

**THE LIGHT OF  
THY COUNTENANCE  
GREEK CATHOLICS  
IN HUNGARY**

METROPOLITAN  
CHURCH  
SUI IURIS OF  
HUNGARY

DEBRECEN  
2020

Cover images: wall-painting of the Pantocrator (by Zsolt Maklár) in the Nyíregyháza Seminary Chapel and a fragment of the icon *Christ the Great High Priest* from the iconostasis of Velyki Kom'yaty (*Magyarkomját*)

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Scripture quotations have been taken from the *English Standard Version* (Crossway Bibles, 2001). Passages from the Divine Liturgy have been adopted from the English translation of the *Ruthenian Recension* (2015). Sections from the Divine Office are from *Horologion* (Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, MA, 2019). The source of quotations and phrases from the Akathist Hymn is a traditional anonymous English translation.

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## II.2.2 The Wooden Church of Mándok

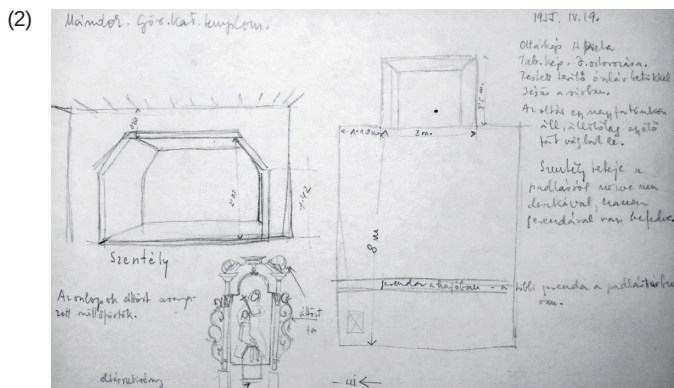
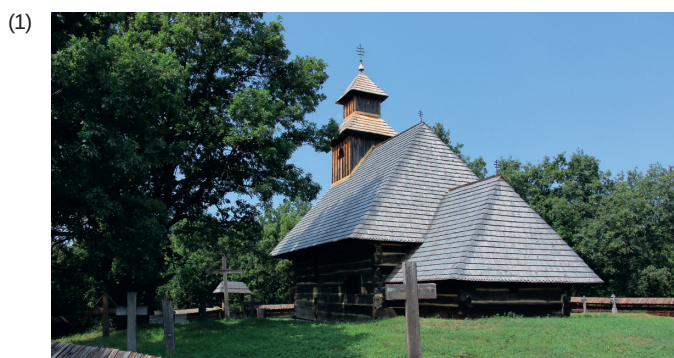
### *Szilveszter Terdik*

Attached to the so-called Upper Hungary ensemble of the Hungarian Open Air Museum, Szentendre, the renovated wooden church of Mándok was opened to visitors in 1978.<sup>1</sup> Ten years earlier, Miklós Dudás, Diocesan Bishop of Hajdúdorog, had permitted the nascent open-air museum to purchase the building.<sup>2</sup> The dismantling of the wooden church began in late May of 1971 and was completed by the beginning of the next month. Subsequently, it took nearly a decade to rebuild it in its current form (Picture 1).

The first known sketch survey of the church meeting academic standards was prepared by an archaeologist of the Jósza András Museum, Nyíregyháza, Emília Szentes Risztics in 1955<sup>3</sup> (Picture 2). A large amount of drawing- and photo-documentation was made about the building prior to its dismantling as well<sup>4</sup> (Picture 3).



(3)



Researchers date the appearance of Greek Catholics in Mándok to the period after 1650. One of the first documents relevant to them, preserved in the original, survives in the Diocesan Archives. In his letter written in the nearby Castle of Tizaszentmárton on 3 June 1680, the local landowner, 'chief steward' of the Forgách family of Halič (Gács), János Makfalvy, called upon the magistrates and principals of Mándok to leave the 'Russians' living in their midst in the service that they had been assigned to perform during the tenure of Péter Bodnár, as well as not to disturb their 'batko', i.e. priest. As described, they live in abject poverty, and the farmers own a total of eight oxen. Therefore, it is demanded that they not be forced to do cart duty to Nagykálló but should only serve on foot as they did before.<sup>5</sup> On 3 April 1686, István and Simon Forgách's plenipotentiary farm bailiff notes on the reverse side of the same letter that he affirms the content of the charter of emancipation of the 'Russians' of Mándok gained at the time of settlement until the landowner provides otherwise.<sup>6</sup>

The settlement document mentioned in the letter is as yet unknown, nor is it possible to establish who Péter

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<sup>1</sup> Kecskés, 1982. Kurucz, Albert – Balassa, M. Iván – Kecskés, Péter. *Szabadtéri néprajzi múzeumok Magyarországon*, Budapest, 1987, 104–105. Cseri, Miklós – Horváth, Anita – Szabó, Zsuzsanna (Eds.). *Fedezze fel a vidéki Magyarországot!*, Kiállításvezető, Szentendre, Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum, 2011, 224–225.

<sup>2</sup> Records concerning the selling of the church: GKPL, I–1–a (2), 1376/1968, *ibid.*, I–1–a, 2264/1968.

<sup>3</sup> The drawings survive in her sketch-book, privately owned.

<sup>4</sup> See in the Documentation Department of the Hungarian Open Air Museum, Szentendre.

<sup>5</sup> The foundation history of the parish is discussed, and a transcript of the first letter is published by: Papp, [1939], 11.

<sup>6</sup> NYEL, II–40–a (Box 1).

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Bodnár, described with the epithet 'poor', was – possibly an allusion to the fact that he was not alive any more at that time. The sources presented so far do not specify the exact date of settlement. It is not known which region the 'Russians' had come from, either. The epithet 'Russian' denoted not simply ethnic but rather religious affiliation in this period. It must have been used as a reference to serfs of mostly Rusyn origin who had come from the neighbouring counties less rich in land, in the hope of a better life. As for Bodnár, he must have been a 'businessman' managing the settlement process.

The time of the construction of the church is evidenced by the Cyrillic-script date carved into the lintel of the entrance, below the inscription 'Jesus Christ Conquers'. The letter-numerals had different readings: Some would decipher them as 1640, while others as 1670.<sup>7</sup> Based on a consensus among Slavists, museologist Péter Kecskés, conducting an investigation of the church, deemed the 1670 reading acceptable,<sup>8</sup> though 1676 would appear to be feasible, too.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, even 18<sup>th</sup>-century censuses do not reveal actual dates for the settlement or the construction of the church. In 1775, it was only alluded that the roof of the church had been renovated three years earlier. In that period, the *antimins* was from the time of Bishop György Bizánczy (1716–1733), an indication which again fails to furnish any secure clues for the dating of the building.<sup>10</sup> The larger one of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century church bells exhibits a date, with precisely the third digit missing. Nevertheless, in the literature, it is usually posited to have been made in 1709.<sup>11</sup>

On the village hill called *Bukóc*, the wooden church was built of finely carved oakbeams and covered with pine shingles. Its base plan is extremely simple: The rectangular nave is joined by a similarly shaped but narrower and shorter sanctuary. (The dimensions of the entire building are 13 × 5.86 meters / 42.65 × 19.22 feet). Local tradition had it that the altar of the *cerko* – as the community called the

wooden church – was created by carving the trunk of a live tree, but, during the dismantling, it became obvious that the thick, prismatic log had been brought here from a different location. The church was rebuilt in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century: The central partition dividing the nave into two parts marking the boundary between the women's and men's church was removed, and the same fate befell the wall separating the sanctuary and the nave, originally holding the iconostasis. Based on the marks they had left behind, the removed walls were authentically restored during the reconstruction.<sup>12</sup> The west steeple and a small porch in front of the entrance were built later, perhaps in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As, in the course of the reconstruction, the roof structure of the church was also restored in its original form, the porch was abandoned, but the steeple was retained. The mullions



(4)

<sup>7</sup> His drawing was published in: Kecskés, 1982, [6]. It displays several letters that may be interpreted as numbers: A X O S M. 1670 may be established with certainty, but the ensuing Cyrillic S ('z') corresponds to 6. The letter M, which follows, theoretically corresponding to 40, albeit not part of the number, might be the starting letter of the word for 'month', but the continuation of the inscription is missing. It was deciphered by Endre Cs. Tóth as 1640. His letter in this relation with a photograph: GKPL, I–1–a, 1896/1963. This data was also adopted in the listed-building topography of the County, based on the document kept in the parish office: Entz, 1987, 59. The latter must have been the ledger (*Ratiotinium*) of the church maintained between 1837 and 1912. Its final page has a hand-written note of the text above the church entrance but with the date of construction written in Arabic numerals: '1640: Esztendőben /Az ájtó Letzeken kivan Vágva' [In the year 1640 / It is carved into the lintel] – a reference to the inscription. The ledger is held in the archives of the parish.

<sup>8</sup> Kecskés, 1982, [3–6].

<sup>9</sup> See: fn 7; Puskás, 2008, 76.

<sup>10</sup> Véghseő–Terdik–Majchrics–Földvári–Varga–Lágler, 2016a, 37.

<sup>11</sup> Kecskés, 1982, [5]; drawings of the church bells: *ibid.*, [8].

<sup>12</sup> Balassa, M. Iván. A rekonstrukció és másolat kérdése a szabadtéri néprajzi múzeumok építésében, *Műemlékvédelem*, 17(1973), 173–174.

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(5)



were also refitted; the wrought-iron grills in front of them are genuine. According to the old ledger, the roof of the church was thoroughly renovated in 1837 and 1862; a new entrance was also made at that time. In the photographs taken prior to the dismantling, it is clearly visible that the walls of the church were plastered over and whitewashed. In 1863, payment was made for 2 bushels of lime; in 1903, the plastering of the interior walls cost a significant amount.<sup>13</sup>

Very little has been preserved from the 18<sup>th</sup>-century furniture of the church. The altar had a *Pietà* picture in an ornately carved, bevelled frame (Picture 4). This icon was lost during the reconstruction, or, at least, it was not returned to the church; at the moment, only its lower structure comprising the tabernacle is found on the altar. The bolt-type lifting door of the sacrament house is decorated by a depiction of the flogged Christ (Picture 5). The iconography of the altarpiece and of the tabernacle, as compositions alluding to the Eucharist, was already widespread in the Carpathian region in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup> A number of similar tabernacles are evidenced from wooden churches.<sup>15</sup> The bolt-type arrangement could perhaps be explained by the fact that the poor community could not even afford to place an order for a metal lock with a locksmith.

It was also during the dismantling that the uniquely shaped, elaborate 18<sup>th</sup>-century Royal Doors were

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<sup>13</sup> Számadáskönyv [ledger], 1837–1912. (In the parish archives)

<sup>14</sup> *Pietà* is frequently featured on the high altar or on the table of oblation. In Polish collections: for example, in the Sanok History Museum (Sanok, Muzeum Historyczne), see: Kułakowska-Lis, 2008, 86–88. Other specimens: Giemza, 2017, 385. Examples from Upper Hungary: Kožany (*Kozsány*), high altar of a wooden church (Pavlovský, 2007a, 61.); Ladomirová (*Ladomérvágása*), on the table of oblation (Pavlovský, 2007b, 79); (Uličské Krivé [*Ulics-Kriva/Görbeszeg*]) on the high altar of a wooden church (Pavlovský, 2008, 132). It is also featured on the high altar of the wooden church of Habura (*Laborcfő*) (moved to Hradec Králové, Czech Republic), see: Dudáš – Jiroušek, 2013, 154. Also in the wooden church of Ruská Bystrá (*Orosz-Bisztra/Oroszsebes*): *ibid.*, 129. The image of the flogged Christ decorates the tabernacle of the old high altar of the church of Sárospatak as well, see: Terdik, 2011a, 162, Pictures 15–16.

<sup>15</sup> At the icon exhibition of the Saris Museum in Bardejov (*Bártfa*) (Šarišské múzeum, Bardejov), several specimens are on display.

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recovered, with depictions of characters from Jesus' Holy Genealogy in small medallions surrounded by exuberant leaves from behind the sitting, relief-carving figure of Jesse holding a scroll in his hand (Picture 6). The Doors were made in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century; in all probability, they were procured by the community from itinerant masters periodically coming from the other side of the Carpathian Mountains, as must have been the case with the altar as well. These days, the 'twins' of the Mándok Royal Doors are also found in various Polish collections as well,<sup>16</sup> but very similar instances have survived in historic Upper Hungary<sup>17</sup> and today's Transcarpathia, too.<sup>18</sup>

As the pictures of the iconostasis had not been recovered,<sup>19</sup> during the reconstruction of the wooden church, icons to be placed on the icon screen were selected from the collection of the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest (Picture 7). Three of the four sovereign-tier icons made in the 1770s were bought by Antal Szmik, a collector from the Greek Catholic church of Borşa (*Felsőborsa*) in Maramureş (*Máramaros*) in 1906.<sup>20</sup> The icon of Saint Nicholas is different in style from the other icons yet dates from approximately the same period; its exact provenance is as yet unknown. Its peculiarity is that its board was part of a considerably larger *Last Judgement* icon, a fragment of which survives on the reverse in good condition.<sup>21</sup> The Apostle- and the Feast-Tier found their way first to the collection of the Department of Applied Arts and subsequently to the Ethnographic Department of the Hungarian National Museum from the former wooden church of Vyškovce (*Viskóc/Viskó*), Sáros County. As the picture depicting the Last Supper had been damaged, it was replaced by another icon, the so-called Not-Made-By-Hands Image of Jesus. The latter picture is from the former iconostasis of the church of Chorváty (*Tornahorváti*), also purchased by the Museum of Ethnography in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup>

The remaining furnishing items of the church also come from various places, mainly through the previous collection activities of the Museum of Ethnography,

Budapest. The high-armed chairs with arm rests were purchased directly from Aradványpuszta, but they were originally in the church of Nyíradony; they were made in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The importance of the church of Mándok is increased by the fact that it is the earliest extant wooden building and the sole surviving wooden church in post-Trianon Hungary.

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5. Tabernacle, 18<sup>th</sup> century. The wooden church of Mándok, Szentendre
6. The Royal Doors of the wooden church, 18th century
7. The interior of the wooden church of Mándok, see the opening picture of Chapter II.

<sup>16</sup> See: Gumińska, Bronisława. *Gallery „Orthodox Art of the Old Polish Republic”: The National Museum in Cracow, The Bishop Erazm Ciołek Palace*, Guidebook, Cracow, 2008, 74, 85; as well as the permanent exhibition of Muzeum Historyczne, Sanok.

<sup>17</sup> As part of the iconostasis of the wooden church of Nová Sedlica (*Újszék*) – currently in the Open Air Museum of Humenné (*Homonna*), see: Pavlovský, 2008, 85–87. Such a set of Royal Doors is also featured at the permanent exhibition of the East Slovak Museum (*Východoslovenské múzeum*), Košice (*Kassa*), see: Dudáš – Jiroušek, 2013, 149.

<sup>18</sup> Приймич, 2014, 120.

<sup>19</sup> Mention is also made of the icon of Saint Nicholas, which was allegedly from the iconostasis, as well as of an icon of Saint Stephen with a Cyrillic-script inscription, the original position of which is not disclosed. See: Entz 1987, 60.

<sup>20</sup> Terdik, 2016, 55–57.

<sup>21</sup> Terdik, Szilveszter. Szent Miklós-ikon Borsáról, *Görögkatolikus Szemle*, 29(2017). 12. szám, 16.

<sup>22</sup> Terdik, 2011b, 16.