



On the Philatelic Circuit of the UNESCO Churches from Maramureș

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Authors BVC and ALP designed the study, performed the literature searches and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author MC managed the analyses of the study. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Maramureș region is often replaced by "the land of wooden churches" syntagm. Traveling through the villages from this region, it is easy to notice that most of the settlements have their wooden church, created by the local craftsmen. Eight of them were included in the UNESCO World Heritage, in 1999, and can be visited in Bârsana, Budești, Desești, Ieud, Plopiș, Poienile Izei, Rogoz, and Șurdești. Remaining in the same context, of the thematic field visit, to come to the aid of those who walk for the first time in these lands and inevitably need specialized information, a philatelic-tourist itinerary was proposed. Through this paper, the intention was to bring into discussion a series of philatelic effects (postage stamps, first-day covers - FDCs, illustrated postcards, maximum postcards, special and commemorative envelopes, etc), and to emphasize, in

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more detail, the cultural heritage associated with the religious buildings considered. Based on the observations made on the rich philatelic material identified (over 50 philatelic mentions), through various platforms with philatelic content (such as Colnect, Delcampe, eBay, Okazii, PickClick, Romfilatelia, StampWorld, wopa-plus, etc.) or benevolent collectors, a philatelic route could be made on the eight tourist objectives considered. It was also possible to highlight the role of ambassador that the thematic philately has in the promotion of cultural (ecumenical) heritage, as well as the visibility that UNESCO objectives have at national and international level.

Keywords: Country life; cultural heritage; philatelic issues; UNESCO; wooden churches.

1. INTRODUCTION

Maramureș, a unique land in northern Romania, has carefully and distinctively preserved the culture, lifestyle, and traditions of the past peasant. While Romania is in the process of aligning itself economically and socially with the rest of Europe, Maramureș remains a testimony of traditional values, a romantic era of simplicity, and a special pride [1,2].

Located in northwestern Romania, Maramureș County occupies an area of 6304 km², bordering Ukraine and the counties of Suceava, Bistrița-Năsăud, Cluj, Sălaj, and Satu Mare. Almost 50% of the region is mountainous - the Gutâi, Țibleș and Rodnei Mountains, which stretch from northwest to east, separate Historic Maramureș from the rest of the region, while the Maramureș Mountains form a political and natural border with Ukraine in the north [3,4].

The first documentary attestation of Maramureș dates from early 1199, but archaeological evidence shows that the region has been inhabited since the Neolithic period. While almost all of Dacia was conquered by the Romans, Maramures remained largely free in the second and third centuries [5]. In the Middle Ages, Roman Dacian society was influenced by neighboring tribes. The feudal settlements formed between the 4th and 10th centuries were largely institutionalized and ruled by the church. In the 13th century, Hungarian rulers began to conquer Transylvania, and by the end of the 14th century, the region of Transylvania, including Maramures, came under Hungarian rule [5].

Maramureș officially became part of the Principality of Transylvania in 1526, then part of the Habsburg Empire in 1687. After 1703, Maramureș County was annexed to Hungary [6]. The revolution of 1848 ended the Habsburg domination, and as a result, in 1918, Transylvania and Maramureș were united with

the Kingdom of Romania. In 1920, following the peace treaties in Paris, Maramures lost the northern Tisza area to Czechoslovakia (a territory that now belongs to Ukraine). In 1940 Maramureș and northern Transylvania were ceded by Nazi Germany to Hungary, and later, in 1944, recovered by the Romanians, with the withdrawal of German and Hungarian troops. In March 1945, the establishment of the communist regime began in Romania. In 1948, from the establishment of totalitarianism, and until 1958, in the mountains of Maramureș, anti-communist partisan commandos acted. December 1989, last century, did not initially bring major changes in the lifestyle of the people of Maramures. Towards the end of the 1990s, however, once isolated communities began to open up to the world, and the phenomenon of migration to Western countries gained momentum. This will make its mark on the architecture and traditions of the area [7].

Nowadays, Maramureș is considered to be the soul of rural Romania. The streets of small villages, the surrounding hills, the meadows full of flowers and the hard-built headlands, the peasants dressed in festive robes or working the land, the vines of fresh milk, and the cows returning from pasture to sunset, all focus on the picturesque. Maramureș includes four ethnographic areas - Maramureș County, Lăpuș County, Chioar County, and most of the Codru area, as well as the area of Baia Mare and Baia Sprie [8,9]. Five of the UNESCO World Heritage wooden churches, presented in this paper, are located in Maramureș County (Desești, Budești, Bârsana, Poienile Izei, and Ieud), two in Chioarului Country (Șurdești and Plopiș) and one in Lăpuș County in Rogoz) [10-12]. Besides that, Maramureș breathes old history and civilization, customs, and testimonies from the past. The wooden architecture specific to the region undoubtedly distinguishes Maramureș from other regions of Romania. In particular, the carved wooden gates give an unmistakable local identity to this land.

This paper aims to highlight the eight UNESCO monument churches, drawing a cohesive route through Maramureș, their illustration being made by reproducing beautiful philatelic pieces (postal stamps, first-day covers, maximums, illustrated postcards, circulations, etc.). Following in whole or in part (in fragments) the route presented is to explore the World Heritage and the rural and urban beauties of Maramureș County.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The documentation for this paper started from the authors' concerns for ecological education, environmental protection and conservation of the cultural monuments [13,14], for the immovable cultural heritage [15], and also for the love of the idea of a harmoniously developed community. Having at hand a series of extremely relevant studies at the national level, both in terms of the management of UNESCO monuments [10-12,16] and philatelic issues that have appeared over time - in various catalogues and journals [17-19],

the authors decided to extrapolate the respective approaches on the relatively limited space of the cultural ecosystem of Maramureș.

Thus, the subject of the study, in the form of a philatelic circuit of UNESCO churches (see details in Fig. 1) [16], also reaches the lands of Maramureș County, where few studies make direct reference to church management, compared to cultural tourism. The sites that formed the basis of the study sought to provide the latest information, to configure more accurately the reality of today, including the dynamics of philatelic appearances. In addition to the sites that host philatelic content, already established (such as Colnect, Delcampe, eBay, Okazii, PickClick, Romfilatelia, StampWorld, wopa-plus, etc.), was turned to discussion forums and online meetings with other collectors and passionate philatelists. The latter was kind enough to provide us with various study materials and to guide us countless times, especially when documentary sources provided interpretable or completely unclear information.



Fig. 1. The distribution area of UNESCO churches in Maramureș (Romania) [16]

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The history of the people of Maramureș is told by the wood of the churches erected by them. Over the centuries, foreign rulers did not allow the locals to build stone churches to give over time, so the Maramures craftsmen built beautiful wooden churches to enter into communion and talk to God. Wood thus became their best friend and confidant. They are built of thick planks, arranged in length, reinforced by one or more portholes. The vaults, like the base of the tower, are covered with shingles fixed on a wooden frame with steep slopes and prominent eaves. The characteristic elements of all the churches in Maramures are the porch and the tower, which gives them a special charm [20].

Contrary to predictions, churches miraculously faced the weather and the times, resisting to offer support to the locals and marveling at the visitors who crossed their threshold through their pride. As such, eight wooden churches in Maramureș were included on the UNESCO World Heritage list in December 1999 [21]. These monuments can be found in Bârsana [22], Budești [23], Desești [24], Ieud [25], Plopiș [26], Poienile Izei [27], Rogoz [28], and Șurdești [29]. The wooden churches from Budești Josani, Desești, Bârsana, Poienile Izei, and Ieud Deal are located in the historical Maramureș, those from Șurdești and Plopiș are from the old Chioarului Country, and the church of St. Archangels from Rogoz is located in Țara Lăpușului [30], as is shown in Fig. 2 [31-38].

Together, these eight wooden churches represent a set of remarkable examples of various architectural solutions from different periods and areas. The churches are narrow but tall, with slender, long towers at the western end of the building. That is why they are the expression of the local peculiarity of the cultural landscape of this mountainous area in northern Romania (as shown in Fig. 3) [39,40]. It is distinguished by the technique of wooden joints and the realization of shingle roofs, by the ornamental motifs visible on the surface of portals and frames - which are supported on slender pillars - symbolizing elements of vegetal, animal and geometric nature made by chiseling, wood carving.

3.1 Pious Paraschiva Church from Desești

The circuit of the wooden churches begins with a winding and steep ascent, of almost 41 km,

starting from Baia Mare, passing through Baia Sprie, towards the forested mountains. The peak of Gutâi Pass offers a picturesque landscape. The road continues on Valea Marei to Desești, the commune that hosts the first UNESCO monument described in this route.

Legend has it that in 1717, the wooden church in Desești was burned during a Tatar invasion and that many locals died trying to save it. The legend also relates that the place of the current church was chosen by the new altar stone. The consecrated stone was moved to different places, but each time it overturned; after five attempts, the stone remained standing, discovering its stability [24,33], and thus indicating that the place is good for the construction of the church named "Pious Paraschiva" in 1770 (see Fig. 4) [41].

According to the inscription on one of the beams of the narthex ceiling, the interior paintings date from around 1780 and are the work of the painter Radu Munteanu from the village of Ungureni and his assistant, Gheorghe (from Desești). Probably the most impressive of the paintings is the Last Judgment scene. In this, sinners are individualized by their costumes - Turks and Tartars wear shawls and tunics, Germans in frock coats and small hats, and the "Franks" are depicted in tight pants, short tunics and high hats in the church cemetery [42]. Next to the old crosses stands a 400-year-old oak tree, the oldest in the region.

The itinerary continues from Desești to Sighetu Marmăției and reaches Vadu Izei, where there are numerous guesthouses with wooden gates, glass painting workshops, fabrics, wood carving, and ornamental bottles. The almost 29 km that follow in this philatelic-touristic journey offers tourists breathtaking landscapes. An advice for them is to stop along the way, from place to place, to admire the beauty of the historic Maramureș.

3.2 The Entrance of the Mother of God into the Church from Bârsana

After visiting Vadu Izei, the road turn left and the journey continue through the villages along the Izei Valley. After 20 km, Bârsana appears, a commune documented in 1326 [22,31]. The old wooden church from Bârsana, dedicated to the Entry of the Mother of God into the Church, was originally built in 1720, in a place called "Monastery Bridges" and later moved (1806) to where it is today, on the Jbârului hill.

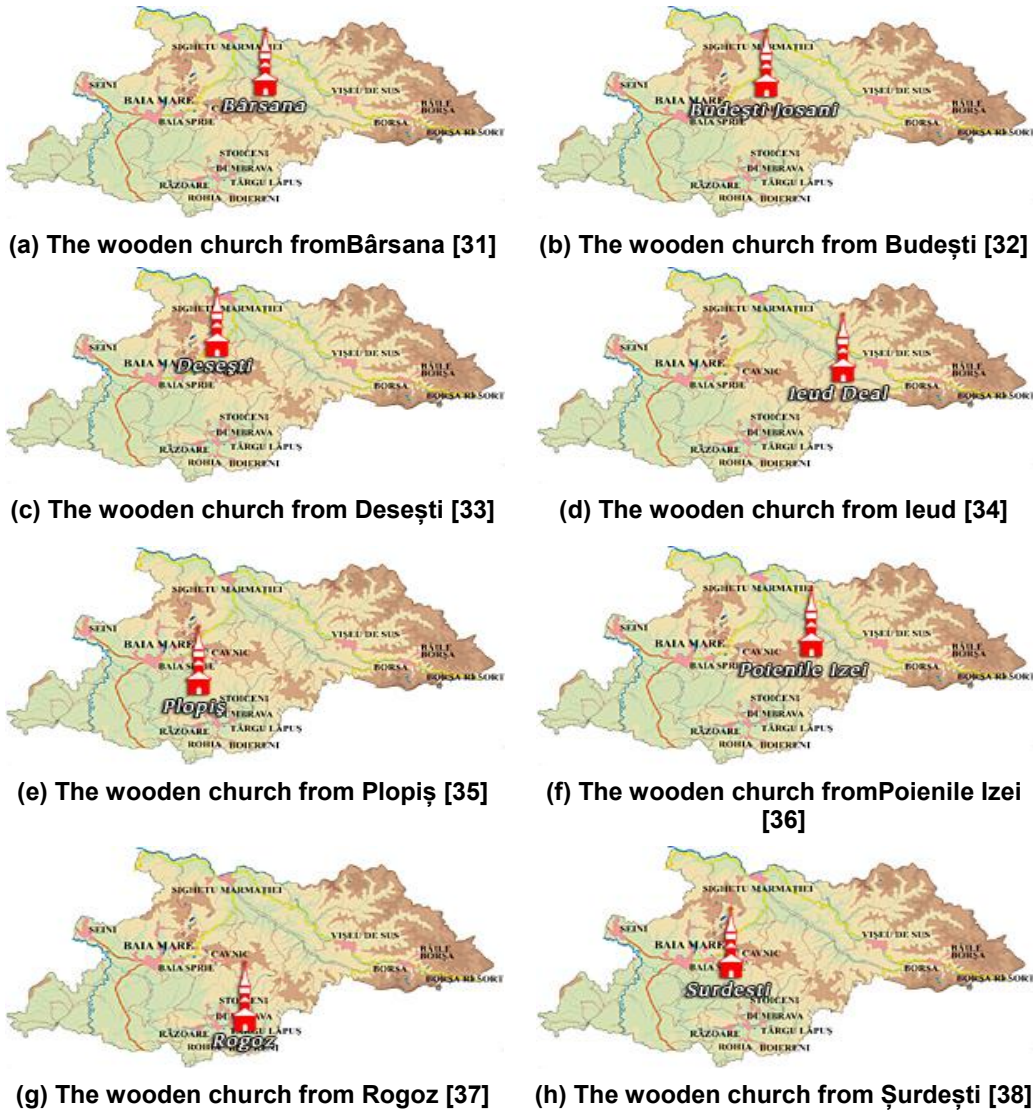
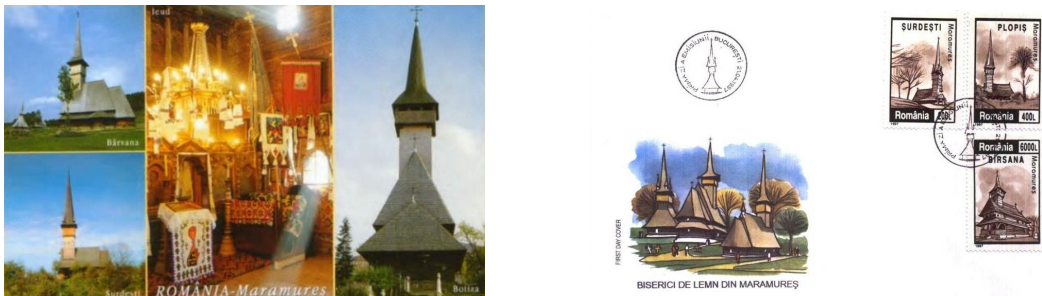
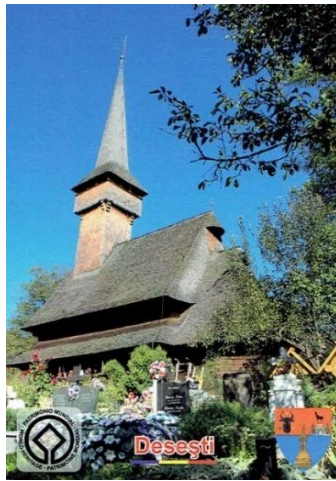


Fig. 2. The positioning of UNESCO churches in Maramureș County (Romania)

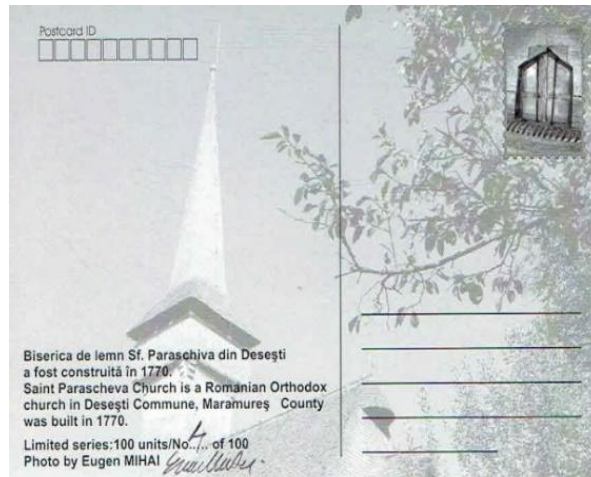


(a) Postcard unused representing the Wooden Churches of Maramureș (Romania): Bârsana, Șurdești, Ieud and Botiza [39] (b) First-day cover representing the Wooden Churches from Maramureș (Romania), 21.04.1997, București [40]

Fig. 3. Various philatelic effects representing a collage with the Wooden Churches of Maramureș (Romania)



(a) front aspect



(b) verso aspect

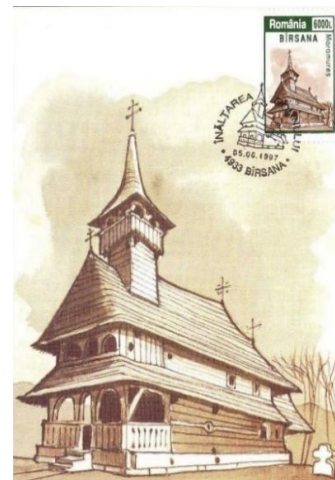
Fig. 4. Illustrated postcard - The wooden church „St. Paraschiva”, Desești, made in private edition (100 copies), after a photo by Eugen Mihai

Legend has it that there was a plague cemetery on this hill. The victims of the plague were buried in a hurry, without any religious service. As in the local tradition, the religious service for the deceased is of great importance, the locals moved the church, thus allowing the poor souls to rest for eternity in the shadow of the church. The church is characterized by a rectangular plan with an apse on five sides, detached, the

bell tower on the narthex with gazebo, and a long helmet [42]. A peculiarity of the construction is the roof with double eaves (see Fig. 5a) [43]. The interior frescoes were painted in Baroque style. The sidewalls of the nave depict scenes from both the Old and New Testaments. Of particular beauty are the depictions of angelic hosts and cherubs with a multitude of eyes covering their bodies, suggesting that they see everything.



(a) Postage stamp with a face value of 6,000 lei (CMR #2427) from the issue “Wooden Churches from Maramureș” (LP #1430) put into circulation on April 21, 1997 (circulation: 1,000,000 copies)



(b) Maximum postcard - the “The entrance of the Mother of God in the Church”, Bârsana

Fig. 5. The wooden church from Bârsana, 1997

From a philatelic point of view, in 1997, on the occasion of the Ascension of the Lord, a beautiful maxim was made with the occasional stamp showing the Church of Bârsana (see Fig. 5b) [44]. The postage stamp used was modeled by the architect Gheorghe Leahu and has a size of 27×42 mm, being printed in three colors on Călărași chrome paper.

Another attraction of Bârsana is the convent of nuns Soborul Sfinților 12 Apostoli, one of the famous places of the tourist Maramureș. Bârsana

is also the birthplace of Teodor Bârsan, a famous wood craftsman, whose creation is recognized not only throughout Maramureș but also in the rest of the country and abroad.

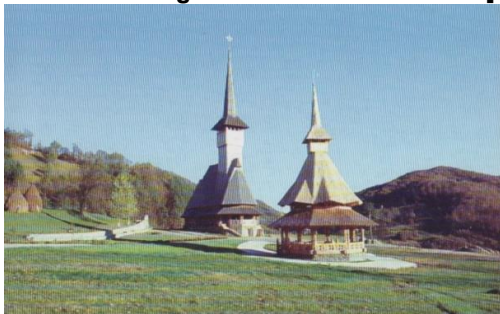
From the point of view of philately, numerous illustrated postcards have been identified (see Fig. 6) [45-56], which capture the area of the place of worship from various angles. The identified and analyzed pieces are made in various periods of time, a chronological indexing of them being difficult to perform.



(a) illustrated postcard representing the cult buildings in the middle of winter [45]



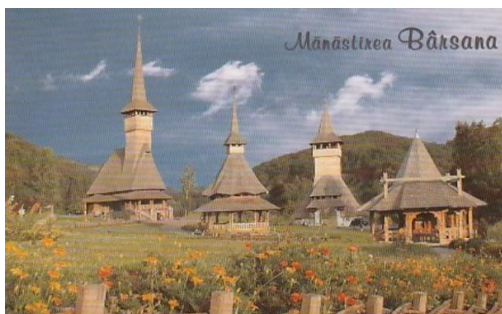
(b) illustrated postcard representing the cult buildings in the middle of summer [46]



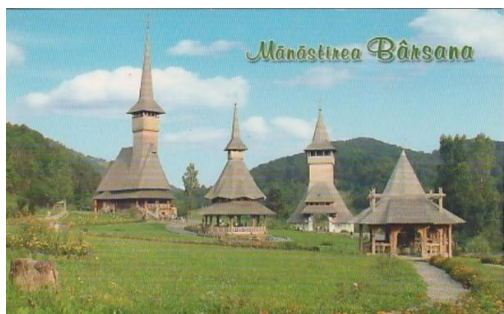
(c) one of the oldest illustrated postcards representing two of the cult buildings in the middle of summer [47]



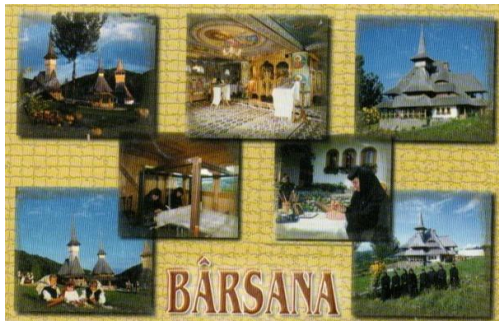
(d) one of the oldest illustrated postcards representing the most imposing of the cult buildings in the middle of summer [48]



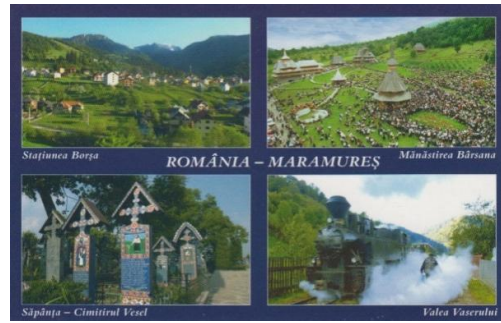
(e) one of the oldest illustrated postcards representing four of the cult buildings [49]



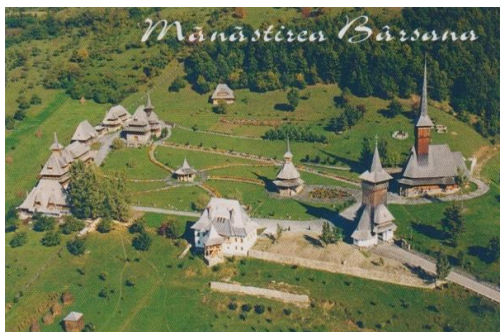
(f) one of the oldest illustrated postcards representing four of the cult buildings [49]



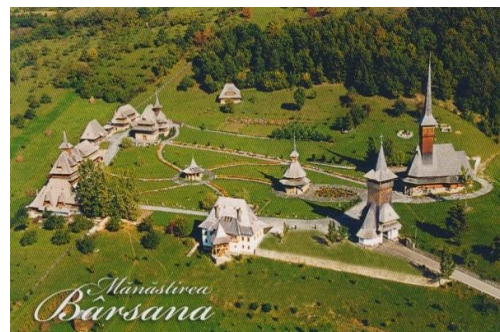
(g) illustrated collage postcard with objects of interest only from the area [50]



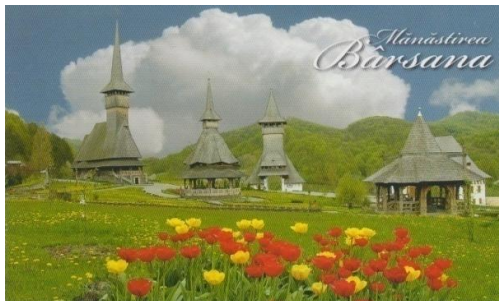
(h) illustrated collage postcard, with other objects of tourist interest in the area [51]



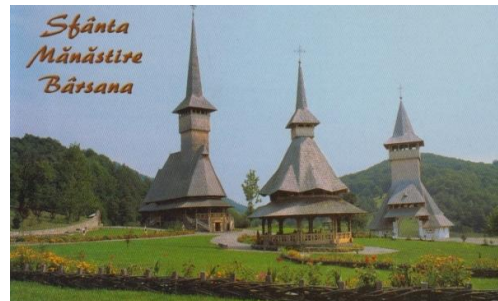
(i) top view of the entire area [52]



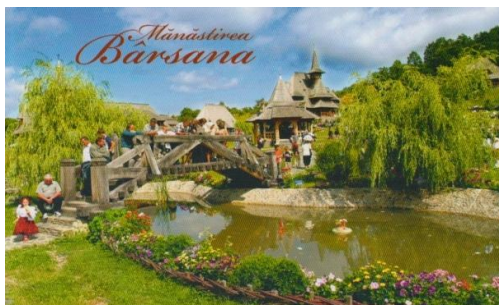
(j) top view of the entire area [53]



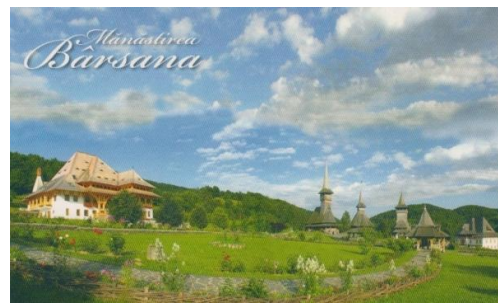
(k) illustrated postcard as a side view of the entire area in midsummer [54]



(l) illustrated postcard as a side view of the entire area [55]



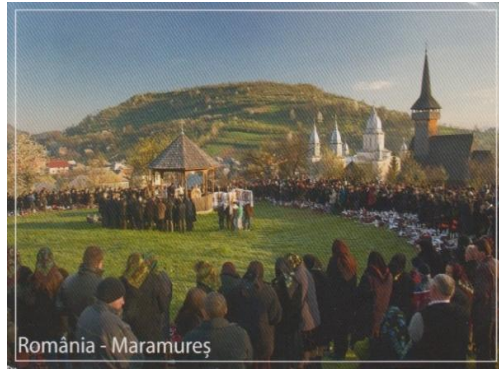
(m) illustrated postcard representing visiting tourists [56]



(n) postcard representing a panoramic view of the ecumenical complex [57]



(o) postcard representing a panoramic view of the ecumenical complex [58]



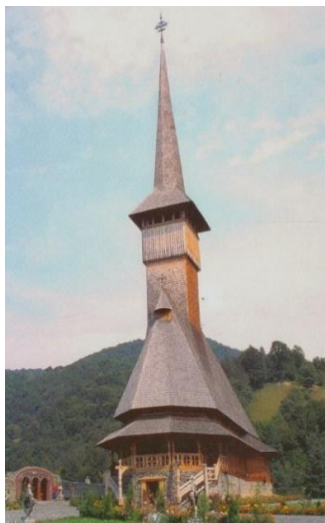
(p) postcard representing a panoramic view of a religious service held in the area [59]



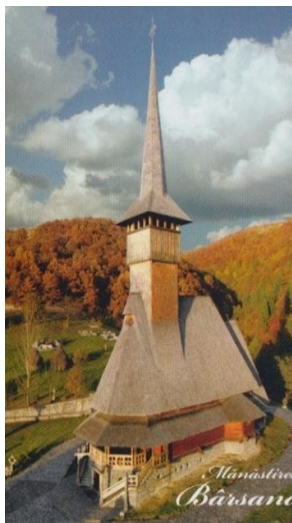
(q) postcard representing interior view [60]



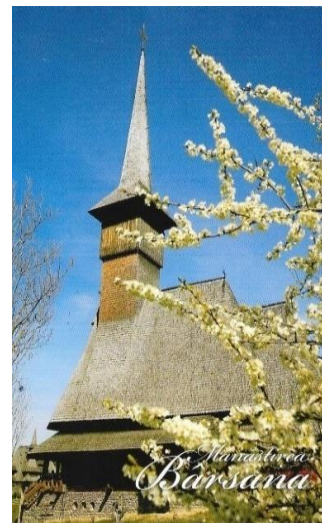
(r) postcard representing a panoramic view of a religious service held in the area [61]



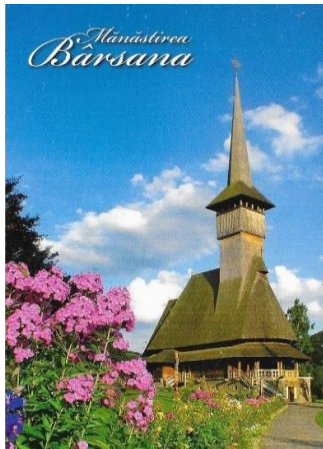
(s) postcard representing a view of the tallest building in the area [62]



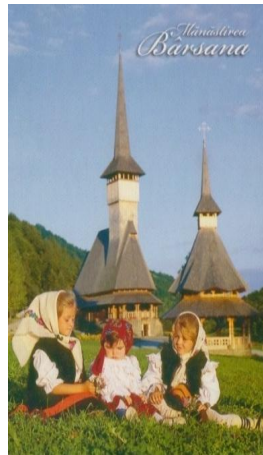
(t) postcard representing a view of the tallest building in the area [63]



(u) postcard representing a view of the tallest building in the area in early spring [64]



(v) postcard representing a view of the tallest building in the area, sometime in the summer [65]



(w) postcard representing a view of the tallest building in the area, with a focus on children dressed in folk costumes [66]

Fig. 6. Maximum postcards with the image of the wooden church from Bârsana

Along with illustrated postcards, two postal circulations were identified, which have in the foreground the place of worship in Barsana. These are reproduced in the Appendix section. As can be seen, both pieces were circulated internationally, one on the route Botoșani (Romania) - Chișinău (Republic of Moldova), as shown in Fig. 13a [67], and the other on Bacău (Romania) - United States of America by plane routes, as shown in Fig. 13b [68]. If in the case of the first piece identified and analyzed three postage stamps were used, over which appeared the day stamp of the Botoșani post office, respectively 20.01.1998, in the case of the second piece no less than eight postage stamps were used, over which the day stamp (13.08.1999) of the Bacău post office was applied.

3.3 Pious Paraschiva Church from Poienile Izei

After leaving Bârsana behind, the circuit continues for the next almost 30 km in the footsteps of the Iza river. In the commune of Rozavlea everyone can visit the old wooden church, built around 1717-1720 on the site of a former sanctuary that had been destroyed by the Tartars. Once arrived in the village of Șieu, which houses another wooden church, carefully follow the sign to Poienile Izei. Turn right onto the main road and follow the sign to the next stop on the

route. UNESCO has designated the wooden church from Poienile Izei "Pious Paraschiva" as one of the most beautiful and best-preserved monuments in the whole of Maramureș [27,36].

The church was built between 1604 and 1632 and is covered inside with spectacular paintings. The walls of the narthex depict scenes of the Last Judgment, depicting shocking images of punishments for sins: the liar is hanged by the tongue, the woman who enchanted the cows, taking their hand, is stabbed by her victims, the peasant who stole the neighbor's land is plowed by two devils, the mother is forced to swallow her aborted child, and those who sleep when the priest preaches are forced to lie on a burning bed and listen to the devil's violin [42].

3.4 The Nativity of the Virgin Mary church from Ieud

The road takes us back to Șieu, to the main road and from there along the river Iza, which we will cross in the next 16.5 km. The next stop is Ieud, located at the exit from the main road to Bogdan Voda. Located at the foot of the Țibleș Mountains, Ieud commune was mentioned in a documentary in 1364. These places should not be missed the opportunity to visit the two churches, which are among the most important in Maramureș County. Ieud Deal church, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list, is made of fir wood and has long been considered by some

specialists as the oldest wooden church in Europe [25,34].

However, dendrochronological dates established that the building was built between 1611-1621. The church is dedicated to the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, celebrated annually on September 8. The interior frescoes were made by Alexandru Ponehalski, one of the most active painters in Maramureș at that time. The picture in the narthex depicts the scene of the Last Judgment, the flames of Hell burning the sinners. In the attic of this church was found the Codices from leud - a document considered to be the first example of a written Romanian language (dated 1391). The second church, in Leud Șes, was built around 1718. It is one of the most spacious wooden churches in Romania, which is why it was nicknamed "wooden cathedral" [42].

3.5 "St. Nicholas" Church from Budești

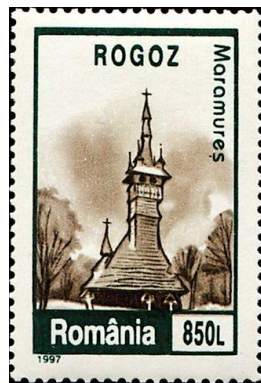
The circuit will take the tourists back to Bârsana, from where after turning left, the road goes to Călinești. Once in Călinești, the road takes the tourists to the left, along the Cosăului Valley, from where they soon reach the picturesque village of Sârbi, where almost every household has its carved wooden gate. Immediately after the Serbs, Budești follows the settlement that houses another UNESCO monument. We thus easily cover over 41 km, in which we can admire real works of traditional architecture and mastery in the art of wood.

The church from Budești-Josani, built-in 1643, is dedicated to Saint Nicholas. The place is made

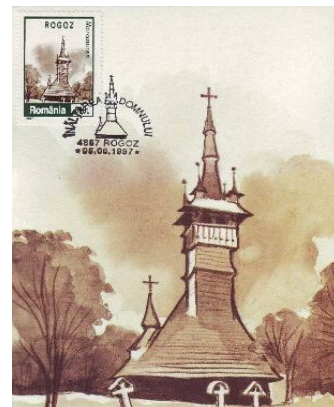
of thick oak beams, placed on a foundation made of river stones. Inside the church, you can see the links, the helmet, and the armor of the famous outlaw Pinteza Viteazu' (1670-1703). Alexandru Ponehalschi painted the interior of the church in vivid and warm colors, around 1762 [23,32]. As such, the church is also known for its collection of icons on wood and glass, dating from the seventeenth century. An older icon from the 15th century contains Slavonic inscriptions depicting John the Baptist. The other church in Budești (Susani) was built in 1760. The tourists are advised to take a closer look at the scenes from the Life and Passion of Christ, and at the painting of Paradise animated by all creatures of the Earth [42].

3.6 The Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel church from Rogoz

We continue our journey on a journey of almost 50 km that offers us the opportunity to change the countries of Maramureș voivodship. Shortly after crossing the slopes of Căvnic, turn left and reach Țara Lăpușului. The village of Lăpuș is 25 km from the Căvnic exit, and not far from it is the village of Rogoz, which hosts another UNESCO monument. According to tradition, the Church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel (see Fig. 7a and Fig. 7b) [69,70] was built in 1663, from two huge twin trunks, brought from Popii Hill. The church survived the invasion of the Tartars in 1717, compared to the Historical Maramureș, Lăpuș County was less affected by the destruction caused by the Tartars [42].



(a) Postage stamp with a face value of 850 lei (CMPR #5425) from the issue "Wooden Churches from Maramureș" (LP #1430) put into circulation on April 21, 1997 (circulation: 1,000,000 copies) [69]



(b) Maximum postcard - The Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel Church, Rogoz [70]

Fig. 7. The wooden church from Rogoz, 1997

The church is a representative monument for Țara Lăpușului, remarkable for the beauty of its silhouette and the richness of its decoration (see Fig. 8a) [71]. It has a rectangular plan, with a detached polygonal apse and a narthex above which rises the bell tower with a gazebo and a long helmet, framed by four turrets. The interior paintings, made in 1785 by Radu Munteanu (from Ungheni), Grigore Badea (1834), and Nicolae Man, have been preserved only in the nave and narthex (see Fig. 8b) [72], with some scenes fragmented and others erased in totality. The uniqueness of the Church of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel is given by the southern entrance, the asymmetrical roof, and the joints in the beam console. The table of the Elders, covered with eaves on the northern side of the church, has the names of the families entitled to sit there. On religious holidays, these

families offered food to the needy in memory of those who had passed away.

From a postal point of view, the stamp with a face value of 850 lei issued in 1997 had a wide circulation power, being easily found on many correspondence items that circulated in the next five years since its launch. At the time of putting into circulation, 850 lei was the fee for a registered letter (or express) sent to the country, weighing up to 20 grams. Starting with June 2, 1997, the postal tariffs started to decrease every six months, so that at the end of 1998 the tariff of 850 lei corresponded to a "loco" letter of up to 20 grams. And the 2013 show enjoyed a philatelic success, the model of the miniskirt with six stamps with illustrated cuff was appreciated by the collectors of this theme (see Fig. 8c) [73].



(a) Postage stamp with a face value of 8.10 lei (CMPR #6939) from the issue "UNESCO Anniversaries" (LP #2000) put into circulation on September 27, 2013 (circulation: 14,280 copies) [71]



(b) FDC of the "UNESCO Anniversaries" issue (LP #2000) released on September 27, 2013 (circulation: 300 copies) [72]



(c) "UNESCO Anniversaries" mini-album (LP #2000a) released on September 27, 2013 (circulation: 1,500 copies) [73]

Fig. 8. The wooden church from Rogoz, 2013

A well-known attraction of Lăpuș County is the Rohia Monastery, located about 12 km south of Târgu Lăpuș. This place impresses with an atmosphere of peace and tranquility that gives the surroundings, the park, and the buildings of the whole monastery and the vast library. Rohia was one of the centers of spiritual resistance against communism [42], where one of the most profound thinkers of Romanian culture, N. Steinhardt, chose to settle in 1980.

Regarding the chapter on postal circulations, only two pieces were identified. The first of these, in form of a registered letter sent on December 23, 1998, and circulated on the relationship București-Suceava, is represented in Fig. 14a [74], along with the other circulated cover - Fig. 14b [75]. To cover the postal service, a pair of postage stamps with the church from Rogoz were used, and in addition, a stamp with the church from Bogdan Vodă was used. From our calculations results a slightly overwritten letter, the sender paying 2,150 lei instead of 2,000 lei (1,100 lei letter "other localities" of up to 20 grams + 900 lei recommendation fee, which was the value of postal rates at that time).

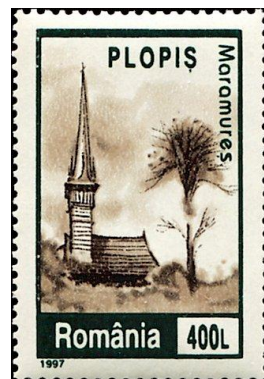
3.7 The Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel Church from Plopiș

From Târgu Lăpuș the route continues down the Prelucii Peak, and turning to the right, after Copalnic Mănăstur, the church from Plopiș appears (Fig. 9a) [76], located approx. 2 km from the main road. Just like the church in Rogoz, the

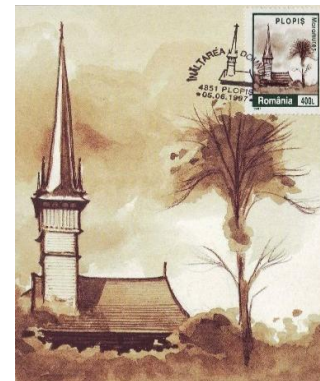
wooden church in Plopiș is dedicated to Saints Michael and Gabriel, celebrated every year on November 8.

The village of Plopiș, located in the Cavnice Valley, is mentioned for the first time in documents as a settlement belonging to the Chioar Fortress. The inhabitants of Plopiș were famous as skilled carpenters, the results of their work can be found throughout the county. In 1798 the villagers began building a new church to replace their old place of worship. On November 2, 1811, with the contribution of the 49 founding families, the new church could be completed [42]. The information regarding the sanctification of the church was taken from a document found at the foot of the prestol, where 49 coins were discovered deposited at that time by each family of the village.

Despite its relatively modest size (17 m long, 7 m wide and 47 m high), the church in Plopiș (see Fig. 10a) [78] is remarkable for its well-balanced proportions, reinforcing the view that this building is one of the most unitary and well-cohesive constructions from Maramureș. Rectangular in the plan, with a detached apse and a porch on the west side, the church is characterized by the special height of the bell tower (Fig. 10b) [79], with a pavilion and a long roof, decorated with four turrets. The frescoes, the icons from the altar, and the iconostasis were made between 1810-1812. The size of the church, the proportions of the body, and the staggered roof next to the altar give exceptional harmony.



(a) Postage stamp with a face value of 400 lei (CMPR #5423) from the issue "Wooden Churches from Maramureș" (LP #1430) put into circulation on April 21, 1997 (initial circulation: 3,000,000 copies + 10,000,000 reprinted later) [76]

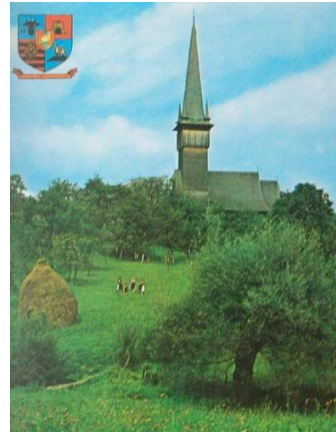


(b) Maximum postcard - The Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel church, Plopiș [77]

Fig. 9. The wooden church from Plopiș, 1997



(a) Postage stamp with a face value of 55 bani (CMPR #2781) from the issue of "Historical Monuments" (LP #650) put into circulation on June 29, 1967 [78]



(b) Illustrated postcard with the wooden church from Plopiș edited by Sport-Turism Publishing House [79]

Fig. 10. The wooden church from Plopiș, 1967

From a philatelic point of view, the wooden church from Plopiș is well represented, the enthusiasts keeping in their collections, instead of honor, the postage stamps (see Fig. 11a and Fig. 11b), or different circulated occasional envelopes, as shown in Fig. 15 (Appendix section) [82-91].

3.8 The Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel Church from Șurdești

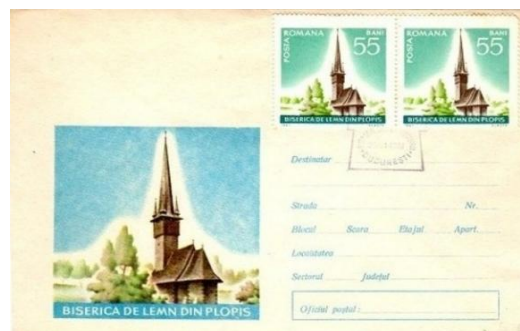
After leaving Plopiș, we return to the main road, to continue our journey to Șurdești, the final point of the spiritual, cultural, and philatelic circuit, which we proposed. In this place, the wooden

church dedicated to the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel was built in 1721, under the guidance of Toma Macarie (see Fig. 12a) [92].

Built of oak beams, it has a rectangular plan with a detached polygonal apse, with a beautiful porch on notched arches with a total length of 16 meters. Sheltered under a roof with a double lap, it surprises with the long silhouette of the bell tower. With a tower of 54 meters and a total height of 72 meters, it is considered to be the tallest old wooden building in Europe, confirming the past belief of the people, according to which the taller the church tower, the more their prayers reached heaven faster.



(a) One of the two FDCs of the "Historical Monuments" issue (LP #650) [80]

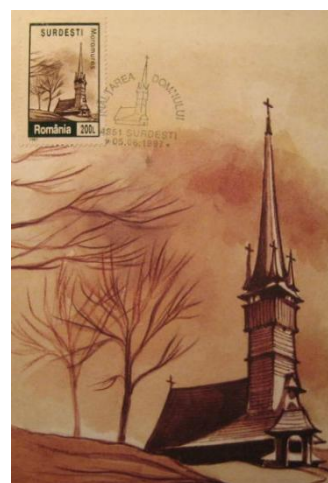


(b) Occasional envelope made from the entire postcard with the church from Plopiș on which were applied a pair of stamps issued in 1967 and the stamp "first-day" [81]

Fig. 11. Different philatelic materials representing the wooden church from Plopiș, 1967



(a) Postage stamp with a face value of 200 lei (CMPR #5422) from the issue “Wooden Churches from Maramureș” (LP #1430) put into circulation on April 21, 1997 (initial circulation: 2,000,000 copies + 40,500,000 later reprinted) [92]



(b) Maximum postcard - the church “The Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel”, Șurdești [93]

Fig. 12. The wooden church from Șurdești, 1997

For philatelists, this postage stamp also finds its place among the paraphyletic pieces. In addition to the maximum shown in Fig. 12b [93], which is part of a series of six maxims, obliterated with custom stamps for each brand, there are other interesting philatelic effects in the form of postal circulations (see Fig. 16) [94-117].

With the church from Șurdești ends the circuit of the Maramureș churches in the UNESCO World Heritage. After visiting the church, the tourists must return to the main road and turn right towards Baia Sprie. Then returning to the main road, a signpost to the left will soon show the road to Baia Mare, the town that was the starting point of our journey. Due to the cultural and ethnic diversity specific to Maramureș, in the last centuries, in the rural communities, the tourists must understand that there are wooden churches with various features that require separate discussions and studies, some with multidisciplinary character (as a combination of local history with ethnography, architecture, and philately).

4. CONCLUSION

Regarding the philatelic part, we regret the fact that we did not find philatelic pieces for all the objectives proposed in our circuit, we do not know if they exist, but it is still possible to have pieces made in a private edition that did not

reach our knowledge. This paper aims to highlight the eight UNESCO monument churches, drawing a cohesive route through Maramureș, their illustration being made by reproducing beautiful philatelic pieces (stamps, maxims, illustrated postcards, circulations, etc.). Following in whole or in part (in fragments) the route presented by us, anyone can explore the World Heritage and the rural and urban beauties of Maramureș County.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, participant's written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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APPENDIX



Fig. 13. Different circulated materials with the wooden church from Bârsana postal stamp [67,68]



Fig. 14. Different circulated materials with the wooden church from Rogoz postal stamp [74,75]



(a)



(b)



(c)



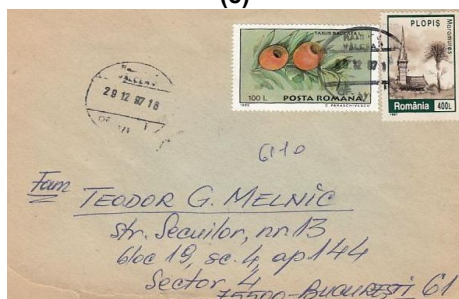
(d)



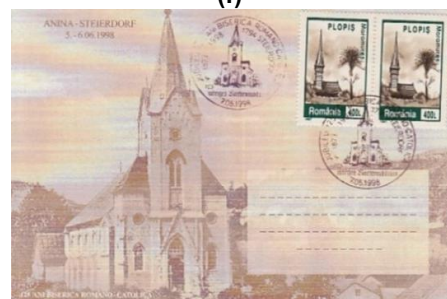
(e)



(f)



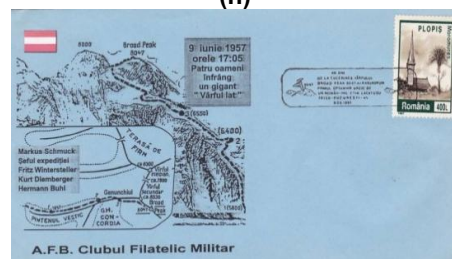
(g)



(h)



(i)



(j)

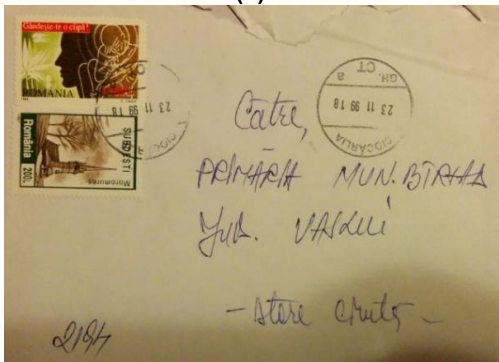
Fig. 15. Various circulations in the franking of which there is the postage stamp issued in 1997 dedicated to the church from Plopiș



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)



(g)



(h)



(i)



(j)



(k)



(l)



(m)



(n)



(o)



(p)



(q)



(r)



Fig. 16. Various circulations in the franking of which there is the postage stamp issued in 1997 dedicated to the church from Șurdești

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