

THE SOCIAL PROCESS OF VILLAGE - SWARMING. THE BACKGROUND OF FOUNDING ŞINCA NOUĂ VILLAGE (FĂGĂRAŞ COUNTY)

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Abstract: *The process of founding the villages was a long and difficult one all over Romania. These social units bobbed up, knitted together, configured through the interweaving of geographical, demographic and historical determinants. Over time, the old villages ("source-villages") generated new rural settlements ("womb-villages") by swarming, a process of anonymous moving of a part of the rural population. Şinca Nouă village of Făgăraş County is the result of a similar process of swarming. In most cases, the swarming process was caused by factors such as demographic growth, resources lessening or social oppression, but as far as Şinca Nouă village is concerned, the religious factor was prevailing in the swarming process.*

Keywords: *Făgăraş County, Şinca Nouă village, Şinca Veche, source-village, swarming, border-guardship, uniatism.*

1. Introduction

The rural communities are social units (almost complete forms of social life) that define the Romanian territory. The ancientness character of many of them (the so-called villages in joint estates) is highlighted by the outliving, sometimes in almost full forms of the archaic types of organization, to the present day. However, the process of founding the Romanian villages was a long and difficult one at times, going up to the late Middle Ages.

Territorialising the rural communities – organisation of the fireplace villages, setting the village boundaries, emergence and persistence of multiple villages in the

same milestone – reflects the steady and constant concern of the rural communities to create those forms of community organisation meant to correspond to the needs of social life. The issue of *village swarming* is also related to territorialisation.

2. Village – swarming

Throughout the ages, the number of the rural settlements increased, adding to each other similarly to “the catching chain joints” including larger and larger territorial alveoli. Subsequently, the care to set firm boundaries for the new villages naturally increased; the boyard and lordly

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records stated that "the old borders where land owners have always walked" were set and strengthened for the inherited proprieties as mentioned in the princely titles. If, in the process of territorialising the first rural communities, the village boundary covered only one settlement (one boundary one village), over time it was noticed that "several villages coexisted within the same boundary"; the extra villages could be considered as "subsequent settlements to setting the border", which was the result of the "social process of *swarming*", not that of "a confederation" (7, pp. 196-197).

Swarming is the process of anonymous displacement, a slow one in most cases, of a more or less numerous number of people in a fireplace village (*beehive-village*, *womb-village*) to another settlement (*resettlement-village*), within the same boundaries, the body of the estate. From the very beginning, it is worth mentioning that: *swarming* is made according to various conditions and subsequent various forms, so that the researcher of the rural area finds it difficult to fit the phenomenon into a preset research pattern. Professor Henri H. Stahl's contribution, a remarkable member of the Monographic School in Bucharest, to deciphering the social process of *swarming* within the larger context of pointing out the mechanisms of setting up and making the rural communities work is considerable.

Stahl starts from the condensed but explicit statements based on the older theories about *village-swarming*: the royal origin of the *village-swarming* (Radu Rosetti); the existence of a primary genesis centre (*womb-village*), a spreader of the demographic surplus and, implicitly, of the forms of social and economic organization (N.A. Rădulescu); crowding of isolated households, which have become "primitive

centres" of cultural *swarming* and diffusion towards new settlements (Petru Poni); founding new fireplaces, starting from a *womb-village*, always in the upper side of the rivers (Victor Tufescu) or exclusively down the rivers (George Maior). But the promoters of these points of view, leading to new horizons within the problematic issue of setting up the Romanian rural communities lacked "a clear theoretical scheme with respect to the phenomenon of *swarming* in the free villages and in those enslaved" (7, p.202), an approach that was to be fully covered by Henri H. Stahl.

Overpopulation of the fireplace or the relative "demographic saturation" has a great impact on the process of *village-swarming*; the increase of the population has either a biological substratum, or it is the result of internal migrations (the movement of population from one place to another). The phenomenon is boosted by the reduction in production capacity of the village households and the degree of exploitation of the feudal state. Then, for some villages, to these determining factors there can also be added "the lack and ingratitude of the settlement space", the village fireplace. The related action of all these factors generates a problematic-issue at the level of village communities, but at the same time, it also enables the self-regulation and internal balancing of these communities' mechanisms. *Swarming* is meant to disburden the old village fireplace (*womb - village*) demographically and economically and to allow the demographic remnant act freely in order to found a new settlement.

Henri H. Stahl (7, pp. 202-204) identifies two types of *swarming*: pastoral and agricultural *swarming*, which is based on the fact that founding villages has been based on raising cattle and agriculture.

There are various types of pastoral *swarming*:

- a) Elongated settlements along the rivers, so that “the map of settlements seems a close reproduction of the hydrographic network” (7, p. 202);
- b) Settlements “scattered” on the pasture, where the geographical conditions allowed building “dwellings”, which, subsequently turned into settled household and, eventually, they outlined the new village fireplace;
- c) Settlements in the natural and artificial glades; the design of those strong dwellings are based on the dwellings and apiaries previously founded on these areas.

On the other hand, Stahl also mentioned the agricultural *swarming* which occurred while identifying and capitalising new lands by turning the soil and deforestation, sized depending on the migratory flow halted while resettling.

Professor Stahl stops at this point with the identification of the factors of *village-swarming* and the types of *swarming*. Although his work “Contribuții la studiul satelor devălmașe românești” (Contributions to the Study of the Romanian Villages in Joint Proprieties) also covers an approach to forms of social organisation of the villages of Făgăraș County, including the issue of *village-swarming*, there have not been revealed specific elements noticed in this area regarding settlement; we point out that for the area between the Olt and Făgăraș Mountains, an area known as Țara Oltului (The Olt County) or Țara Făgărașului (Făgăraș County) the massive *swarming* form the *womb-village* Șinca (Veche) and the founding of the settlement at Șinca Nouă for mainly religious, denominational grounds.

3. The social process *village swarming* in the Olt Country. Exploring the context of founding Șinca Nouă village

The Olt County, admirably characterised by Henri H. Stahl as “an area of joint and round estates” (7, p. 189), preserves evident traces of the old forms of social organisation, the phenomenon of *village-swarming* included. The territory of Făgăraș area reveals, first of all, an amazing correlation between “the geographical shape of the land” and the shape of the village fireplaces and the village boundaries, as it can be seen in the land register map of the region. In the West, the landscape allows boundaries and fireplaces “surprisingly” regular, while in the Eastern area, the kneaded landscape is responsible for the irregular shapes, even sometimes in the joint estates of the village territories. As for the process of *village-swarming* in the Olt County, also pointed out by Henri Stahl, the analysis of the structure of the village areas shows the presence of the *worm-villages* and *hive-villages* along the water courses (upstream or downstream), in the Western part of The Olt County (Ucea de Jos – Ucea de Sus, Viștea de Jos – Viștea de Sus etc.), while in the centre of the region there are cases of lateral *swarming* (Voivodenii Mari – Voivodenii Mici, Berivoii Mari – Berivoii Mici etc.).

The rural settlements founded this way are differentiated from each other in terms of individual background, but also in terms of the rights acquired in the village collective system: on the one hand, the *hive-villages* territorialised in the beginning phases of the process of social organisation of the Olt County have acquired the same rights and community benefits similarly to the (originary) *hive-villages*; on the other hand, the further

swarming, spent "in a phase in which «*swarming*» did not permit a division of the womb lands" (7, p. 194), they limited the area of the new settlements, for example by placing them outside the distribution of mountainous lands and subsequently, they deprived them from the very useful facilities like grazing and afforestation.

Swarming from the fireplace of Şinca (Veche) village to "the upper side of the village" is a late and atypical *swarming*: it is late – because it takes place at a time (mid XVIIIth century) in which the other *womb-villages* in Făgăraş County had already found their own place and specific purpose of the religious factor (preserving the Orthodox faith) in a massive and immediate *swarming* of the population from the *behive-village* (Şinca Veche) to the *swarming-village* (Şinca Nouă) but not the "exclusive" stipulation of demographic character (overpopulation of the village fireplace) and economic character (reduction of the productive capacity of the *womb-village*). In fact, the process of *swarming* from Şinca (Veche) expressed the courage of these "hardworking, smart and brave" Romanian people in Făgăraş County not to allow the Austrian oppression, instituted over Transylvania after 1699, "to mock at its religious feelings and change its ancestral faith" (3, p. 20), through the crafty work of unifying the Romanians in the Transylvanian space with the Church of Rome. According to Dumitru Stăniloae, uniatism was an attempt to "dismantling" the Romanian nation in Ardeal by a threefold violence: socio-economic, religious and military-administrative (8, p. 11). Most people of Şinca chose to found "an oppression free community" of a new village fireplace getting shelter against the excesses of the political-military Austrian domination.

a. Economic and social constraints

In the *swarming* process, in general, the economic constraints play an important role. They have to be regarded from a double perspective: on the one hand, in terms of the productive potential of the *womb-village*; on the other hand, of the fiscal duties or the produces duties (terrages, rents and other duties) paid by the villagers to the ruling authorities. Consequently, in our case, research of the settlement conceptions (4, p. 188-194) prior to the *swarming* process in Şinca (Veche) develops a rural settlement equipped with a special productive potential (rich, ploughing lands, forests and wide grass lands, rivers appropriate for fishing etc.), which were sufficient for the population in the community of Şinca Veche. In this case we cannot mention the overpopulation of the village fireplace, or the decrease of the productive potential of the *womb-village* – which, in the case of other rural communities were prerequisites to the *swarming* process. Contrarily, the community of Şinca, has got more potential than other communities of Făgăraş County and it fully felt "the hardships and rents" (4, p. 278) set by the oppressing Austrian administration which was "incredibly greedy"; such hardships made the people of Şinca either "leave the country to their compassionate and free brothers" (4, p. XIX), or to found a new village fireplace.

b. Political-administrative and military constraints.

The resistance capacity of the Romanian people in Transylvania to the longlasting and various attempts to be integrated forcefully into aggressive political system set in the Princedom, The House of

Habsburg ordered that "the deceiving argument of privileges", as regards the Romanian nation to be supported by military arguments: burning the wooden churches and breaking down the brick ones. Conscriptio of 1758 records that Șinca (Veche) village is "orthodox and independent from the united episcopate" (5, p. 111). Similar arguments related to military aspects refer to the decision of The Court of Wien to force the male villagers attend military service, "obliging our poor ancestors obey the military service and uniatism" (5, pp. 112-113), an approach which meant the foundation of the border batalions or bordership an institution which has a threefolded role: military, economic and confessional. The reaction of the community of Șinca regarding the institution mentioned above was that "a great part of the villagers of Șinca (Veche) did not agree with the militarisation in the Greek-Catholic formula" (1, p. 183) leading to the foundation of another village fireplace.

c. The religious oppression.

Similarly to all the Romanian people living in the Transylvanian area, the people in Făgăraș County "stubbornly preserved their orthodox faith" and suffered painfully to confess it, orthodoxism being regarded by the Austrian authorities as "schismatic" and kept outside the shared religions. The orthodox priests, covered by the numerous special rents and also by their statute of being tolerant", were tempted with promises of rights and privileges to enter the church united with Rome. Some of the bishops and orthodox priests entered the Greek-catholic religion under the guidance of Atanasie Anghel. The orthodox Christians in the area of Făgăraș remained the advocates of preserving the ancient

Orthodox religion intact. For the community of Șinca Nouă, a community which did not *swarm* from the *womb-village* Șinca (Veche), the churches and monasteries has remained the protective and saviour "citadels".

Șinca Nouă village is today for the keepers of the beautiful inheritances of the Șincan past, the triumph in keeping the doctrinary and lithurgic orthodox thesaurus.

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