds to seek remembrance and salvation of their souls through services. Sometimes they were recorded on the walls only after their departure, nearby their burial place, as a customary way to honour their memory.

Conclusions

The present research focused on the numerous distinctive wooden churches erected in the 17th and 18th centuries in *old Maramureş*. The significant shift to stone churches occurred there at the turn of the 18th century brought the construction of wooden churches to an end and with it a long tradition behind. Fortunately, despite rapid replacements and inconsistent protection during the last two centuries, the close reading of the extant wooden churches can still help us recover some of their main testimonies.

Within the local vernacular architecture, the wooden churches display the best performances. They are clearly distinguished not only through specific models adapted to rituals and fashions but also by the high quality of the wood work. From the Middle Ages until the turn of the 18th century the rural communities and their carpenters used a well articulate language to differentiate the sacred rooms from the secular ones. This language was especially recognizable in the plane and well sealed walls, as well as in the flush joints. The skills, knowledge and experience to build ample log structures with these characteristics were performances out of the ordinary. From this perspective, the craftsmen from Maramureş who were able to reach such levels were not simple peasants but well specialised church carpenters who inherited and maintained this advanced knowledge to exclusively build houses of worship. Their highest knowledge had a sacred purpose with wide continental circulation and therefore requires distinction from the more regionally rooted vernacular one.

The extant wooden churches from Maramureş reveal the existence during the 17th and 18th centuries of at least two main family schools of church carpenters, one residing in Nyzhnie Selyshche and mainly covering the parishes in the lowlands of the Tisa Plain around Hust while the other one potentially living in the lower Iza Valley and covering the parishes from the southern part of Maramureş. With help of the standing churches and their particular features there are further distinguishable three main itineraries and numerous smaller ones, indicating the work of some of the most important church carpenters ever active in the region and in some cases even shifts among generations. In general, the church carpenters stood for the technical performances, the high quality of the wood work and the artistic refinement in the local wooden churches. Their artistic refinement excelled sometimes in intricate compositions carved on the portals, used as marks of identity and high status. The symbolically charged compositions and the dedicatory inscriptions reveal a good literacy, high grade of religious education and openness towards new ideas among the foremost church carpenters.

In a long perspective, the true creators of the local wooden churches were actually not the engaged church carpenters but the commissioning founders. Especially the role of the noble founders of Eastern rite was decisive in the formation of a regional character among the local wooden churches. In the continual fight to preserve the inherited rights to land and rank, which assured liberties and privileges, the local nobility of Eastern rite also strived to build churches able to signal their social status, resources and ambitions. They continually founded, modelled, endowed and took care of their churches after their own interests and needs. At least for the 17th and 18th centuries it was easier to document the successive introduction of new fashionable features along with the disappearance of some other ancient ones. It can be considered that the wooden churches from Maramureş were a mirror of a society of modest country landlords manifesting themselves along several centuries in their double condition of Eastern

Christians and Western nobles. The models adopted by them were taken over in the poorer communities becoming common tastes, finally expressing a homogenous local identity.

From the triple perception offered by the local vernacular tradition, the builders and the founders, the wooden churches from Maramureş appear as unique regional synthesises of the cultural and spiritual streams coming from Eastern and Western Europe. In return, the local wooden churches testifies the long distinctiveness of the sacred architecture within the traditional vernacular one, the participation of specialized church carpenters with professional knowledge at the European level and the ambitions of the local elites and communities of Eastern rite to integrate into a frame of foreign values without loosing the essence of their spiritual identity.

Within the European log architecture the wooden churches from Maramureş belong to some of the foremost performances, enabling excellent comparisons within historical carpentry across the continent. The situation found in Maramureş, in relation to earlier indications from Scandinavia and Poland, suggests that the elite of the European rural carpenters was made of itinerant specialised church carpenters and their high knowledge had for a long time mainly a sacred purpose. Among these, the professional knowledge might have easier circulated from one region to another, bringing necessary technical improvements in different corners of the continent. As there were seemingly no important hinders for the circulation of church carpenters and professional knowledge, the evident regional variety among the wooden churches from Northern and Eastern Europe may originate, as in Maramureş, from local demands, ideals, models, resources, ambitions and other particular historical conditions. In other words, the surviving wooden churches are well anchored in the previous regional cultures and identities, mirroring parts of their complex geography. One of these cultural regions with a particular identity was, certainly, Maramureş and the wooden churches surviving there strongly testify about its former excellence.

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ASC: *Arhivele Statului Cluj*, Cluj Napoca, Romania.
ASM: *Arhivele Statului Maramureş*, Baia Mare, Romania.
DAZO: *Derzhavsky Arkhiv Zakarpatskoi Oblasty*, Berehovo, Ukraine.
DMI: *Direcția Monumentelor Istorice*, Bucureşti, Romania.
IAF: *Institutul 'Arhiva de Folclor'*, Cluj Napoca, Romania.
IEF: *Institutul de Etnografie şi Folclor*, Bucharest, Romania.
KÖH: *Kulturális Örökségvédelmi Hivatal*, Budapest, Hungary.
MOL: *Magyar Országos Léveltár*, Budapest, Hungary.
MLR: *Muzeul Limbii Române*, Cluj Napoca, Romania.
MET: *Muzeul Etnografic al Transilvaniei*, Cluj Napoca, Romania.
MIT: *Muzeul de Istorie al Transilvaniei*, Cluj Napoca, Romania.
ÖStA-KA: *Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Kriegsarchiv*, Wienna, Austria.

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Abbreviations. ACMIT: Anuarul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice – Transilvania; *AMET*: Anuarul Muzeului Etnografic al Transilvaniei; *MISLR*: Monumente Istorice. Studii şi Lucrări de Restaurare; *RRHA*: Revue Roumaine d'Histoire de l'Art; *SCIA*: Studii şi Cercetări de Istoria Artei; *SCIV*: Studii şi Cercetări de Istorie Veche; *SMSC*: Satu Mare. Studii şi Comunicări.

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