

# **The Wooden Church in Ersig, Vermeș Commune, Caraș Severin County. State of Conservation and Causes of Degradation**

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## **Abstract**

The wooden church dedicated to the "Assumption of the Virgin Mary" in the locality of Ersig, Vermeș commune, Caraș-Severin county is one of the most representative wooden monuments in the western part of our country. According to the specialized bibliography, the construction year seems to be 1713 and the current church was built on the site of another older one, built with clay. The execution technique of the interior mural painting in this wooden church is distemper paint. A notable element, specific to this technique, is the fact that the pictorial layer is totally unprotected by varnish (vegetable gum, resin, varnish, etc.), and the preparation layer is unevenly distributed and of poor consistency.

The support consists in wooden beams that make up the walls, placed horizontally, lined on the inside with wooden boards placed horizontally and covered with a primer obtained from an organic binder of animal origin and as an inert material, a plaster. This primer is unevenly distributed over the wooden planks and strips of interstitial cloth, and its consistency is quite thin, making it almost non-existent in some areas. The wooden church in Ersig belongs to the category of representative wooden monuments for the western part of our country, being certainly an edifice with a special historical, documentary, artistic and stylistic value.

Having reached an advanced state of degradation and in danger of collapsing at any time, it fully deserved an extensive conservation-restoration process aimed to prolong its existence for future generations and restoring its former charm. The degradation on the surface of the wooden walls outside the church is mostly the result of environmental factors (temperature, humidity, pollutants, microorganisms, etc.), but also of the interventions on the monument, which caused degradation directly or indirectly, through: improper maintenance, handling, subsequent repair interventions. Another important factor that led to a poor state of preservation is determined by the climatic conditions, the difference in temperature and humidity, exposure to the sun and wind, which favored tensions in the wood fiber, superficial cracks, deep cracks, detachments, partial or complete gaps and so on. Improper fixing interventions were carried out over time, their purpose being to ensure the stability of the pieces

inside the church. Thus, in certain places, metal fixing elements (nails, dowels, screws) were inserted, using methods that do not correspond to the conservation and restoration methodology. Their presence in the wood structure damages both aesthetically and structurally, producing gaps with loss of original material. Numerous different types of adherent deposits were identified on the painted surface of the interior. Inadequate maintenance and conservation interventions caused irreparable damage to the painted layer, with loss of original material. By removing poorly adhering deposits with inappropriate tools, erosions of the paint layers and the primer, up to the support, occurred. On certain surfaces of the paint layers some detachments could be observed and also numerous gaps, mainly caused by repeated erosions of the painted surfaces.

As a result of all the identified forms of degradation and the fact that most of them are active and evolving, urgent conservation-restoration operations were required in order to stop the triggered processes and the factors that generated them. The wooden church in Ersig is certainly an edifice with a special historical, documentary, artistic and stylistic value that needed to be saved.