

## PRESERVING AND TRANSMITTING CUSTOMS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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**ABSTRACT:** *In order to know the customs in all aspects, it is required to know the place and conditions in which they appear, to research all the customs concretely and thoroughly and then to relate it to similar customs in other areas of folklore, to the whole category of facts that that it belongs in our folklore and other peoples' folklore.*

*In rural communities, customs gave life its own rhythm. Respecting and practicing them according to the ancestral order, gives a certain cadence to the collective life, the family and, in general, to the social life of the village. During agricultural work, habits established a certain balance between work and rest, through the stages that marked the end of some work and preparation for others. Even during a work day, during mowing or reaping, breakfast and lunch are strictly respected, along with a rest period after lunch, in which people sing and tell stories, and dinner.*

**Keywords:** *custom; tradition; rural community; folklore; rural culture.*

### About customs in rural communities

Of all the social norms, the rural tradition or custom is best identified with the notion of social norm, due to its unmistakable features, it represents the creation of society, born from the desires and aspirations of each people, from its pains, troubles and feelings, from the struggle for survival, from the defeats and victories.

People's interest was mainly focused on folk customs. This phenomenon is due to the significance that habits have, as well as human interest in them. Habits have profound meanings for man and his relationship with nature, with the world around him. Thus, customs present social life and various aspects of her ordinances, they reveal all the qualities and defects of a nation due to it's conservative character and it's possibility of adaptation to the flow of time.

In Romanian culture, the customs, in their entirety, have been named "calendaristice"(yearly celebrations),

together with those of family life form an inter-relational system, a system related to human life, the rules that organize this life, the rules of social coexistence, to the rules according to which man organizes his work with nature through work. This system of rules ensures for the rural man a good ordering of the society.

Habits form an active mechanism of social life, a creative and orderly mechanism, a creative mechanism of culture. By this, the customs differ from the other categories of folklore, such as: fairy tales and poetry that talk about the situations in which man finds himself, about certain events of social life, so the customs appear as acts of the social mechanism [Pop, 1989].

In relation to the norms and rules that organize human relations with nature and interpersonal, intersocial relations, habits are acts of communication in their own language, an active language in which, in addition to the amount of information communicated, the amount of action is much higher than in any act of verbal language. As

traditional communication arts, they have a complex language because, in fact, several ways of expression contribute to the realization of each habit. Verbal expression is combined with musical and choreographic expression, gestural expression and mimicry. They combine to create hierarchical relationships between languages, not only in its overall habit, but also in different sequences, in its different moments.

The habit as an act of cultural communication, establishes, in fact, an exchange relationship between its partners, an exchange of information, of goods, an exchange of services. Every act of communication, and every habit, sends a message through which the exchange is made.

In traditional culture, communication between man and nature was done at the level of primitive practice, between man and the representations he made about the phenomena of nature at the level of myths and rites. At the concrete social level, the exchange relations were established at the level of customs, behavioral norms, ceremonies, between individuals of the same social group and between different social groups, of various nature and size: different territorial and ethnic groups. The limit of exchanges was determined by the power of understanding, the ability to communicate [Pop, 1989].

In the traditional rural culture, habits formed an important chapter because man's entire life, his yearly work and his various occupations, his relationships with peers and with mythological imaginations were interwoven with habits. In our folklore, some habits kept until today ample forms of development, in which the old rituals are tied with ceremonial acts, with spectacular manifestations. They are real rural rich in songs, dances, poetry and mimetic and dramatic acts.

Habits are, for the most part, passed on through tradition. They were subjected to a continuous process of adaptation to new

socio-cultural contexts and this ensured their permanence.

On the other hand, human communities can create and even create new habits. In the past, habits have contributed to the cohesion of a community, to the preservation of traditional ways of life.

Preserving habits was, at times, a way of defending rural communities from disintegrating influences from outside. The obligatory custom for the whole community is not always done collectively. For example, the custom of pouring New Year's heated lead to guess the future was mandatory in villages with traditional folk life for all girls, but it is not practiced collectively, but in small groups or individually. Instead habits over the year had a general character. In these villages, only children or groups of lads caroled, so only they took an active part in the practice of the custom. However, the whole village participated in the development of the custom, all houses were required to receive carolers. Other times those who didn't welcome them were ridiculed by the village. The participation of the collective had, then, other proportion and another character than marriage or funeral habits [Bancilă, 1996].

According to the nature of the custom, according to the circumstances and according to the needs, the traditional community practiced the custom as a whole, in group or individually. The people who believed in the habit practiced it. When, according to the nature of the custom, it was actually practiced, any member of the community seeks to fulfill it, does not try to evade it, but respects tradition. In this respect for tradition, in fact, lies the power of habit. Man had no choice but to act according to tradition, to conform to traditional rigors, to respect good deeds. Otherwise, he excluded himself from the community. Those who belonged to a community were obliged to respect its habits. The custom had to be performed correctly, according to the traditional order. Failure to do so was a

violation of the good order of the community. The care for the correct fulfillment of the customs, of the ceremonies led to a crystallization of the customs. Respect for tradition and care for the shape of the custom meant that, in villages with traditional life, people with skills and interest cultivated and distributed certain specific customs of the community.

Customs, rituals and ceremonies reflect people's conception of the world, the socio-cultural context in which they lived. It is natural that, with the development of society, with the change of the socio-cultural context, the purpose of habits also changes. Changes in function have led to changes in structure and changes in habits [Băncilă, 1996].

And now there is the custom of throwing wheat or oats on New Year's Eve and wishing each other plenty for the coming year. It is an ancient custom spread everywhere, once a ritual act meant to bring abundance, rich fruits, fertility.

Being ritual and ceremonial acts of communication, the customs were realized through actions or objects with symbolic value. But along with or together with the acts of communication, oral and recited or sung texts, prayers, wishes, shouts and ceremonial or ritual songs were included in the customs. They marked in this way, moments or significant aspects of ceremony or ritual, spoke directly about things whose meaning amounted customs purposes, describing the ritual practice or, allegorically, there were certain situations in communication between partners' habits [Moga, Rădulescu, 2004].

Shouting over the village, which usually took place in the spring, was a kind of punishment in the past. This custom had a profound meaning, it was in fact a public critique of the sins of the village. The purpose of the confession was to protect the community from any misfortunes that might have befallen it because of the mistakes of some [Pamfile, 2018].

The custom of the Plowman, found in Făgăraș, or of Tânjala, from Maramureș, was a way to distinguish those who were at the forefront of spring work, to mock and punish the lazy. In traditional communities, man represented the whole community, and the community was responsible for each of its members.

Analyzing ancient rituals and agrarian ceremonies, we can see that at those sacred festivities, which return with the seasons in which it is practiced, the community celebrates through ritual performances the great events of natural life.

The custom of the sânzieni is practiced during the transition from spring to summer. The transition of nature from one state to another is marked by the ceremonial through which the explosion of the vegetable and human kingdom is invoked for a beneficial purpose [Ghinoiu, 1997]. The symbol of the Sînzienele custom is dew, a sign of purification and contamination with sap and vegetable power. The rolling of the girls through the dew, and, later, the gathering and weaving of wreaths of sânzienă represent what was called the act of ritual antiquity.

The wreaths are brought to the village and placed at the gates of the houses, one for each member of the family. If one of the wreaths withers, it will signal the approach of the extinction of those who have been ordained. The fulfillment of the custom is meant to ensure fertility and continuity for the family, especially for virgins on the verge of marriage.

And the fruitful season of summer, bathed in solar energy, determined specific ceremonies marking the successful completion of the harvest, of the transformation from a seed into a plentiful bounty. The most common custom is the woven wreath from the biggest grains of the last harvest. The girls reaped, the lads tied the sheaves and made the piles of wheat. The crown was made of the most beautiful twigs chosen from the last part of the harvest. The custom of the crown also has a mythical part,

sung, bringing with it the melody from carols.

The traditional seats, the games that were held especially on the day of the fair or on the day of the holiday, are kept only in certain localities, but unfortunately most often they have received a different form and destination. Local fairs and celebrations are the ones that best preserve the colors of traditional life. Although they have been through important changes in recent years, they continue to have an important traditional value that reflects the lifestyle and beliefs of the inhabitants.

In some areas the folk costume is still preserved and also here events such as baptism, wedding, burial have kept a good archaic importance and continue to have a special significance in the life of the village because due to its conservative character and oral transmission, from generation to generation, the custom is very hard to change, reflecting traditions that today no longer have the same value and the same meanings, becoming more of a tourist attraction than a social reality that are part of the life of each of us.

## Conclusions

The village has always been a keeper and developer of traditions. A tradition must be both old and constantly repeated, in the most faithful form possible.

The discontinuity of a habit leads to the simultaneous loss of its symbolism and favors the insertion of foreign elements that eventually end up hijacking it.

In the general structure of the Romanian traditional customs, in which any custom marks a non-everyday moment of life, an important moment, a beginning or an end, a transition from one state to another, the customs are correlated in such a way that the old separation of calendar habits from those of family life is only partially justified, being reduced by the polysemous character of each custom as a sign. Worldview and life of traditional societies is global and implies in each and every act multiple facets meant to strengthen in man the determination of keeping the good order of social life as a unity.

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