

IOAN GODEA, *Monumente de arhitectură populară în nord-vestul României* (Monuments of folk architecture in the North-West of Romania), Oradea, Muzeul Țării Crișurilor, 1972, 80 p. + 1 map + 60 photos and designs. An index, summaries in French, English and German.

Published in the collection edited by the "Țara Crișurilor" Museum in Oradea, this work deals with the monumental architecture in wood in one of Romania's areas less known from this point of view, namely the former Sylvania, situated in the West of the country, mentioned as early as the 12th century by the Anonymus *Belae regis notarius* as inhabited by Romanians. In this area, crossed by the rivers Barcău and Crasna, a very interesting architecture in wood had developed along the centuries which, by its being a link between the zone of Maramureș in the North and that of Bihor in the South, ranges within the great unity of the Romanian people's architecture.

The description of the historical events and of the uninterrupted cultural relations between the Romanian Lands in the Middle Ages confer on this book also a particular significance as to the history of the Romanian culture as a whole. By reminding some facts, which seem to concern rather the ecclesiastical history such as the edict proclaimed in 1279 by the Buda catholic synod on the strength of which the Romanian population was prohibited from building stone or brick churches or the extension in 1391 of the jurisdiction of the Maramureș monastery at Peri over the Romanian areas of Sălaj, Sătmar and Bihor – the author spotlights the basic unity, ethnical as well as linguistic, of the Romanians in Transylvania. This accounts for the heavy circulation of Romanian manuscripts from Maramureș since the 15th century and of prints since the 16th century, which came from all parts of Romania, from Transylvania and from towns beyond the mountains such as Bucharest, Buzău, Tirgoviște, Rimnic and Jassy and also from some southern localities in Serbia such as Karlovitz.

The author is quite right when ascertaining that organically the Romanian churches in wood are part and parcel of the Romanian folk culture and arts: "The great number of these wooden churches preserved in the Bihor – an area permanently inhabited by a population, the continuous material traces of which can be detected all along the centuries up to the ancient times – the employment of local building materials and their construction by local artisans, their longitudinal design specific of Romanian buildings for worship – their ornaments which agree with the style traits of the Romanian folk arts, the fact that from the very beginning they were meant for the Orthodox faith, the adherents of which in these regions

were Romanians only, and that all the books and inscriptions (written in Cyrillic or Latin letters) are in Romanian – are only a few of the arguments which entitle us, without any possibility of denial, that they are creations specific of the Romanian people".

The work relies on an exhaustive field investigation, which the author – museologist and research worker at the Oradea "Țara Crișurilor" museum – made in the zone, rather limited in surface, of the upper basins of the rivers Barcău and Crasna, where he recorded twelve wooden churches in the villages Chieșd, Sighetul Silvaniei, Derșida, Zalnoc, Cămar, Ceheiu, Poț, Tusa, Boianul Mare, Vișoara, Sacalasău and Brusturi. Each monument is presented in a monographic way; the design, elevation and ornaments are described and special emphasis is laid on the characteristic elements and also on the relationship with similar monuments in other parts of Romania, Moldavia inclusively. The presentation of the monument is preceded by a historical information on the village and by a number of demographic statistical data on the evolution of the population in the given locality. The pointing out of the ethnographic characteristics of the villages in question is helpful in placing the monument in the specific environment of these old Romanian settlements.

The presentation of the field investigation is supplemented by a well-compiled bibliographical list and an arduous study of local archives, the entries of which little studied so far are expected to cast new light on some important aspects of the olden history of these Romanian areas, situated in the extreme Western parts of the country. The study of the architecture is completed with an analysis of the interior paintings and sometimes

of the exterior ones, the author succeeding in revealing several new names of church painters unknown so far.

A rich illustration, consisting of photos and elevations, accompanies this very interesting work to be followed by other volumes which will present the wooden monuments of architecture in other areas of Western Romania.

Paul Petrescu

CONSTANTIN PRUT, *Fantasticul in arta populară românească* (The phantastic in the Romanian folk art), Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest, 1972. 52 p + 40 plates, a bibliographical list and summaries in French and German.

The recent decennium witnessed a marked trend towards investigating "the phantastic" — a complex notion, fraught with multiple shades of meanings and interpretations which has allured many thinkers and researchers adherents of various schools of thought and concerned with different problems, ranging from philosophers and ethnologists to historians of arts and literary critics. In our country too, some remarkable essays have been published signed by Al. Philippide, Edgar Papu, Radu Bogdan and Răzvan Theodorescu, to which we have to add the quite recent book by the arts critic Constantin Prut, *Fantasticul in arta populară românească* (The Phantastic in the Romanian Folk Arts), issued by the Meridiane Publishing House. Turning to account a rich foreign speciality literature, Constantin Prut directs the reader's attention to the unjustly forgotten Romanian bibliography on this theme which, besides such names as Lucian Blaga, Mircea Eliade, George Călinescu and Ovidiu Papadima, intent particularly on defining the ensemble of the Romanian cultural phenomenon in its folkloric manifestation, includes also some noteworthy and tireless ethnographers and folklorists having worked in the late 19th and early 20th century such as Simion Florea Marian and Tudor Pamfile. His wide cultural horizon, based mainly on the knowledge of the problems of modern arts, enabled Constantin Prut to penetrate in the world of the Romanian people's arts along a less known or even nearly completely untrodden path.

The chapter dealing with general aspects is followed by a chapter on the sources of "the phantastic" in the Romanian folk arts, where the author correctly dissociates the reality of the folkloric vision of the world from the various modalities of the artistical expression, which reflects the sequence of the historical epochs

and of the dominant social formations. The Romanian artistic experience is a complex one, in which "the mythology of the East, the biblical tales, elements of migrating civilizations, the Western Middle Ages claim each its share in the formation of a vision, which [. . .] is a point of contact of the East with the West, of the meridional tension and the northern nocturnal traits". It was quite natural that such a background of historical confluences and such an artistical experience had generated a typology of "the phantastic" which is nearly confusing through the implications on and associative links with multiple planes of the Romanian collective frame of mind. Chapter III — "The phantastic in the world of the Romanian folklore" — reflects the effort made by the author to systematize the rich folkloric material he collected from printed collections and through his own investigations in the villages of his native Northern Moldavia. On "the cosmic plateaux" — according to Blaga's terminology — which lingers in the Romanian people's cosmogonic vision live the differentiated worlds of the Giants and Gentles, who had preceded the present mankind, in which the Ogres too find a place to live on and would succeed it. The correspondence of the folkloric phantastic apparitions with their plastic images in the people's paintings, in the works of the wood carvers and in ceramics is modified by the latter's preponderantly symbolical load — a circumstance quite obvious especially in the case of the Dragon, one of the most frequent and concurrently most protean occurrence in Romanian folk culture. The list of the phantastical apparitions continues with the image of the Siren or the Pharaoh's wife, of the Unicorn, of the winged Griffon, of the Giant Eagle, of the Asp and of the Pest. The work winds up with a chapter on the "phantastic" and the individual creation, which reveals the appreciable effort of the author to integrate in a theoretical vision the diversity of the factual material. Placed in the contemporary world, which Man crosses at incredible speed and extends to unfathomable spaces, the traditional folk "phantastic" seems to be "pale and minor".

Accompanied by suggestive illustrations, Constantin Prut's book testifies to the profound inclination of the young generation of Romanian art critics towards a many-sided explication of the Romanian artistic phenomenon, viewed in the light of necessarily comparative studies. It is a needed step in the study of Romanian folk arts, which follows the big amount of recording work done so far and which, if perseveringly and cleverly continued, will yield unexpected for crops on the still fertile soil of non only the Romanian philosophy of culture.

Paul Petrescu