
**PROMOTING ORTHODOX IDENTITY THROUGH
ART IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN
MULTICULTURALISM – RESTORATION OF
THE WOODEN CHURCH DEDICATED TO
“SAINTS ARCHANGELS MICHAEL AND GABRIEL”
BUZEȘTI VILLAGE, FĂRCAȘA COMMUNE,
MARAMUREȘ COUNTY**

Adriana-Gabriela Mardale and Alexandrina Bădescu*

Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Craiova, 24 Brestei street, Craiova 200581, Romania

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Abstract

The present study covers the methodological process of conservation-restoration of a monument that is particularly valuable for our traditional wooden architecture and that has recently benefited from interventions aimed at saving it and restoring it to worship for future generations. The wooden church in the village of Buzești was built in 1799 by the creative fantasy of anonymous craftsmen, who reached exceptional performance levels through structural design, jointing and ornamentation. Its architecture bears the imprint of the Baroque style but the interior painting was done later, in the 19th century. Due to its age and especially its outstanding value, it was decided to include it on the list of category A historical monuments. Although over the years there have been several restoration interventions and sites with important repair works, in 2015 when the last important restoration of the monument took place, the church was in an advanced state of deterioration. The interior iconographic program was severely affected by internal and external factors that led to its almost total loss. Thus, in the pronaos, the original painting on the east wall could still be seen in gaps, in the nave the iconostasis still had small traces of painting and in the altar the faces of two hierarchs and a composition on the west wall were still barely visible. Only the vaults still had traces of the original painting, which had also been badly damaged by decay. Because the original painting was almost completely lost, it was proposed to create a new painting in the manner and technique specific to the period and to create an iconographic, chromatic and compositional balance between the new and the old. Thus, the new painting executed in the style of 19th century folk painting was done in the pronaos on the north, south and west walls and on the ceiling, and in the nave on the north, south and west walls as well as on the south and north vaults. What is

* gabriela.mardale@edu.ucv.ro; alexandrina.badescu@edu.ucv.ro

special about this restored monument is the way this combination of restoration and new painting was achieved.

Keywords: restoration, wooden church, traditional architecture, folk painting

1. Introduction

The Wooden Church dedicated to the “Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel” in the village of Buzești village, Fărcașa Commune in Maramureș County (Figure 1, 2) is recorded on the list of national monuments of Romania due to its age, and building, architectural, sculptural and pictorial styles. It is located on the upper side of the village cemetery on a platform called “Piciorul codrului” (*The Foot of the Grove*). According to the inscription, the monument was erected in the year 1799 through the creative imagination of anonymous craftsmen, who achieved exceptional levels of performance through the structural design, joining techniques and decorations. Its architecture bears the imprint of the Baroque style, but the interior painting was done much later in the 19th Century. The church has recently benefited from extensive conservation and restoration renovations aimed at stopping the degradation and restoring a state as close as possible to the initial one.

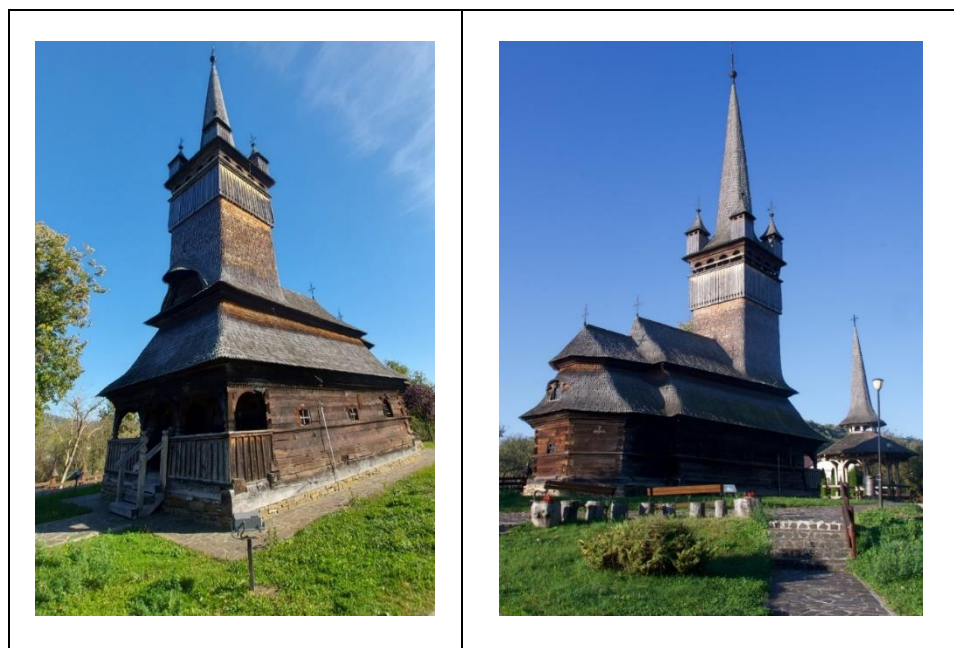


Figure 1. Church assembly – view of the South-West side

Figure 2. Church assembly – view of the North-East side

From a planimetric perspective, the church meets the typology predominantly spread throughout the country (porch, narthex, nave and altar, the latter being unhooked), but with increased monumentality due to both the working techniques and significantly larger vertical dimensions, the monument is by far an

object of maximum interest. The monumental structure made of massive oak wood beams is also remarkable, but especially the Baroque silhouette of the roof which clearly differentiates it from the cluster of wooden monuments from the same era. The wooden construction is equipped with a monumental porch supported by pillar decorated with a ring-shaped cut-out on the lower side and in the shape of a chalice on the upper side, which are connected to the architrave by grooved counter braces in a 'wolf-tooth' pattern.

The very high and multileveled roof extends also over the apse into a bell tower equipped with a semi-coif on the front, which is carved and painted on the lower side with an outstanding Wheel of Life. The bell tower has a vertically filled parapet with perforated boards, and two rows of triangles pointing downwards at the base, being enclosed by a solid relief-modelled baluster.

The balcony is made of massive arcades with small openings, supported by small columns profiled at the base and topped on the upper part with an outer band of undecorated wood.

The octagonal sectioned coif with a square base has four small towers with bell tower on the corners and a forged iron cross with four arms at the top.

The arcade of the entrance door is made in a pointed arch style, while the frame and the portals are decorated in relief with stylised floral patterns, ended at the base with sunflower rosettes. We encounter the same pointed arch also on the passage door of the narthex, which has longitudinally profiled portals and open spaced pained with elegant stylised floral patterns. [1]

The church enjoyed the attention of the authorities as it was restored in 1997 when complex infrastructure and structure consolidation works were carried on the tower coif which had been destroyed by a lightning approximately 20 years earlier. The construction part was restored between 2010-2011, and the works included the reconstruction and raising of the base and the replacement of the shingle covering.

As the predominant material used in the architecture of this church, the wood reveals itself as a defining element for churches of this type, especially in the detailing of the facades. The walls have been made of massive oak wood beams, and the covering is made of resinous wooden shingles.

On the exposed beams that are part of the elevation structure, the natural effects of wood aging can be observed, as well as the traces left by the vicissitudes of time. On the western side, the building is equipped with an open porch supported by pillars, perforated with ring-shaped patterns on the lower side and chalice-shaped ones on the upper side. The pillars are connected by arches incised with the 'wolf tooth' pattern. The cornice has a deeply profiled front part with a row of diamonds incised in the middle, a pattern that is also repeated under the eaves all around the church. The parapet consists of vertically embedded wooden boards, enclosed by a solid baluster modelled in relief on the upper side.

Unfortunately, the iconographic program of the church has been severely affected by internal and external factors, which resulted in its almost full loss. However, we can also still find in the narthex some original paintings on the eastern wall, where three angels are depicted above each icon that covers the openings to the nave. The transition to the nave is possible through a frame

sculpted in the shape of an arch (Figure 3.), similar to the one at the entrance to the church.



Figure 3. Detail – border in accolade

In the nave, the iconostasis painted directly on the wall still maintains to this day small traces of painting and we can distinguish from the iconographic program a representation of the Mandylion with the Face of Jesus Christ outlined by an angel on each side, which continues with Jesus as a High Priest, and on the upper side, the central cross with Jesus Crucified, enclosed by the two *molenii* (icons with St. John on the left and Mother Mary/Holy Virgin on the right).

The Royal Doors are decorated with cut-out elements depicting grapevine patterns, arranged around large leaves overlapped by eight medallions portraying the Annunciation and the four Evangelists. On the surface of the right door leaf, there are three sculpted medallions wherein the angel Gabriel is sculpted in the upper medallion, the Holy Evangelist Luke in the central one, and the Holy Evangelist Mark in the lower one. On the surface of the medallions, Virgin Mary is depicted in the upper medallion, the Holy Evangelist John depicted in the central one, and the Holy Evangelist Matthew in the lower one.

In the sanctuary, on the pillars of the Royal Doors, the depictions of the Patriarchs Laurence and Melchizedek are still preserved, and on the intrados of the iconostasis, there is a large composition depicting the Sacrifice of Isaac. In the narthex, we can admire a wayside cross decorated at the ends of the arms and at their intersection with rosettes in coloured twists.

In 2015, the last major restoration of the monument took place, which involved consolidation works on the structure and on the interior painting, which has been severely affected over time by internal and external factors of degradation, resulting to its almost full loss. Due to the lack of change of the covering in due time, rainwater infiltrated through the interstitial spaces of the vaults, causing moisture in the wooden support of the walls, iconostasis, and vaults, generating the loss of the painted layers to varying degrees. Thus, it can be observed throughout the entire surface, that there are stains of moisture and tannins from the wood structure, which caused staining in some sections of the support with dark-coloured halos and led to the detachment of the paint layer, followed by gaps in the pictorial layer [2]. Thus, in the narthex, some remnants of the original painting could still be observed on the eastern wall, while in the nave,

the iconostasis still retained small traces of painting, and in the sanctuary, it was difficult to discern the faces of two hierarchs and a composition on the western wall. Only the vaults still preserved some traces of the original painting, which was also significantly affected by degradation factors. The interstitial tapestry strips applied at the junction of the beams were almost entirely missing. Where they were still present, they were fragile, torn, and brittle. The preparation layer was also greatly absent, largely due to the infiltration of rainwater. Such examples could be seen in the southeastern corner, on the western wall, at the base beam of the tower on the southwestern side, or on the sections located under the window on the northern side and all around it. The gaps in the frame were mainly caused by functional wear and tear. The entire surface of the mural painting exhibited superficial, adhered, and ingrained deposits of dirt, which impaired the legibility of the iconographic program. The fact that the church had been in use for a long period of time resulted in numerous areas being blackened by candle smoke, wax deposits, biological deposits, and signs of functional wear and tear, such as scratches, erosions, opacities, and various-sized gaps and discolorations in the pictorial layer. Among the causes of degradation highlighted earlier, we also mention the anthropic (human) factor. Although it should be one of the protective factors, the anthropic factor is perhaps the one causing the greatest damage to the cultural heritage, regardless of its nature. Through their actions, inappropriate interventions done willingly or due to the lack of information, but particularly through their lack of involvement, humans consistently contribute to the degradation of the heritage.

The most common inappropriate interventions generated by the anthropic factor in the case of wooden churches stem from the structural and architectural aspects of the construction: extensions of the building, replacement of original elements with some inappropriate new ones (roofing materials, changes of the door and window joineries) or addition of elements that do not harmonise with the original work (interior and exterior plastering, cladding, cement bands, concrete borders, etc.). In the case of the interior, the inappropriate interventions refer to both the degradation (nails, hangers, lighting or heating systems the network of which does not take into account the painting layer), replacements of paints vaults, drilling of wood by creating windows either between the interior spaces, or on the exterior walls or, even more seriously, interventions in the painting with inappropriate materials: plastering or covering of beams with inadequate materials (various types of plasters), wet cleaning with various solutions or oil applications to the icons on the large or small iconostasis.

In the nave, we can also notice the almost full loss of the canvas applied to the interstitial spaces of the beams. In this case as well, a triggering factor may have been a strong infiltration that occurred at some point, also causing the significant loss of the painted layer in that area. The affected areas currently exhibit the preparation layer or the support with gaps and stains of dark brown-coloured moisture halos. The canvas strips made of flax fibres have been degraded in the moist areas due to fungal attacks caused by micro-fungi (moulds) as rot. The spruce beams that are part of the construction of the nave vault have also been affected by massive infiltrations of rainwater, leading to the erosion and loss of

the colour layer and the degradation of the interstitial canvases. The very high relative humidity level has facilitated not only the development of micro-fungal attacks but also a massive infestation of xylophagous insects. The adhesive used for sticking them has lost its qualities, resulting in the detachment or full loss of the canvases.

On the side areas of the boards and particularly on the sections where they were glued, attacks by xylophagous insects have occurred. Larval galleries and flight holes can be observed under the detached canvases. The biological expertise showed that the attack is partially active. The weakening of the mechanical wood resistance as a result of the insects' attack required the replacement of some wooden boards in the vault.

A layer of smoke, adherent dirt impregnated in the wood and in the stratigraphy are visible on the entire surface of the vault. There is a superficial layer of dust and bird droppings on the surface. On the sides of the vault, the rainwater infiltrations have cleaned the colour layer in a very large proportion, over 80%, especially on the northern side.

On the southern and northern sides of the wall, the rainwater infiltrations have cleaned the painting layer and only approx. 15% is still preserved.

The iconographic program of the iconostasis is affected by the rainwater infiltrations that cleaned the colour layer on about 50% of the half towards the North and about 30% of the half towards the South. On the upper part, the interstitial canvases have detached and have been partially lost and in the lower register, multiple areas degraded by the human factor can be observed.

Of all the interior spaces, the painting in the sanctuary is preserved in the best condition. On the southern wall, more than 85% of the painting is missing, while on the northern side, it is approximately 60% preserved, the eastern and western walls are affected by an over 70% loss. The ends of the beams forming the elevation on the northern side have been degraded by fungal attacks at the joint with the beams of the other sides, yet their mechanical strength has not been affected to the extent that replacement would be required. The rainwater infiltrations have washed away some of the colours and caused the loss of the interstitial canvases due to dimensional movements of the wood. The pictorial layer on the tympanum of the side facing the sanctuary has been affected by rainwater infiltrations to an extent of approximately 20%.

Due to the almost full loss of the original painting, it has been suggested to create a new painting in the style and technique specific to the era, as well as to achieve an iconographic, chromatic, and compositional balance between the new and the old. As a result, the new painting was done in the style of 19th Century folk painting, in the narthex on the northern, southern, western walls, as well as on the ceiling, and in the nave on the northern, southern, western walls.

2. Operational goals or materials and methods

Regarding the remaining original painting, it has been suggested to preserve and restore it using the specific methodology. The preliminary operation consisted of conducting a chemical analysis bulletin to identify the nature of the stratigraphy

and composite elements. The stratigraphic surveys and the results of the microchemical analysis carried out on samples taken from the mural painting of the church enabled the determination of the structure, constituent materials, and the working techniques used by the painters. Microchemical tests were carried out on samples taken from areas with different pigments, so that the entire surface of the painting and its chromatic range was covered. The white-coloured primer consists of a homogeneous paste based on chalk, strips of hemp canvas were glued on the junction areas of the beams, and the primer was applied over them. In contact with the wooden support and on its surface, the primer exhibits isolating layers of animal glue. The colour layers are generally thin, with thicknesses ranging from 16 - 24 μm . The pigments used include lead Minium, anhydrous or hydrated iron oxide, ultramarine blue pigment, green clay, yellow pigment based on iron oxides, chrome yellow, Prussian blue pigment, and pigments containing aluminium. Mixtures of these pigments are also present. All samples exhibit a thick layer of compact deposit consisting of granules and periodically condensed dust on the surface.

The tars represent the greasy particles resulting from the incomplete combustion of the wax components used in to make the candle. It is known that candles often have a heterogeneous composition and are rarely made solely of beeswax, which is the least harmful. Other components found in candles include paraffin, ceresin, unrefined parts of hydrocarbons, etc. Paraffin is obtained from petroleum (paraffin waxes), and mineral wax is obtained by distillation, purification and crystallization. Therefore, when burning a candle, very fine carbon particles are produced, which are the result of complete combustion, the tars, which refer to the greasy particles from which the candle was made, as mentioned above. The tars generate greasy, sticky deposits and contribute to the reinforcement of the adhesive connections with dust and dirt deposits.

The fine carbon particles absorb the corrosive gases from the atmosphere, thus resulting corrosive concentrations such as CO_2 , SO_2 , NO_2 , etc. [3]

Starting from the analysis conducted on the preservation state of the mural painting, a precise technological flow has been established based on the conclusions drawn as a result of the physical-chemical and biological analyses carried out on the hemp canvas support and interior painting. Following the chemical analysis report, the actual operations on the support were initiated. They consisted of the mechanical cleaning to remove dust and other superficial and weakly adherent deposits from the surfaces where there was no risk of damaging the paint layer, using soft natural hair brushes. It was continued with the removal of the previous inadequate interventions (nails, improvised hangers, and various inappropriate attachment systems), while avoiding surface damage.

As a result of the fact that traces of xylophagous attack were observed on the wood surface, it was necessary to carry out a bulletin of biological tests, which provided the restorer with important data both regarding the nature of the supporting wood, the essence from which it is made, characteristic elements but also relevant data about the type of xylophagous attack as well as providing the appropriate treatment according to the biodeteriogens identified. The analysis bulletin showed that the attack was an active one of the insects of the *Anobium*

genus (Fam. Anobiidae), insects that use wood as trophic base and as a place for their lifecycle, and as a treatment, it was suggested to inject the flight holes and brushing the wood with a Perxil-10 solution. [4]

This was followed by the application of an insecticide treatment against the attack of xylophagous insects. Recognising the surfaces affected by biodeterioration is essential for restorers and largely depends on their expertise in identifying the typical deterioration morphologies compared to the effects caused by humidity, temperature or human intervention. The morphological aspect of the surface examined is often correlated with the chemical structure of the material and with the microclimate conditions of the period prior to the examination. Restorers are trained to recognise the size and shape of the flight holes, as well as the morphology of the galleries created by xylophagous insects, and by analysing the biological characteristics, the insect species involved can be identified. In the absence of a biological analysis bulletin prepared specifically for this purpose, in order to detect the biological attack, an acoustic test accompanied by observations under a magnifying glass can be used, applicable to both wood and the painting layer. This test can signal suspicions of an attack by xylophagous insects, especially in the case of species creating deep galleries, parallel to the surface of the wood. In addition, the test can also highlight the detachment of the painting layer, under which biodeteriogens may develop.

The needle sawdust adhesion test is another specialised method, carried out exclusively by experts, in order to avoid mechanical damage. This test is based on the adhesion of the sawdust formed by larval activity and polysaccharides to the tip of a needle. The results obtained are interpreted qualitatively and correlated with other tests. As for the biocide treatment, it is recommended only if the tests reveal the active presence of xylophagous insects at the level of the wooden support. The treatment generally involves injecting a biocide into the flight galleries and applying it to the entire supporting surface by brushing. Special care is taken in order to avoid the contact of the biocide with the painting layer. And in the case of this monument, the Perxil-10 solution indicated in the biological expertise was used and the treatment was applied by injection.

The very brittle wood that showed low mechanical resistance was impregnated by injection and brushing with a solution obtained from granules of Paraloid B72 dissolved in ethyl acetate in a 10% concentration. Paraloid B72 (Acriloid B 72) is a methyl acrylate copolymer, composed of ethyl methacrylate in a 30:70 ratio, and is known for its chemical and light resistance. This substance is soluble in various solvents such as toluene, xylene, acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, methyl acetate and ethyl acetate, and has the ability to form glossy films. An important aspect of this substance is the viscosity of its solutions, which influence the ability to penetrate the substrate. The viscosity differs depending on the solvent used for dissolution, so that solutions in acetone have a lower viscosity than those in toluene. [5] The application procedure begins with meticulously cleaning the deposits and previous interventions from the surface of the support. Before applying the Paraloid B72 solution, xylene is used in order to open the pores of the wood and facilitate the penetration of the consolidator into the fibrous structure of the wood. The consolidator is then injected and applied with a brush

to the fragile areas, taking care not to excessively run onto the wooden surface. After the application, the consolidator is left to get dried, and the need for reapplication is checked by subsequent inspections.

The dimensional movements of the wood as a result of its hygroscopicity [6] generated interstitial gaps between the beams of the vault, which required degreasing with alcohol in order to seal them. In the actual process of restoring the original painting, the interstitial spaces were filled with linen and hemp fibres followed by covering of these spaces on the outside with strips of linen and hemp cloth on the areas where they were missing or detached. The larger spaces were filled with wood of the same essence as that of the original support and later covered with strips of natural fibre cloth. The glue used was fish glue in a 12% concentration. The next step consisted of consolidating the pictorial layer using the methodology specific to painting as the distemper technique, which involves the use of natural pigments mixed with a weak animal glue solution in a maximum concentration of 2%, applied directly on the wood or over a very thin layer of lime.

Therefore, for the consolidation operation, it was opted to use fish glue in a concentration of 1.5 - 2% applied while hot with a brush on areas that had detachments and exfoliations, and after the glue penetrated deeply and the excess on the surface gelled, the actual operation began. This consisted of applying multiple layers of absorbent paper and pressing firmly with a melinex foil film. The newly inserted binder served a dual role, to restore the adhesive-cohesive properties between pigments and also between the component layers of the stratigraphy. The elasticity of fish glue is superior to other animal glues, and it does not form leather-like animal glue, as its gelatine has a smaller molecular mass. [5, p. 209] The dimensional movements of the wood due to its hygroscopic nature [5] generated interstitial gaps between the beams of the vault, which were subsequently degreased with alcohol during the restoration process and then sealed with sea grass or reeds until the space was fully sealed. Larger gaps were filled with wood of the same essence as the original support and covered afterwards with strips of natural fibre canvas. They were glued using a fish glue adhesive in a concentration of 12%. Since traces of xylophagous attack were observed on the wood surface, a biological analysis report was required, which provided the restorer with important data regarding the nature of the support wood, the essence of which it is made, the characteristic elements, and relevant information about the type of the xylophagous attack, as well as enabling the application of the appropriate treatment according to the biodeterioration agents identified.

The analysis report revealed an active attack by insects of the Anobium species (the Anobiidae Family), which use wood as a food base and as a habitat for their life cycle, and the treatment suggested consisted of injecting the flight holes and brushing the wood with a Lignolit solution. [6] For those areas where the preparation layer had a coarse consistency, it was opted for a selective filling of gaps in the pictorial layer, using a filler made from fish glue in a concentration of 3% and mountain chalk. For most of the large gaps in the pictorial area, minimal intervention was preferred, consisting only of consolidating those areas that were

detached or potentially degrading areas, leaving the surfaces without further interventions. The next operation carried out on the colour film consisted of taking samples for cleaning the adherent and ingrained deposits, by using various solvents compatible with the original materials. They were tested on areas with different pigments using an egg yolk emulsion diluted at a 1:3 ratio, artificial saliva and a surfactant detergent in a concentration of 2 - 3%. The results showed that the egg emulsion diluted at ratios of 1:3 and 1:4 was optimal, as the egg acted as a cleaning and consolidating agent. The natural emulsion formed by egg yolk is also used as a binder for the new painting. The mixture of egg oil and water in different proportions includes albumen and lecithin, naturally present in the yolk. Albumen, along with lecithin - a lipid substance - is the most effective emulsifying agents. The natural emulsion formed by egg yolk with water in different proportions includes albumen and lecithin (a complex fatty substance), naturally present in the yolk. Albumen, along with lecithin, which is a lipid substance, are the most effective emulsifying agents. Liquid emulsions are an essential part of the painting process, being used to dilute the pigments and allow them to be applied evenly to the surface of the artistic support. These emulsions are initially miscible with water, which makes them easy to apply and mix with other colours in order to achieve different shades and tones. The milky, opaque appearance of the emulsions in the liquid phase is a result of the way light interacts with the particles dispersed in the mixture. The phenomena of refraction and dispersion cause the light to be dispersed in all directions, giving the painting a characteristic texture and glow. However, once the emulsion begins to dry, the particles become aligned and compacted, and the emulsifying agent loses its effectiveness. Emulsions with low oil concentrations are matte, porous and have low elasticity, and those with high oil content provide glossy films. [5, p. 59]

On areas with small erosions and small gaps in the pictorial layer, where there was local evidence, it was opted for a chromatic integration using the glazing and retro-fit technique, using watercolours and egg emulsion, and the resulting chromatic retouching is one tone lighter and cooler than the local tone.

For the five imperial icons, an imperial door with two panels and two decorative panels with embedded icons, belonging to the heritage of the church, the following conservation-restoration operations were carried out: mechanical cleaning of the painting from dust and impurities where the pictorial layer was not exfoliated; thorough examination of the icon with both with the naked eye and with the specialised laboratory equipment (magnifying glass, microscope, binoculars); preventive consolidation of the detached pictorial layer with Japanese tissue and fish glue in a concentration of 3 - 4%; successive hot pressing (using an electric spatula) and cold pressing to consolidate and ensure good adhesion of the pictorial layer to the support; the removal of the Japanese tissue using mechanical procedures. As for the support, cleaning was suggested and carried out down to the wooden support of the carbonized areas; the treatment of the wood by injecting the flight holes and brushing the unpainted surfaces with a biocide to stop the xylophagous insect attack; filling in missing wooden elements and sculpting them to match the original shape; filling the small-sized areas with missing paint layer using calcium carbonate and fish glue in a concentration of 8-

10%; for the larger gaps, in the absence of a local 'witness', only the consolidation and edge lining of the gaps was opted for, without fully filling it; conducting cleaning tests with different solvents compatible with the original materials on areas with different pigments to identify the optimal solutions for wet cleaning; In order to carry out the cleaning tests, the following materials were used: mixtures of solutions in concentrations of 3%, 5%, 10% distilled water, absolute ethyl alcohol, solutions (absolute ethyl alcohol, ammonia water in various concentrations). General cleaning of the pictorial layer was carried out by removing the thick layer of adherent dirt, dust, and soot with the optimal solutions identified as a result of the tests; artistic retouching - chromatic selection with a lighter tonality than the original one in the glazing, retouching and striping techniques, according to the shape and size of the gaps.

It is worth noting that all the interventions carried out during the restoration process were carried out using materials compatible with the original ones in terms of the techniques that meet the principles of scientific restoration. [7]

To create the new painting using traditional techniques, it was first suggested to remove the old layers of paint and adherent and encrusted deposits from the surface of the wood in order to ensure the adhesion of the new pictorial layer. After this operation, the support was brushed with a 6% concentration fish glue applied in three successive layers with a drying time between them. It is worth noting that the first two layers ensured the saturation of the very dehydrated support, while the last layer aimed at sealing its pores and provided adhesion to the canvas layer. In order to prepare the canvas to be mounted on the support, three successive layers of fish glue were brushed onto the backside, gradually increasing the concentration of the adhesive from 6% for the first layer to 8% for the next two ones. For the actual gluing operation, a layer of cold fish glue in a concentration of 4% was applied to the backside of the canvas, followed by other two additional layers on the front side, one cold and one hot, with a drying time between them.

For the preparation layer, it was started with a putty mixture obtained from fish glue in a concentration of 4% and mountain chalk, applied by brushing, followed by six successive layers in which the viscosity of the putty was gradually increased until a homogeneous paste was obtained, which was spread using a spatula. [8] The final primer layer was mechanically sanded with wet and dry cork plugs, preserving the original irregularities of the wood.

3. Results or outcomes

The construction site included not only the restoration of the existing mural painting, but also similar operations carried out on the movable heritage of the church. This consists of the register of imperial icons and doors, decorative panels, as well as four smaller icons positioned in the recesses flanking the entrance frame of the nave (Figures 4, 5). Additionally, there is a representation of Jesus with the vineyard, and an icon equipped with a wooden stand placed on the altar table (Figure 6.). In order to receive the new painting, a compositional drawing was done according to the approved project proposals throughout the primed surface.



Figure 4. Assembly – decorative panel on the left side



Figure 5. Assembly – decorative panel on the right side

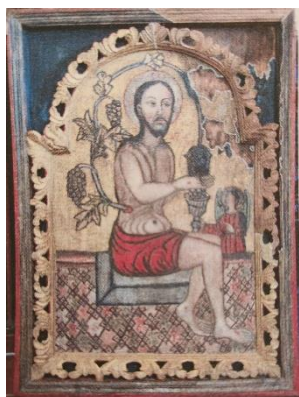


Figure 6. Altar - Jesus with vine



Figure 7. Northern wall assembly - pronaos-before cleaning.

The new painting was done in tempera colours with an egg emulsion, preserving all the characteristics of the interior painting found in the wooden churches of Maramureş County since 1780 - 1800. The iconographic program suggested and approved included the following representations in the narthex: St. Mary, St. Martha, St. Irina, and St. Paraskeva on the northern wall (Figures 7, 8, 9); St. Anthony the Great, St. Sava the Sanctified, St. Arsenius the Great, and St. Athanasius on the southern wall; St. Ilarion, St. Bishop Vasile Moga, St. Euthymius the Great, St. Theodosius, and St. Pachomius on the western wall; Jesus Emmanuel, the Orant Mother of God, St. Cyprian, St. Methodius, St. Sophronius, St. Germanus the Anchorite, and St. Roman the Anchorite on the ceiling.

On the western wall of the nave, the following iconographic scenes were represented: the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel on the pillars; two angels; ornaments; the Creation of Eve, the Temptation of Adam, and the Expulsion from Paradise were painted in the upper register; Sts. Emperors Constantine and Helena, St. Great Martyr Demetrius, St. Martyr Theodore Tyro, St. Martyr Gurias, St. Martyr Procopius, St. Damian, St. Chiriack the Hermit on the northern wall; and

the Deesis, St. Great Martyr George, St. Great Martyr Theodore Stratelates, St. Great Martyr Minas, Mercury, St. Cosmas, St. Onuphriu on the southern wall.

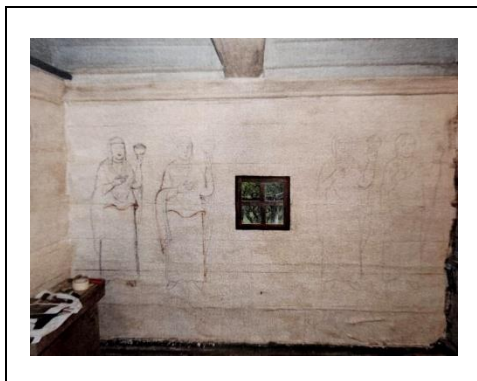


Figure 8. Northern wall assembly – pronaos- after applying the preparation and the drawing.



Figure 9. Northern wall assembly - pronaos - after ending the painting: St. Mary, St. Martha, St. Irina and St. Paraskeva

4. Conclusions

In addition to the actual aforementioned conservation and restoration operations on the mural painting and movable heritage, the restoration site also consisted of rehabilitation and consolidation works on the structure and the exterior space surrounding the monument. As a result of these interventions, the entire ensemble was saved from ruin, and the evolving processes of degradation were stopped. Therefore, the church has been successfully returned to the community, also ensuring its continuity for future generations.

Acknowledgement

Besides the actual permanent maintenance actions, Romanian wooden churches also require interventions to be carried out by qualified personnel when needed, as well as constant efforts by authorities to raise the awareness on the uniqueness of these monuments.

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