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The Trial of the Soul. Post-Byzantine Visual Representations of the Tollbooths in the Romanian Churches of Maramureș*

The iconographic programs found in the wooden churches of Maramureș County in northern Romania witness a frequent appearance of the Last Judgment theme, a composition which has one of the most complex iconography in Byzantine and post-Byzantine sacred art. The present article intends to analyze the tollbooths' representations in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century iconography of the Last Judgment in the wooden churches situated in the southern part of the historical Maramureș (Hung. Máramaros) County,¹ more exactly in the Upper and Cosău Districts. The localities in which these historical buildings are to be found are situated in present-day Maramureș County. However, in this article I will constantly refer to a comparative study of the imagery to be found in the regions of Transcarpathia and Galicia (today Western Ukraine), too. Although the compositional element of ordeals in the Ruthenian and Russian Last Judgment iconography has been largely dwelt upon in a number of studies,² the representations of this subject to be found in the region of Maramureș have not yet been the subject of sustained scholarly research and in most cases only been mentioned in brief descriptions.³ Therefore, this study will present a detailed iconographic analysis of this subject, intending to answer the following research questions: What are the elements of tradition and innovation contained in the post-Byzantine iconography of the tollbooths in Maramureș? How did the motif develop during the Romanian communities' process of transition from Greek-Orthodox to Greek Catholic confession? What is the message the images of the ordeals are meant to transmit?

The first part of this essay will discuss the textual basis, the origin and development undergone by the iconographic motif of the tollbooths. The second part – following a brief account of the history of Maramureș and a description of the precise setting of these images within the wooden churches of the region –

will focus on the main purpose of my study, namely a detailed iconographic analysis of the tollbooths images found there. The last section of this article will investigate the meaning of this subject matter and also propose further perspectives of research in this visual material.

The *Life of St. Basil the New* – a tenth-century Byzantine work – represents the direct literary source of the iconographic motif of the tollbooths.⁴ This text contains descriptions of two eschatological visions: one shows the particular judgment, which takes place after death, and the other refers to the Resurrection and the Last Judgment. The personal judgment is described in the second part of the text, where Gregory, the saint's disciple, witnesses Theodora's journey through different stations situated in the air, where the demons charge her for the sins while the angels who are accompanying the soul defend her innocence⁵

“These angels of evil report all misdeeds in detail to the guardians of each gate, so that those who lie in wait for you to stop and stay each human soul who dies and takes this way of ascent may drive it off into the abyss of fire and the depth of Hades, where they have their place, unless the soul has properly repented of what he or she has done, and with the aid of a guardian angel is able to produce good deeds that clearly measure up and are balanced against the sins and base thoughts displaced by the accusers, and thus the soul will be able to escape their hands”.⁶

Thus this hagiographic writing describes in detail the belief of the Orthodox Church in the idea of *teloneia* (tollbooths), a concept which dates back to the time of Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376 – 444).⁷ *The Life of St. Basil the New* was especially popular not only among the Eastern Slavic Orthodox population⁸ but also among Romanians.⁹ The text circulated in two Russian versions by the early sixteenth century,¹⁰ while in the second case we can notice the existence of three Romanian redactions, out of which the oldest



Ill. 1 The Last Judgment, beginning of the seventeenth century, icon on wood, provenance: environs of the town of Przemyśl (Poland), National Museum in Kraków, inventory number MNK-XVIII-32.

appeared toward the middle of the seventeenth century.¹¹ Instead of the popularity and the frequency with which the *Life* circulated and aside from the fact that the tollbooths worked their way into folklore, one may easily notice that except for the Carpathian and northern Rus' regions, where this motif is most frequently depicted, the tollbooths were not often depicted as visual images.

Excluding the frescoes in the monastery of Rila (Bulgaria) and the "Moldavian monasteries" of Proboata, Arbore, Humor, Voroneț and Moldovița (Romania), where the tollbooths appear as an independent scene, being in relationship with the Last Judgment theme but not in its immediate vicinity, the pictorial representations of this motif were usually included in the complex composition of the Last Judgment. The earliest depictions of the tollbooths appear in the northern and Carpathian Rus' iconography of the Last Judgment, beginning with the fifteenth century. The icons from the regions mentioned above depict twenty or twenty-one customhouses as rings on a serpent's body: on each of these ordeals the devils are holding scrolls with the name of a bad deed, closely based on the sins described in the *Life of St. Basil the New*, while the angels are holding a soul in their arms.¹² (Ill. 1)

But, as John-Paul Himka points out, on the Ruthenian artworks this element could be found in two other designs – as a ladder of booths and a zigzag road with tollbooths – beginning with the sixteenth century.¹³ Himka classifies this iconographic element in three different types according to the designs mentioned above.¹⁴ Aside from these forms of representation, two other variants of tollbooth depictions have been identified by Lilya Berezhnaya; namely, the aerial tollbooths painted on clouds as in the nineteenth-century fresco of the Kyivan Caves Lavra and the chain of rings used to symbolize the ordeals, preserved in some seventeenth-century Ruthenian woodcuts.¹⁵

On present-day Romanian territory, besides the depictions of the tollbooths from Maramureș, the representation can be found in different regions. On the sixteenth-century external frescoes of some of the Moldavian monasteries, it takes a new form as a tower with access ramps.¹⁶ (Ill. 2) Other examples occur on two wall paintings from the end of the eigh-

teenth century in the Sălaj region of Transylvania, where the image of the tollbooths is depicted as a chain of rings¹⁷ (Ill. 3) and on a few woodcuts made in Wallachia and Moldavia (first part of the nineteenth century), taking the form of a serpent.¹⁸



Ill. 2 The Tollbooths, 1547, external fresco, Voroneț monastery (Romania), northern facade.

Interestingly enough, the motif of the tollbooths does not appear in the Balkan region except in Bulgaria. It is worth noticing that in the *Hermeneia*, also called *Mount Athos Painter's Guide*, written by Dionysius of Fourna between 1730 and 1734, this iconographic element is not recorded. The same absence is to be mentioned in the Romanian versions of the painter's manuals.¹⁹ So far I have been able to detect two depictions in Bulgaria, both dating from the nineteenth century²⁰ but displaying different designs: the icon from the Preobraženski monastery depicts the toll-

booths on a serpent, while on the external frescoes of the main church of the Rila monastery this motif takes the form of aerial customhouses painted on clouds.²¹ (Ill. 4) Some categories of works that come from the two last regions mentioned above, namely the woodcuts from Wallachia and Moldavia and the icon from the Preobraženski monastery, which depict the serpent tollbooths variant, certify in my opinion the spreading of the Russian and Ruthenian compositions of the Last Judgment in these geographical areas through engravings.

For those who are unacquainted with the history of Maramureș, a few words are necessary on the political and religious coordinates of the region. After the Battle of Mohács in 1526, a great part of the Hungarian Kingdom was occupied by the Ottomans and transformed into a Turkish eyalet.²² The principality of Transylvania was created in 1541 under Ottoman suzerainty to which were also attached the counties of the "Partium", among them Maramureș. At the end of the seventeenth century Transylvania was occupied by the Habsburgs and the Leopoldine Diploma issued in the year 1691 defined the status of Transylvania within the Habsburg Empire and stated that Maramureș remained within the boundaries of Transylvania. Following the defeat of the Rákóczi uprising, in the Peace of Szatmar (1711) Transylvania preserved the boundaries of the old principality including the "Partium". These boundaries, however, remained a continuous object of dispute, both Transylvania and Hungary claiming these territories. A decree dating from 1732 regulated the situation, deciding the inclusion of the Maramureș county in the territories of Habsburg Hungary.²³ As regards the distribution of the main two ethnic groups of this region, which were originally Orthodox, the northern part of the county was predominantly inhabited by Ruthenians, while on the southern side of the Tisa River the majority of the villages were Romanian.²⁴ By the end of the year 1711 the newly invested Orthodox bishop of Maramureș, Serafim of Petrova recognized the Union with the Church of Rome. Although the Romanian archpriest could not preserve his fidelity to his commitment to Rome because of the local opposition, his gesture "remains the first act of the toilsome penetration process of the idea of a church union in Maramureș County".²⁵ After



Ill. 3 Painter Nichita, Hell and the Tollbooths, the end of the eighteenth century, wall-painting, the village church of Cehei (Romania), narthex, western wall.

a period of more than two decades during which we witnessed the struggle for jurisdiction over this region between the Greek Catholic Bishops of Mukachevo (Hung. Munkács) and Făgăraș (Hung. Fogaras), on 1st July 1733 the emperor Charles VI named Simion Ol-savskyi bishop of Munkács and Marmaros.²⁶ Thus all the Eastern Rite communities from this region were passed officially under the jurisdiction of the bishops of Mukachevo.

In comparison with the regions of Galicia and Transcarpathia, where the scene of the tollbooths has been depicted frequently,²⁷ this iconographic motif was seldom included in the Last Judgment composition in the south of Maramureș. In this region there are still a number of thirty-one extant wooden churches,²⁸ where so far I have been able to detect twenty-two representations of the Last Judgment. The majority of the Last Judgment compositions in Romanian Maramureș are wall paintings, with the exception of one wooden icon and three colored lithographs. Out of these, only four images of the tollhouses have been

identified, and unfortunately one of them has not been conserved.

All four representations of the tollbooths from Maramureș are located in parish churches belonging to Romanian villages (Budești-Josani, Călinești-Căieni, Ieud Deal and Oncești). They are situated in the space of the narthex,²⁹ which in this region is named the women's church because the female members of the community participate in the church service from there. As regards the iconographic program of the narthex the painters had to select certain themes and reject others, given the limited space available. The main criteria in this selection were the didactic, moralizing value and the eschatological message of one episode or another. Therefore Judgment Day was given a prominent place, being depicted beside other themes like the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the Parable of Dives and Lazarus, the Temptation of Christ, St. Marina killing the devil, and St. Parascheva giving her clothes to the poor. In the case of the Maramureș wall paintings, the Last Judgment scenes are characterized by ample depictions, typically developed horizontally: on the wall paintings from Călinești-Căieni, Oncești and Ieud Deal the Last



III. 4. The Tollbooths, 1840-1872, fresco, main church of the Rila monastery (Bulgaria), exonarthex, southern wall.

Judgment composition is displayed on either two or three walls. At Călinești-Căieni the centre of the composition is painted on the western wall, while at Oncești and Ieud Deal it occupies the eastern wall. Thus in the last two cases the scenes of the Last Judgment were the last images the congregation would see when leaving the church. Regarding the location of the wooden icon in Budești, nowadays it is displayed on the northern wall of the narthex, but its original location is not certain.

As regards the iconography of this theme in Romanian Maramureș, those representations which date back from the seventeenth to the beginning of the nineteenth centuries resemble generally the Byzantine composition of the Last Judgment, being composed of its main iconographic elements.³⁰ The theme is constructed on a central axis; Jesus Christ's figure can be seen on the top of the composition, while the

eternal Heaven and Hell are displayed on the right, respectively on the left of the Judge. In the Last Judgment iconography from Maramureș, the tollbooths are painted always on the right side of Jesus. The works of sacral painting from this county display certain features that are indicative of a connection with the artistic production of the Carpathian region.³¹ This aspect can also be noticed in the Last Judgment representations in south Maramureș, which have several characteristic features in common with the artworks originating from Galicia and Transcarpathia, incorporating some elements typically either only for the region of Carpathian Rus' (the image of death, devils driving sinners in a hand cart, and the Parable of the Unicorn), or for both the Russian and Ruthenian iconographies³² (the resurrection of the dead taking the form of a circle, the Heavenly Jerusalem and the fall of the rebel angels). John-Paul Himka concluded in his monography on the iconography of the Last Judgment in the Carpathians that the direction of influence was from northern territory to south, pointing out that



III. 5. Mykhail Popovych, The Last Judgment, seventeenth century, icon on wood, village church of Budești-Josani (Romania), narthex, northern wall.

the iconography of the Last Judgment spread from the Carpathian Rus' region to the south, reaching Romanian Maramureş in the seventeenth century.³³ But some later works of the Last Judgment, dating back from the nineteenth to the early part of the twentieth century,³⁴ were beginning to be inspired more and more by western models, not only in matters of style but also with regard to their iconography.

Harking back to the tollbooth's images, in comparison with the northern part of the Maramureş County, where out of the number of three representations of this element which so far I could identify,³⁵ two compositions present a zigzag road with tollbooths,³⁶ and on one work the ordeals take the form of a ladder of booths,³⁷ a very clear classification of the depictions located in the Romanian churches of the southern part proves to be difficult. Even though the representations are located in a small territory, it may be observed that they do not adhere to a single type. In this geographical area, we find different interpretations in which the ordeals are sometimes situated in booths arranged vertically, diagonally or even horizontally. In the images of the customhouses in Maramureş, there are no depictions of the snake with ringed tollbooths. Instead, the painters used two other designs: the tower customhouses and the aerial tollbooths.

The oldest representation of the tollgates in Maramureş appears on the Budeşti-Josani icon (Ill. 5), painted in the seventeenth century.³⁸ This is the only wooden icon preserved in the southern part of the historical Maramureş County. One of the many Slavonic inscriptions on this work is very important because it most probably indicates the painter of this work, who was the son of a priest: "The most sinful Mykhail Popovych from Kolomyia, from Rus', [painted?] this second coming of Christ: the incorporeal battle". The content of the inscription to be found on the Budeşti-Josani icon proves that the process of southward expansion of the Last Judgment iconography was aided by the presence of Carpathian Rus' works in the region of Romanian Maramureş.

At Budeşti-Josani the representation of the customhouses takes the form of a ladder of boxes, a design which was frequently used beginning with the sixteenth century only on Carpathian icons, not being found in the Russian iconographical tradition.³⁹ In



Ill. 6. Mykhail Popovych, Detail: The Tollbooths, seventeenth century, icon on wood, village church of Budeşti-Josani (Romania), narthex, northern wall.

comparison with these icons, though, the scene at Budeşti-Josani (Ill. 6) is located not on the border of the salvation side but closer to the middle of the composition. Traditionally there were twenty or twenty-one tollbooths on the Carpathian and northern Rus' icons, but at Budeşti-Josani, as in several other cases,⁴⁰ there appear fewer customhouses; namely, twelve. Unfortunately only four of the scrolls that the devils are holding contain readable inscriptions. In contrast with other Carpathian Rus' icons, here the inscriptions identify sinners and not the sins committed: thief (the first tollbooth), silver lover (the fourth tollbooth), murderer (the fifth tollbooth) and infanticide (the sixth tollbooth).⁴¹ Except for the infanticide, all the



Ill. 7. Alexandru Ponehalski, The Tollbooths, village church of Călinești- Căieni (Romania), 1754, wall-painting, narthex, eastern wall.

other three sinners which are condemned are modeled on the bad deeds described in the text the *Life of St. Basil the New* in its first Rus' redaction.⁴²

The most complex representation of the Last Judgment conserved in the region of south Maramureș is a wall painting in the wooden church of Călinești-Căieni. The inscription, written in Romanian with Cyrillic characters and painted on the clouds below the apostles reads: "This saint thing has been paid by the w[hole] village, Marinca with his husband [...] and the nobles, to be taken [into account?] health and [for]giveness [of ?] the sins, for all alms [...] 1754, August the 9th, the painter Alekzander Ponehalskii".⁴³ In this case, aside from the date and the painter's name, the inscription offers important information about the commissioners. In Maramureș County, some of the Romanians had a different social situation than other territories with a numerous Romanian population belonging to the Habsburg Empire: in this region there were many Romanian landowners and noblemen of the Eastern Rite.⁴⁴ Alexandru Baboș points out that "whether the Uniate nobles formed a majority or only

a frail minority in a parish, in the second half of the 18th century, they seem to have assumed its protection partially or entirely, due to their double condition as owners and parishioners [...]. The initiative could come from an individual noble, a particular family, a group of various nobles and even the entire community of nobles [...]. Nevertheless, we should notice the major role played by the noble clerics".⁴⁵ Călinești was a noble village⁴⁶, and as the inscription from this church proves, the local noblemen assumed a major role in the embellishment of their parish church. As to the origin of Alexandru Ponehalski, the scholar Bernardt Puskás⁴⁷ has reached the conclusion – based on stylistic analysis – that this itinerant painter hailed from the town of Rybotycze, Poland, where a painting workshop existed.⁴⁸ The painter settled in the Romanian village of Berbești in Maramureș County and worked in the southern part of this region.⁴⁹ As regards the possible models of inspiration for him, despite the fact that the two Last Judgment icons from the second half of the seventeenth century⁵⁰ – which probably came from the Rybotycze workshop⁵¹ – present the tollbooths on a serpent, the painter had chosen to depict this iconographic element in different ways.



Ill. 8. Alexandru Ponehalski, *The Tollbooths*, village church of Călinești-Căieni (Romania), 1754, wall-painting, narthex, eastern wall.

The scene starts with the representation of a group of people who are being gathered by an angel in order to pass the tollbooths, as the inscription above it confirms (Ill. 7). The painter chose to depict twelve customhouses, not arranged vertically as in Carpathian Rus' iconography but instead placed horizontally and diagonally as booths with roofs (Ill. 8). There is a devil painted inside each booth, while the angel protects the soul from outside. But in comparison with other depictions where the devil holds a scroll containing only the name of the sin, here both the angel and the demon bear in their hands papers with narrative descriptions of the bad and good deeds done by the dead man.

It is very interesting how Alexandru Ponehalski managed to structure this composition: trying to connect the scene of the particular judgment with the depictions of Paradise and Hell, the painter represented the tollbooths not as an ascent to heaven, but as a descending ladder. At the bottom of the ladder the final fate of the soul is represented: depending on

whether or not he or she is able to pass the examination, the soul will be rewarded with eternal life in Paradise, like the choirs of various saints, or will be punished for its sins and taken by devils to the endless pains and torments of Hell. The inscriptions written on the scrolls are of utmost importance. At the first two tollbooths the "dialogues" between the demons and angels are the following: "That is not going to church on every Sunday and holiday" - "That prayed at home and Christ forgave him?"; "That didn't obey his father and mother" - "He took care of his old parents in his house until death". At the third and the fourth tollhouse only the inscriptions written on the angels' scrolls have been preserved: "This has confessed and gave benefactions and Christ forgave him"; "This has confessed and a religious service was made after his death". At the fifth customhouse the texts are completely destroyed, while at the sixth tollbooth only the description of the kind act has been conserved: "This fasted on Friday[s] and Wednesday[s] and Christ forgave him".⁵² The next two pairs of good and bad deeds are: "This committed 7 big sins" - "This believed in 7 sacraments of the church and Christ the Lord forgave him"; "[Women] of [man] has been separated" -



Ill. 9 Alexandru Ponehalski (?), The Tollbooths, ca. 1765, wall-painting, village church of Ieud Deal, narthex, western wall.

“Before death this confessed and repented”; “This swore falsely and on his brother [...]?” - “This made one hundred liturgies”. Further the devil accuses the soul of the following: “That has eaten [people?] and killed them”,⁵³ but the angel defends him “That fasted for seven years and much [...]?”. At the eleventh tollhouse we witness the accusation for the next sin: “The priest who has married another [woman]”, while the angel responds that: “He broke up with her and repented”.⁵⁴ At the last customhouse only the description of the good deed is visible: “This was redeemed from all his sins upon his repentance”.⁵⁵ The only composition which I have encountered so far, which bear some common features with the representations in Maramureș, is the image of the tollhouses from Rila monastery in Bulgaria, which dates back to the 19th century. Here the angels are also holding scrolls, but

only with inscriptions of the name of the good deed. Additionally, scrolls on which written narrative descriptions of the sins charged at every customhouse are painted at the top of the squares which delimitate each ordeal. But compared to Maramureș the content of these inscriptions are based on the sins included in the text the *Life of Saint Basil the New*.

Shortly after 1766 Alexandru Ponehalski painted the same scene in the church of Ieud Deal⁵⁶ (Ill. 9), probably sometime after the repairs performed in 1765.⁵⁷ In the case of this picture the painter didn't depict the booths anymore. The aerial character of the tollhouses is emphasized here through the depiction of flying angels carrying the souls in their arms. We may witness a reduction of the number of the ordeals to three, but curiously, in this image the painter represented a whole group of people at one of the customhouses instead of picturing the usual depiction of one dead man. At the bottom of the scene, as in the Călinești-Căieni church, Alexandru Ponehalski

painted the saints approaching the gate of Paradise on one side and the devils taking the souls of sinners to Hell on the other side.

Many inscriptions are hardly readable, and I have managed to decipher only two of them: "These people argued inside the church and that is why I don't let them pass",⁵⁸ but the angel defends them with these words: "Go devil away because for those sins they have had a big penance, and the Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven them".⁵⁹ Regarding the nature of this dispute, Alexandru Baboş suggests – in his study discussing the partition of the places in the wooden churches of Maramureş – that this image "aimed to remind the worshippers the difficult tests that await those who disputed for places or for other reasons inside the church".⁶⁰ In fact exactly in the village of Ieud, a document from 1689, attests to the existence of a conflict between noble families for the places inside the parochial church.⁶¹

The wooden church of Onceşti – which is now located in the open air museum of Sighetu Marmăţiei – was decorated by an anonymous painter, probably in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁶² Although the painting has not been conserved, its appearance is known from a description made by the scholar Anca Pop-Bratu in the 1970s. The author described the scene – which was located on the southern wall – as depicting the tollbooths in the form of a tower with stairs.⁶³ I am not in possession of further information, but the brief description mentioned above indicates similarities to those representations painted on the external frescoes of the monasteries in Bucovina, attesting to a possible reception of the Moldavian iconography. At the time when Anca Pop-Bratu analysed the scene on the painting of the village church of Onceşti (Maramureş County) there was only one inscription preserved, which represented the accusation brought against the soul by the devil: "They didn't understand and didn't behave as they were told in the church".⁶⁴

The study of these images and inscriptions associated with them allows conclusions to be drawn about the gradation of sins, the good deeds, and the forms of repentance encouraged by the Church in order to help the souls overcome their transgressions. Regarding the category of transgressions represented

on the tollbooths in Romanian Maramureş, it can be observed that the painters did not always follow the literary source because in addition to the sins described in the *Life of St. Basil the New*, they chose also to depict the breaking of some of the Ten Commandments, the accumulation of more sins ("seven big sins") and even bad acts which reflect local realities (such as conflicts between parishioners, the priest's behavior and the disobedience of the priest's word). Therefore, these cultural artifacts represent an important source not only in the study of religious mentalities but also as regards social aspects of the Romanian rural communities in the historical County of Maramureş. It is very interesting to notice – as the inscriptions in the Maramureş churches indicated – that every sin was considered forgiven by God if people confessed them and showed repentance following the spiritual guidance of the priests.⁶⁵ One inscription also expresses the belief professed by the Eastern Church which says that the fate of the soul can be influenced after death "through the prayers and intercessions of the living".⁶⁶

In the context of this region, where the transition of the Romanian communities from Orthodox to Greek Catholic confession could be witnessed, it is important to point out the meaning the images of the ordeals intend to transmit. The scholar Lylia Berezhnaya, in her study analyzing whether or not the iconographers of the Ruthenian Last Judgment compositions interpreted tollbooths as the "intermediate place", the Purgatory, concluded "that the tollbooths were perceived precisely as a testing, not an expiating procedure".⁶⁷ As a matter of fact, in two of the Romanian wooden churches of Maramureş, the meaning of tollbooths as a trial of the soul is accentuated through the representation of the soul which at the end of its journey through the aerial customhouses can take either the road of Heaven or Hell, depending on its capacity of overcoming or not overcoming the ordeals. Furthermore, by analyzing the tollbooths' depictions on the Carpathian Rus' icons, John-Paul Himka reached the conclusion that in the first period (sixteenth-first half of seventeenth centuries) all the icons had customhouses, while only two-thirds of the icons from the second period (second half of seventeenth-eighteenth centuries) displayed this image. The author's

opinion regarding this omission is that it probably “reflects the influence of the West, which never displayed much interest in the idea of tollbooths and developed instead the concept of Purgatory”.⁶⁸ A similar process can also be observed in Maramureș, where the later Last Judgment depictions, influenced by the catholic art, no longer include the image of the tollbooths. More information about the donors and the painters of the customhouses’ images from Maramureș, correlated with this iconographic material, can in the future provide answers to a further research question: Were the representations of the tollbooths from the eighteenth century painted with the purpose to emphasize orthodox dogmas and to distinguish these parish communities from those which had accepted the union with Rome?

The general conclusion of this study is that in Romanian Maramureș the iconographic motif of the tollbooths came from the Carpathian Rus’ region, but here the scene underwent a different development. In the eighteenth century the innovations consist of the reduction of the number of ordeals, sometimes even to three, and the presence of narrative descriptions of the bad and good deeds done by the dead, which actually constitute a “dialogue” between the demons and angels contending for the soul’s innocence and guilt. These peculiar features singularize the depictions of tollbooths to be found in the Romanian Maramureș region in the iconography of this motif. The present article has focused especially on the iconographic analysis of this visual material, but further investigations – correlated with an ample study on the religious texts from Maramureș and its neighboring regions – can in the future provide more detailed information regarding the perception on the particular judgment and different sins. Furthermore, a detailed comparison between the depiction of sins on the tollbooths and in the scenes of Hell could be the subject of another interesting study.

Endnoten

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1. The historical Maramureș County differs in terms of geographic territory from the present-day county with the same name, situated in Romania. The present county has a smaller surface: it doesn’t include anymore the territories north of the river Tisa, but it incorporates the regions of Chioar and Lăpuș, which belonged to Chioar District and Solnocul Interior (Hung. Belső-Szolnok) County.
2. See for example Heinz Skrobucha, *Zur Ikonographie der „Jüngsten Gerichts“ in der russischen Ikonenmalerei*, in: *Kirche im Osten*, 5 (1962), p. 51-74. David Goldfrank, *Who Put the Snake on the Icon and the Tollbooths on the Snake? A Problem of Last Judgment Iconography*, in: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 19 (1995), p. 180-199. Vladimir Klavdievich Tsodikovich, *Semantika ikonografii ‘Strashnogo Suda’ v russkom iskusstve XV-XVI vekov* (Semantics of the iconography of the Last Judgment in Russian art in the 15th and 16th centuries), *Uljanovsk* 1995, p. 21-22, 49-50. John-Paul Himka, *The Icon of the Last Judgment in the Village of Roztoka, Transcarpathia*, in: *Zachodnioukraińska sztuka cerkiewna*, part 2: *Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej Łańcut-Kotań 17-18 kwietnia 2004 roku*, ed. by Jarosław Gienza, Łańcut 2004, p. 363-380. Lilya Berezhnaya, *Sub Specie Mortis. Ruthenian and Russian Last Judgement Icons Compared*, in: *European Review of History/Revue européenne d’histoire*, 11 (2004), No. 1, p. 8-17. John-Paul Himka, *The Last Judgment Icon of Mshanets*, in: *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 33/34 (2008/2009), p. 219-226. Idem, *Last Judgment Iconography in the Carpathians*, Toronto-Buffalo-London 2009, the subchapters “Serpent and Tollbooths”, “Tollbooths”, p. 47-53 and 110-113.
3. See Victor Brătulescu, *Biserici din Maramureș* (Churches of Maramureș), in: *Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice*, 34 (1941), p. 48-49. I. D. Ștefănescu, *Arta veche a Maramureșului* (Old Art of Maramureș), București 1968, p. 94. Anca Pop-Bratu, *Pictura murală maramureșeană* (Mural painting from Maramureș), București 1982, p. 27, 36, endnote 130, fig. 20, 32. Cristina Bogdan, *Reprezentarea „Ireprezentabilului”. Chipurile Morții în iconografia românească* (Depiction of the “Undepictable”. Images of death in the Romanian iconography), in: *Caiete de antropologie istorică*, 5/6 (2004), p. 79, footnote 31. Alexandru Baboș, *Tracing a Sacred Building Tradition, Wooden Churches, Carpenters and Founders in Maramureș until the Turn of the 18th Century*, Norrköping 2004, p. 226, fig. 19. Cosmina-Maria Berindei, *Imaginarul eschatologic în iconografia românească* (The Eschatological Imagination in the Romanian Iconography), Cluj-Napoca 2008, the subchapter “Vămile Văzduhului”, p. 51, fig. 47, 48, 56, 57. Himka 2009, *Last Judgment Iconography*, p. 53, fig. 2.28.
4. Goldfrank 1995, *Who Put the Snake on the Icon*, p. 180. Himka 2009, *Last Judgment Iconography*, p. 47-52. The text of the *Life of Saint Basil the New* has been accompanied by illustrations probably beginning with the seventeenth century. Miltiadēs K. Garidēs points out that some Russian illuminated manuscripts – dating back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – contain depictions which present Hell as a cave, or the image of St. Basil the New being greeted by an angel, and accompanied in the upper register by the Deesis and the apostles sitting on thrones. However, the author doesn’t record the presence of the toll-

- gates as an independent illustration. See Miltiadēs K. Garidēs, *Etudes sur le Jugement Dernier post-byzantin du XVe à la fin du XIX siècle. Iconographie, esthétique*, Thessalonikē 1985, p. 103.
- Lennart Rydén, *The Life of St. Basil the Younger and the Date of the Life of St. Andreas Salos*, in: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 7 (1983), p. 568-586. George Every, *Toll Gates on the Air Way*, in: *Eastern Churches Review* 8 (1976), p. 139-151. *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. by Alexander P. Kazhdan, vol. I., Oxford 1991, p. 270-271. The number of the tollbooths can vary from twenty to twenty-one depending on different redactions of the text the *Life of St. Basil the New*. The version analyzed by David Goldfrank includes twenty-one tollbooths: slander, abuse, envy, falsehood, anger and fury, pride, profanity, usury and deceit, indifference and vanity, avarice, drunkenness, unforgiveness, sorcery, gluttony, idolatry and heresy, sodomy and pederasty, adultery, homicide, theft, fornication, stinginess and hard-heartedness. This version is cited in A. N. Veselovskij, *Razyskanija vo oblast' russkogo duxovnogo stixa*, in: *Sbornik Otde-lenija russkogo jazyka i slovesnosti*, 46.6, 1889, p. 21-41.
 - After the English translation of George Every. See Every 1976, *Toll Gates*, p. 146.
 - Kazhdan 1991, *The Oxford Dictionary*, vol. I., p. 593, p. 728, vol. II, p. 1182. Every 1976, *Toll Gates*, p. 140.
 - Lilya Berezhnaya, *Perception of death in the Polish Orthodox and Catholic Religious Literature in the 17th century. An attempted comparison*, in: *Proceedings of the Commission Internationale d'Histoire Ecclesiastique Comparée*, Lublin 1996, part 3: *Churches and Confessions in East Central Europe in Early Modern Times*, ed. by J. Kloczowski, H. Kaszkiewicz, Lublin 2000, p. 92. I wish to thank Dr. Lilya Berezhnaya for making her articles available to me.
 - Nicolae Cartoian, *Cărțile populare în literatura românească* (Popular books in Romanian literature), București 1974, vol. 2, p. 202. Meda Diana Bărcă, *Carte și societate în Transilvania secolului al XVIII-lea. Manuscrise de cărți populare românești* (Books and society in Transylvania in the 18th century. Manuscripts of Romanian popular books), Cluj-Napoca 2002, p. 7 and 536. Out of the many manuscripts and printed books of the *Life of Saint Basil the New* found on the Romanian territory, the only exemplar still preserved, which probably originates either from Maramureș or its neighboring regions, is a printed book (1847, București, located now in the Collection of the Rohia Monastery Library). Maria Stanciu-Istrate, *Cele mai vechi cărți populare în literatura română*, vol. IX, *Viața Sfântului Vasile cel Nou și Vămile Văzduhului* (The oldest popular books of Romanian literature, vol. IX. *The Life of St. Basil the New* and the heavenly tollbooths), București 2004, passim, *Socolan Aurel, Circulația cărții românești până la 1850 în județul Maramureș* (Circulation of Romanian books in the Maramureș County until 1850) (PhD thesis), Cluj-Napoca 1983, p. 116.
 - Himka 2009, *Last Judgment Iconography*, p. 49. Idem, *On the Left Hand of God: "Peoples" in Ukrainian Icons of the Last Judgment*, in: *States, Societies, Cultures East and West. Essays in Honor of Jaroslav Pelenski*, ed. by Janusz Duzinkiewicz, New York 2004, p. 321, endnote 12.
 - Stanciu-Istrate 2004, *Cele mai vechi cărți populare*, p. 16-31.
 - Himka 2009, *Last Judgment Iconography*, p. 49-53, table 2.1.
 - Ibid., p. 110-113, fig. 3.14, 3.16. Berezhnaya 2004, *Sub Specie Mortis*, p. 11-12, figure 3.
 - Himka 2009, *Last Judgment Iconography*, p. 113.
 - Berezhnaya 2004, *Sub Specie Mortis*, p. 13, figure 4.
 - The tollbooths are painted on the external frescoes in Probota, Arbore, Humor, Voroneț and Moldovița. Some of these images are reproduced in Paul Henry, *Monumente din Moldova de Nord. De la origini până la sfârșitul secolului al XVI-lea. Contribuție la studiul civilizației moldave* (Monuments of Northern Moldova. From the Origins to the End of the 16th Century. A Contribution to the Study of Moldavian Civilization), București 1984, p. 226, fig. 82 and Ileana Stănculescu, *Il Giudizio Universale nella pittura murale esterna del nord della Moldavia. The Last Judgment. External Mural Paintings from the Northern Part of Moldavia*, Bologna 2001, p. 132-134. I am grateful to Elena Firea for providing me with more information about the location of the tollbooths on the external frescoes of the Moldavian monasteries. I would also like to thank her for supplying me with photographs and permission to publish them.
 - These two wall paintings are located in the wooden churches from Cehei and Zalnoc and were probably made by the same painter Nichita. In these two cases, though, we do not meet compositions of the Last Judgment in the strict sense, since the paintings contain only the depiction of the scale where the souls are weighed and ample representations of Hell, without the Judge or the image of Heaven. See Ioan Godea, Ioana Cristache-Painait, *Monumente istorice bisericesti din Eparhia Ortodoxă Română a Oradei. Biserici de lemn* (Historical ecclesiastical monuments of the Orthodox Eparchy of Oradea. The wooden churches), Oradea 1978, p. 289, Bogdan 2004, *Reprezentarea „Ireprezentabilului”*, p. 79, footnote 31.
 - The woodcuts of the Last Judgment are included in the following printed books: *Life of St. Basil the New*, București, 1819 (CRV 1050, Romanian Academy Library), p. 1 and *The New Testament*, Neamț Monastery, 1818, the last page. See Ion Nianu, *Nerva Hodos, Bibliografia românească veche 1508-1830* (Old Romanian Bibliography 1508-1830), vol. III, Fasc. I-II, 1809-1817, București 1912, p. 246, 314. Andrei Oișteanu, *Imaginea evreului în cultura română* (Image of the Jew in the Romanian Culture), București 2001, p. 280.
 - See Dionisie din Furna, *Carte de pictură* (Painting manual), București 1979, p. 174-177, Vasile Grecu, *Cărți de pictură bisericească bizantină* (Byzantine ecclesiastical painting manuals), Cernăuți 1936, p. 205-209.
 - Bulgarische Ikonen*, catalogue of the exhibition Wiesbaden 1985, Recklinghausen 1985, fig. 39. Christo A. Christov, *Das Rila-Kloster. Die Geschichte, das Bauerwerk, Wandmalerei und Holzschnitzerei*, Sofia 1957, p. 52.
 - In his book, the scholar Miltiadēs K. Garidēs includes a photograph of a painting which also displays the aerial tollbooths on clouds in a very similar depiction to those from Rila and Kyivan frescoes. The information attached to the photograph, however, indicates only the year and not the place of origin of the painting. See Garidēs 1985, *Etudes sur le Jugement Dernier*, fig. 67.
 - Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804*, Seattle-London 1996 (A History of East Central Europe 5), p. 70.
 - See *Istoria României* (History of Romania), București 1962, vol. II, p. 801, vol. III, p. 487.
 - Nicolae M. Popp, *Crișana și Maramureșul în conscripția iosefină* (Crișana and Maramureș in the Josephine Conscription), București 1947, p. 24-25, fig. 3, p. 73-75, annex 1. *A Munkácsi görög-katolikus püspökség lelkészsegeinek 1806. Évi összeírása*, (Conscription of the Greek-Catholic diocese of Munkachevo for the year 1806), ed. by István Udvari, Nyíregyháza 1990 (Vasvári Pál Társaság Füzetei 3), p. 158.
 - Ovidiu Ghitta, *Nașterea unei biserici. Biserica greco-catolică din Sătmăr în primul ei secol de existență (1667-1761)*, (The Birth of a Church. The Greek-Catholic Church of Sătmăr in its first century of existence, 1667-1761) Cluj-Napoca 2001, p. 158.
 - Idem, *O veche dispută bisericească și semnificațiile sale* (An old ecclesiastical dispute and its meanings), in: *Viață privată, mentalități colective și imaginar social în Transilvania* (Private life, collective mentalities and social imagination in Transylvania), Oradea-Cluj 1995-1996, p. 222.
 - Himka 2009, *Last Judgment Iconography*, p. 110-111, see the Table 3.13.
 - See Baboș 2004, *Tracing a Sacred Building Tradition*, p. 140-143.
 - Except for the external painting in Giulești-Mănăstirea (depicted on the western wall, above and flanking the entrance door) all the wall paintings from Maramureș are situated in the space of the narthex.
 - The most frequent Byzantine elements included in the Last Judgment compositions in Maramureș are the following: Deesis, the apostles flanking Christ the Judge, the Hetoimasia, the representation of Adam and Eve, choirs of various saints (bishops, prophets, emperors, martyrs, monks and saint women), the gate to Paradise, the river of fire and the lake of Gehenna with the representation of Satan sitting. Sometimes we can notice the presence of angels assisting Jesus, the rolling of the heavens to-

- gether as a scroll by two angels, the Paradise represented by the Mother of God and the good thief, and chambers with different torments. For more information about the classic Byzantine composition of the Last Judgment see: Desanka Milošević, *Das Jüngste Gericht*, Recklinghausen 1963. Beat Brenk, *Tradition und Neuerung in der christlichen Kunst des ersten Jahrtausends. Studien zur Geschichte des Weltgerichtsbildes*, Graz/Wien 1966.
31. The term "Carpathian icon" was defined by the polish scholar Janina Kłosińska as designating the icons that originated on a specific territory, namely the Ukrainian, Polish, Slovaks Carpathians and the Romanian territories of Maramureş and Bucovina, and which display common features not only in matters of style and iconography but also with regard to some technical solutions. The author argues for the usage of this concept instead of the terminology which has been used in the literature (Ukrainian, Ruthenian or Lemko icons). See Janina Kłosińska, *Ikony. Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie. Katalog zbiorów* (Icons. National Museum at Krakow. Catalogue of the Collection), vol. I, Kraków 1973, p. 11-12. John-Paul Himka, *Episodes in the Historiography of the Ukrainian icons*, in: *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 29 (2004), No. 1/2, p. 149-167. Bernadett Puskás, *Questions Related To The Research Of Greek Catholic Art. Debate About The Concept Of The Carpathian Region And Its Lessons*, in: *Symbolae. Ways of Greek Catholic heritage research. Papers of the conference held on the 100th anniversary of the death of Nikolaus Nilles SJ*, ed. by Tamás Végheő, Nyíregyháza, 2010 (Collectanea Athanasiana I/3), p. 121-138.
 32. Himka 2009, Last Judgment Iconography, p. 47-64, 131-136.
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 174, 186, 189.
 34. See the wall painting in Fereşti (beginning of the nineteenth century) and the three colored lithographs (late nineteenth-early twentieth century) which are located in the village churches of Breb, Sălişteana de Sus (the church of Nistoreşti), and Budeşti-Susani. The colored lithograph which is preserved in the last church circulated not only in this region but also in Bukovina and Galicia. *Ibid.*, p. 170, fig. 4.42.
 35. So far I have been able to detect seven depictions of the theme Last Judgment in the northern part of Maramureş.
 36. The icons in the village churches of Roztoka and Tiushka, which are both published in Himka 2004, The Icon of the Last Judgment, p. 367, fig. 4, Himka 2009, Last Judgment Iconography, fig. 3.16, p. 111, endnote 51.
 37. The wooden icon of Nehroveths. Himka 2009, Last Judgment Iconography, p. 111, endnote 48.
 38. Marius Porumb, *Vechi icoane din Maramureş (secolele XV-XVIII)* (Old icons from Maramureş, 15th-18th centuries), in: *Studii si Cercetări de Istoria Artei, Seria Artă Plastică*, 22 (1975), p. 79-84. Himka 2009, Last Judgment Iconography, p. 238.
 39. See, for example, also the icons and wall paintings in Hankovice, Stanylia, Novoselytsia and Shelestovo, which date back to the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries. Himka 2009, Last Judgment Iconography, p. 110, 113.
 40. For example, the representations on the icons in Roztoka, Tiushka, Shelestovo (nowadays in the possession of the Transcarpathian Museum of Folk Architecture in Uzhgorod) and the icon located in the Museum of the History of Religion, Lviv (its provenance its uncertain, but it bears similarities with the icons from Roztoka and Tiushka).
 41. The translation of these inscriptions painted on the Budeşti-Josani icon was made by Prof. John-Paul Himka, and I wish to thank him for his help.
 42. Himka 2009, Last Judgment Iconography, table 2.1, p. 50-51.
 43. The reading of this inscription was made by the scholar Anca Pop-Bratu. The original text in Romanian is: „Acesta s[fi]n[ti]tu lucr[u] au plă[ti]t[ă] [to]t[ă] satul Marinca cu so[ti]u [...] şi (bo)ierii ce cu so(coteală) [pen]tru sănătate şi [ier]tare [de] p[ă]ca[te] pentru to[ti] poma(nă) [...] 1754, avgust 9, zugravul Alekzander Ponehalskii”. See Pop-Bratu 1982, Pictura murală maramureşeană, p. 114, nota 109.
 44. Baboş 2004, Tracing a Sacred Building Tradition, p. 40-41.
 45. *Ibid.* p. 263.
 46. A noble village was characterized by the fact that it was inhabited and owned either entirely or partly by Eastern rite landowners. They lived beside their serfs, but formed an important part of the village community. *Ibid.*, p. 40, 254.
 47. I am grateful to Dr. Bernadett Puskás for providing me with more information about the Rybotycze workshop.
 48. Bernadett Puskás, *Kelet és Nyugat között. Between East and West. Ikonok a Kárpát-vidéken a 15–18. században. Icons in the Carpathian Region in the 15th-18th Centuries*, Budapest 1991, p. 21.
 49. Unfortunately, sufficient information for reconstructing a detailed biography of Alexandru Ponehalski does not exist. According to Anca Pop-Bratu, the painter was probably the leader of a local workshop. He worked in many wooden churches of Romanian villages, as for example the ones from Călineşti-Căieni, Berbeşti, Budeşti-Susani, Budeşti-Josani, Sărbi-Susani, Mănăstirea, Borşa, Deseşti and Ieud-Deal, being the author of many icons, as well as wall-paintings. Pop-Bratu 1982, Pictura murală maramureşeană, p. 23-24. Marius Porumb, *Dicţionar de pictură veche românească din Transilvania, sec. XIII-XVIII* (Dictionary of old Romanian painting in Transylvania, 13th-18th centuries), Bucureşti 1998, p. 294-295. Idem, *Icoane din Maramureş* (Icons from Maramureş), Cluj-Napoca 1975, p. 18-19.
 50. The icon from the village of Volosianka, in the present preserved in the Budapest Museum of Ethnography (Néprajzi Múzeum) and the one from Wola Wyzna, now located in the Historical Museum in Sanok. See Puskás 1991, Kelet és Nyugat között, fig. 38, p. 63, Himka 2009, Last Judgment Iconography, p. 99, 110, endnote 45.
 51. Both the scholars Vasyl Otkovych and John-Paul Himka agree that the Last Judgment theme is rarely met in the Rybotycze school. Himka 2009, Last Judgment Iconography, p. 99.
 52. Part of these inscriptions has been destroyed, thus they could be deciphered only partially. They have been retranslated in comparison with the readings made by the researchers Victor Brătulescu and Anca Pop-Bratu. See Brătulescu 1941, Biserici din Maramureş, p. 48-49. Pop-Bratu 1982, Pictura murală maramureşeană, endnote 130.
 53. Pop-Bratu 1982, Pictura murală maramureşeană, endnote 130.
 54. Brătulescu 1941, Biserici din Maramureş, p. 49.
 55. Pop-Bratu 1982, Pictura murală maramureşeană, endnote 130.
 56. The painter didn't sign the wall painting in Ieud Deal church, but the stylistic and iconographic analysis has proved that Alexandru Ponehalski is the author of this work, too.
 57. Baboş 2004, Tracing a Sacred Building Tradition, p. 226.
 58. Almost the same reading at Victor Brătulescu. See Brătulescu 1941, Biserici din Maramureş, p. 112.
 59. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
 60. Baboş 2004, Tracing a Sacred Building Tradition, p. 226, fig. 195.
 61. Other similar cases could be witnessed in the villages of Săpânţa, Berbeşti, Sarasău, and Apşa de Jos. The documents from these localities testify that the places in the church - partitioned according to the rank and contribution of the parishioners - were left as an inheritance to the successors, and that the violation of this right could constitute a motive to advance reports of action at law, See the State Archives Maramureş, Baia Mare (Romania), fond 301, 7/1696, passim, and Baboş 2004, Tracing a Sacred Building Tradition, p. 226, footnote 18.
 62. Pop-Bratu 1982, Pictura murală maramureşeană, p. 49-50.
 63. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
 64. *Ibid.*
 65. This aspect is emphasized in the analysis made by George Every. See Every 1976, Toll Gates, p. 147, 150.
 66. Kazhdan 1991, The Oxford Dictionary, vol. I, p. 594.
 67. Berezhnaya 2004, Sub Specie Mortis, p. 13.
 68. Himka 2009, Last Judgment Iconography, p. 111.

Illustrations

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- III. 9, Photographs Archive of the Oaş Land Museum

Abstract

The present article analysis the representations of the aerial tollbooths in the iconography of the Last Judgment painted during the seventeenth and eighteenth century in the wooden churches, situated in the southern part of the historical Maramureş (Máramaros) County (nowadays Romania). Besides the representations of the customhouses as a series of booths arranged vertically, diagonally or even horizontally, in Maramureş the painters used two other designs, namely the tower customhouses and the aerial tollbooths. The iconographic motif of the tollbooths came in this region from the Carpathian Rus' territory; but in Romanian Maramureş the element will be characterized by a different development: the innovations consist of the reduction of the number of ordeals (sometimes even to three) and the presence of a "dialogue" between the demons and angels who are contending the soul's innocence and guilt. In comparison with other depictions where usually the devil holds a scroll only with the name of the sin, in Maramureş both the angel and the demon are presenting papers with narrative descriptions of the bad and good deeds done by the dead man. The study of these images allows conclusions to be made about the gradation of sins, the good deeds, and the forms of repentance encouraged by the Church, which will help the souls to overcome the transgressions. However, these cultural artifacts represent an important source not only for the religious mentalities, but also for the social aspects of the Romanian rural communities in the historical County of Maramureş, because a part of them reflect local conflicts between parishioners.

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Titel

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