THE ROMANIAN VILLAGE: A FORM OF HUMAN COMMUNITY
SATUL ROMÂNESC - FORMĂ DE COMUNITATE DE UMANĂ

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Abstract: *People's life goes on within a community where they make sure there are relationships needed to exist and to make social progress. The term "community" covers different areas: therefore, it can refer to family, village, town or city, national community (nation), and world human community. The specificity of a rural community consists in its strong feeling, in the consciousness of sharing the same working, acting, and thinking methods, customs and traditions, d well as a land whose fruits allow them to exist.*

Key words: *village, the Romanian archaic village, human community, rural settlements*

INTRODUCTION

Communities can be developed according to different criteria – religion, language, morals and manners, trusts – the same criteria that allow the development of different associations – business, commercial, or scientific – whose significance is different.

Rural communities represent, according to Tönnies [Tönnies, F., 1970, p. 295-296], *the most durable, pure, and original forms of life*: it is within them that relationships between humans are stronger and livelier, turning human communities into living bodies.

The idea that somebody can live one's entire life within a community is the emblem itself of the community.

Wherever the members of a small or large group live together and share life conditions in common, the group is considered a "community" [Cobianu-Băcanu, Maria, 2003, p.1].

The main feature of a community is its *social cohesion*, and the community relies on *locality and on the feeling of community.*

Any human community shares *a geographic area*. Occupying a well defined area guarantees the chance of intense human relationships. Common environmental conditions engender similar *life patterns and the strong feelings of mutual aid and solidarity* – features that gradually fade in our

contemporary world because of the higher and higher impact of the means of transportation and of communication.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

There have been, in Romanian literature considerable research concerning the Romanian specific way of defining or classifying Romanian villages.

Speaking of the historical process of changing the way of living and working of Romanian peasantry, Romanian sociologist *Dimitrie Gusti* defined the Romanian village as a unity of life and living: "*A village is not a free association of individuals in which each of them behaves according to his mind, but a strong living community, a pattern and a factor of changing and shaping"* [D. Gusti, 1965, p.8-9].

According to Gusti, social unity is manifest in the multiple living requirements of the humans, its social manifestation being subjected to "as many ways as people's needs", i.e.:

- *economic*, i.e. concerning material, food, shelter, circulation;
- *spiritual*, i.e. concerning the satisfaction of the needs for positioning and guidance in the world and in life, such as religious, artistic, and scientific events;
- *moral and legal*, i.e. concerning the regulation of the institutionalisation of economic and spiritual events;
- *political*, i.e. concerning the way these regulations and institutionalisations are stated and enforced.

H.H. Stahl's sociological research in Vrancea contributed greatly to clarify the issue of defining village: he managed to develop his own theory on *the Romanian archaic village*, a theory that is still accepted by both Romanian and foreign scientists.

Stahl claims that the Romanian archaic village "is a form of social living established on an estate, a form of biological group of related humans living on households associated in a community who, through its commonly shared decisions, has the right to interfere with the private life of each household according to the legal rules of the joint ownership and according to the psychic mechanism of the community based on diffuse traditions". Based o his research, Stahl reaches the conclusion that there is no "Romanian joint ownership based village" in general, but only "Romanian villages", each village being "an original variation on the same theme" [Stahl, H.H., 1965].

No matter how difficult to define, a village, as a form of human settlement whose population is mainly agricultural, is *a complex social and territorial category made up of an agglomeration of houses* – "the precincts of a village" – *and of some agricultural land* – the basis of agricultural production. These features are dynamic factors that influence mutually and that determine, together, largely, the area, which develops new opportunities for the villages, intensifying the relationships between rural and urban areas, and developing more and more intensely both material and spiritual links.

RESULTS AND DISCUTIONS

The concept "village" designates mainly outer morphological aspects of the rural (geography, relationship with the natural environment defining the village as a mountain, hill, or plain village).

These definitions point out the features and functions characterising each village. Thus, as a form of human settlement in which agricultural economic activities are predominant, a village is also a complex social and territorial category. In fact, it is also a double territorial reality: through *the area concentrating the village dwellings* (the precincts of the village) and *the working area* (the agricultural lands) – each of which plays well defined social and economic roles in the life of the rural community [I. Bold, Crăciun, A., 1999, p. 190].

Taking into account the consequences, the relationships between the village precincts and territory, sociologists and other specialists pointed out three types of rural settlements: *the nucleated village*, *the disperse village* and *the scattered village*.

There have been other attempts to concretise the types of village settlements depending on both the shape of the locality and on the economic factor favouring the appearance of a type of village in a geographical context. But most specialists claim that the economic function is no longer sufficient to classify rural settlements functionally, which make knowing social structure a must.

Polyvalence and functionality are the main features of a village; hence, its *matrix pattern* generating fundamental structuring modalities. Village polyvalence has a wide span diachronically and synchronically.

A both exhaustive and extremely comprehensive analysis of the Romanian village and villager is that of the Romanian *Academician Păun Ion Otiman* in his book "*Dezvoltarea rurală în România*" (*Rural*

Development in Romania) (1997), in which he also presents the points of view of some Romanian cultural personalities (ethnologists, literates, philosophers, geographers, agronomists, etc.).

CONCLUSIONS

Romanian villages – representing mall groups of related individuals, constituted on the stable and rhythmical exploitation of the natural environment, live in general, in *the cosmic time*, i.e. the succession of the seasons asks for a certain harmonisation with nature, which is a certain repetitive pattern.

Historical time affecting the villages is nevertheless defined through the improvement of the way nature is cultivated, i.e. it is exploited more and more efficiently and through an accumulation of events (natural disasters, wars, etc.) that can change the destiny of the community.

The historical evolution of the settlements attests *elements of ethnographical, economic, social, and demographical nature* of the localities. On the other side, the evolution also marked both the structure and the architecture of the village, and the habitat.

Economic activity has developed in the Romanian area depending on the type of environment, i.e. at three or more levels (*primary agriculture, crop culture, animal breeding, and rural economy*).

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