

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS IN CICLOVA ROMÂNĂ – IMPORTANT FACTORS IN THE ECONOMIC AND SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION OF THIS VILLAGE

Mihaela MARTIN, Mihai VIȘAN

University „Eftimie Murgu” of Reșița

This article intends to forward a theoretic synthesis of the local customs still present in the life of a Banat rural community: Ciclova Română. The village has been attested since the sixteenth century and has been known under different names: “Cameral Ciklova” or “Csiklofalu”¹. Although in these past decades the village has undergone a permanent transformation process, being situated at only 3 km from the town of Oravita, the specificity of this rural locality has been preserved.

From the methodological point of view, the paper aims at completing the following stages: a primary research based on the discussion with the Mayor of the commune and a secondary research following the conversations with part of the villagers about the local beliefs and traditions. The article intends to identify and present a local reality that can bring about spiritual benefits, favouring thus the development of the community by putting its potential to an optimum use.

The local traditions and customs may be analysed from the perspective of the manifestation of the economic or spiritual phenomenon. This village shelters a series of myths and symbols, which confer it a specific identity. Regarding thus from a multisided perspective, we may identify the manner in which these manifestations can be turned into resources of local development, in the economic and spiritual plane. The diversity of religious traditions, as well as the stress on the magical-mythological significance of such imposes the elaboration of certain strategies of local development, not limiting the role of customs only to their folkloric function.²

These traditions and customs were transmitted orally, from generation to generation, or in a written form, grace to teachers and priests of the village. We should also mention here the efforts of the peasant writer Dumitru Brainzei who, beside the presentation of these ancient traditions, completes the information by his own impressions related to one creed or another.

In the village world, the celebration or the festival, understood as a sacred time, is filled with multiple customs, many of them not being completely anchored in the religious sub-layer, but based on different superstitions, considered by Emilian Voiuțchi to be heavy and dangerous errors: *“the superstition is not only a heavy and sinful aberration in itself, because it means at the same time the negation of belief and reason, but it makes man brutal and imposes him the most bloody sacrifices, precisely because it is a religion of fear and awe, and as a result of its fatalist*

¹ Văran 2003, p. 110.

² Lazar, www.unibuc.ro.

corruption it also impedes the look into the natural conditions of human life and distracts the energy and will ...”³

In general all festivals throughout the year, starting with Saint Vasile celebration and the Epiphany (*Boboteaza* in Romanian) and ending with Christmas by the dissolution of the old year and the beginning of the new one, comprise numerous ritual acts with mythological subjacent significance (for instance the importance of Mythraism in the evolution of the Christian idea; the parallelism between the birth of Mythras and Jesus’s birth⁴; the symbolistics of the fire; the symbolistics of the end of the previous year and the beginning of the following year – death and rebirth of vegetation, of time, the time mirror being represented by the image of the god regarding both to the past and the present – Janus). The idea of preserving the Greek-Roman mythology is encountered also in the writings of Atanasie M. Marienescu and S. Manguica⁵. “Colenda” from the Christmas Eve, ancient agrarian ritual starts a cyclical period of twelve days between the Christmas and the Epiphany, the climax being “Șiuraleșa”, both events being moments of joy and prosperity for all the community (Maria Mândroane – Fișa unu obicei: Colindatul). The agrarian rituals and the ancient cult of nature’s fertility are also reflected in the spring festivities, in the Children Ball (*Balul Copiilor* in Romanian), and especially in the tradition of Bears from Ciclova⁶ (*Urșii de la Ciclova* in Romanian, Shrove Tuesday (*Fasanc* in Romanian) described in detail by Maria Mândroane, researcher at the Museum of the Banat Village of Timisoara, in her paper Shrove Tuesday in the Mountainous Banat.

The valences of these customs have stirred the curiosity and interest of society along time, having ritual senses over the material and spiritual world. Beside the important feasts and festivals of the year, other moments charged with numerous rural customs are the passage moments (birth, wedding, death). If we speak of birth, the string of events starts by the anticipation rites, different modalities to see the gender of the new-born – ranging from salt spreading on the pregnant women’s head (information given by Stoia Elena – Crișan, no. 440) to pinning a needle without seeing where the tip or the ear is (as the tip symbolises a boy and the ear a girl) – and ends with the baptism and the tradition of the Fates (*Ursitoarele* in Romanian) (the ancient Moiras), customs that in these past years have become more and more present at the parties organised on the occasion of the new born baby’s entering into the world celebration. The wedding is also strongly charged with customs, from the crossing of the house threshold to the stealing of the bride⁷. By far the most numerous traditions, many a time without a religious foundation, are encountered in the funeral rituals, from the payment of the oblation to Charon to different burial practices meant to ensure the continuity in a future world (Măran Mărioara, – Rotconi, no. 409).

These traditions seem to be expanded not only in the area of the commune and of Banat region, but across a wider surface, if we consider the assertions of the researcher L. Berdan⁸ or according to the information found in the writing “Romanians feasts and festivals” by Simion Florea Marian.

What is remarkable is that although they have a common sub-layer, each region imposes its own footprint, depending on the region’s economic interests.

A festival of the village that is not encountered though in all Mountainous Banat’s areas, but is present under a similar form in Serbian traditions, is that of the “Matcalau” celebrated on the

³ Chiș – Toia 2006, p. 81

⁴ Birsan 1989, p. 147.

⁵ Chiș – Toia 2006, p. 82–83.

⁶ Taban 2013, p. 11.

⁷ Gennep 1996, p. 121.

⁸ Berdan 1989, p. 122.

first Tuesday after Thomas' Sunday, when the children braid flower wreaths, put them around their neck and go to a blooming tree where they "swear to become brothers and sisters" (brotherhood and sisterhood tradition), and then they put the wreath down, kiss one another and say: "Let us be brothers and sisters until death" (Branzei Rusalina, -Bioi, no. 173).

A local tradition respected by the entire village is the "Ispas" Celebration Day (the Lord's Ascent), called the "Easter of the Horses" in the folkloric tradition, when the village festival ("*Nedeie*" in Romanian) is celebrated, honouring the Saint Patron of the village church.

Due to their adaptability the customs have a permanent evolution, always going hand by hand with influences and superstitions⁹. The perpetuation of these traditions meant to put to optimum use the exceptional cultural potential of the area requires a sustained effort, and the involvement of the local public administration is essential. As the spiritual endowment of the commune is well kept and rather well known by the youth as well, the creation of a development direction for a specific strategy in order to improve the cultural accumulations of the area is imperiously necessary.

A proposal for ensuring the permanence of these traditions would be the elaboration of a calendar of local customs that define the village, or providing, within the future Centre for touristic information, information materials meant to value the cultural past of the zone. The leaders of the commune intend to establish a local museum which, with the support of villagers and grace to the endeavours of important researchers such as Dumitru Țeicu, Maria Mândroane or Nicolae Irimia, is expected to be founded as soon as possible, ensuring thus the increase of the local economic potential.

All these traditions show man's endeavours to find protection against different evil forces, against things that risk impeding them to ascend towards redemption.

To conclude, the interviewed persons prove an optimistic spirit, they are proud of their customs, and are characterised by strong moral convictions. We can also remark certain nostalgia for the ancient traditions that failed to perpetuate from generation to generation. Unfortunately, without a continuous care and preservation, these traditions, considered by some obsolete perhaps, will become desacralized and cause the loss of part of the local cultural identity¹⁰. Elena Voronca's urge "*... let us not ruin the traditions and customslet us not destroy the Saint Patron's days, songs, dances and festivals.....*"¹¹ points us towards the faith permanence supported by the preservation of religious traditions and rituals representing community practices entered into the sacred tradition of human community, either directly, from the sphere of an organised religious system, such as Christian cults, or from the magical-religious realms entered more or less in the calendar of religious festivals and celebrations, as the delimitation line between the two is very thin.

The commune still constitutes a source of comprehension of a lifestyle characterised by a high number of ritual actions, providing a rich research material¹². Still one question remains – will the traditional customs be important for the next generation of teenagers from the village ... the answer may be in each of them depends on the way everybody chooses to look for and understand the human valences that lay within each individual custom.

⁹ Meîtoiu 1989, p. 108.

¹⁰ Mândroane 2011, p. 5.

¹¹ Chiş – Toia 2006, p. 78.

¹² Frențiu 2013, p. 48.

Bibliography:

- Berdan 1989 = L. Berdan, Considerații etnologice asupra unor obiceiuri ale vieții familiale. Rituri de trecere – rituri de început, în *Buletin de informare și documentare științifică Studii și articole*, vol. V, Baia Mare, 1989, p. 120–127.
- Bîrsan 1989 = I. Bîrsan, Substratul mitico-magic al unor obiceiuri de iarnă, în *Buletin de informare și documentare științifică Studii și articole*, vol. V, Baia Mare, 1989, p. 147–151.
- Chiș-Toia 2006 = Chiș-Toia, Câteva datini și credințe populare prezentate în Foaia Diecezană (1886–1918), în *Un crâmpei de istorie: Foaia Diecezană 120 de ani - Studii*, Reșița, 2006, p. 76–84.
- Frențiu 2013 = Maria Frențiu, Actul ritual în contemporaneitate, p. 48–50, în *Nedeia I*, Nr. 2/2013.
- Gennep 1996 = Arnold Van Gennep, *Rituri de trecere*, Polirom, Iași, 1996.
- Meițoiu 1989 = Ion Meițoiu, Semnificații străvechi și contemporane ale manifestărilor folclorice spectaculare de Anul Nou, în *Buletin de informare și documentare științifică Studii și articole* vol. V, Baia Mare, 1989, p. 108–115.
- Mândroane 2011 = Maria Mândroane, *Descântece (I) Culegeri*, Brumar, Timișoara, 2011.
- Taban 2013 = M. Taban, Povestea vremii de demult (eseuri de mitologie românească) I, în *Nedeia I*, Nr. 2/2013, p. 9–11.
- Văran 2003 = I. Văran, *Monografia protopopiatului ortodox român Oravița*, Timișoara, 2003.
- Online references:
Lazăr = A. Lazăr, Teza de doctorat-*Religie și dezvoltare locală în munții Banatului*, www.unibuc.ro.

**OBICEIURI ȘI TRADIȚII ÎN CICLOVA ROMÂNĂ – FACTORI IMPORTANTI
ÎN EVOLUȚIA ECONOMICĂ ȘI SPIRITUALĂ A ACESTUI SAT
(Rezumat)**

Ciclova are propriul sistem economic original în care obiceiurile și credințele istoria satului. Articolul își propune să prezinte mai multe tradiții străvechi menținute și păstrate de către săteni până astăzi în Ciclova Română. Toate aceste obiceiuri înrădăcinate și nenumărate au fost moștenite de la strămoșii noștri și joacă un rol-cheie în existența acestui sat, subliniind identitatea sa culturală. Istoricii, și nu numai, s-au încumetat în ultimele secole să colecteze, dar să și păstreze cât mai bine obiceiurile și datinile legate de diferite evenimente și momente ale anului. Aceste tradiții mențin spiritul viu și marchiază o linie despărțitoare între modernizare și istoria lor reală.



„Colenda. Ajunul Crăciunului”



„Balul Copiilor”



„Fășancul”



„Matcălaul”