

TOURIST VALORIZATION OF THE WOODEN CULTURAL HERITAGE FROM THE CRISUL REPEDE HYDROGRAPHIC BASIN

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Summary: The Crisul Repede hydrographic basin possesses a valuable but poorly explored anthropic tourist potential. In this sense, the woodworking crafts (making tools and handicraft articles of wood) and the wooden cultural heritage components emerge (houses and household annexes, wooden gates, shadufs, wells with wooden wheels, traditional technical installations, wooden churches and wooden crosses). Taking into consideration the tourist's will to know and understand the local culture and the traditional life of the inhabitants, it is necessary to find solutions for the tourist valorization of these components and to introduce these solutions in the development strategies of the involved administrative - territorial units. A proper tourist valorization of the wooden cultural heritage, which is, in fact, the most important cultural heritage of the inhabitants from the studied area, would ensure its sustainability course.

Key words: hydrographic basin, ethnographic area, wooden cultural heritage.

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Introduction

In Romania, the ethnographic areas are among the most diverse in what concerns their ethno-cultural composition and

heterogeneity, traditionalism and authenticity being two attributes that are commonly associated (Ilieș et al., 2008; Stașac & Herman, 2010; Ilieș et al., 2011). In this respect, the studied area, correspondent to "the ethnographic area Crisul Repede (Mozes, 1984), has a number of elements that are characterized by diversity, authenticity and traditionalism which require further analysis. The woodworking crafts (making tools and handicraft articles of wood) and the wooden cultural heritage components emerge (houses and household annexes, wooden gates, shadufs, wells with wooden wheels, traditional technical installations, wooden churches and wooden crosses). Nowadays, many of these elements have lost their utilitarian importance, but they are, instead, greatly appreciated for their artistic and scientific significance, becoming attractions for tourists interested in their authenticity, age, novelty.

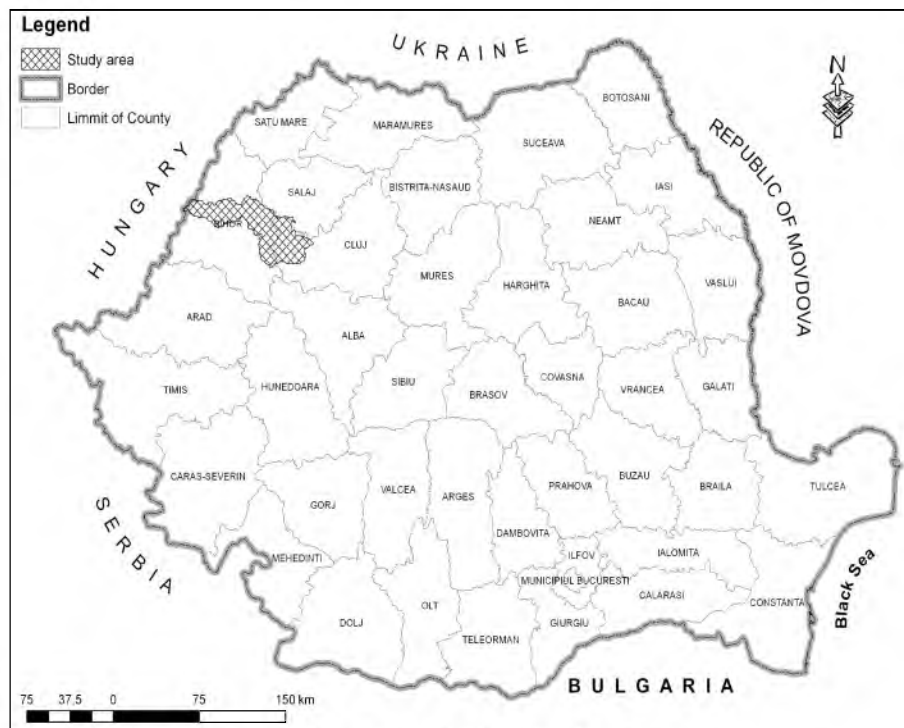


Fig. 1. Geographical location of the studied area

Objectives and methodology

The Crisul Repede hydrographic basin (figure 1) was studied because of overlap with "*the ethnographic area Crisul Repedes*" (Mozes, 1984), an area that can be explored and developed in order to design an authentic tourism product, a product which could represent an alternative for the sustainable development of this area.

This study is based on the following geographical research methods: the literature documenting and mapping method (Cocean, 2005), followed by the research conducted on the field, with the appropriate techniques such as observation (Armas, 2006, Veal, 2006; Kothari, 2004) and the analytical, synthetic and aesthetic description of the encountered phenomena (Ianoş, 2000); the historical method used in dating the components of the wooden heritage; the analysis method - data and information obtained in the processing profile (Cocean, 2005) and the mapping method - transformation of the information in maps, using the GIS software (Petrea, 2005; Clifford et al., 2010). Moreover, the information analyzed in this study comes from the fields of geography, architecture, history and research conducted in the field.

Components of the wooden cultural heritage

We can state that the area that we took in study represents a true cradle of the Romanian folk culture in which the diligence and the skills of craftsmen have given birth, over time, to several goods that compose the wooden cultural heritage, such as: houses and household annexes, wooden gates, shadufs, wells with wooden wheels, traditional technical installations, wooden churches and wooden crosses that have managed to survive over time in a rapidly changing society (figure 18). Nowadays, the emergence and development of industrial units specialized in wood caused a decrease in the number of crafts and craftsmen specialized in woodworking.

The main wood crafts related to woodworking in the studied area are making tools (rakes, forks, tool shanks) of ash or hazel wood and making handicrafts (icons, crosses, cups, etc.) from cherry, maple and lime wood. A craftsman specialized in making handicrafts in the village Bulz (Munteni locality), is Popuțe Dănuț.

The traditional wooden house, typical for the studied area, built of wood, following a system of horizontal beams arranged in shape of loops, is presented as a rectangular with a tile roof and a wooden fence made of stakes exceeding one meter in height. The plan is as follows: one or two rooms, plus attic and basement, and along the façade stands a semi-closed porch or verandah called “*prispa*” or „*târna*” which is supported on poles and used as an entrance room (figure 2) . In what concerns the interior architecture of the traditional home, rustic furniture items are organized in the following way: a rustic bed is placed in a corner near the stove, the table near a window, the cupboard is located behind the door or on the wall near the table, and the chest of dowry is between the table and the cupboard. We can also find inside the house a variety of traditional woven fabrics which perform various functions (figure 3): household textiles (pillow cases, tablecloths, towels) and decorative textiles (dish towels, towels for icons, etc.), textiles that prove the Romanian woman’s virtue in the art of darning. Although the age of these houses is not known exactly, most of these types of dwellings are older than 100 years.



Fig. 2. Traditional house with a porch from the village Beznea, Bratca commune



Fig. 3. Traditional elements from the interior of a house (the village Remeti, Bulz commune)

Typically, a traditional wooden house is facing the street and the household annexes (barn, shed, chicken coop, and basket for corn cobs) are located in the backyard, far from it (figures 4 and 5).



Fig. 4. Barn (Beznea, Bratca commune)



Fig.. 5. Barn, shed and chicken coop facade (Valea Crisului, Bratca commune)

The shadufs, the wells with wooden wheels (figure 6) and the wooden gates have become a rarity in the landscape in the studied area and they are often used as decorative elements in arranging the rural tourist hostels or the houses of the people who are keen on the traditional elements.



Fig.. 6. Well with wooden wheel

(Tourist pension Casa Delureni, Beznea village, Bratca commune)

In some cases, the wooden architecture arouses interest because the traditional architectural style was imported from Maramures (figure 7).



Fig. 7. Wooden gate built in the traditional Maramures architectural style (Beznea, Bratca commune)



Fig. 8. Water mill from Vărciorog village

The traditional technical installations are represented by water mills (figure 8) and whirlpools (figure 9). Although their number has decreased a lot, they are still present in the cultural landscape of Bihor and constitute important values that could be reinvigorated through the development of cultural tourism in the studied area.



Fig. 9. Whirlpool from Bulz village

Made of wood and supported on stone foundation, wooden churches are like a mirror for the innate artistic sense of the Romanian master that built them by hand, trying to insoul a place imbued with love for Divinity (Kiss & Balu, 2000).

In the analyzed area 27 wooden churches were identified, of which 21 wooden churches belong to the national cultural heritage (table 1 and figures 10, 11 and 12) and six other wooden churches that are not declared historical monuments (table 2 and figures 13 and 14). The wooden churches date from the XVIth century till the XXIst century, the oldest wooden church being the church "*St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel*" that belongs to the Monastery of the Holy Cross in Oradea.

Tab. 1. Wooden churches – historical monuments from the Crisul Repede hydrographic basin
(Data source: Cucu & Stefan, 1979; Godea & Cristache-Panait Ioana, 1978; Godea, 2008; Măhăra et al., 1999;¹)

No.	Town / Village	Titular Saint	Year of construction / Century of construction
1	Alesd	The Assumption	1770
2	Băile Felix	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	1785
3	Beznea	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	1723, modifications in 1864
4	Borșa	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	1692
5	Botean	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	1721
6	Bucea	The Assumption	1791
7	Ciucea	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	XVIII th century
8	Fâșca	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	XVIII th century, modifications during the XIX th century
9	Gheghie	ST. Apostles Peter and Paul	XVIII th century
10	Hidișelul de Jos	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	1730
11	Hotar	Saint George	1714, modifications in 1880
12	Josani	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	1768
13	Lugașu de Sus	The Annunciation	1720
14	Luncșoara	Saint George	XVIII th century
15	Oradea	Saint Martirs Constantin Brâncoveanu and his	XVIII th century

¹ www.cimec.ro; <http://www.cultura.abt.ro/Files/GenericFiles/LMI-2010.pdf>;
<http://www.bihor.djc.ro/>

		sons and St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	
16	Oradea	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel Monastery of the Holy Cross	XVI th century
17	Păușa	Saint Dumitru	1710
18	Peștiș	The Annunciation	1797
19	Tilecuș	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	1785
20	Valea Crișului	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	1783
21	Vârciorog	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	XVIII th century

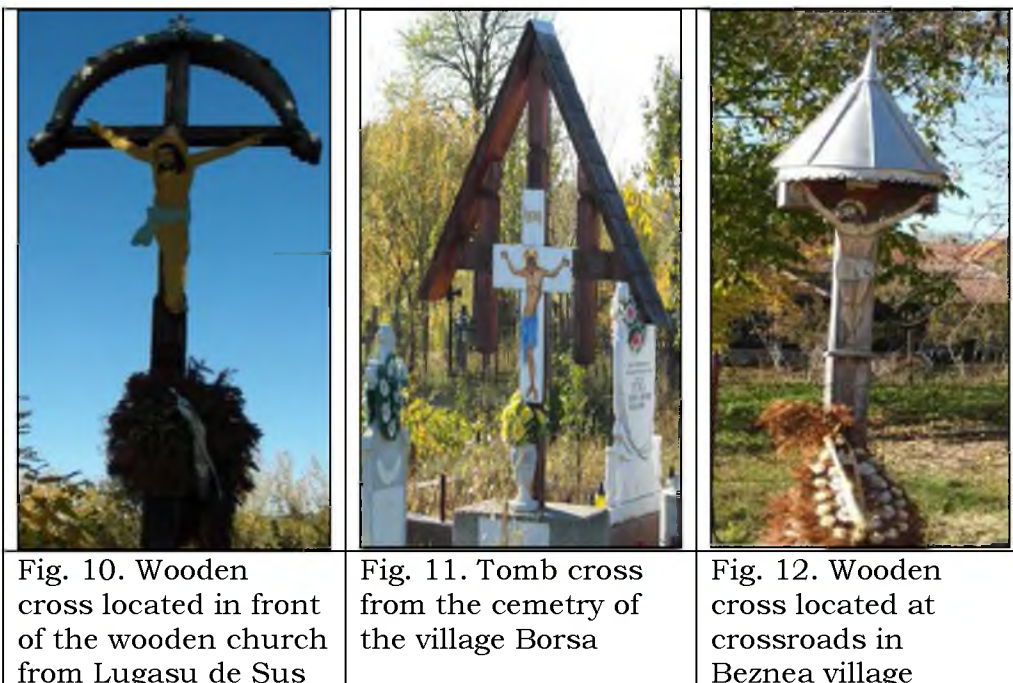
In terms of planimetry and construction techniques, there are certain similarities between the traditional wooden churches and the wooden houses from the studied area, such as the adoption of the rectangular base, the presence of a porch and the system of construction of wooden beams arranged in horizontal crowns, attached at the ends to form loops and dovetails.

Tab. 2. Wooden churches from the Crisul Repede hydrographic basin, which are not included on the list of historical monuments (Data source: data collected from the field)

No.	Town / Village	Titular Saint	Year of construction / Century of construction
1	Cornet	The Assumption	2000
2	Hidișelu de Sus	Holy Trinity	1997-2001
3	Oradea	Saint Spiridon	2004
4	Oradea	Great Martyr St George	1998
5	Oradea	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel and St. John the Baptist	2012
6	Remeti	St. Archangels Michael and Gabriel	XIXth century

Their structure is characteristic to the Orthodox cult, and the exterior decoration has an element specific to almost all wooden churches in Bihor County, namely the twisted rope year of construction / century of construction.

In general, the wooden churches were built in the middle of the locality, on a high surface in order to be seen from a great distance and in order to avoid the risk of flooding.



The wooden crosses (figures 10, 11 and 12), placed at the entrance of the village, at crossroads, near fountains, in front of churches, in cemeteries or in places related to an event, are a symbol of the Christian faith.

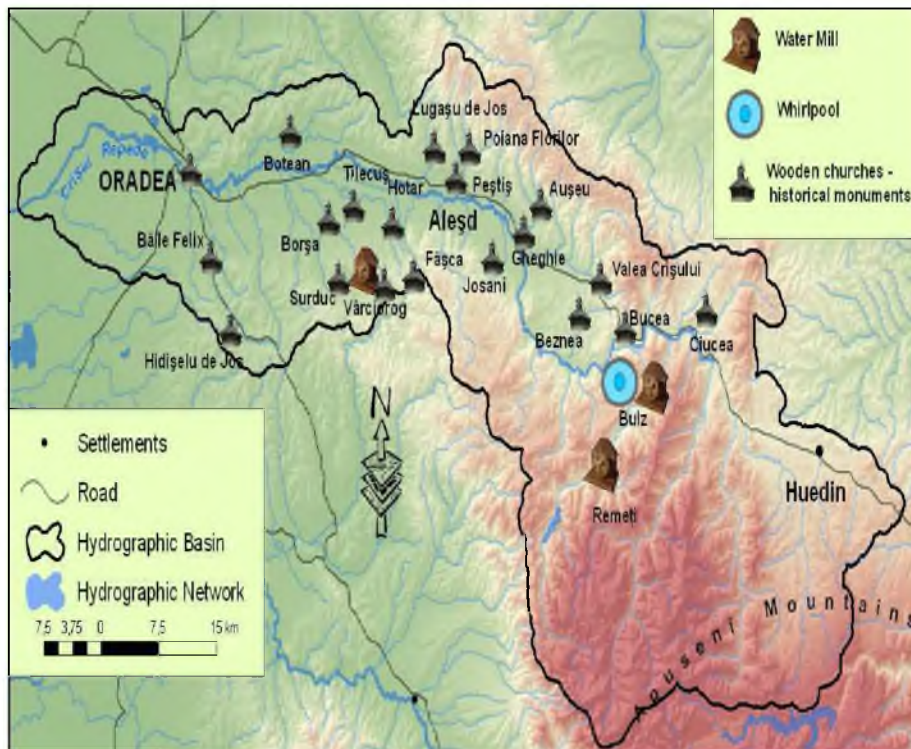


Fig. 13. Location of the wooden churches - historical monuments and the traditional technical installations in the studied area

Aspects of the tourist valorization of the wooden cultural heritage

Identifying, assessing, quantifying and valorizing, through tourism, the anthropic tourism potential should be a mandatory part of an integrated sustainable development strategy and used as a key resource for tourism development (Ilies et al, 2009). In this respect, the development of tourism in the study area cannot be the result of only isolated steps but it must be integrated into the general plan of development of the localities from the Crisul Repede hydrographic basin. It is mandatory to find solutions regarding the valorization of the wooden cultural heritage and a first solution would be to design a thematic tourism product such as *“the wooden cultural heritage from the Crisul Repede hydrographic basin”* and to include it in the tourist circuits. The creation of a tourism network is very important because it helps to avoid

conflicts between institutions and locals. Another solution would be to implement a project that complements the offers of the cultural tourism through the development of other types and forms of tourism: rural tourism, religious tourism, educational tourism and recreational tourism, given the value and the small distances between the components of the wooden cultural heritage and the towns Aleșd and Huedin from the Oradea city. Such a project could be an important step in the development of tourism in the Crisul Repede hydrographic basin.

Conclusions

The analysis of the Crisul Repede hydrographic basin has shown a valuable wooden cultural heritage represented by: the traditional wooden house, the shadufs, the wells with wooden wheels and the wooden gates, the traditional technical installations (water mills and whirlpools), wooden churches (27 wooden churches) and wooden crosses which are mostly in a good condition. We observed a discrepancy between the anthropic tourism potential (wooden architecture) of that particular area and its poor valorization. Among the restrictive issues, we noted the absence of tourist facilities at sights, a superficial exploitation of these tourist sights connected to the wooden architecture and the fact that inhabitants are poorly informed when it comes to tourism in this area.

Prospecting a tourism product theme such as “*the wooden cultural heritage from the Crișul Repede hydrographic basin*” and implementing a project that considers developing other types of tourism would help, of course, to customize the cultural tourism offer, thus highlighting the novelty of this complex.

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