

Țara Făgăraşului: istorie, obiceiuri și tradiții /Țara Făgăraşului. History, customs, and traditions. – Ion Negrilă – 2024

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The book *Țara Făgăraşului. History, customs, and traditions (Țara Făgăraşului: istorie, obiceiuri și tradiții)* by Ion Negrilă, published by Media Musica from Cluj-Napoca in 2024, is an anthropological decoupage, an ethnographic research with musical insertions on the customs and traditions of Țara Făgăraşului. From the verses accompanying the rites of passage, to the description of customs with agrarian functions, from the use of the comparative method of research on a custom in various villages in the geographical area, to the description of popular costumes, the author takes us on a journey through history and spiritual beliefs.

This book has a logical structure and follows the researched phenomenon from the macro to the micro, proposing a first chapter in which the theoretical coordinates, the historical individualization and the ethnographic landmarks of Țara Făgăraşului are set. It is impossible to discuss traditions, customs and spirituality (which is the subject of the second chapter) without the extensive introduction (Chapter 1) in which the author takes us through the history of the place targeted for research. For the first chapter, the author synthesizes valuable information from authors such as George Barițiu, Neagu Djuvara, Dumitru Stăniloai, Constantin Băjenaru, Vasile Bogrea, Augustin Bunea and many others, covering significant events in the history of the targeted county, under various occupations and with notable political and spiritual upheavals.

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The second chapter, the core of this research, brings together verses and musical pieces, as well as comparative descriptions from different villages of the Făgăraşului region regarding rites of passage and customs related to age and family life, agrarian customs (such as *Plugarul*) and others with predominantly spiritual functions (such as the *Descântecul*).

Ion Negrilă discusses the importance of customs related to age and the passage through life: rituals related to the fate of girls to be married, fortune telling, birth, wedding and burial customs. He also analyzes at length the significance of the *Plugarul*'s custom, with its agrarian symbolism of homage. In the few villages in which this custom is still practiced (Vad, Grid, Părău, Comăna de Jos, Lupşa, Fântăna, Toderiţa), it celebrates the industrious plowman who was the first to plow the field. The whole community is involved in the theatrical unfolding of the custom and it is the joy of spring that animates the crowds. The rite is a commemorative ritual, but it also has a magical meaning, purifying and influencing nature for favorable weather conditions for the cultivation of the land.

Another part of the research that attracts attention and imposes a dose of originality is the one in which the author discusses about *Descântec*, proposing different perspectives from which this phenomenon is viewed. The *Descântec* is a form of folk medicine, it is also an initiatory act, it has a cathartic function, and the author wonders if it is not also a form of logotherapy. Through a magical incantation, the caster connects with the world of the righteous and restores balance to that world, whether healing a sick person or banishing trouble from a village.

The work ends with the author's concluding remarks in which he summarizes the whole book, pointing out the most important moments in the history of the region concerned as well as the most interesting aspects related to folk customs and traditions. Then follows a rich bibliography, with books discussing history, ethnography, ethnomusicology, religion and politics.

The author has made a work of synthesis that capitalizes on the spiritual and artistic heritage of the Țara Făgăraşului – central Romanian area. It is very important to note how the customs and traditions he talks about interweave Christian beliefs, which are linked to the living history of the region, as well as an archaic pagan, magical layer, specific to Romanian folklore. It should also be noted how the verses that the author includes in his collection make a natural transition between the world here and an ideal world of the righteous, with the help of which one can restore balance to everyday life.

This book has all the characteristics of a scientific research approach (Duțică 2024, 7). First of all we can talk about the clear definition of the research object - this is reflected in the coincidence between the title and the content of the work. The paper presents a clearly defined, recognizable and conceptually delimited object, so that it can be studied by those interested in the folklore of our people. Secondly, the originality lies in the organization and synthesis of the information in an ethnographic and ethnomusicological monograph on Țara Făgărașului.

The portrait of the Romanian peasant is sketched in all the (syncretic) folkloric productions that the author talks about in his book. The village Romanian from the Făgăraș area (and not only) does not lose his humor, he has a fine ability to cry his hardships through music and dance, and irony is his way of expressing hardships:

*U, iu, iu până la groapă
Ș-acolo oi mai juca o dată,
U, iu, iu până la mormânt
Ș-acolo-mi vine să cânt.*

(Negrilă 2024, 162)

*(U, iu, iu to the grave
And there I'll play one more time,
U, iu, iu to the grave
That's when I'll sing)*

Mr. Negrilă's book highlights the great richness of Romanian folklore, given by the diversity of creations that make it up. This is easy to see from the nature of the different creations - vocal, vocal-instrumental, instrumental, in the different morphological aspects, in the syncretic quality, in the zonal particularities, but most strikingly in the functions that the creations have - utilitarian, ceremonial, ritual or entertainment (Mârza, Szenik 1969, 7).

References

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