

ORDERLINESS IN THE ROMANIAN VILLAGES

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Abstract: *Life of the Romanian villages, preserved in the framework of unchangeability and of the things made to last, unfolded under the nurturing of orderliness. Orderliness has been since the beginning the ruling principle of the entire country life; it has remained life-giving for balance, harmony, solidarity and energy in this sane community called „village”. It is this orderliness that has created a sane, customary lifestyle, soaked in old patterns that have ingrained rural communities under their protection; patterns that have given these communities the consistency and ability to break through in tough times.*

Key words: *orderliness, God’s orderliness, human orderliness.*

1. Introduction

Within the Romanian area, at the crossroads of times, beyond all temptations and suffering, rural communities have been bearers and preservers of some patterns or life guides, resonant with the signs and harmony of nature and with the power to overcome any obstacle, so that time could flow profusely and efficiently. These patterns can be considered true identity markers of the Romanian people. They have given our villages a long-lasting intimacy, the feeling of tranquility and endurance so that people could keep up the balance in hard times and stay together in rough times; similarly, the ancient and counselling, the object of our study, have acted as a huge, surveying mirror, which has reflected, lit up and kept alive those patterns considered beneficial for the rural community since the beginning, and it has acted truthfully for every single generation in a natural, harmonious lifestyle.

This corrective vaulting of the past is to be found in the term „orderliness”. It has secretly rendered the Romanian village „a unique, extremely rich communion of life” [8, p. 15] and has projected it in „the light of eternity”, due to the fact that peasants constantly let themselves in God’s hands, obeyingly. To the inhabitant of the traditional village, similarly to the inhabitants of those remaining villages in „the marvelous fabric”, specific to the natural and ancient Romanian world, orderliness is the „foundation of harmony, balance and wisdom of universal life”, the blessed foundation of „the One who created all forms of life” [7, p. 60]. Therefore, orderliness integrates the village man in the harmony of nature, through understanding and accepting hierarchy (cosmic, social and historical) and through continual endeavor to fulfill the useful things from a material and spiritual perspective.

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2. God's Orderliness or cosmic orderliness

God, in his infinite love for people and everlasting, paternal care for them, made it possible for "all what is good and perfect", to come down on earth and spread all over the place, thus uplifting everything and spiritually integrating it in the "harmony of the natural measure of spheres", [9, p.136]. Hence, „all what is good and perfect” has been integrated in the cosmic orderliness or the „great orderliness”, an all-encompassing orderliness, as created by the Creator of all that is seen and unseen, an act rendering harmony and balance but at the same time maintaining sense and hierarchies.

For the inhabitants of the traditional Romanian villages, similarly to those living in the well preserved pattern, man is considered a "gifted being", created by God to look and act like Him. Moreover, man becomes a part of "this orderliness which gives him a well-established hierarchy when it comes to his things and actions" (2, p.87). Such a blending of man in the orderliness mentioned above is only but natural. It gives human beings a certain detachment, it makes them be at peace with what has been mysteriously projected for them (their fate) but, at the same time, it opens new perspectives and conveys the ability to understand some of the secrets of life and as a consequence its depth and challenges.

In the conscience of its inhabitants, every village used to be a "peculiar specific world", a "cosmic entity in direct contact with the unlimited, faiths and heresies" and not only a "geographical, economical, social and moral entity" [6, p.183]. In specific Romanian rural areas, there have been settings encompassing stability and forever bursting with Mercy and Grace from Above where the village is the centre of the world. The village cosmocentrism,

placing the village in the centre of the "world" was the Romanians' answer to their constant search to find an integrating axis of the world. We hereby bring clear and well-balanced testimonials, in simple language dating back to the middle of the last century. These testimonials come from worthy villagers in Bârsa County and refer to the village as centre of the world. Therefore, to them, the village "is similar to the centre of the universe", a world where "everything is nicely laid out", each thing is made to last and at the right moment. They claim that in the village there is "the axle of the earth and sky; everything in the world has a purpose, an orderliness, and this is the orderliness" [2, p.86].

Setting the villages seen as centre of the universe, "so expressive" when it comes to the metaphysical horizon of the Romanian peasants has kept old villages close to their origins. It gave them full consistency and didn't let them disappear in hard times, fall into oblivion or perish. Moreover, it offered villagers a quiet existence for centuries. Over the lasting ages, the number of these villages, "the world villages", as Constantin Noica named them, diminished but didn't totally disappear; in the surviving dwellings, "miraculous seeds" could spring, thus confirming the existence of a whole rural world and being witnesses of our past.

Lucian Blaga, wrote about the Romanian village, "our predecessor without a name", preserver of ancient collective life patterns, depicted as a whole world an overwhelming and well deserved eulogy to the so-called centre of the universe. The surroundings in which the traditional village is depicted transcends the geographical and material boundaries due to its cosmic extension. According to Lucian Blaga, the poet-philosopher, placing dwellings in such areas is linked to the "metaphysics of the village", that is "a

living metaphysics, hidden in those hearts that beat under straw roofs, reflected on the faces haunted by fate, but with eyes looking up to the sky” [5, p.10]. Revealing meanings were gathered in this “vision” of the world, in a careful and loving way, to set wise foundations over time to keep being ourselves, under „our piece of sky”, as a nation of peasants, created under tough times to keep God’s will.

For the inhabitants of the Romanian villages, God’s Orderliness is the fully accomplished rule in everything, everyone and every time. It creates a „totalitary” way of life, as Blaga used to name it, that is a round, harmonious way of life, full of „mysteries and hidden meanings”, with strict regulations, hierarchies and continuous care from Above. The anhistorical peasants confide in this supreme Order, „an axis that directs the Romanian spirit” [9, p.166] and they do it lucidly, at peace and with that matchless „dignity of simplicity” so that they wouldn’t wander in the world and feel ashamed forever. It was the durable dwelling, obeying God’s orderliness that gave us the ability to overpass the „boundaries of time” and to preserve ourselves through the original customs since the beginning of time.

3. Man’s Orderliness

Having previously mentioned the rural vision on cosmic orderliness as a condition for the proper and everlasting organisation of the world, we shall now seek to open a door to those old yet uplifting patterns which have neatly arranged life in rural communities for generations, and which are encompassed in the Orderliness of the Romanian villages. We shall do our best, given the length and time provided, to bring to light special signs about the village orderliness regarding the

households, the social and economic aspects, etc.

The Romanian villages are not merely „places”. These territories came into being at the „command of destiny”; they have grown strongly but kept a certain intimacy within a distinct horizon, each of them being surveyed and supported when suffering, by a spirit of the place. They have miraculously survived in this Order helped by the „power of nature and fate”, thus resisting temptation to disappear; „something from the rhythm between valley and hill became one with these settlements [4, p.198]”, whether, astray or dispersed on the hills, at the valleys of the mountains or in „the wide open spaces of the plains of Bărăgan”. In the village dwellings, every single Romanian porch is „similar to the man”; it naturally rises out of the harmony of the surrounding nature.

„Nothing of what man has built here insults the landscape, is different from it or adds something to it. In the village Romanians are complete, as we know them, people who like dancing and singing, one with the mountain and forest” [9, p.137].

The orderliness of rural dwellings, the way in which houses are arranged and their unique architecture, reveal to us defining characteristics of the inner side in the makers of the folk culture and civilization. Lucian Blaga mastered the way in which he outlined these characteristics, by comparing Saxon and Romanian villages existing on the Romanian land. The Saxon villages, „the old, massive Saxon villages”, having a „well-thought organisation”, and lasting a long time through strictly and „carefully done work”, appeared in cautiously selected places. They prided themselves with high, fortified churches, rich dwellings holding only the „useful things”, thus revealing a nation with „a strong will but very introvert”, a rural community of „introvert people”, bearing

an ethical concept on the order of life. On the other hand, Romanian villages seem to have been placed somewhat „incidentally and not with a lot of enthusiasm”; the architecture of the houses „discloses balance”, vertical and horizontal lines, and the yard does not isolate but „opens itself to the village”. Therefore, „the Romanian village is an instinctive community, with extrovert people who love the picturesque in life” [3, pp. 223-225]. The essence of life lies in fact in this Orderliness.

In the world of the Romanian village all things are carried out according to established rules: with a lot of effort, in a particular order and arranged in a hierarchy in line with their importance in people’s lives. Moreover, there is a clearly designated time when they are to be accomplished. Therefore, labour, hierarchy and harmony within the community set the life in the village, make it meaningful and take care of it. Since the economical aspects of things cannot but influence the entire way of life inside the village, we have chosen to show and understand the household like meaning of the orderliness.

In the village, labour is life. People live by the agricultural calendar which was established according to „the historical conditions” and a constant care for these; their work is always „earnest, quiet and fruitful”. There is a tight, natural connection between „man, labour and land”, according to C. Rădulescu-Motru. This connection was established by the power of „blood and not the law” and secured by God. This explains why, sometimes, the villagers’ labour gives the impression of a „religious service”; it is because work is accomplished in due time, in a natural order, accompanied by earnest and deep praying being of high impact in the households.

The rural household is „the main core in the life of the villages”, organized as a „working unit of a family”, it isn’t a simple

economical unit but a larger „life unit” [10, pp. 143-144]. Furthermore, the household in the traditional village is founded in agreement with „simple yet natural lifestyle patterns”; its purpose is to obtain subsistence („everything one needs”). The form of economic orderliness in the village is the fact that they still preserve here „natural, human conventions”, which clearly emphasises the role of maintaining „natural relations between man and his acts” [10, p. 71]. The peasant has been a man who appreciates assets not money, because gains cannot be part of „a consuming economy”, like the village economy. The economic order in the village life also involves the existence of associations, whether they are planned either according to alternative labour or to the mutual aid principle (agricultural and sheep breeding associations). These associations made it possible for people to respect the agricultural calendar and generated harmony and coherence within the community.

The Orderliness in the village life not only means economical aspects but also community, family, religious elements etc.; these are not to be focused on now. However, as a conclusion, the characterization that Ernest Bernea made for Orderliness is brought to your attention: „Moving from an economical aspect to a social one, and from a social aspect to a spiritual one, Orderliness gives consistence, beauty and it gives the world the possibility to exist” [2, p. 112].

It is not too late yet to make principles work; principles that have sustained a well-defined world, full of vigor and meaning.

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ANNEX

THE ORDERLINESS OF AGRICULTURAL WORKS IN THE RURAL HOUSEHOLD ACCORDING TO THE AGRICULTURAL CALENDAR

(Source: The villager's calendar in the common year 1918,

Sibiu, W.Krafft Publishing House)

(EXTRACTS)

FEBRUARY	MARCH
<p>Sift seed pieces. Take out and scatter manure, so that, once it is defrosted, its sap will go into the ground. When the weather is nice, you can start ploughing. If you failed to do so in January, it is now time you gathered snow around trees. Remove heaps, rocks and thistles off the meadows and where the place is even seed grass. (...)Cut young branches that are to be grafted from the South part of trees. Thrust them into moist sand or ground until you'll use them. Continue cleaning and trimming trees, remove caterpillars and if the weather allows, plant trees. Cut unnecessary branches off the younger trees so that they can grow stronger and more beautiful. Make harbours for vegetables; plant celery, onions, lettuce, cucumbers and the like, which you will protect against freezing temperatures by covering them well.</p>	<p>Seed spring wheat, then barley, oats, peas and alfalfa. Harrow the fields of alfalfa and clover seeded in previous years and do this so that they grow better. Throw seeds of clover on the scarce crops of the previous autumn. Plant vegetables intended for the seed. To defend them against caterpillars, put around a few hemp seeds. Their smell drives away the butterflies. Grind whatever needed so that it keeps longer. Graft fruit trees, make beds for vegetables and plant them.</p>
	APRIL
	<p>Weed what you've seeded before it are invaded by bitterweeds. Plant potatoes and corn. Weed and dig nursery fruit trees. Hurry the grafting of the rest of the trees. The harbours for vegetables are to be uncovered the whole day and also overnight if there's no fear of frost. Start work on the vines. After Saint George cattle go to the common grazing ground. Toss up grain and in order to save it from ladybugs, put unwashed wool in the vicinity of wheat baskets. Mix hot wheat with charcoal powder and sift it after 14 days or it will lose its smell.</p>

