

**‘FOLK BOOKS’ AND THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE PAINTINGS  
IN THE WOODEN CHURCHES FROM MARAMUREȘ  
(18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY - EARLY 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)**

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**Abstract.**

"Folk Books" – Apostle Paul's Apocalypse, The Lord's Mother's Apocalypse, The Life of Saint Basil the New – were translated from Slavic into Romanian towards the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Romanian versions of these apocryphal writings influenced the iconography of the painting of the wooden churches from Maramureș, especially of Judgment Day and Air Customs after Death. Reflecting the social realities of the time, painting became a means of expressing social criticism. The representatives of the local administration, the birău, coming from the Magyar "biro", term which designated the village leader and the jurors, who helped the birău with his duties – as well as the șpan, coming from the Magyar "işpan", the county leader – are condemned to the eternal labours of Hell, together with the "unjust judges".

Inspired from the apocalyptic literature, Judgment Day and Air Customs After Death, represented in the painting of the wooden churches from Maramureș from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, educate the Christians to respect the church and its servants. Those who sleep during Liturgy, who work on Sundays, who do not observe the fasting periods over the year or on Wednesdays and Fridays are thrown into hell and condemned to hard labours.

The painters incriminate both the sins present in the secular society, as well as the ones among the altar servants, such as fornication, gluttony, abortion etc. Those who commit such sins suffer various labours in the afterlife. Those who practise magic are damned for eternity, just like the ones who break the norms of the village morals – the greedy, the drunkard, the liar, the gossip, etc. The painters of the churches also incriminate the dishonest work of the craftsmen – the shoemaker, the blacksmith, the tailor, the furrier – for which the Magyar terms are used, as well as the ploughman who ploughs on his neighbour's field, not respecting the boundary. The dishonest miller and publican are satirized and thrown into hell, condemned to eternal labours.

The influences exerted by the apocryphal literature on the Judgment Day iconography are not found in the painting of the churches from Moldova, for the period under discussion.

**Key words:** Saint Paul's Apocalypse, The Lord's Mother's Apocalypse, The Life of Saint Basil the New, apocryphs, churches from Maramureș, Judgement Day, Air Customs after Death, The Parable of the Prodigal Son, Christian morals, sins, hell, eternal labours.

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