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Wooden Churches in the Land of Zarand

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Abstract: The Land of Zarand (Hundoara 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 Târnava 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.

• Introduction

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. 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.



Figure 1. The Land of Zarand

• Material and method

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.

• Results and discussions

 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 din Rîșca) - Inscription: painted inside the church - Distinctive feature: rococo style in painting	 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 stella from Germisara used as altar
 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 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 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 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 din Rîșca) - Paintings: 1820 on the iconostasis and altar doors (Mihail Borșos) - 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	

• 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;