

**JOVANA BOŠKOV<sup>1</sup>, ȘTEFAN COTÂRLĂ<sup>2</sup>, SEBASTIAN COTÂRLĂ<sup>3</sup>, SERBIA**

**Cuvinte cheie:** case tradiționale, moștenire culturală, turism, români, Voivodina, Serbia

## **Funcția caselor tradiționale în păstrarea moștenirii culturale a românilor și rolul lor în turismul din regiunea Voivodina (Serbia)**

### **Rezumat**

Casele tradiționale din lemn sunt un mijloc adecvat pentru păstrarea identității unui neam. Ambianța lor permite celor care le folosesc să afle cum au trăit și muncit strămoșii lor în trecut. Ba mai mult, rolul lor crește în cadrul industriei turismului și ele devin adesea parte integrală a pachetului turistic. Ele sunt atractive pentru turiști pentru că în ele se păstrează obiecte casnice, mobilă și unelte care au fost folosite în trecut și care nu mai pot fi găsite în altă parte.

Această lucrare prezintă casele românești tradiționale care există în Voivodina, la fel și rolul lor actual și potențial în turismul din această zonă.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Sciences, Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management, Novi Sad, Serbia; E-mail: boskovjovana@gmail.com;

<sup>2</sup> University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Sciences, Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management, Novi Sad, Serbia; E-mail: stefankotrla@gmail.com;

<sup>3</sup> University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Romanian Studies, Novi Sad, Serbia, E-mail: sebi.kotrla@gmail.com

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## **Function of Traditional Houses in Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Romanian People and their Role in Tourism of Vojvodina Region (North Serbia)**

### **Summary**

Traditional houses are a good way to preserve the cultural identity of one nation. Their settings allow users to find out how their ancestors have lived and worked in the past. Furthermore, their role in the tourism industry is increasing and are often an integral part of the package tours. They are very attractive for tourists because they store objects, furniture and tools that were used in the past, and which cannot be seen elsewhere.

This paper presents the Romanian traditional houses that exist in Vojvodina, as well as their current and potential role in the tourism of this area.

## **Function of Traditional Houses in Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Romanian People and their Role in Tourism of Vojvodina Region (North Serbia)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Vojvodina, as extremely multinational environment, has a great number of different nationalities, and each of them has its own tradition, customs and cultural heritage. The existence of a large number of nationalities in a relatively small area such as Vojvodina, caused their interweaving and mixing. One of the most numerous national minorities in Vojvodina are Romanians, whose highest concentration is in Banat. Banat is an area where Romanians always had a focus of their territorial concentration in Vojvodina, primarily due to the proximity of the home state, while they inhabited poorly in Bačka and Srem. The only significant concentration of Romanians in Backa is the territory of the Apatin municipality, while in Srem there is a small number of Romanians. Some Romanian settlements are very old. Some of them are mentioned in the fourteenth century (Kicošev and Bjeljic, 1996). Beside the Romanians, also Serbs, Hungarians, Slovaks, Rusyns, Roma, Bunjevci and other nationalities are present in Vojvodina. All these cultures have been preserved in great extent. Some of the ways to achieve it are: oral tradition, customs that are passed from generation to generation, folk songs and written works, then organizing various events, and more recently the establishment of traditional houses with exhibitions that reflect the culture and tradition of one nation.

Traditional house is a house with the entire economy, which is built in the traditional folk architecture style of Serbian as well as Romanian, Slovak, Bunjevci, Croatian and other population in Serbia. Traditional houses also have elements of private agricultural holding, whose basis is the preservation of traditional agricultural. They also represent the cultural heritage (Todorović and Bjeljic, 2007). In recent years a number of these houses is increasing. In addition to preserve cultural identity they play important role in the tourism industry, and are often an integral part of the package tours. They are very attractive for tourists because they store objects, furniture and tools that were used in the past, and that almost can not be seen elsewhere.

### **CULTURAL IDENTITY OF ROMANIAN PEOPLE IN VOJVODINA**

Planned colonization of Romanians on the territory of Vojvodina contributed to the growth of their concentration in this part of the Pannonian plain. In fact, the lack of a larger natural geographic barriers and proximity of the home state, caused the highest concentration of Romanians in the south and southeast Banat. The first settlements of Romanians in Serbian part of Banat, are mentioned very early (14th century). However, the largest immigration of Romanians on the territory of Vojvodina was from the 17th to the 19th century (Kicošev and Bjeljic, 1996). It is clear that the colonization of Romanians among the Serbian population resulted by mixing of those two cultures, but also of other cultures that have been, or are still present in Vojvodina. In such multi-ethnic environment each of these cultures attempted to preserve its identity.

The identity of the Romanians is a particularly interesting phenomena, which has its roots in the period of formation of the Romanian national movement in the Habsburg monarchy, in the last decades of the 18th century and the first decades of the 19th century. Until 1918, this identity was not substantially different from the identity of Romanians in other parts of the historical Banat. One of the specific elements of this identity, which was present even in the Austro-Hungarian period, was caused by geographical location of Romanians in the western parts of Banat. The fact is that they were located

on the outskirts of the Romanian ethnic area, in surrounding where Serbs were dominated. Serbian influence on the Romanian identity is noticeable primarily on religious as well as linguistic base - using Serbian words in everyday speech, taking Serbian names, customs, elements of folk costumes etc. (Đurić-Milovanović at al., 2011). In Vojvodina the Romanians are highly concentrated in Banat (eastern part of Vojvodina), so the cultural institutions are also predominantly formed in this area.

The most important cities in which the cultural identity of Romanian people was established are Vršac, Pančevo and Bela Crkva. In Vršac, the Romanian citizens managed to build a church, in the period between 1910-1912. The church was consecrated on 23rd of May, 1913 and on that occasion a rich cultural program was organized. For the first time, the Romanian church choir under the direction of Friedrich Renger performed in public (Cinci, 2003). In this period, cultural activities of Romanians in Vršac were very intense. In Pančevo, only after establishment of the Romanian Orthodox parish (1899), favorable conditions for organizing cultural life and for development of the national movement of Romanians were created. In the same year, priest Trifon Miklja buys a building that becomes the Romanian Orthodox chapel, consecrated on 30th of January, 1900. It is also significant to mention that the “Romanian Singing Society” was founded in 1901 and “Society of Romanian women” was registered in 1911. It should also be noted that in Pančevo (during the Austro-Hungarian period), first publications written in Romanian language were published. It was the journal “Pedagogical talks” („Covorbiri pedagogue“). The journal was launched in 1886 in Banatasko Novo Selo, and in the same year the editorial board was moved to Pančevo. The first literary journal in Romanian language in the area of southern Banat, called “Star” (“Steaua”), was also published in Pančevo. In Bela Crkva, cultural life of Romanians was developing faster than in other places. Romanians built their church in 1871. It is mentioned that in 1877 one cultural event was held, and by that occasion the ancient Romanian folk dance “Kalušarul” was played. In the same year, in Bela Crkva, four theater plays in Romanian language were shown. The most important cultural institution of the Romanians in Bela Crkva “Romanian vocal choir” had adopted its rules in 1879 (Maran, 2004; 2006). Combining the Romanian national identity and the identity of the state in which they live, Romanians in Vojvodina have created a unique, one may say local identity.

## **ROMANIAN TRADITIONAL HOUSES IN VOJVODINA**

On the territory of Vojvodina there is a number of traditional houses that present folklore heritage of different nationalities. These houses were made deliberately or spontaneously, as a result of great love of individuals or groups, seeking to preserve the memory and spirit of the old times. Their founders are mostly individuals, enthusiasts, lovers of history (Ivkov et al., 2007).

Regarding to the traditional houses that present the Romanian heritage, three are currently active and open for tourist visits, and these are: traditional house in Torak, traditional house in Uzdin and traditional house in Lokve.

### ***Traditional house in Torak***

Traditional house in the village of Torak (Žitiste municipality) was opened in 2002. Its adaptation was financed by the Foundation for Ethnography and Folklore of Romanians, provincial and municipal Government, a number of donors, as well as the Embassy of Romania. In 1997, at the proposal of the president of the Romanian Association (Foundation) for Ethnography and Folklore from Vojvodina, Kosta Rošu, decision on establishment of the Museum of fostering culture and traditions of the Romanians in the Serbian part of Banat was adopted. So, in 1999, the Museum of Romanian spirituality from Vojvodina, centered in Torak, was formed

This traditional house is an authentic building characteristic for Banat village, whose ethnographic collection consists of about 200 exhibits depicting the way of life of the Romanians in this area (in the house, on the field, in social life). The building with the collection bears the name of

“Banat house” and with the space and amenities that surround it - “Ethno complex Banat house”. This ethno complex presents folk architecture of Romanians in Vojvodina, and includes a house, a church building of the Romanian Orthodox Church, smokehouse, barn with old tools and agricultural machines. Within the complex, the most interesting is a wooden church. It should be mentioned that this is the only Romanian church of that kind built in the Serbian Banat, and it is a present from the benefactor of Caras-Severin County in Romania. Within the complex there are also the gift shop, and the meeting room. In this traditional house is also the seat of the Foundation for Ethnography and Folklore of Romanians in Vojvodina.

From 2002 to the present day, Banat house has hosted numerous participants of cultural and artistic events. Tourist events that take place within this complex are (Todorović and Bjeljic, 2007; Košić, 2012):

- Festival of winter customs
- Ethno Fair
- Festival of documentary ethno film.

### ***Traditional house in Uzdin***

Romanian house in Uzdin was founded on 21st of May in 2005 in cooperation with Romanian consul in Belgrade, Radu Bajenaru. This house became the real Romanian cultural center, in which the various events are being held. The house has several rooms and every room is presenting some thematical part. There are: the library “Petru Mezin” with a fund of over 4,000 books, gallery “Torna, Torna Fratre”, a poetic terrace “Targovistea”, museum room “Sport in Uzdin through the centuries”, a rich collection of old household items, old photographs, collection of folk costumes, as well as a room in traditional style of Uzdin.

The Romanian traditional house is a gift to literary-artistic society “Tibiscus” from Uzdin. It was donated with cultural purposes and as a memory of their father dr. Petru Dimcea by the brothers dr. Dorel Dimcea, a medicine specialist from Nicosia, and Dan Dimcea, working in the scientific research of IBM in Paris. The exhibition items in this house have great museum and spiritual value.

The following cultural events are being held in the Romanian house ():

- The reciters contest “Blagovesti” (“Annunciation”)
- International symposium “Ugledni ljudi Banata” (“Prominent People of Banat”)
- Creative literary festival of Banat speech “Todor Krecu Toša – Petru Dimcea”
- Literary colloquium “Trebalo bi da nose jedno ime”(“They should take one name”)
- “Svetlosne palube” (“Light Decks”)
- International festival of poetry “Putevi klasja” (“Ways of Spikelets”)
- Meetings of writers from Banat.

### ***Traditional house in Lokve***

Traditional house in the village of Lokve was founded in 2014. The building dates from 1958. Currently, there are five rooms in which are housed exhibits between 100 and 200 years old. The owner of this traditional house, Stivi Miuca had carefully collected old objects for years. As in the previous two, in this traditional house are also exposed exclusively exhibits of the Romanian folklore. Among the most important are: a rich collection of traditional costumes, rugs, dishes, furniture. In the courtyard there are: carriages, plows, planters etc. The plan is to expand on two more rooms.

In this traditional house many Romanian customs are recorded. As this traditional house is recently opened, it has not yet hosted any event, but it is planed for the future. It is open for tourist visits during the whole year.



**Figure 1.** Romanian traditional house in Lokve village; Foto: *Stivi Miuca*

### **THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL HOUSES IN PRESERVING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF ROMANIAN PEOPLE**

Traditional houses are a symbol of Vojvodina. They have great significance for the history, culture, ethnology, as well as tourism. Three Romanian traditional houses that are existing in Vojvodina play an important role in preserving the cultural identity of Romanian people in this region, they also promote it and prevent it from falling into oblivion. A large number of items that were used in everyday life, furniture and various tools that are exposed in these traditional houses held the memory of past times and our ancestors way of life. These authentic objects, over 100 years old, are true example of traditional architecture in the Pannonian plain, and also the holders of the culture of life. They reveal the original appearance of Romanian households and all the visitors who come to visit these objects can get an impression about functionality, size, arrangement and use of the space, as well as social and economic purpose of residential buildings. In them is exposed a large number of old objects that are no longer used, and are an important element of the Romanian folklore. These subjects have been carefully collected for years and arranged to represent a kind of thematic areas (eg. traditional bedroom, clean room, kitchen). All exhibits in traditional houses are of a great cultural, historical and spiritual values.

Also, a very important element for cultural identity preservation is the folk costume. In all traditional houses that are currently present in Vojvodina, folk costume is an essential item that attracts visitors attention. Presentation of folk costumes in traditional houses is significant because they rarely can be seen elsewhere.

Furthermore, the organization of various cultural events is also of great importance. The aim of these events is to preserve tradition and social customs, as well as to express cultural diversity, while some of them have the aim to popularize an art. As mentioned, in the Romanian traditional houses various cultural events take place every year. The fact is that these events are not largely visited, but their role in preserving the cultural identity of Romanians in Vojvodina is extremely important. This is supported by the fact that some of them are visited by a number of participants from the Republic of Romania (Boškov et al., 2014). The advantage of organizing events in traditional houses is authentic environment, which complements the overall experience.

It can be concluded that traditional houses play very important role in preserving the cultural

identity of Romanians in Vojvodina. They are representing a kind of “Museums of Romanian folklore” which keep the spirit of past times. For the time being in Vojvodina there are only three Romanian traditional houses. Considering a large number of Romanian settlements in Vojvodina, it is preferable to establish few more traditional houses, in order to contribute to the preservation and promotion of Romanian culture in this area more significantly.

## **THE ROLE OF ROMANIAN TRADITIONAL HOUSES IN TOURISM OF VOJVODINA**

Traditional houses have become almost inevitable segment of the rural tourism offer in Vojvodina. Almost in every village in Vojvodina there is an traditional house that reflects traditional architecture and cultural tradition of Serbs, Romanians, Slovaks, Hungarians, Rusyns or another nation that is characteristic for a certain part of this province.

As already mentioned, in Vojvodina there are three Romanian traditional houses and all of them are located in Banat, which is logical given the fact that in this part of province concentration of Romanian people is the highest. Each of these traditional houses is well equipped and decorated, and as such has all the quality for inclusion in the tourist offer of Vojvodina. Apart from rural tourism, these objects are also part of offer for different forms of tourism (e.g. cultural tourism, event tourism, agrotourism). Visiting the traditional houses is included in the programs of individual travel agencies. Furthermore, a big number of school excursions includes visits to traditional houses. Also, these objects are often hosts for different cultural and artistic events, and some of them are traditionally held for many years.

However, tourism in Vojvodina is generally undeveloped, so the number of visitors to these traditional houses is relatively small. Tourism in Vojvodina is faced to a great number of problems. Regarding to the traditional houses, as the biggest problem can be stated that their founders are mostly individuals, enthusiasts, lovers of the past. The problem is in the inability to provide sufficient financial resources for their development and preservation (Košić, 2012). In addition, the promotion of these objects is extremely poor. None of the three Romanian traditional houses does not have a website, and the information that can be found on the websites of tourism organizations are very poor and mainly referring to the address and phone number. By greater investment, primarily in the promotion, protection and restoration of the traditional houses, development of tourism in Vojvodina can be advanced. The fact is that traditional houses are typical for Vojvodina region. Especially interesting is the fact that Vojvodina is a multinational area with a large number of nationalities. This relatively small area is inhabited by Serbs, Hungarians, Romanians, Rusyns, Slovaks and other nationalities. Each of these nationalities has its own ethnic and cultural characteristics, and the best way to present and preserve them from oblivion are the traditional houses. In Vojvodina there are traditional houses dedicated to each of these nationalities. One of the interesting potential tourism products is linking these traditional houses in a single, thematic entirety, ie. creating tourist package that would include visit of Serbian, Romanian, Hungarian, Rusyn and Bunjevci traditional house. Creating of such themed tours would provide the promotion and presentation of Vojvodina's multi-ethnic heritage, while at the same time it could be a tourist brand of this part of Serbia. Individual visits to traditional houses are included in arrangements of travel agencies, but local travel agencies in Serbia currently does not offer packages that include such complex thematic tours. Current role of romanian traditional houses in Vojvodina tourism mainly involves visits of small number of individuals, school excursions, as well as the organization of cultural events. The largest number of visitors is in the period from May to October, while it is lowest in winter months. By carefully planning of tourism development, forming a different travel tours, as well as by adequately promotion, the role and importance of Romanian traditional houses in tourism of Vojvodina can be significantly improved.

## CONCLUSION

The role and importance of Romanian traditional houses in Vojvodina is multifaceted. Primarily, this importance is reflected in preservation of the Romanian culture, history and tradition, as well as folk architecture. Furthermore, these traditional houses play an important role in tourism in this part of Serbia. Traditional houses are the guardians of Romanian ethnic heritage and, as such, they kept from oblivion traditional way of life and work of Romanian people. As Vojvodina is characterized by distinctive multi-ethnicity, it is clear that people of different nationalities had many difficulties to preserve their customs and to prevent their interference with the customs of other nations. Therefore, the role of traditional houses is very important. In traditional houses different elements of a culture, such as old dishes, furniture, tools and folk costumes can be exposed. They are also representing an appearance of residential building and ancillary facilities of rural households. During their tour, visitors can enjoy the charms of past times. Moreover, traditional houses are hosts to many events that reflect the culture, tradition and creativity, and that is another way of preserving the cultural identity of Romanian people in Vojvodina. With their contents they fully meet the requirements of modern tourism demand and represent outstanding tourism potential. However, tourism in Vojvodina is in generally poorly developed. Thus the traditional houses, as a form of tourist offer in Vojvodina, are underutilized.

Traditional houses are representing a unique ethnic mosaic in Vojvodina. By carefully planning, investment and development, they can be improved as the tourism brand of this part of Serbia.

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