

A Spiritual Connection Between Transylvania and Banat The Wooden Church of Crivina de Sus: Local Identities, Transformations and Perspectives

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Abstract

Initiated in 2013, the Interdisciplinary Workshops in Crivina de Sus were conceived as annual camps where students and specialists from various fields share knowledge in order to better understand the sacred wood architecture in the Banat area. Another objective of these workshops was to highlight the complexity of this particular type of architecture, the difficulties of its historical study, and the inherent fragility of its materiality. From 2014, these meetings, unfolding around the church of Crivina de Sus, and being part of the project "Wooden Churches" of Banat, have been focused to find solutions to rescue this building through a process in which good practices from one domain would transfer into another. Thus, the researches undertaken sought to establish the social framework that determined its appearance and which were the main transformations suffered over time. As a result, biological and dendrochronological investigations were carried out, on-site documentation, and relevant archival documents and papers were studied. The new data complete and improve what had been known about this church so far, while allowing a pertinent scenario on the voyage from Ilia (Transylvania) to Crivina de Sus (Banat). Therefore, the present paper aims, on one hand, to introduce into the scientific circuit new significant data concerning this church and to present the historical context in which it was built and later moved. On the other hand, the work wants to bring into question the fragility of the Banat wood heritage as well as the need for wise, integrative and prudent restoration. From this perspective, the "Wooden Churches" of Banat project could be a sprig whose seeds would be worth planting elsewhere.

Rezumat

Începute în anul 2013, atelierele interdisciplinare din Crivina de Sus au fost concepute ca tabere anuale unde studenții și specialiștii din diferite domenii împărtășesc cunoștințe pentru a înțelege mai bine arhitectura lemnului sacru din zona Banatului. Un alt obiectiv al acestor ateliere a fost acela de a evidenția complexitatea acestui tip particular de arhitectură, dificultățile studiului său istoric și fragilitatea inerentă a materialității sale. Începând cu anul 2014, aceste întâlniri, desfășurate în jurul bisericii din Crivina de Sus și făcând parte din proiectul "Bisericile de lemn" din Banat, s-au axat pe găsirea de soluții pentru salvarea acestei clădiri printr-un proces în care bunele practici dintr-un domeniu s-ar transfera în altul. Astfel, cercetările efectuate au căutat să stabilească cadrul social care a determinat apariția sa și care au fost principalele transformări suferite de-a lungul timpului. Ca rezultat, s-au efectuat investigații biologice și dendrocronologice,

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au fost studiate documentele la fața locului și au fost studiate documentele și arhivele relevante. Noile date completează și îmbunătățesc ceea ce se cunoștea despre această biserică până în prezent, permițând în același timp un scenariu pertinent pentru călătoria de la Ilia (Transilvania) până la Crivina de Sus (Banat). Prin urmare, lucrarea de față urmărește, pe de o parte, introducerea în circuitul științific a unor noi date semnificative cu privire la această biserică și prezentarea contextului istoric în care a fost construită și mai târziu mutată. Pe de altă parte, lucrarea dorește să pună sub semnul întrebării fragilitatea patrimoniului lemnului din Banat, precum și necesitatea unei restaurări înțelepte, integrative și prudente. Din această perspectivă, "Bisericile de lemn" ale proiectului Banat ar putea fi un lăstar al cărei semințe ar merita să se planteze în altă parte.

Keywords: Wooden churches, Banat, Transylvania, Crivina de Sus, Ilia

1. The long road toward saving the last sacred wood architecture in Banat-the story behind Wooden Churches of Banat

Romanian communities in Banat inhabited for an unrecorded long time a land covered with endless secular forests, situated at the meeting point of political and economical ambitions, that divided the Orient and the Occident. In a world of unsettling rulings and danger, their architecture was basic and simple, built with materials at hand. In some sense the vernacular architecture was disposable, easy to leave behind in case of danger or scarce resources. At a first glance, this architecture seems modest, but it is perfectly adapted to the site, closely related to the rhythm of life, to traditions, customs and the passing of seasons. The vernacular housing is the result of a millennial adaptation to site constraints, to wind and rain, to arid summers and long winters. Usually, the most feasible material was the wood. Wood was easy to build with and in abundance. In the center of these villages, usually in the highest point, somehow closer to God, stood the wooden church. The church was indeed the *axis-mundi* of rural communities. This is the reason why when a place was left behind, the church moved with its community. Dismantled, moved on logs by oxen, over the hills and valleys, the church change its setting.

Banat, is a border region, currently divided between Romania, Hungary and Serbia, and due to its strategic position and natural resources, the historically theatre of rivalry between the Ottomans and Hapsburgs. When eventually the Hapsburgs conquered this region in 1716, a massive process of land systematization was initiated. Villages were moved and rebuilt, roads were built to give easy access to mineral resources, swamps drained and rivers channeled, the landscape was brutally adapted to a new type of ruling, and all traces of former rulings erased. In this massive adaptation of the land, many wooden churches disappeared. Some communities build new stone and brick churches to join the realm of the Hapsburg reconstruction of Banat.

We know that at the end of the 19th century there were more than 200 wooden churches in Banat²[1], in 1929, 54 survived, and today we have a little more than 20³. Every year another wooden church is endangered. In the spring of 2015 we lost one of the oldest and most valuable churches in Banat due to fire : The Saint Michael and Gavril church in Povergina.

Most of the wooden churches in Banat are concentrated in the Făget Area. It is an area situated on the boarder between Banat and Transylvania. Due to its isolation, many remote villages managed to survive unspoiled by Hapsburg urban renewal. It was here, that a team of seven arrived in 2013 to

²Nicolae Săcară, *Bisericile de lemn ale Banatului*, Ed. Excelsior, Timișoara, 2001, p.8

³ Their number varies according to the area taken into consideration

study the cemeteries of Banat, with a grant from AFCN, a division of the Romanian Ministry of Culture. The team, formed by 3 architects, 3 landscape architects and an anthropologist, arrived in the picturesque village of Crivina de Sus. The village emerged in the valley of the Bega river, a remote location, surrounded by hills and luxuriant woods. On top of one of these hills, there stood, majestically, Banat's presumably oldest wooden church: Saint Paraschiva from Crivina de Sus. The cemetery was literally a jungle and it was difficult to distinguish the beautiful wooden crosses surrounding the church. The community shifted to Neo-protestantism and buried their loved ones in a cemetery nearby. The church was in decay as well. Since it rained inside, the religious service was moved in a small room in *Caminul Cultural*, a building of all-purposes in the village, near the school.



Figure 1. The location of Crivina de Sus within the Banat region.

It was probably the wild beauty of the place and the outstanding value of the church that contributed to the fact that this team decided to join hands and try to find a way to save the church and the cemetery. The first idea that came to mind was to organize an interdisciplinary workshop, with students and volunteers, in order to raise awareness and find funding for temporary protection. The first workshop in 2013 gathered students in architecture, landscape architecture, cultural studies, painting restoration, theology under the umbrella of an NGO, The Romanian Landscape Association. Shortly after, the Faculty of Architecture in Timișoara and West University of Timișoara, joined as project partners. It was mostly a group of enthusiasts that finally managed to clean the cemetery, clean the paintings on the altar doors, make the first survey of the church and the cemeteries, both the old and the new one, and build a traditional access door to the cemetery. In the same time several directions of study emerged: an ethnological and anthropological study of the local community, an urban and historical study and an in-depth landscape study. Year after year, this workshop attracted more and more volunteers and students, and so, one year after, *Biserici Înlemnitate/Wooden Churches of Banat* became a project, in an interdisciplinary effort to save the church. From 2014 to 2017, several interventions reshaped the place: a new traditional wattle fence around the cemetery to protect the site from invading cattle, a second access door to the cemetery, draining the swamp around one of the accesses, reshaping two access roads. The works culminated, in December 2015 with the assembly of a tensioned membrane on a steel structure to protect the

church from rain and snow. The structure built on a foundation of metal pillars is flexible and most important, mobile, built in such a way as to be easily disassembled and rebuilt to protect another church in need, once the church in Crivina will be restored.

Since the beginning of this project many professions met and joined hands: architecture, ethnology, anthropology, landscape architecture, history, art, philosophy, theology and engineering. The discussion on heritage protection reached new levels and perspectives. At the same time research continued on 3 major levels: the big scale of landscape, encompassing not only the village of Crivina, but a much larger area, beyond political and administrative borders; the medium scale of the communities surrounding these churches, with their lives, traditions and customs; the small scale of the church and its cemetery, from the smallest details such as craftsman's signs to a historical perspective connecting together different regions and confessions since the church was initially moved from Ilia in Transylvania.



Figure 2. One of the lectures around the wooden church, 2015.



Figure 3. "Going Native", bounding with the local community, while exploring the natural landscape, 2013 .

Every new workshop pushed the team, much enlarged, to become friends with many people from the community and finally reached decision makers: the administration and the church. In February 2017 a new milestone was reached when the main team, together with the Banat Metropolitan Church organized a conservation class for the priests serving in a wooden church. It was a down-to-earth, good practice presentation on how to protect the church, its environment and the interior, showing that day to day use and maintenance could prevent expensive restoration works later. Most of the churches in Banat are abandoned, being mostly used as funeral chapels, since the majority of the villages have new churches. Sometimes, something as basic as airing the church and holding service inside could substantially prologue the life of the monument.

This interdisciplinary approach and maybe, as improbable as this seems, the long studies do to the lack of funding for its restoration, while the church stays safely protected by its membrane, led to unprecedented findings. The churches in Banat, are mostly understudied. Nobody had the time and resources to gather such a complex array of investigation, and then to assemble them in a coherent restoration discourse, including not only the church but also the people and the landscape. Putting together data from all these fields an incredible story emerged.

2. Saint Paraschiva in Crivina de Sus- a historical perspective

For an appropriate restoration, in order to understand the modifications of this construction over time, but also its heritage value, it is important to outline its historical course. This, in the situation where the few bibliographic sources dedicated to the wooden church architecture in the Banat area offered too little useful information.

In search of pertinent answers, the local tradition was taken into account, noting that the church was once brought from Ilia, a village located on the Mureș valley, in the neighboring county of Hunedoara⁴. The same local tradition also stated that the church had been brought to Crivina de Sus with the material support of a rich widow⁵.

This information, along with the inscriptions on the church's wood and the inscription dating back to 1677, were virtually the only starting point for this research. Accepting the hypothesis of the removal of the church from Ilia to Crivina de Sus, which was suggested by a series of bookmarks found on the church's wood, a number of questions were naturally asked: when and how the church was brought and what was the context that made this operation possible. Trying to find the right answers for these questions, it has been noticed that over time there have been mentioned several dates, each of which differs depending on the source of documentation. In the historical and archaeological questionnaires sent by the Banat Museum during the interwar period from every Banat village, in order to gather relevant information about the past of each locality, the representatives of Crivina de Sus stated in 1928 that there was a single wooden church, built in year 1686⁶. In addition to the same questionnaire it was stated that the church was built around 1756⁷. In March 1929, in a similar questionnaire, the representatives of the locality stated that there was only one church that was built in 1730⁸.

In 1943, in a questionnaire filled in by the parish priest, it was mentioned that "*it is believed from the elders that there would have been no other church (in Crivina de Sus), the one being made in 1678 probably*"⁹. Only three years later, in 1946, it was mentioned that the church, 4 m. long and 6 m. wide, was made of wood (beams). Its interior was at that time plastered with clay and whitewashed. The exterior was not plastered. It is believed that "*the church is old, being built in 1778, probable*."¹⁰

In a work from the early 1970s, author Mircea Teleguț remarked that the year of the building of the church, in Crivina de Sus was 1713¹¹. Only "further research" was invoked in this respect. It should be said that this date coincides with the year that appears in one of the inscriptions that can be found on the old entry. Thus, on the left hand we can read: "*Popa Filim(o)n au fost în Ilie (ai) D(omnului). A(n)i ruka (cu înțelesul: scris de mâna lui) 1713*" (*Philemon the priest was in Ilia. Years of Lord ruka (with the meaning: I wrote) 1713*). From this passage it does not appear that the church was brought to Crivina de Sus in 1713 but rather that a certain priest, Filimon (*Philemon*), functioned in Ilia in 1713. From this we understand that at that time the church was still at Ilia.

Returning to the initial building of this church, it is necessary to make some clarifications about Ilia, the place of origin of the church. In order to understand the context in which this church was built,

⁴In a brief monograph written by the priest in Crivina de Sus in 1941, it was stated that the church first was first built in Vidra de Sus (today Vidra, county of Alba), then transported to Ilia, and from Ilia, later brought to Crivina de Sus, according to Timiș County Service of National Archives, personal collection Gh. Cotoșman, dos. nr. 265, f. 16r.-16v.; Dendrocronological studies have disproved the hypothesis that this church was older than 1677.

⁵The church is supposed to have been brought to Crivina de Sus following a gift of a rich widow at the beginning of the eighteenth century (1713), according to Mircea Teleguț, *Arhitectura bisericilor de lemn de pe Valea Begheiului*, in "*Mitropolia Banatului*", XX, 1970, nr. 4-6, p. 327;

⁶Archives of the National Museum of Banat, Answers to the Historical and Archaeological Questionnaire, elaborated by the Banat Museum in 1928, nr. 395, com. Crivina de Sus, f.n.;

⁷*Ibidem*.

⁸Archives of the National Museum of Banat, Answers to the Historical and Archaeological Questionnaire, elaborated by the Banat Museum in 1928, nr. 396, com. Crivina de Sus, f.n.;

⁹Timiș County Service of National Archives, personal collection Gh. Cotoșman, dos. nr. 338, f. 1r.;

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 3r.;

¹¹Mircea Teleguț, *Arhitectura bisericilor de lemn de pe Valea Begheiului*, in "*Mitropolia Banatului*", XX, 1970, nr. 4-6, p. 327;

we must bear in mind that in the seventeenth century Ilia was more than an ordinary place. It had been a border city near the Banat region, which was under the control of Ottoman Turks. During the seventeenth century, when the wooden church was to be built, Ilia was a small fair. It was crossed by the rafts with various goods on Mureș. Here too, the important Calvinists of Transylvania possessed important properties.

Moreover, by a decree of 1643 of Prince Gheorghe Rákoczy I, the Romanian churches from Alămor, Orăștie, Hațeg, Hunedoara and Ilia were removed from the jurisdiction of Bishop Simion Ștefan and placed under the jurisdiction of the Calvinist superintendent¹². In this context of Ilia, dominated by the powerful Calvinist Hungarian noble families, it seems that the wooden church was built in 1677 for the Romanian community of Ilia. Most likely, this church would remain in the use of the Romanian-Calvinist community of Ilia because only a year after, in 1678, a second wooden church was built in Ilia to be used by the Romanian Orthodox community¹³. The latter was to be moved to Bacea, where it still survives today, in a modified form.

Regarding the wooden church at Crivina de Sus, the local tradition of Ilia also holds that the old church was dismantled, taken along the Mureș river and transported by rafts to Valea Mare-Căpâlnaș. From here, up to Crivina de Sus, the church's wood was transported with carts with oxen¹⁴.

Why did the wooden church of Ilia arrive at Crivina de Sus? There's another question we've been looking for. One of the first parishes of Crivina de Sus seems to have been Ioan Popovici, mentioned in a conscription drawn up in 1767 in order to capture the Orthodox priests who were active in the Banat area but who were not locals. We find out that Ioan Popovici, the Crivina de Sus parish priest was from Roșcani¹⁵, a village in Hunedoara, about 30 km. away by Crivina de Sus. Although today there is no road to make a direct connection between the two localities, until the contemporary period it seems that the locals used a coastal route between the two villages.

Probably the name of the same priest Ioan Popovici is also linked to the first records in the civil registry of the parish, documents kept since 1779. Given the difference between the two moments, suppose that it is not a coincidence of the name of two different persons, the priest Ioan Popovici was in 1767 at the beginning of his priestly activity. Under these conditions, he could not be surprised that in his native settlement, a relatively small distance from Crivina de Sus, the Roscani stone church underwent major transformations. With the support of the Romanian noble family Caba de Dobra, the church in Roscani has undergone extensive renovation works around 1766¹⁶. These transformations are mentioned by the inscription of the church in the apse of the altar: "*17+66 Pomenit se fie întru împărăția cerului c(t)itorul sfintii acești biserici Caba Raț Agnes + Laslo*" (17 + 66 It is named in the kingdom of heaven the founders of this church Caba Raț Agnes + Laslo).

Without any written evidence, a pertinent scenario about bringing the wooden church from Ilia to Crivina de Sus we think it might be the following: through the priest Ioan Popovici, the little Crivina de Sus community enters in contact with the Caba family. With the support of Agnes Raț, who is known that in 1784, when the uprising of Horea burned the Caba's manor house in Dobra,

¹²Zenovie Pâclășanu, Câteva date despre preoții româno-calvini, in "Cultura Creștină", I, februarie 1911, nr. 3, p. 69;

¹³Miron Țic, Petru Balaj, Partenie Vasîu Verghelia, Cronica de la Ilia-Mureșană: schiță monografică, Ed. Călăuza v.b., Deva, 2005, p. 223.

¹⁴Idem, p. 224;

¹⁵ Ion B. Mureșianu, Un document din 1767 privind aspecte ale vieții bisericești din Banat, in "Mitropolia Banatului", XXVI, 1976, nr. 5-8, p. 543;

¹⁶<http://arheologie.ulbsibiu.ro/publicatii/carti/roscaniplanse/2biserica%20din%20roscani.htm> (01.09.2017);

was already a widow, bought the church from the Romanian community of Ilia. It should be remembered that one of the Romanian noble families in Ilia, with a good material status at the end of the 18th century, was the Raț family¹⁷. If Agnes Raț was part of the Raț family from Ilia, and if she was that rich widow who paid the cost of buying and transporting the church at Crivina de Sus, it is hard to tell with the documentary sources available. It is a desiderate for the future to verify this hypothesis.

Considering the context mentioned above as well as the maps drawn up following the Josephinian Land Survey, made for the Banat area between 1769-1772, maps in which Crivina de Sus does not have a church and the map of Crivina de Sus since 1777¹⁸, a map showing the church, we believe that bringing the edifice of worship from Ilia to Crivina de Sus took place sometime between 1772-1777.

After bringing the church to Crivina de Sus and by the end of the nineteenth century, the information kept about interventions on the church is almost inexistent. The cross above the iconostasis has been inscribed in 1805, which is why we assume that both this cross and the royal doors were made during this period.

In the second half of the nineteenth century there were other attempts made by the community of believers to decorate the church. From this period dates the icon of the Holy Spirit Descendant and the Resurrection icon, both renewed by the parish in 1882, through the efforts of Ștefan Popovici, epitrop and Iosif Dateu, chinez and communal judge. There were also four prapors: the first was made by Damaschin Popovici and his wife Ana, and by Iosif Dateu and his wife Maria. On one side was the icon of St. Archangel, the upper left was the Sun and on the right was the Moon. Under the icon of St. Archangel, in the medallion, the icon of the Pious mother Paraschiva, on the other side is the icon of the Mother of God with Jesus in her arms under which is the icon of St. Nicholas. Both in the middle and in the corners of both sides there is an angel's head. On the side where the icon of the Mother of God was painted on is top and side, the eye of God. A second prapor was made in 1881 by Petru Hobian and Elena's wife in Crivina de Sus. He had on his side the icon of the Crowning of the Virgin, and on the other side the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul holding a church. The third one was made in 1882 by Ioan and Catița Dateu from Crivina de Sus, on the one hand represented the icon of the Nativity of the Lord, and the other icon of the Mother of God with the Son in his arms. The fourth was made in 1885 by Petru Hobian and his wife. On one side was the icon of the Mother of God and on the second part, the Holy Apostles. It was painted by Maria Vancea of Susani¹⁹.

In 1907, a series of expenses were made for the ceiling of the church. Without further details being provided in the parochial documents, we think it is the ceiling of the narthex. About 20 wood planks would have been used. The craftsman's payment, unnamed, amounts to about half of the value of the materials used²⁰.

In 1915, planks and a dice were purchased to make the two doors of the church cemetery²¹. In the 1920 Parish's Income and Expense Statement, a record mentions the sale of tiles that have remained

¹⁷The priestly family. In 1792 Ioan Raț served as priest in Ilia. In the inscription of the current church in Ilia it is remembered that priest Ioan Raț gave 100 florins for the erection of the new church, according to Miron Țic, Petru Balaj, Partenie Vasiliu Verghelia, *Cronica de la Ilia-Mureșană: schiță monografică*, Ed. Călăuza v.b., Deva, 2005, p. 220.

¹⁸<https://maps.hungaricana.hu/en/MOLTerkeptar/2355/?list=eyJxdWVyeSI6ICJLcmI2aW5hIn0> (01.09.2017);

¹⁹ Timiș County Service of National Archives, personal collection Gh. Cotoșman, dos. nr. 265, f. 16r.;

²⁰ Archives of the Poieni Orthodox Parish, documents related to the church in Crivina, Extracts from the church accounts for 1907, f. n.;

²¹ Archives of Poieni Orthodox Parish, documents related to the church in Crivina, Journal of the Crivina de Sus church in 1915, f. n.;

after the church, hence the fact that in 1920 the church was already covered with a tile. After replacing the shingle cover with a tile, we consider that the geometry of the roof has changed²².

In 1922 a new bell was bought with 500 lei²³. The expenses of 1926 include the expense of 1,860 lei for "*materials and work at the tower*" with the mention of requiring special permission from the Church for this expense²⁴. In 1927 the tower of the church was covered²⁵. In 1931, other tile expenses were made to repair the roof of the church²⁶.

By letter of April 1936, the Crivina de Sus parish office informed the Historical Monuments Commission on the status of the wooden church in the locality, while requesting the material support of the Institution. We find out in this way that the church had already been included in the list of historical monuments. The state of the church was a bad one because it was raining through the tower. If the planned repair was postponed, the tower was likely to collapse.

Requested approx. 2.000-3.000 lei for repairs, given that the community, formed at that time from approximately 70 families, was poor and lacking the material resources needed for such work²⁷.

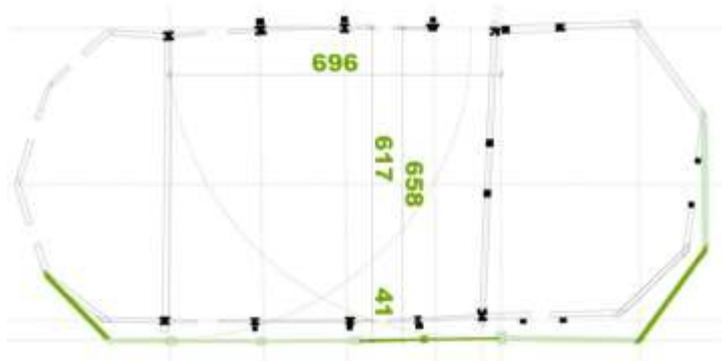


Figure 4. Simulation of the old church plan.

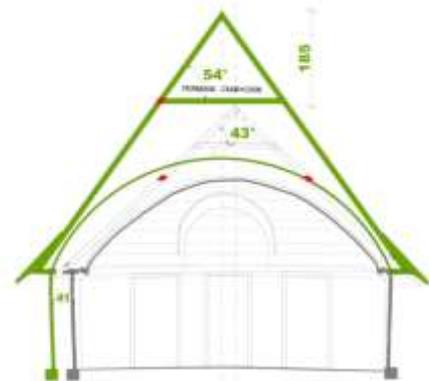


Figure 5. Simulation of the original shingle section.

After all, it seems that the repair work done during the interwar period at this church was assumed by the parish under the control of the Banat section of the Commission for Historical Monuments²⁸. In 1936, the Banat Section of the Historical Monuments Commission accepted the plastering of the interior of the church, but not the exterior to preserve the character of this ancient wooden church.

In 1937, from the beginning of March to the end of May, the parish accounts record a series of

²²Archives of Poieni Orthodox Parish, documents related to the church in Crivina, Journal of the Crivina de Sus church in 1920, f. n.;

²³Archives of Poieni Orthodox Parish, documents related to the church in Crivina, Journal of the Crivina de Sus church in 1922, f. 1v.;

²⁴Archives of the Poieni Orthodox Parish, documents related to the church in Crivina, Preliminary 1927, f.n. ;

²⁵Archives of Poieni Orthodox Parish, documents related to the church in Crivina, Journal of the Crivina de Sus church in 1927, f. n.;

²⁶Archives of Poieni Orthodox Parish, General account of the Crivina de Sus church for 1931, f. n.;

²⁷Archives of the National Heritage Institute (hereinafter: AINP), File nr. 1357 – Crivina de Sus, bis. ort., Adresa din 8 aprilie 1936, f.1r;

²⁸Liliana Roșiu, Preocupări de protejare a bisericilor de lemn din Banat în perioada interbelică, in "Analele Banatului", serie nouă, Arheologie-Istorie, III, 1994, p. 491;

expenses incurred to repair the church. Probably these works were to be completed by October of the same year, when these situations recorded spending on washing and cleaning the church²⁹. In 1937 the church cemeteries were repaired, 2000 lei³⁰. In 1938 the parochial budget provides the cost of 700 lei for making the fence at the church³¹.

The dendrocronological investigations carried out on the monument showed that the most likely period when the trees used to build the church were cut: 1675-1677, which coincides with the information kept in the church's inscription. A repair of the church took place around 1727 when a sole on the southern side of the church was replaced. Also, around 1779, probably when the church was moved, the bell tower was erected and an element of the nave's vault was also replaced. Later, in the interwar period, probably during the interventions of 1936-1937, the soles of the tower were replaced.³²

By the end of the 1960s it appeared that a number of other maintenance works were carried out at the wooden church in Crivina de Sus. After a visit to the repair yard of this church, an address was made to the Orthodox Archdiocese of Timișoara and Caransebeș on the findings made on this occasion.

Thus, in addition to the works already done, it was necessary to replace with the wood the zinc-coated sheet metal of the narthex tower, restoration with lime mortar without the addition of cement, interior plasters, plasters that had to be smoothed with the trowel, the dismantling of the carton mounted on the nave's vault, the execution of a socket and a pavement, the joining of the spaces between the beams of the walls, and the paving of the new carpentry. Replacement of the floor was to be done only in the altar and in the narthex, the one in the nave being in good condition³³.

Regarding these works, in another communication of the same period, this time addressed to the Department of Historical Monuments, it was stated that the pavement to be made around the church had to be made of boulders on a sand bed, the interior floors were to be made of very dry wood placed over a very small broken stone layer. For ventilation of the floor, it was required that the built-in socket of the church be provided with apertures of approx. 1 cm. wide and 15-20 cm. tall, at a distance of about 2 m. from each other. It was also required that the shingle wrapper that was to be laid should not be painted with Carbolineum and the old skylights and shutters were required to be kept³⁴.

According to the project for the maintenance and preservation of this church, in 1969, it was stated that the edifice was in an advanced state of degradation, with "*Marseille*" tile cover, rotten walls, foundations and cracks and completely destroyed flooring. To return to the original form, replacement of the tile roof with a four-row shingle, painted with Carbolineum, was proposed. There were also changes in the beams in the church walls, the change of the floor covering in the flap and groove system to be laid on a layer of slag about 10 cm. thick, repairing the tower, making a pavement made of raw stone around the church³⁵.

²⁹ Archives of Poieni Orthodox Parish, documents related to the church in Crivina, Journal of the Crivina de Sus church in 1937, f. n.;

³⁰ Archives of the Poieni Orthodox Parish, the church's church budget for 1937, f.n. ;

³¹ Archives of the Poieni Orthodox Parish, the church's church budget for 1938, f.n. ;

³² Information taken from the dendrocronological report drawn up for this church by the Dendrocronological Laboratory of Transylvania.

³³ AINP, File bis. de lemn Cuv. Paraschiva din Crivina de Sus, Jud. Timiș, Adresa nr. 12.037 din 21 noi. 1969, f. 1r;

³⁴ AINP, File bis. de lemn Cuv. Paraschiva din Crivina de Sus, Jud. Timiș, Adresa nr. 3.863 din 19 aprilie 1969, f. 1r;

³⁵ AINP, File bis. de lemn Cuv. Paraschiva din Crivina de Sus, Jud. Timiș, Memoriu justificativ 1969, f. 1r;

In 1976, the repair project at the wooden church in Crivina de Sus provided the following works: replacing the foundation soles throughout the church, replacing the cobblestone pile, replacing the shingle cover, lining the vaulted ceiling with fibrous plates, interior plasters and paint with lime. Following the analysis of the documentation prepared, it gives a favorable opinion, taking into account the following conditions: after the dissolving of the interior plasters on the walls, the assistance of Department of Historical Monuments to specify the works to be executed at the walls and at the vaults of the church. Also, when replacing wooden beams in the walls of the church, the dimensions of the original elements as well as their way of joining should be respected³⁶. The documentation for the repair of this church indicated that at that time the church was covered with shingles³⁷. Estimated as necessary, among others, dry oak wood - 4.2 cubic meters. as well as 14,000 pieces of shingle³⁸. Repair works, especially on walls and roofs, were to be carried out by the Department of Historical Monuments at Crivina de Sus in 1977³⁹.

As a conclusion, the historical importance of the wooden church of Crivina de Sus is determined by the fact that this church: is one of the oldest churches in Banat, over time, the church has been used by several religious communities: Calvinist, Greek Catholic and Orthodox, one of the inscriptions mentions the archpriest Daniil, probably the protopop of Ilia who signed the act of the Romanians' union from Transylvania with the church of Rome and because the case of this church speaks about the social and cultural conditions of the Romanians at the end of the 17th century and the first part of the 20th century.

3. Towards a new approach in restoring Banat's wooden churches

In the middle of the cemetery, surrounded by plum trees, the church from Crivina de Sus seems to have been in this place since the beginning of time, yet, as showed here, the road from Ilia where it was built to the place where we can find it now has been long and complex. It was a travel in time and space, between shifting borders and rulings, between different confessions and ethnicities.

The church's long travel from Ilia to Crivina, until abandoned by its community, only to be reborn as an object of study and admiration beyond the borders of its modest community, will definitely continue. The *Biserici înlemnite/ Wooden Churches of Banat* project tries to bring a new approach towards preserving Banat's last wooden churches. It is an approach that reaches beyond the architectural object and its complex history. It reaches to the people living in Crivina, their needs and the productive landscape surrounding the place. Raising awareness from the community is one of the main goals of this project.

On the one hand this project tries to be a pilot-project, hopefully the findings and the methodology applied could be used on other churches as well. The main goal is to have a minimal intervention restoration, and in doing so, we wanted to understand the story of every element of this construction.

On the other hand, one of the most important aspects of this project is the educational approach. *Biserici înlemnite/ Wooden Churches of Banat* tries to teach us the relevance of heritage conservation to the local and national identity, and furthermore, its fragility

³⁶ AINP, File bis. de lemn Cuv. Paraschiva din Crivina de Sus, Jud. Timiș, Aviz nr. 566 din 9 dec. 1976, f. 1r;

³⁷ AINP, File bis. de lemn Cuv. Paraschiva din Crivina de Sus, Jud. Timiș, Memoriu tehnic, f. 1r;

³⁸ AINP, File bis. de lemn Cuv. Paraschiva din Crivina de Sus, Jud. Timiș, Extras de materiale, f. 1r;

³⁹ Liliana Roșiu, De la monument la ansamblu istoric. Lucrări de conservare în județul Timiș, in "Analele Banatului", serie nouă, Arheologie-Istorie, II, 1993, p. 390;

4. Instead of conclusions...

Protecting the church with a tensile membrane on a metal structure, enabled a different conservation viewpoint. Thus, the project Wooden Churches of Banat targeted not only restoring the church, but also a social-educational approach. Within the workshops, the team realized that this restoration project is a rare opportunity to dive into the depths of its constructive history. This way, consistent historical proof, certified local traditions regarding the displacement of this church in the 18th century, from Ilia to Crivina. Thru its inscriptions and architectural features, this church is the living witness of long past times. This church's conservation, thru non-invasive interventions, will give the opportunity to future generations to have a veritable historical document in hands. To underline its historical value, it is sufficient to mention that the church in Crivina de Sus is the oldest church in Banat, dated by an inscription. Also, it is one of the few to have been used at a time by Calvin-Reformed, Greek-Catholic and Orthodox communities. If we add, that this church is build in Ilia, a fairdominated by strong Calvin noble families, in a time of crucial importance to the religious history of Transylvanian Romanians, one can easily understand the singular character that this church holds.

To conclude, this project brings together simultaneously research from in-depth surveys studying each constructive element of the church, analyzing different joints, craftsmen's signs, with different evolution sceneries, parament studies, studies of traces of painting, ornamentation, dedro-chronological and biological studies,etc. All of this is completed with the research of different archives, some, never studied before, as is the case of documents found in the attic of the church, archeological research, urban evolution studies, landscape studies, anthropological studies, etc...

Possibly the most important component is the educational one: for the future professionals, the local community and the general public this type of approach should be a milestone. The project wants to offer a methodology on preserving this very fragile type of heritage, focusing not only on the architectural object but also on the landscape, local community and shared history. Furthermore, the project aims to slowly move to other churches in the area and discover their understudied history, and maybe build a guide on how to approach other churches in Banat and Romania.



Figure 6. The community and the workshop participants in 2016

We irrecuperably loose churches every year, due to fire hazard, water or human intervention. Once lost, this wooden heritage is impossible to revive. Most of the churches of Banat are already gone, the few remaining are the only traces of long gone communities, with their stories and lives,

between shifting borders and rulings, despite different confessions and ethnicity.

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