

WOODEN CHURCHES IN THE LAND OF ZARAND

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Abstract: *The Land of Zarand (Hunedoara County)-remarkable due to its wild landscape beauty-abounds in archaic architecture, inhabitants' respect for their forerunners, inhabitants' spiritual richness, and old traditions. The Land of Zarand is also home to eleven beautiful wooden churches in Basarabasa, Birtin, Brotuna, Căzănești, Ciungani, Curechiu, Lunca, Ocișor, Ociu, Ribicioara, and Târnavă de Criș. Both the architectural plan and the murals individualise these wooden churches. The authors present the wooden churches in detail, focusing on the most salient features of each of them – altar, bell tower, icons on wood and glass, inscription above the main entrance door, murals, patron saint icon, and royal doors of the altar.*

Key words: *wooden church, Land of Zarand, architectural plan, murals, architectural features*

INTRODUCTION

The Land of Zarand stretches on the western slope of the Apuseni Mountains, on one side, and on the other slope of the Alb Crișului, extending over the territory of Alba, Arad, and Hunedoara counties. It is one of the richest reserves of archaic traditions [13] in Romania. Most of the Land of Zarand is in the historical region of Crișana. The economic center of the area is the municipality of Brad (17,000 inhabitants). The area is crossed by railway 317, which connects Brad and Ineu. The main economic activities of the area are mining, lime production, agriculture, and animal breeding (Figure 1). [2,5,9]



Figure 1. The Land of Zarand

Source: [8]

An ethnographic area endowed with a rich cultural and historical heritage, the Land of Zarand abounds in treasures of archaic architecture, most of its wooden churches being inscribed on the List of Historical Monuments. [6,11,15] The whole area stands out for the wild beauty of the unchanged landscape, as if, for hundreds of years, for the preservation of the traditions inherited from the family, for the love of the locals for what their

illustrious forefathers achieved, being, for the traveller of our days, like an escape in an ageless time, the golden time of our glorious history. When saying Lan of Zarand, one is talking about a special, charming nature, which shows off its beauty, just like the inhabitants who show off their wealth of soul. [1,3,4,10]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material used in this paper consists on books and articles on the wooden churches in Hunedoara County aiming at suggesting a tourist circuit. The method used is descriptive, a method that accurately and systematically describes a situation or phenomenon, answering what, where, when and how questions, but not why questions.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The wooden churches below are part of the cultural-tourist circuit of the wooden churches in Hunedoara County, "Wooden churches in the Land of Gold". The circuit is relatively easy to make because the wooden churches selected are relatively close to each other. Moreover, eight of the eleven churches included in the circuit are in villages are component villages of the Commune of Vața de Jos. Wooden churches in the Lan of Zarand are part of the wooden churches of Transylvania (together with the wooden churches in counties such as Alba, Bistrița Năsăud, Brașov, Cluj, Covasna, Harghita, Hunedoara, Maramureș, Mureș, Sălaj, Satu Mare, and Sibiu), which are part of the great family of Romanian wooden churches. The boxes below contain the minimum of information tour guides should supply to their tourists. [7,8,12,14]

Village of Basarabasa, Commune of Vața de Jos



- *Patron Saint:* St Nicholas
- *Status:* historical monument
- *Built:* end of the 17th c.
- *Murals:* second half of the 18th c.; 1810
- *Paintings:* second half of the 18th c. – icons and altar doors (Constantin Zugravul from Rîșca)
- *Inscription:* painted inside the church
- *Distinctive feature:* rococo style in painting



Village of Birtin, Commune of Vața de Jos

- *Patron Saint:* The Annunciation
- *Status:* historical monument
- *Built:* 1690
- *Murals:* damaged, but still beautiful
- *Paintings:* 1740 altar doors (Gligorie Moldovan); 1772 iconostasis (Stan Zugravul)
- *Inscription:* 1772 painted inside the church (Stan Zugravul)
- *Distinctive features:* bell-tower on the narthex; massive oak beams placed directly on the ground, without a sole



Village of Brotuna, Commune of Vața de Jos

- *Patron Saint:* St Nicholas
- *Built:* 1870 on the place of a beam church from 1761 and destroyed during the Revolution of 1848, renovated in 1961 1987, 2007
- *Murals:* from 1850-1866, very valuable, damaged
- *Inscription:* painted inside the church



Village of Căzănești, Commune of Vața de Jos

- *Patron Saint:* The Descent of the Holy Spirit
- *Status:* Historical monument
- *Built:* 17th century
- *Murals:* 1828
- *Paintings:*
- *Inscription:*
- *Distinctive feature:* the nave ceiling displays the Saint Trinity, Mary praying, and the Evangelists



Village of Ciungani, Commune of Vața de Jos

- *Patron Saint:* The Annunciation
- *Status:* historical monument
- *Built:* around 1600
- *Murals:* 1810 (Ioan from Poiana Sibiului and Mihai Borșoș)
- *Paintings:* 1782 (Iosif Zugravul) including the icons in the narthex (Constantin Zugravul from Rîșca)
- *Distinctive feature:* the tallest tower of the wooden churches in Hunedoara County (14 m)



Village of Curechiu, Commune of București

- *Patron Saint:* St Nicholas
- *Status:* historical monument
- *Built:* 1785
- *Murals:*
- *Paintings:* iconostasis from 1788 (Ioan Zugravul din Deva)
- *Inscription:*
- *Distinctive feature:* Roman funerary stela from Germisara used as altar



Village of Lunca, Commune of Baia de Criș

- *Patron Saint:* The Dormition of the Mother of God
- *Status:* Monument istoric
- *Built:* end of the 17th c.
- *Murals:* very damaged
- *Paintings:* 1829 (Lupșa din Roșia Montană)
- *Inscription:*



Village of Ocișor, Commune of Vața de Jos

- *Patron Saint:* The Dormition of the Mother of God
- *Status:* historical monument
- *Built:* 1802; 1967 renovated
- *Murals:* end of 18th c. (Constantin of Rîșca)
- *Paintings:* 1820 on the iconostasis and altar doors (Mihail Borșoș)
- *Distinctive feature:* Baroque tower



Village of Ociu, Commune of Vața de Jos

- *Patron Saint:* Holy Archangels
- *Status:* historical monument
- *Built:* 1750
- *Murals:* 1821 (Nichifor Bădău)
- *Paintings:* rich
- *Inscription:* repeated



Village of Ribicioara, Commune Ribița

- *Patron Saint:* Saint Pious Parascheva
- *Status:* historical monument
- *Built:* 18th c.
- *Murals:* 18th c.
- *Paintings:* 18th c. iconostasis



Village of Târnava de Criș, Commune of Vața de Jos

- *Patron Saint:* The Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel
- *Built:* 1824

CONCLUSIONS

Touring the wooden churches in the Land of Zarand offers a rich and immersive cultural experience:

- **Architectural beauty:** the wooden churches are masterpieces of traditional craftsmanship, showcasing intricate woodwork and beautiful designs that are unique to this area;
- **Cultural immersion:** visiting these churches allows one to connect with the local culture and traditions, experiencing the hospitality and customs of the people;
- **Historical significance:** these churches date back centuries and provide a glimpse into the religious and cultural heritage of the region;
- **Scenic landscapes:** the Land of Zarand is known for its picturesque landscapes, with rolling hills, lush forests, and quaint villages that add to the charm of exploring these historic sites;
- **Spiritual experience:** these churches offer a tranquil and serene environment, making them perfect for reflection and spiritual contemplation.

Whether one is a history enthusiast, an architecture lover, or simply looking for a peaceful retreat, the wooden churches of the Land of Zarand provide a unique, enriching experience.

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