

# KEY ASPECTS FOR THE DATING OF “SAINT NICHOLAS” CHURCH LOCATED IN THE VILLAGE IZVORU DE SUS, ARGEȘ COUNTY

Constantin Bogdan Stanciu\*

**Key words:** Izvoru de Sus, Peticari, “Saint Nicholas” Church, historical monument, dating

**Abstract:** Izvoru manor was first mentioned during the reign of Prince Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521), when it passed from the possession of Glavacioc Monastery to a boyar ownership. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century at the earliest, this manor belonged to Știrbei boyars and was later transferred to Colfescu and Peticari families.

The only traces of the old mansion are the vaulted cellars of a ruined house, atop of which a new house was built toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the chapel – currently the parish church, severely deteriorated.

The history of this halidom, which was classified as a monument in 1930s, is unclear. Historical sources reveal contradictory information. On the one hand, some sources and the typological survey place the building of the church during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, the hypothesis of erecting it at the beginning of the subsequent century should not be ruled out, as suggested by the epigraphic documents.

According to these sources, “Saint Nicholas” Church of Izvoru de Sus was built during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Rezumat:** Moșia Izvoru – menționată în documente încă din vremea lui Neagoe Basarab (1512 – 1521) când trece din stăpânirea mănăstirii Glavacioc în posesiune boierească – devine, cel mai devreme în secolul al XVI-lea, moșie a boierilor Știrbei, trecând apoi în proprietatea familiilor Colfescu și Peticari. Astăzi, din curtea boierească constituită cel mai târziu în cursul secolului al XVII-lea se păstrează doar pivnița vechiului conac – peste care s-a construit, la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea, o nouă casă – și capela, transformată în biserică parohială cu hramul Sfântul Nicolae.

Prezentul studiu are ca obiect biserica Sfântul Nicolae, monument de arhitectură de importanță națională, clasat în perioada interbelică. În ciuda valorii sale, edificiul nu a suscitat interesul specialiștilor, majoritatea studiilor dedicate arhitecturii de cult din Țara Românească făcând abstracție de existența sa. În lipsa cercetărilor sistematice, stabilirea evoluției monumentului este destul de anevoioasă. Unul dintre cele mai neclare aspecte privind istoricul bisericii se referă la datarea ei. Deși o parte a surselor consultate – printre care se numără și documentele epigrafice – afirmă că biserica a fost construită în prima jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea, Elena Peticari susține că lăcașul fusese edificat cu câteva decenii mai devreme. Dacă această ipoteză este corectă, biserica Sfântul Nicolae din Izvoru de Sus marchează un moment important în evoluția arhitecturii bisericăști din Muntenia.

The village Izvoru de Sus is located in the south of Argeș county, on the road connecting the cities of Pitești and Alexandria, in the neighbourhood of the former manors of Tătăraștii de Sus and Balaci (Fig. 1). Izvoru de Sus manor was first testified during the reign of Prince Neagoe Basarab and belonged, as time went on, to Știrbei, Colfescu and Peticari families. Out of this manor, which was probably built by boyar Știrbei, the sole today's survivors are the chapel patronized by Saint Nicholas (the parish church nowadays) and the manor cellars, which were later incorporated in one of the buildings erected by boyar Peticari.<sup>1</sup>

Although classified as a monument since 1930s and currently listed among the monuments of national heritage importance, the history of “Saint Nicholas” Church is ambiguous, being marked by contradictory sources (Fig. 2). Specifically, while most of the available data reveal that this edifice was built during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Elena Peticari – the last owner of Izvoru manor, who dealt with the refurbishment works of this monument during the period between the World Wars – dated the building works almost half-century earlier (the latter conclusion is confirmed by the typological survey). The history of “Saint Nicholas” Church should be clarified not only for retracing its development, but also for thoroughly understanding the Wallachian religious architecture since this edifice stands for a transition monument between two distinct stages.

\* “Spiru Haret” University, Bucharest.

<sup>1</sup> Stanciu 2011, p.161-173.