

ELEMENTS OF LOCAL IDENTITY IN THE ROMANIAN RURAL SPACE. STUDY CASE OLCEA COMMUNE, BIHOR COUNTY

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Abstract : This study aims to identify and analyze the elements of local identity specific to Olcea commune, Bihor County, Romania. This approach is needed in the context of the growing manifestation of two complementary phenomena, regionalization, and globalization. The complementary use of observational, cartographic, analytical, deductive, and historiographical methods led the research to identify the main elements of identity specific to the place, namely : local language, occupations, household as a central element of the rural universe, gastronomy, and traditional dress.

Key words: local identity, occupations of the inhabitants, gastronomy, globalization, regionalization

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INTRODUCTION

Identity elements are defining structural aspects for a human community that has been formed and will be formed under the impulses of the inputs and outputs of substance, energy, and information. Thus, we can say that the identity of human communities is closely linked to the spatial identity of the environment, as a supporting and restrictive factor in their genesis, evolution,

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and dynamics. The support function is derived from all favorable local characteristics specific to the environment, while the restrictive character is derived from those unfavorable characteristics of the local environment (relief, soil, climate, hydrography, fauna, and vegetation).

Regionalization and globalization are two complementary phenomena of an economic, political, social, and cultural nature, specific to current societies, which cannot coexist independently. The difference between the two notions is only spatial, so that regionalization is a structural part of globalization (Herman et al., 2016; Indra, 2016; Herman and Grama, 2018; Herman et al., 2018a; Herman, 2022). "Globalization and regionalization are two complex and controversial concepts that transcend from the very nature of the human being and have evolved constantly over time" (Herman et al., 2018b, p. 89). In this context, we can say that the elements of local identity, due to the multiple valences and functions they incorporate, contribute to the assertion of regionalization (Ghena, 2015; Ming, 2006), as structural part of globalization (Andreff, 2008; Lechner, 2009; Maguire, 2011), on the one hand, while on the other hand, they represent a valuable potential for the expanding tourism industry (Herman & Gherman, 2016). Given the fact that the elements of local identity represent a portal of knowledge of places, people, past, identity, belonging, etc. (Caciora et al., 2021; Herman & Benchis, 2017; Herman et al., 2020a; Ilies et al., 2020), they can contribute to the development of local and regional tourism by using them to diversify the local tourist offer (Herman et al., 2020b; Herman et al., 2021a,b) and create the image of a tourist destination (Herman et al., 2019; Saarinen, 2003, 2004; Toral, 2018).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study area

Olcea commune, located in the south of Bihor County, consists of four localities, namely: Olcea, Călăcea, Ucuriș and Hodișel. From an administrative point of view, Olcea Commune borders with: Tinca Commune (North), Cociuba Mare (North-East), Șoimi Commune (South-East), Craiva Commune from Arad County (South) and Apateu Communes and Batăr (West) (Figure 1). From a morphological point of view, the area belonging to Olcea Commune overlaps over the Eastern part of the Cermeiului Plain, a subunit of the Western Plain, which represents the central compartment of the Western Plain.

Therefore, the location of Olcea Commune in the east of Cermeiului Plain, at the Contact with Codru Moma Mountains, in the southern part of Bihor County, between Crișul Negru River to the North and Crișul Alb River to the South, gives this space a series of specific characteristics and features: climatic, hydrological, and bio-pedo-geographical.

Over time, the people of Olcea Commune have created a special civilization, closely related to the existential possibilities offered by the environment (Herman & Wendt, 2011; Herman, 2012).

In the literature, the issue of local identity has been widely treated by both foreign authors (Angle et al., 2017; Black and Veloutsou, 2017; Downey, 2017) and Romanian ones (Banini, 2021; Ciupe, 2021; Dincă et al., 2012; Filimon, 2012; Filimon et al., 2014; Herman and Wendt, 2011; Herman, 2012; Herman and Gherman, 2016; Ilieș et al., 2016; Stașac and Herman, 2010; Ilovan, 2020). However, at the local level there is still a lack of knowledge in this direction. Against this background, in the context of the current society characterized by

globalization (Drăghici et al., 2015), the identification and analysis of the elements of local identity is a supporting premise in diversifying the tourist offer of a tourist destination. In this context, the present study aims to complete the studies previously performed, by identifying and analyzing the elements of local identity specific to Olcea commune, Bihor County, Romania.

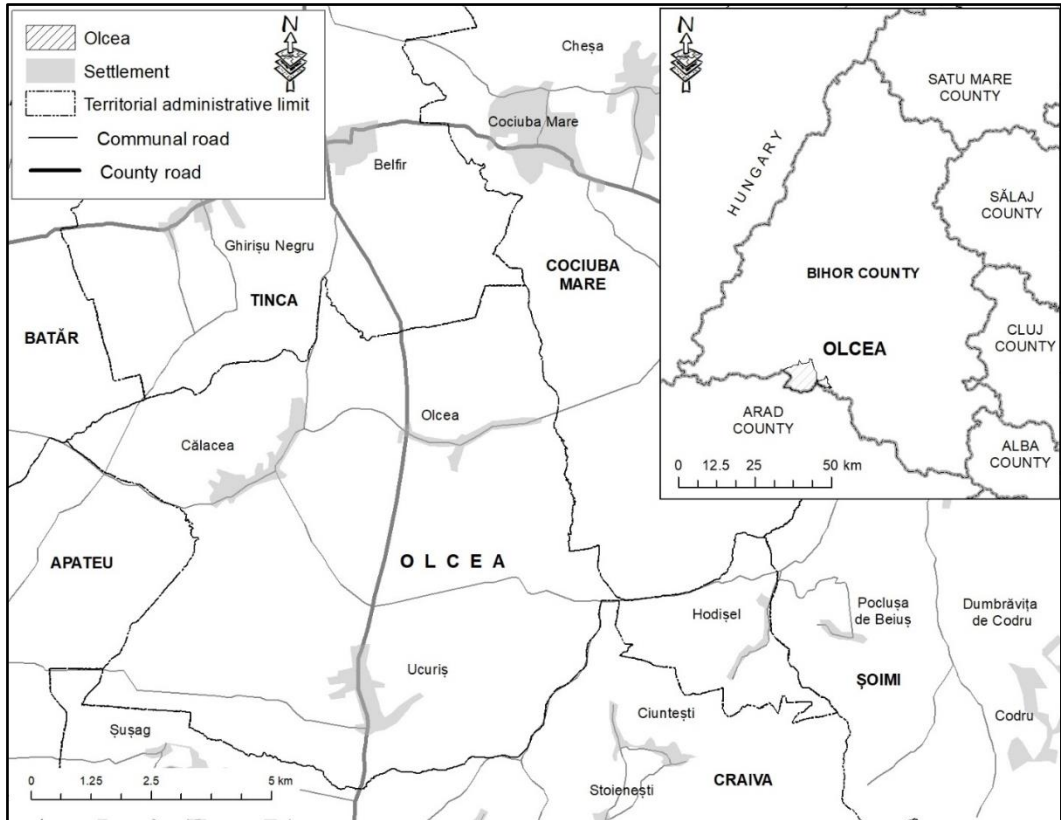


Figure 1. Geographical location of Olcea Commune, Bihor County

Data analysis

The realization of the present study involved the completion of two standard stages, namely: the office stage and the field stage. In the office stage, various specialized studies on similar topics were consulted and the present study was elaborated, while in the field stage, the necessary observations and photographs were made. The following research methods were used in the preparation of this material: the observation method, the cartographic method, the analysis method, the deduction method, and the historiographical method. Thus, following the two major stages of research (office and field) and the complementary use of the methods mentioned above, was identified the following elements of local identity, specific to Olcea commune, Bihor County, Romania: local speech, occupations of the inhabitants, the household regarded as a central element of the rural universe, gastronomy, and traditional dress.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Local speech

The studied area had a population of 2726 inhabitants in 2021, most of whom were Romanians (85%), followed by Roma and Hungarians.¹

Therefore, the language of communication is Romanian, but with strong Hungarian influences (until 1918 the region was under Hungarian occupation, the school classes being in Hungarian) found in the regionalisms of the local vocabulary: "cuptoriu" - stove, "obloc" - window, "ștroafe" - slippers, "felegă" - towel, "tălechi" - yard, "părădică" - tomato, "piparcă" - peppers, "tolcer" - funnel, "păsulă" - beans, "curechi" - cabbage, "tărtarcă" - sorghum etc.

Other expressions and words in the local dialect are: "scoacă" - sweet cow's cheese, "zamă dă părădaică" - tomato soup, "tuluc" - young ox, "firoang" - curtain, "nădragă" - pants, "gaci" - izmene, "cușmă" - hat, "chimeșe" - shirt, "lacreu" - jacket, "leveșe" - chicken soup, "pită" - bread, "lavor" - basin, "a iscăli" - to sign, "plevat" - pencil, "ciripă" - tile, "haizaș" - roof of the house, "clisă" - bacon, "ai" - garlic, "oloi" - oil, "miere" - sugar, "laviță" - bank, "clop" - hat, etc.

The preposition "dă" and "pă" instead of "of" and "on" is also widely used, as well as the conjunction "and" instead of "to": example "give where you are" instead of "where are you from" and "pă" table instead of "on the table. In some words, the final "u" and "i" are used, for example "cuptoriu", "dî-nde".

The first names used were the traditional Romanian ones: Floare, Mărie, Ană, Elena or Ileană, Petre, Teodor, Ioan, Moisă, Gheorghe, Flore, Pavel, Vasile. In the post December period, the traditional first names were replaced with the modern ones: Alin, Adrian, Călin, Corina, Carmen, Daniela, and now the first names with a western accent stand out: Marcus, Matei, Marius, Lucas, Aida, Antonia, Isidora, and so on. In the Roma communities, the first name oscillates, depending on the "characters in the movies", so we will meet: Tarzan, Zoro, Vineto, Pamela, Boby, Ghiocel, Lămâița etc.

Among the family names, the most common are Ile, Mic, Ștefan, Todor or Mateaș (in Călăcea); Mateoc, Popa, Țapoș, Botoc or Sârb (in Ucuriș); Ilieș, Ripan, Pantea or Dobra (in Olcea); Pelle, Ilonca, Matei or Ciocluț (in Hodișel).

Almost every person in the community benefits from three first names: last name, first name, and nickname. Depending on the circumstance, they can be used simultaneously or separately, sometimes together with other names or terms, denoting the age class or social status (Ardelean, 2014). We exemplify these situations with nicknames from the village of Călăcea: "Ile Ioan a Largului" - name, surname, and nickname, "Pavelea Petrii" - first name and nickname, "Delcea" - nickname.

The family name is transmitted on the paternal line, from father to children, in legitimate marriages. If the child comes from cohabitation, then it takes the surname of the grandfather, from the mother. At marriage, women take their husband's last name. However, there are exceptions, in which women wanted to keep their maiden name, so the husband's family name is added to that of the wife, for example Pele - Matei (in Hodișel), or cases in which the husband takes the name of the wife's family, for various reasons (wealth, ethnicity, nationality, etc.).

If the two spouses lived in cohabitation, during which time their children were born, they will bear the mother's family name. If the two decide to get

¹ <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

married and have children after that, they will take their father's name. Also in this situation is the man who has children from a marriage, remains a widower and remarries a woman who in turn has children from a previous marriage. After remarriage, the woman takes the name of the husband, but the children will keep the family name of the natural father. If the two have children after that, they will bear the husband's name. To be more specific, Ripan Pavel, who was left a widower with three children, remarried Todor Ana, also a widow with two children. After remarriage, the two had three more children together.

In the rural community, the nickname is the predominant one. This is because many individuals have the same first and last name, often creating confusion. So, just to eliminate the confusion, the nicknames were put, as for example, in Călăcea, where many are Ile Teodor, without a nickname it is impossible to know who is referring to: Ile Teodor - Delcea, Ile Teodor - Jnecu, Ile Teodor - Mititelu, Ile Teodor - Blondu sau Debu, Ile Teodor - Ciutica, Ile Teodor - Todoru Delcii, Ile Teodor - Ciuca.

The nickname informs about behaviors and attitudes, for example the "Snake" - Matei Gheorghe in Hodișel. Sometimes the nickname informs about the profession or social status, such as "Dăscălea" - Avram Teodor (teacher by profession), or "Birău" - Boșe Flore (former president of the CAP) or "Chiaburu" (the wealthiest) and "Licheaua" (for the poor). In most cases, the nicknames are funny and give a picture of the group's humor as in the case of "Chereșledan" Petrică, nicknamed "Trump". Sometimes the nickname indicates the place of residence, "Ghița de la Vale", and in the case of women with children it indicates the name of the husband or father, such as: "Măria Polii, Anuța Ciunii, Pavelea Petrii".

Occupations of the inhabitants

The main occupation of the inhabitants of the commune is agriculture, both the cultivation of plants (wheat, corn, sorghum, oats, barley, rye) and the raising of animals (cattle for milk and meat).

A major impediment to the practice of agriculture, especially plant cultivation, is the inferior quality of the claytype soil. That is why in the past, correlated with outdated work techniques and agricultural inventory, the yield was very low (Ștefănescu, 1995).

Over time, various plants have been grown in these lands: tobacco in the early 19th century in Călăcea, hemp, flax, communist vegetables, and sorghum. Of all these, the sorghum culture prevailed the most. So, in a short time the sorghum culture became a tradition, especially for the villages of Călăcea and Olcea, occupying large areas of land (in some years even more than 50% of the total).

Sorghum is a drought resistant plant native to India and North Africa. It is also known as "durra" in Sudan and "gaolean" in China (Bențe et al., 2001).

In our country it is also known as "tartar" and is cultivated for straw from which brooms are made. It was introduced as a crop plant in 1969 at Călăcea, becoming since then the main agricultural crop.

From the preparation of the land to the sale, the sorghum requires numerous work steps. Thus, in the autumn and spring the manure is spread for an improvement of the soil. In the spring, the work of preparing the land for sowing begins plowing and sowing. This first stage is also the easiest because everything is mechanized. After sowing, the crop is weeded against weeds. It should be noted that, being a drought resistant plant, it has adapted very well to

the soils of the commune, knowing that clay soils retain water longer. Also, the seeds do not require a special selection for sowing, using seeds from their own culture every year. The biggest pest of sorghum plants is the wireworm. The hoe is mechanized, with the tractor or manually, with the hoe.

The real work begins in late summer, in mid August, when the sorghum harvest begins. It is a difficult period, because the whole operation is done manually and in a relatively short period of time, 3-4 weeks maximum, when it is very hot (35 - 40°C).

Each plant is cut separately, 4-5 cm below the node of the spike, harvesting the straw, on which the seeds are also found. On a normal day, a person cuts about 200 kg. As the production is around 2500 Kg / ha, it takes at least 12 people to manually harvest one hectare. Most farmers have between 5 and 8 ha (exceptions with 15-20 ha being few), so the harvest requires a lot of labor, generally seasonal brought from neighboring villages (especially Rroma from Talpoș, Tinca, Fonău and Gepiu), who are provided with transport, meals and work pay 150 RON / day.

If, as far as the establishment of the culture is concerned, sorghum is not pretentious, it is pretentious as far as the harvest is concerned. Thus, the sorghum straw is spread on the ground to dry, so it is cut in August when it is very hot (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Sorghum culture. Aspects of the harvest

The spike needs three to four days to dry, during which time the straw turns a yellow-green color, which is of the best quality. If during the dry season it is watered by rain, it "loses its color", the spikes becoming gray to black, of lower quality, so a lower price. At 3-4 days, the sheaf spikes are harvested (skinned), taken home to the household, where it is stored in the form of a hay heads "jireadă" and covered with nylon so as not to be watered by rain.

After that, another difficult stage begins, which the locals call "drișcuit" or brushed sorghum. Basically, this means removing sorghum seeds with the help of a machine, called a "drișcă", mechanically driven by an electric motor (Figure 3). It is difficult because, when put in the "drișcă", sorghum emits a very irritating dust, which causes itching of the skin, nasal secretions, stinging of the eyes, in some cases facilitating the onset of asthma.



Figure 3. "Drișcuitul" - removal of sorghum seeds



Figure 4. Broom machine

At least three people are needed at this stage. The resulting seeds are an excellent fodder for domestic animals and in the bakery industry that uses the seeds to produce bread for diabetics.

Most farmers use raw sorghum at the broom factory in Olcea, owned by an Italian, with an amount between 5 and 7 RON / Kg.

There are a few entrepreneurs who continue the tradition of broom manufacturing. They must go through a few extra steps to produce the broom. First, the brushed sorghum must be selected in three categories: the third a - the less beautiful spikes (they make the inner part of the broom, which is not visible), the second a - is applied over and the first is the face (appearance) of the broom, that is, the most beautiful spikes.

To produce the broom, the producer also needs wooden tails (which he buys from people authorized to process wood), small nails and wire. The wooden tail is inserted into a handcrafted machine (Figure 4), which rotates the broom for processing.

Once produced, the broom is sewn with thread, for which a hand operated "press" and a handmade needle are used (Figure 5). The brooms are capitalized at different economic agents with amounts between 15 and 17 RON.



Figure 5. Broom in the sewing press

If in the 90's there was a broom sewing machine in almost every household, today there are very few lefts, about 3 in Călăcea and 2 in Olcea (authorized persons).

Fruit growing is quite widespread in addition to plant cultivation, especially in Hodișel and Ucuriș, hilly areas (specific to fruit growing). The fruits are used in unprocessed food or in the production of brandy. In this sense, the large number of brandy boilers in the area are representative (Ardelean, 2007).

Animal husbandry is another branch of agriculture, being a well-developed occupation in the past. Currently, their number is declining from year to year. The tractor also replaced the horse, with most of the horses now belonging to the Roma community; the goat is considered a sign of poverty, and the sheep is a sign of insensitivity (shepherds enter with their sheep over the crops of the

people doing damage). The goose has disappeared from the household. Since 2007, there has been some interest in raising beef for export.

The household is a central element of the rural universe

The houses were built of wood, by local craftsmen, with vertical wooden poles, on oak soles, at first covered with straw, and later with tiles (Cios).

Specific to the villages of Olcea commune are three types of households: open, traditional household; the household with double yard; the household with closed and semiclosed yard (Ardelean, 2014).

The open house is the oldest, with a very wide detour (yard), all surrounded by a twig fence. The house was at the back of the yard, away from the alley. It had a wagon cage, an animal stable, and a bread oven.

Between 1920 and 1960, there were households with a double yard: the district and the area. The house moves close to the street and generalizes the oven (summer kitchen), the birdhouse, the woodland, and the fountain in the yard.

After 1960, closed house households spread. The courtyard is smaller, the buildings are united all around, the house stretches along the street. The annexes for the birds, the pigsty and the "basket" for the corn move to the second yard. The main courtyard is paved with concrete and covered with vines (Ardelean, 2014).

The room on the street is called the "new house", where the valuables are kept furniture, pillow beds, etc. When the family has guests, they are welcomed here.

At present, the appearance of the villages has changed, the influence of modernity being observed in the new constructions, the western model, with attic or floor.

Gastronomy specific to the place

The foods that make up the food of the villagers are the traditional ones, especially products obtained in their own household, both vegetable and animal.

In the not-too-distant past, the staple food was polenta or cornmeal, made from cornmeal, eaten in combination with other foods such as cheese, milk, bacon or vegetables.

After World War II, "mălaiul" corn was replaced by wheat, which became the staple food. Bread is made from wheat flour. Until recently, it was obtained in his own household, which was equipped with a "bread oven". A loaf of bread meant about 6-7 loaves, which were enough for a week. In the summer days it baked more often because, from the heat, the bread deteriorated.

Milk is a widely used food because it was very handy (every family has at least one cow) and is eaten raw or processed in the form of shell (sweet cheese), cheese, curd, cream, butter, etc.

Vegetables are a substantial part of the diet, eaten raw, cooked, or fried. Vegetables include beans, onions, potatoes, cabbage, carrots, tomatoes, peppers, etc. These vegetables were cooked in the form of soups, chops were garnished. Bean soup is not missing from the "weekly menu", at least on Wednesdays and Fridays, as a fasting dish. Potatoes, considered the second bread of the peasant, are eaten almost daily, in all seasons, in different ways: potato soup, French fries, baked potatoes, etc. During the winter, the menu was supplemented with cabbage in the form of cabbage soup, sarmale, etc. Tomatoes are also very important in the diet, eaten raw in summer (tomato salad with cucumbers and bacon), and in winter in the form of soups.

Chicken soup was and is considered a holiday dish, so it was cooked on holidays and Sundays.

The fruits had a great passage because they were eaten raw, dried (in winter) or in a jar, in the form of compote. The jams were also made from fruit.

Pancakes filled with cheese or jam, potato and cabbage pie, walnut roll, poppy seeds, and apples are prepared as a "dessert".

The drinks are prepared from grapes (wine), and brandy from any fruit, the most "best" being the plum. The wine is stored in 200 l oak barrels and glass vessels (50 l) and the brandy in mulberry barrels.

Traditional dress

The men's folk costume consisted of a white war woven linen or cotton shirt. From the chest upwards it was open and had colors or buttons in colors up to the neck. It was worn over "gaci" or "nădragi". In the summer, the shirt was worn with a "laibăr simplu" made of black cloth, and in the winter with a "cojocelul". The shoes were shoes or boots. In winter, over the coat, the suman was worn, made of white blanket with various geometric ornaments, red, black, blue, green. The head was covered with a white or brown straw bell during the summer, and in winter the black lambskin hat (Ardelean, 2014).

The women's folk costume was made of white cloth lapels with large handmade fangs. The legs were woven during the war. They wore hair or silk in front of them. Another element was the "spătoiul cu pumnari". They wore "lăiberelul de catifea" over their backs. They wore "opinci" on their feet, and later shoes, while on their heads they wore black naframa (Ardelean, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

The Romanian villages represent an inexhaustible source of historical richness, of the past and the present, carrying on the unseen relay of the Romanian spirituality, which unites us all in one unitary whole. The elements of identity that define the life of the Romanian village are, in fact, about the people who created, endured, and went on, regardless of the situation and who, generation after generation, carried on the tradition, culture, religion and aspiration of the forerunners, creating and completing, at the same time, all this by broadening the creative horizon, work and national aspirations. With each generation, the cultural baggage has been enriched, but ensuring that the cultural heritage will be transmitted intact, materialized in myths, ceremonies, songs, and carols, in wooden notches or in traditional Romanian (local) clothing.

The creative spirit of the uneducated Romanian peasant in high schools is reflected in the numerous oral creations, traditions and customs that mark the most important stages of human life, birth, baptism, marriage, death.

Traditions and customs are a significant part of rural life. The creative spirit of the peasant materialized in various customs, traditions, enchantments, hatreds and incantations, superstitions; all this alleviating the long winter nights, the "sentimental" pains, the longing for the loved ones, the loss of a loved one or the lack of life, they being transmitted orally from generation to generation, returning to us, the duty not to forget them, for that this is what defines us, it is that "compass" that shows us where we come from and where we are going.

Another defining element of the identity in the Romanian space is the feeling of ownership, of belonging to the geographical space, the love for the land. The land was, is and will be the most precious of the inhabitants of the

village. Although in Olcea Commune the soils are poorer in quality, being clayey alluvial soils, worked with effort and love, they bore fruit. And as "man sanctifies the place", the inhabitants of Olcea Commune proved their diligence and occupation by transforming sorghum culture into tradition / custom, and sorghum "rewarded" them by giving them the necessary livelihood and even the opportunity to progress economically so that the villages of the Commune Olcea to be known for their abundance. If from the local's point of view, the local language is a comfort, especially when it is far from home, then the identity of the "Olcean" is the native village.

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