

ECUMENICAL TOURISM IN BANAT, TIMIS COUNTY

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Abstract: *Ecumenical tourism, a complex phenomenon, is in a constant transformation and diversification, but preserves its basic element that has consecrated it: religion, pilgrimage. This form of tourism, which has existed for centuries and has evolved over time, is practiced by those who want to regain or retreat and involve from the tourists a level of training and a high degree of culture that allows the appreciation of the cultural-religious objectives from the point of view of architecture, construction, value, spiritual meanings, and the content of art objects. The tourist potential of Timis County includes 10 religious cultural objectives, of great value, that can be included in the tourist circuit with religious and pilgrimage purposes.*

Key words: *ecumenical tourism, monasteries, Timis County*

INTRODUCTION

Religious tourism is the type of tourism that has as purpose visiting religious buildings with spiritual implications. From this point of view, there can be no clear distinction between those who visit these places with religious motives or other nature, the impact of visiting may be religious or not.

Religious tourism continues to have an important share in the overall tourist flow (26%) worldwide, its size being even higher, but the registration of the number of tourists is not very accurate, the exact number of tourists is unknown.

In Banat, religious tourism is not widely practiced, although in Timis County there are 10 monasteries with high religious cultural potential.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The purpose of this work is to identify and analyze the churches from Timis County through the perspective of the tourist potential, the history of the places of worship, the localization, the existence of the relics and the miraculous icons.

RESEARCH RESULTS

In Timis County there are 10 monasteries with a high tourist potential with religious objectives of high cultural value that can be entered in the tourist circuit with a religious purpose. In the following I will identify and analyze each of these places of worship in terms of history, localization, the existence of relics and miraculous icons.

The Saraca Monastery is an Orthodox monastery located in the plain of Banat, in Semlacu Mic, the town of Gataia, 67 km south of Timisoara. The day of the monastery is on August 6, "Change to the Face".



Saraca Monastery



Saraca Monastery

The old church of the monastery was built in the first half of the 15th century and is on the list of historical monuments. Here is found an icon of the Mother of God about which is said that is a miracle-maker one. Also here are found the relics of Saints Nicholas, Tecla and Filofteia.

Sag-Timiseni Monastery is an Orthodox monastery of nuns located in Sag, Timis County, dedicated to the "Cutting of the Head of St. John the Baptist" on August 29, located about 14 km from Timisoara, in Sag. It was founded by Metropolitan Vasile Lazarescu in 1944. It has annexes for the workshops and icons painting. It was disbanded during the communist regime. It was reorganized with the help of the HE. Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu. The present church of the monastery was built between 1968 and 1972, the painting being made by Victor Jurca from Lugoj. It has accommodation facilities for pilgrims.



Sag-Timiseni Monastery

Cebza Monastery is a monastery located in the Cebza village. The wooden church of the monastery is the most western wooden church from Banat. It is located about 31 km southwest of Timisoara.

Although the first documentary references on the Cebza Monastery dates from the seventeenth century (1758-1759), it is believed that it is much older and dates back to the 15th century. According to the legend transmitted verbally, before the monastery was built, in the middle of the forest that stretched over these places, there was a spring miracle-making. Attracted by the beneficial powers of the spring, a hermit made a cell around the spring. By multiplying the number of monks, they would have built a small church in such a way that the spring would be taken to the altar. The waters of the spring are considered healing even today by believers, that are coming to pray at the monastery.



Cebza Monastery

Morisena Monastery - The origins of this monastic wind descended into the distant eighth century, when the Banat had passed under the rule of the Hanat Avar in the First Bulgarian Land. At that time there were several Byzantine rites in the fortress from the shore of Mures, called Morisena, which was to become in the 9th-10th centuries, the residence of the Banat princes Glad and Ahtum.

The first attestation of a monastic settlement here is the year 1002, when the Ahtum, newly baptized in Vidin after the Byzantine Rite, brought with him Orthodox monks and priests in Banat, laying the foundations of the first known monastery in our country. From the very beginning, the Monastery of Morisena, was protected and patronized by the Lord's Baptist, St. John. After conquering this part of the Banat (1028), Hungarian King Stephen I, gave this fortress and his domain to his victorious general in the battles with Ahtum, Hanadin.

When the Great Schism occurred, in 1054, the monastery chose to remain faithful to the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate, meaning to the Orthodox Church, to the great disappointment of the Roman Catholic Benedictine monks from the area who complained about this to Hungarian king. It intervenes and displaces the Orthodox monks at Oroslamos in the Serbian Banat, while Morisena becomes an abbey, residence of the first Roman Catholic bishopric founded by the new conqueror. This is also reflected on the religious plan of increasing the Hungarian influence in Banat at the expense of the Bulgarian and Byzantine influence.

After a very tense millennium, the Metropolitan of Banat, Nicolae Corneanu, blessed in 2003, the redefinition of the monastery at Cenad, thus marking the hearth where the first prayers were raised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ on the territory of our country. It was also found that the presence of a monastic place in this part of the diocese would contribute to the revival of church life.

On June 24, 2005, the church was minted by PS Vicar Bishop Lucian Mic. At that time, the was blessed the building body and the summer chapel, all built in full field, on an arable land once.

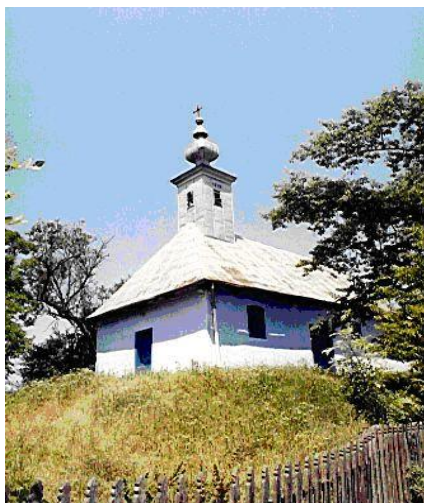


Morisena Monastery

The wooden church from Dobrești, Bara commune, Timiș County dates from 1832. She has the patron Saint of "Paraschiva" and has as her abbess: the monastery of Stefania Fronea. The church is on the new list of historical monuments under the LMI code: TM-II-m-A-06218.

Dobrești village belongs to Bara commune. The settlement is mentioned as a domain of the Soimos fortress in 1444. The church dedicated to the Holy Virgin Paraschiva was built in 1832. It is made of beech wood. The iconostasis is made of lime

wood painted by the painter Ion Zaicu from Banat. The year of painting made is 1852, passed on one of the icons. The old church bells were requisitioned and melted by the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War.



Wooden Church Dobresti

The Fardea Monastery is a monastery of nuns, 16 living creatures, with the patronage of "The Assumption of the Virgin" - August 15 and "The Holy Virgin Paraschiva" - October 14 located in the village of Fardea with the abbess Antonia Sfrijan.

It was founded in 2001 with the blessing of I.P.S. Metropolitan Nicolae, first as a hermit. The foundation stone was put by P.S. Bishop Lucian of Caransebes, at that time bishop of the diocese of Timisoara, on August 12, 2001. It is located in the vicinity of Surduc reservoir. Religious services are officiated in the newly built and sanctified church on October 12, 2003. In 2004, were finalized the works on hermitages, this being placed in the form of cottages around the church and the bell tower. In last years it has been built the main body of hermitages and the abbesses. In tailoring and embroidery workshops are made clerical garments, church coverings, banners, epitaphs and so on.



Fardea Monastery

The Romanesti - Izvorul Miron Monastery has 3 inhabitants, the life with the dedication of St. Elijah located in the village of Romanesti, the commune of Tomesti. In 1910, Bishop Miron Cristea, the future patriarch, made a canonical visit to the parishes

from these places and amazed by the beauty of the landscape, decided to build a monastery. The foundation of the church was made in 1912, by the Glava family from Romanesti; was finished in 1929 and inaugurated in 1931. In 1980 the restoration work of this settlement began, and the church was repainted, so that on July 20, 1991, when it feast was celebrated, it was re-blessed. After 1995, extensive construction works were carried out: a chapel, a trapeze, a hermitage body, a library, accommodation, etc. In fact, nothing has been left of the old buildings until this year.

On June 8, 2003, the new winter chapel dedicated to "The Spring of Healing" was celebrated by His Eminence Vicar Lucian Lugojanu, former abbot of the monastery. On July 20th the same year, the summer chapel was in the courtyard of the monastery.



Romanesti-Izvorul Miron Monastery

The Luncanii de Sus Monastery is a monastery of nuns, 4 living creatures, living together with the dedication: "The Cover of the Virgin Mary" - October 1 and "The holy kings Constantine and Helena" - 21 May in the village Luncani de Sus, Tomesti commune having as abbot of the Stavrophaera monastery Filotea Nistor.

It was founded in 2001 with the blessing of I.P.S. Metropolitan Nicolae, first as a hermit. The foundation stone was put by P.S. Bishop Lucian of Caransebes, when he was an episcopate in Timisoara on August 12, 2001. The church, like the entire settlement, is made of wood and impresses through its dimensions. Other construction works were carried out between 2001-2006 period. Currently, the two building bodies, on the right and left of the church, are in good working order. The monastery has its own household.



Luncanii de Sus Monastery

The Pietroasa Mare Monastery is a monastery of monks, 4 living creatures, with a community life celebrated on 8 November by the "Saints Archangels Michael and

Gabriel" located in the Petroasa Mare village no. 321, the Victor Vlad Delamarina commune, having as the Ancestor: hieromonah Stefan Mateş.

The settlement was founded by the monastery Mihaela and her grandson, Constantin Dradean, who bought a piece of land on the edge of the village. In 1995 the Diocesan Council approved the establishment of the monastery, designed to monks. On February 22, 1996, has been obtained the approval of the Holy Synod. In the same year the construction works began, and the sanctification of the new monastic settlement was made by P.S. Bishop Lucian of Caransebes, at that time bishop in Timisoara, at August 26, 2001, when the works are already partially completed at the church and the hermitage body. In the finishing phase there is the church and the main building body of the settlement.



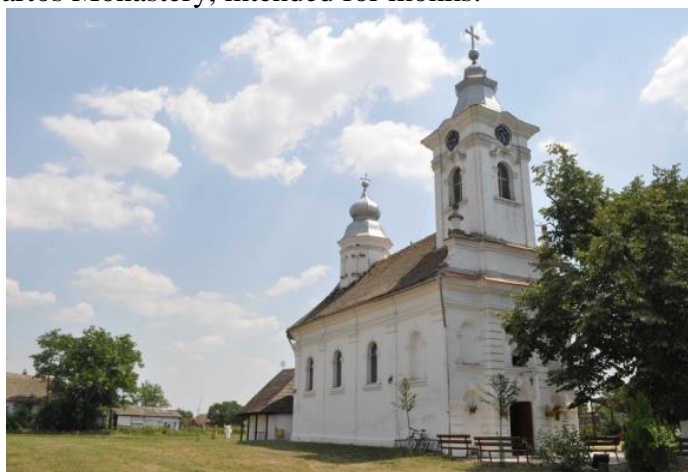
Pietroasa Mare Monastery

Partos Monastery. The Day of the Monastery is on September 14th, on the day of the the Holy Cross, Saint Joseph the New from Partos (September 15th), located in Partos village, Banloc commune, Timis County, with the abbot of Varlaam Almajanu. The earliest documentary mention known to us about this monastic settlement dates from 1571, 19 years after the occupation of Banat by the Turks, when hieromonk Laurentiu, on his way to Brasov and Alba Iulia where he printed between 1577-1580 three religious books , lingers for a long time here and makes a princess from 1562, on the pages of which he calls it: "This book, the Divine Gospel, was given by the hieromonk Laurentiu Cernogorat to the Partos Monastery dedicated to Saints Archangels Mihail and Gavril in 1571".

Another testimony from 1529, says: "This book is the property of the Hopovo Monastery. It was given in 1639 in the hands of the archpriest Eftimie for the use of the Belgrade church during the hieromonk ruler Gavril. Then it went to the Partos Monastery in 1655 under the ruler of the hieromonk Neofit. If there it will be threatened by any danger, then must be given back to the Hopovo Monastery" a monastery in Srem, which enjoyed in the seventeenth century together with other monasteries in the southern Danube by the taxes sent by Vasile Lupu, by his son Stefan, by Dabija Voda, by the nobleman Draguti. Her Egumen, Gavril Miakici, recalled in 1667 as a bishop pastoring the 11,000 Romanians from Zagreb's diocese and who was sanctified in Moldova, gave to the Partos Monastery a Mina, a manuscript from 1623. And about the significance of the monastery in the first half of the eighteenth century confesses the monumental monastery church built between 1750-1753 by Marcu Mutiu and the stopping here in the year 1744 of the monk Visarion Sarai from Pakra Monastery from Slavonia on his way to Lipova and Transylvania, where he prevented in a few weeks the catholicization forced which had been made through the Habsburgs' army, and administration.

The Catholic action was directed through the monasteries, which constituted an invincible obstacle to its realization. In fact, there is a collection of nearby monasteries: Saraca, Sangeorge, Partos, Srediste, Zlatita, Voislovita, Bazias, Cusici and Mesici. The Viennese Court based on the Articles 47 and 50 of the Iliric Regulation goes to deeds. The provisions signed by Joseph II replied after many delays to the leadership of the Serbian Church.

In 1944, under the care of the Eparchial Center, the monastery was reactivated, with nuns sitting here. In the years of communism, the monastic life here was interrupted, the place being taken by the Partos parish. In the years 1970-1980, the Eparchial Center, at the proposal of the High Holy Metropolitan Nicolae of Banat, decided that important works of repair and maintenance should be made at the church of the former monastery, which is a parochial church and at the chapel. On March 6, 2008, the Metropolitan Synod of the Banat Metropolitan Church, under the chairmanship of the High Holy Metropolitan Nicolae of Banat, decided, based on the proposal of the Diocesan Council, the re-establishment of the Partos Monastery, intended for monks.



Partos Monastery

CONCLUSIONS

Following the analysis of the existing monasteries in Timis County, we can deduce that this area is suitable for practicing ecumenical tourism because it is a developed area with a lot to offer in terms of tourism. From Timisoara, which attracts business tourism, shopping and cultural tourism to other places in the county, where visitors can admire monasteries, ride bicycles on different routes or can discover the landscapes of these places.

As a result of the analysis of this region, namely Timis County, in terms of ecumenical tourism practiced in this area, we concluded that this is a poorly exploited tourist area, being visited by quite a few tourists, of which only a small part are foreign tourists. Analyzing data regarding the number of tourists in this region, it can be concluded that the promotion of these monasteries is much weaker than it should, although this area has a very high operating potential. It is necessary to develop a general management and promotion plan for this region in order to determine what is being attempted to be promoted and by what methods. This plan should also take care of the inherited traditions and try to preserve them as well. At the same time these monasteries should be included in religious tourist routes.

The church should promote and organize pilgrimages in this area, the group being accompanied by the priest, who during the journey to carry out specific activities: prayers,

discussions on spiritual themes combined with the presentation of monasteries as tourist attractions.

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