

# Romanian Peasant Identities in Transylvania: Sources, Methods and Problems of Research\*

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SORIN MITU, ELENA BĂRBULESCU

**T**HE FORMULA stipulating that the village is “a silent world” made a long career in the world of historians, especially when it referred to the investigation of mentalities and of the cultural universe of the rural societies. Alexandru Dușu,<sup>1</sup> Daniel Barbu<sup>2</sup> or Barbu Ștefănescu<sup>3</sup> are just a few of the authors that have discussed and analyzed this matter in Romanian historiography. While for the anthropologists that are doing field researches, in present times, the peasant confessions are main and generous material of their investigations, for the historians that approach the same topic in a farther epoch the things look totally different. The village “keeps silence” and “hides” from the historian, for a double reason: firstly because the peasants themselves did not put their representations in writing, but only orally; and secondly because the accounts of others regarding the peasants (officials, travelers, chroniclers, folklore gatherers) are pretty rare, and above all, altered by biases and by their incapacity of understanding and transmitting the peasant thoughts, feelings or dreams. Even when it “talks,” the village is doing it because it is provoked or compelled to do it (through inquiries, interviews, researches) and less on its own initiative. More often, “others” are those who speak in the name of the peasants, from priests, teachers or village notaries that record their words, till nobles or officials. For this reason we may say that the peasants, as we meet them in the historical sources, practice a double language: one for them (identifiable especially in the folkloric creation) and one for the “others,” present in the other types of sources.

All these problems become more acutely when it is about a delicate and complex matter as identity is. Is it possible a research of identities that structure the peasant world, from a historical perspective? Are there sources to reveal how the peasants saw themselves few centuries ago, how they described and how they identified themselves from ethnic, regional, confessional or social, gender or age, point of views?

It has been written for a very long time in the social literature in Romania about the identities and solidarities in Romanian rural world, even if this was done with a total-

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ly different methodology from today. Authors like Ovid Densușianu,<sup>4</sup> Liviu Rusu,<sup>5</sup> Ernest Bernea<sup>6</sup> or Ovidiu Papadima<sup>7</sup> have written works that set on deciphering the mental universe of Romanian rural world. Being marked by an essentialist conception, of Herder tradition, these authors have tried to identify in the manifestations of peasant cultures the specific features of a “Romanian soul.”<sup>8</sup> Despite the fact that today these works seem obsolete, a series of observations or even useful conclusions for the topic of research proposed by the title of this article may be recuperated.

Lately though, studies in history of mentalities, historical anthropology and cultural history have brought significant contributions in knowing the peasant identities in Transylvania, succeeding in “breaking the silence” manifested until now in many regards. The Ph.D. dissertation of Toader Nicoară offered the first overall regard upon rural mentalities in Transylvania of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, approaching, in a special chapter the problem of the peasant self image.<sup>9</sup>

Of special importance are the works of Barbu Ștefănescu, dedicated to the reconstitution of rural civilization in Transylvania, during 18-19<sup>th</sup> century. Three of his books tackle the topic of identity by offering firstly, an image of the peasant in Bihor (in the mirror of his own accounts but also those of nobles),<sup>10</sup> and then a systematic analysis of the frames of aggregation of peasant community, starting with the house, family, village, parish and neighborhood, and ending with the “country,” as last circle of peasant communitary identities.<sup>11</sup>

Studies in anthropology and ethnology, dedicated, usually, to contemporary realities, offer sometimes important marks for the historical ones. In some cases, they approach identity phenomena developed on a longer duration, as is doing it for example, Paul H. Stahl, who describes the Romanian house, household, villages and village confederations.<sup>12</sup> Numerous aspects regarding identity in Romanian folk culture are approached also in the thorough ethnological work written by Ela Cosma<sup>13</sup> (author asserted herself later as a historian), or in the recent studies written by Adrian Crupa.<sup>14</sup> Other anthropological works, even if they tackle present realities, they also valorize historical information (as Gail Kligman does)<sup>15</sup> or they even have a consistent historical dimension (the case of the article signed by Katherine Verdery).<sup>16</sup>

One work that combines the methodological perspective of the history of mentalities with the techniques of investigation of the researchers of the folk culture, addressing the vision of Romanian peasant from Ardeal regarding the WWI, is Eugenia Bârlea’s Ph.D. dissertation.<sup>17</sup> The same combination between the methods of ethnology with those of history can be traced in the works dedicated by Constantin Bărbulescu to the imaginary of the human body<sup>18</sup> or to the impact of modernization upon the rural world<sup>19</sup> (with the note that these regard less the problems of Transylvania).

Let us see, further on, which are the historical sources that allow the investigation of the rural mental universe and, in particular, of the peasant identities in Transylvania, in the modern epoch?

Firstly, we can operate a methodological distinction between the historical sources that “go in” and those that “go out” from the village world. Doubtless, the second category, containing texts produced by peasants or where they talk about themselves, is the most valuable for research. But, sometimes, it is insufficient or is totally missing. Accordingly, in the majority of situations, these *direct* sources can be rounded or replaced with *indirect*

sources, respectively, the ones that “go in” the village. These are texts elaborated by instances located outside the village (civil or ecclesiastical authorities, estate high officials, elites, physicians, scholars), but are destined to it, and usually, they intend to influence the peasant behavior, either by transmitting some norms or orders, or by subtler means, of education and persuasion. These texts, to fulfill their destination, that is to be received by peasants, must be written “in their own language,” that is in accordance with the communication codes and the systems of representations specific to the folk culture.

Consequently, they can reveal, indirectly, aspects linked to peasants’ behavior or mentalities. This can be done either by decoding some topics of peasant culture, reflected indirectly in the mirror of messages that are transmitted to them and that must resonate with what the peasants think or say, in order to be intelligible; or by evaluating their potential of influence, of the transformations they succeed to provoke at the level of receiver.

All the texts having an educational character, lay or religious, transmitted towards the village enter in this category of sources. This is, firstly, the religious literature (catechisms, sermons). This is followed by school didactic literature, consisting of manuals for the primary education destined mostly to peasants’ children. For example, Ovidiu Ghitta or Ciprian Ghișa have analyzed the way catechisms have molded the confessional identity of the Greek-Catholics believers,<sup>20</sup> and Joachim von Puttkamer and Rodica Ianoș have studied the impact of history manuals upon the social identities in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with effects in the broadest layers (including the rural) of society.<sup>21</sup> Thirdly, there is the didactic literature with unofficial character, made of “wisdom books” or “learning books” (beginning with the 18<sup>th</sup> century),<sup>22</sup> followed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by calendars and almanacs.<sup>23</sup> Thematically, these are making the passage towards the literature “of delectation” destined to the village where an important place was taken by the well-known “popular books”, even from the Middle Ages.<sup>24</sup>

To the literature with didactic character the interventions with normative character of lay and ecclesiastical officials are added, diffused in the direction of traditional community. The most important channel of transmission for these regulations was represented by the church or school memoranda.<sup>25</sup>

One category of sources that do not go in or out from the village world is represented by the accounts of some exterior observers, belonging to the urban world. These may be either official reports, elaborated by authorities (civil, military, ecclesiastical, medical), or narrative sources (trip descriptions, correspondence). To the latter category belong the memoirs of intellectuals of rural origin, coming from the village world, but whose mentality was later molded by the urban culture.<sup>26</sup> Finally the last level of these texts dedicated to the peasant world is represented by the older ethnographic literature.<sup>27</sup> All these sources mentioned above can incorporate also “voices” of the peasants, expressed in the transcription of the urban people who set themselves up for their spokesmen. But absolutely all (including here the ethnographic literature that claimed to be a “scientific” creation) were altered by a vision strange to the rural world that powerfully distorted their original message.

The historical sources that “go out” from the village world are much more rarely. Often, they had an occasional character, being provoked by a dramatic event (upheavals, revolutions, epidemics), after that the peasants were compelled, temporary, to talk about themselves.<sup>28</sup> Such *inquiries* upon the peasant world have represented a golden mine

for historians who published or interpreted them in important works. Keith Hitchins has studied the inquiries of Habsburg authorities that followed the religious turbulences in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>29</sup> David Prodan has analyzed the testimonies of authorities regarding Horea's revolt,<sup>30</sup> Barbu Ștefănescu has sketched the entire universe of peasant mentality starting from an inquiry developed by the authorities of Bihor county at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ioan Bolovan, Gelu Neamțu, Adrian Onofreiu, Dumitru Suciuc have edited or brought to value inquiries developed in the peasant environment following the Revolution in 1848.<sup>31</sup>

Even if, usually these sources record the voices of the peasants investigated, they are also subjected to some specific distortions. Sometimes, distortions are due to misunderstandings, other times due to deformed transcriptions, done on purpose or involuntarily. But the most important alteration is due to the fact that the peasants themselves manipulate this type of discourse. Most of the times they are afraid, they hide, dissimulate, deny, present themselves with a certain image (as victims or "ideal servant," by stressing of naivety and own ignorance), function to their own interests. On several occasions, after the dramatic moment has passed, they withdraw in silence again, certainly an apparent "silence," valid only in relation with the indiscreet ears of the ones outside the community.

A distinctive category of sources that are "going out" from the village world is represented by the notes on the books that were used by professor Barbu Ștefănescu to outline a broad and expressive image upon the rural mentalities. Even if they belong almost always to a rural elite (priests, teachers, notaries), their authors are situated usually very close to the peasant mental universe, succeeding this way in perceiving it accurately.

Finally, towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when most of the peasant will become literate, some of them reach to leave written testimonies. Among the sources of this type we should mention the correspondence. But for a peasant to write letters he had to leave the village and this had an exceptional character. Departure was occasioned by the military service most of the times, and especially by wars (that also left expressive traces in folklore). The most known example of genre is that of the letters from the Romanian peasants from Transylvania that fought in the WWI.<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, a methodological question to raise regarding these sources is if the peasants are still "peasants" (at least in the way they were in the pre modern epochs) from the moment they start to write? Certainly, the writing and all that is transmitted through writing will reconfigure substantially the cultural universe of the peasants. The traditional peasant culture is defined, as it is well known, by its oral character. In the moment orality is replaced by writing, firstly through schooling, the peasant identities and mentalities are changing, too.

For these reasons we think that the most important source for studying the peasant culture (including identities) in a historical duration is folklore. Through these texts, the peasants no longer talk, finally, for the others but for themselves. Their values, beliefs and feelings (or better said, the discursive interface these are conveyed through) are expressed in an authentic manner, without being affected neither by unreliable "translations" of those who write in their names, nor by the fears and restraints of the peasants to talk in front of the "strangers."

Still, despite these obvious historiographic qualities, folklore was used far too little by the historians in Romania in their works. These have considered that folklore did not capture almost at all the historicity, respectively, the specific events or features of an epoch.<sup>33</sup> Certainly, as any historical source neither folklore is able to offer a perfect mirroring of the historical realities it reflects. But the objections of historians, mentioned above, can be surpassed with the help of some methodological precautions.

Firstly, folklore collections, especially the old ones, from 19<sup>th</sup> century, are altered by the interventions of the folklorists, who interpolated in the published texts different elements of the urban culture (for example nationalist insertions). At other times, on the contrary they have eliminated some paragraphs they considered inadequate, for various reasons (aesthetical, modesty, “lack of relevance” etc.). Most of the times, though the lost fragments can be recuperated, and those interpolated can be identified by comparing the different variants of the same text, as folklore is extremely stereotype, the same piece having numerous versions. The modifications operated by folklorists can be easily traced, through textual archaeology because, usually, it is about anachronisms and strident interventions that make a discordant note in the ensemble of the texts. Besides, they are also useful to the research, because they reveal interesting aspects regarding the ideological attitudes of the gatherers of folklore.

Secondly, the texts should always be datable and contemporary to the epoch we study. Even if the folkloric creations are transmitted through generations, often preserving an archaic ideational fund, they suffer also alterations in the course of transmission, bearing at certain levels the print of the epoch they were performed. Consequently, for a research upon the peasant identity in 19<sup>th</sup> century is indicated to use texts gathered in that epoch (and not in 20<sup>th</sup> century, for example), having this way the assurance that they are representative at least for the period under discussion and possibly in a measure that need to be established with caution, for the previous centuries.

Thirdly, we must take into account the specific of each folkloric genre. Certain genres, such as shouts for example, made *ad hoc* at the *Sunday dance* or bees, are more sensible to actuality and have the capacity of capturing contemporary, momentary aspects. The same thing can be said by the military service songs that mention a concrete historical event—for example a certain battle (“*La Solferino pe vale*” [On the Solferino valley]) or a specific manner of recruiting (for example the cast lots) datable historically—and that are spread exclusively by a certain folkloric community. Other genres, in exchange, such as fairy tales, are travelling much more through space and time reflecting more general aspects and that are not necessarily specific to a certain community.

We will present as follows, few examples of analyzing some folkloric texts relevant for the study of the peasant identities. We chose here the love lyrics, a folkloric genre somehow in the middle regarding the capacity of reflecting actuality. On the one hand the analyzed texts are related to actuality, to the sentimental adventures of the performers, developed in present, resembling sometimes in tonality with the shoutings. On the other hand, these formulas are extremely stereotype and can be met on large spaces in Transylvania, but also in Moldavia or Muntenia, and the chronological interval they were gathered is also very large, developed along the whole duration of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Specialists in folklore have identified in the structure of the love folk lines a motif they entitled “regional self-pride,”<sup>34</sup> motif able to introduce us in the discreet zone of peasant identities. Many times, when they evoke the figure of the lover, the peasants (respectively, peasant women) place it in a certain space context, this allowing us to identify their topographic frame and to draw the shape of a peasant symbolical geography.

Numerous Romanian love songs begin with formula like: “As up is the sun/ Girls like in X, there are not.”<sup>35</sup> The general rule is that the most beautiful girls (or lads, according to the case) are in the native village of the peasant. The superlative (in a relative form) associated with the native locality and community confirm the idea accredited by ethnologists according to which the native village represents for peasant a true “centre of the world.”<sup>36</sup>

Now, the village is nominated, now it is replaced with the formulae “we,” that totally identifies with the “village.”<sup>37</sup> In other cases, the “village” or “we” is replaced by the ethnonym “Romanian” (the “Romanian maid”). The apparition of this term can be interpreted also as an influence coming from the nationalist discourse, but equally it can be about a genuine expression, as we know from other texts that the peasants identified in many situations through ethnonym (the “Romanian law,” “Romanians” with the meaning of socman etc.) we may say that the identification through ethnonym specific to modern nationalism, has taken a traditional formulae from folklore, without operating any alteration in form though regarding the meaning, the folklorists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (and later on even the peasants themselves) have converted the pure ethnic, traditional meaning of the original formulae in one of a modern national character.<sup>38</sup>

But which is the frame this centrality, this relative superlative is referring to? The broadest spatial context is that of the world: “As long is the world/ There’s no lad like the Romanian.”<sup>39</sup> The next reference circle is the “country,” which is sometimes associated with the world: “As far as the world and country/ There are no maids like in Zagra.”<sup>40</sup> The term “country” has basically two meanings. The first signification is the one of “country” with political-administrative meaning. Such is the case of the formulae: “as far as the Hungarian country/ There’s no maid like the Romanian maid”<sup>41</sup> or “as far as the Serbian country/ There are no maids like Romanian maid.”<sup>42</sup> The same meaning of “country” politically we meet in “as far as the country and Ardeal/ There’s no lad like *Ibășteanu*.”<sup>43</sup> It can be noticed that these countries are identifying in conformity with the formal constitutional delimitations, of mediaeval tradition: the Kingdom of Hungary (or maybe, *Partium*), (The Great) Principality of Ardeal, and maybe the “Serbian” territories covered by Illyrian privileges. In exchange, nowhere in these formulas that is not the question about the Habsburg Empire, too recent and missing the organic structure to replace in such basic expressions, the traditional reference frames.

The “country” in the last quote may be synonym with Ardeal (by repetition, doubling, frequently met in the folk poetry) but it may also make a reference to the second meaning of the term: the one of “land” or “village confederation.”<sup>44</sup> This meaning is explicit in lines like: “As far as the Olt Country/ There’s no maid like the *Moș’s* maid.”<sup>45</sup> As it is well known the country with the meaning of a group of villages in a distinct geographical area, linked through endogamy, commercial trade, solidarities and common ritual practices, represents the broadest familiar space to the peasant, beyond that

“alterity” truly began.<sup>46</sup> To this space, as we have seen, sometimes the title of “country” is ascribed, but most frequently it is identified through different attributes that nominates it: regional-administrative ( “How many girls are Bihor girls”<sup>47</sup>—Bihor, name of a county but also of an ethnographic area—or “My man is a Banat man.”<sup>48</sup>; ethnic-regional (“Guguleanu has peasant sandal,”<sup>49</sup> geographical (“On Mureş and in the Plain/ There’s no maid that I like,”<sup>50</sup> “How many villages under the mountains/ Like here there are not many maids.”)<sup>51</sup> Many times the country is a valley, and other times it settles the boundaries by placing “on the plain” or “under the mountain,” “up,” or “down.”

In some cases, in parallel with underlining of the personal qualities of the lyric heroes, the uniqueness of the village is also celebrated identified at the level of the identity geography through its exceptional attributes. The mountains, waters and its valleys are matchless, and so are the lads and maids on its area: “As far as Maramureş/ There’s no maid like you and me/ Nor lad like my lad/ Village like Dragomirescu/ No mountain like Tibleşu/ No water like Baicu.”<sup>52</sup>

There are also situations where centrality is no longer placed at the level of village but at the level of the country: “Up is the sky from earth/ Maids like in Cou there are not/ Yes there are at us/ But they don’t have soft lips.”<sup>53</sup> This time excellence is not to be found at “us,” in the village, but at “Cou,” that is Vaşcău, at the fair where the lads go to sell, to socialize and to find a partner, according to the endogamic limits of the Beiuş district.

The lines analyzed above, despite their character at first sight simple and stereotype (that led to their neglect from historians) have an important role in the context of peasant traditional culture. On the one hand, being love lines, they had the aim of celebrating beauty and exceptional qualities of the loved one. On the other hand though, as we have seen, in subtler way they contributed also to the formation, manifestation and consolidation of community identities.

Paradoxically, the discourse upon uniqueness and excellence of the village was repeated in each community, with the same words and using the same clichés. Each village considered itself “the hub of the universe,” ascribing exclusively the same set of exemplary qualities. Doubtless the peasants themselves could not ignore the relative and “illogical” character of this vision: “As far as the Serbian country/ There is no maid like the Romanian maid/ Anyone can talk/ Anyway to scold her.”<sup>54</sup> But as these lines are saying they did not care about it.

Surprising is the fact that the nationalist discourse, emerged and developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is circulating the same mechanism of the own uniqueness, that we have met in the case of rural mentalities. Every nation considers itself “the most” (brave, diligent, altruistic, oppressed etc.), preferring to ignore the fact that all the nations around are sharing the same image of themselves. This similitude between the modalities of functioning of the two identity mechanisms is posing the matter of the influence of peasant mentalities upon the building of the modern nations. The simple fact that everywhere in Europe, the first nationalists were also the first theorists, gatherers, and enthusiastic admirers of folklore<sup>55</sup> is in the measure to offer a convincing answer to this question.



## Notes

1. Alexandru Dușu, *Literatura comparată și istoria mentalităților* (București: Univers, 1982), 60–65. Id., *Călătorii, imagini, constante* (București: Eminescu, 1985), 260–269.
2. Daniel Barbu, *Scrisoare pe nisip: Timpul și privirea în civilizația românească a secolului al XVIII-lea* (București: Antet, 1996), 11–12.
3. Barbu Ștefănescu, Edith Bodo, *Ruperea tăcerii* (Oradea: Editura Muzeului Țării Crișurilor, 1998), 5–7.
4. Ovid Densușianu, *Vieașa păstorească în poezia noastră populară*, vols. 1–2 (București: Casa Școalelor, 1922–1923).
5. Liviu Rusu, *Viziunea lumii în poezia noastră populară* (București: Editura pentru Literatură, 1967).
6. Ernest Bernea, *Spațiu, timp și cauzalitate la poporul român* (București: Humanitas, 1997).
7. Ovidiu Papadima, *O viziune românească a lumii: Studiu de folclor* (București: Saeculum, 2009).
8. The same objective can be traced in works of philosophers like Lucian Blaga, or historians of religions like Mircea Eliade. A history and a critical analysis of the scientific literature referring to the problem of national specific in Romanian folklore creation see Henri H. Stahl, *Eseuri critice: Despre cultura populară românească* (București: Minerva, 1983), 30–67 (upon historiography of folklore studies); 71–219 (about Blaga and Eliade).
9. Toader Nicoară, *Société rurale et mentalités collectives en Transylvanie à l'époque moderne: 1680–1800* (Paris: Harmattan, 2002).
10. Ștefănescu, Bodo, *Ruperea*, 186–211.
11. Barbu Ștefănescu, *Sociabilitate rurală, violență și ritual: Cartea în practicile oblativ de născumpărare a păcii comunitare, Transilvania, sec. XVII–XIX* (Oradea: Editura Universității din Oradea, 2004), 36–149. Id., *Le monde rural de l'ouest de la Transylvanie: Du Moyen Âge à la Modernité* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2007), 83–140.
12. Paul H. Stahl, *Triburi și sate din sud-estul Europei* (București: Paideia, 2000), 115–158.
13. Ela Cosma, *Ideea de însemciere în cultura populară românească* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000).
14. Adrian Crupa, “Proiecții spațiale ale identității/alterității în gândirea tradițională românească”, *Acta Iassyensia Comparationis* 2, 2 (Fall 2004): 47–53. Id., “Repere identitare în cultura tradițională românească”, in *De la fictiv la real. Imaginea, imaginarul, imagologia*, ed. Andi Mihalache, Silvia Marin-Barutchieff (Iași: Editura Universității “Al. I. Cuza”, 2010), 589–597. Id., *Identitate și alteritate în cultura tradițională*, vol. 1 (Iași, Tehnopress, 2011).
15. Gail Kligman, *Nunta mortului: Ritual, poezică și cultură populară în Transilvania* (Iași: Polirom, 1998).
16. Katherine Verdery, *Transylvanian villagers: Three centuries of political, economic and ethnic change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
17. Eugenia Bârlea, *Perspectiva lumii rurale asupra Primului Război Mondial* (Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut, 2004).
18. Constantin Bărbulescu, *Imaginarul corpului uman: Între cultura fărâncască și cultura savantă, secolele XIX–XX* (București: Paideia, 2005).
19. Constantin Bărbulescu, Vlad Popovici, *Modernizarea lumii rurale din România în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea și la începutul secolului al XX-lea: Contribuții* (Cluj-Napoca, Accent, 2005).
20. Ovidiu Ghitta, *Nașterea unei biserici: Biserica greco-catolică din Sătmar în primul ei secol de existență* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2001); Ciprian Ghișa, *Biserica greco-catolică din Transilvania (1700–1850): Elaborarea discursului identitar* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2006).



21. Joachim von Puttkamer, *Schulalltag und nationale Integration in Ungarn* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 2003), 349–363; Nicoleta-Rodica Ianoș, *Educația în învățământul primar românesc din Transilvania: 1850–1870*, PhD Diss. (Cluj-Napoca: Universitatea “Babeș-Bolyai”, 2010), 204–209, 287–299.
22. See Alexandru Dușu, *Cărțile de înțelepciune în cultura română* (București: Editura Academiei, 1972).
23. Listed in Georgeta Răduică, Nicolin Răduică, *Calendare și almanahuri românești, 1731–1918: Dicționar bibliografic* (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1981).
24. For this remains as reference the solid work of Nicolae Cartoian, *Cărțile populare în literatura românească*, vols. 1–2 (București: Editura Enciclopedică Română, 1974).
25. See Nicolae Boșan, Valeriu Leu, *Școala și comunitate în secolul al XIX-lea: Circularele școlare bănățene* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002). An analysis of the impact of church memoranda upon peasant mentalities at Sorin Mitu, *Transilvania mea: Istorie, mentalități, identități* (Iași: Polirom, 2006), 338–347.
26. Such texts were left by intellectuals like Timotei Cipariu, Ioan Slavici, Ion Pop Reteganul or Lucian Blaga. A kindred category is the belletristic literature inspired by the peasant life, be it poetry (Coșbuc, Goga) or prose (Rebreanu, Agârbiceanu).
27. See for example the work of Simeon Florea Marian, *Trilogia vieții*, vols. 1–3 (București: Saeculum, 2000).
28. Models of analysis of these types of sources are the classical works of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Montailou, sat occitan de la 1294 până la 1324*, vols. 1–2 (București: Meridiane, 1992) and Carlo Ginzburg, *Brânza și viermii: Universul unui morar din secolul al XVI-lea* (București: Nemira, 1997).
29. Keith Hitchins, *Conștiință națională și acțiune politică la românii din Transilvania: 1700–1868*, vol. 1 (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1987), 30–61.
30. David Prodan, *Răscoala lui Horea*, vols. 1–2 (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984).
31. Gelu Neamțu, Ioan Bolovan, eds., *Revoluția de la 1848 în Transilvania: Ancheta Kozma din Munții Apuseni* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 1998); Ioan Bolovan, Adrian Onofreiu, *Revoluția de la 1848–1849 în zona Regimentului grăniceresc năsăudean: Contribuții istorice și demografice* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2003); Dumitru Suciuc, *Soldați fără uniformă ai Landsturmului românesc și starea protopopiatelor ortodoxe din Transilvania după Războiul Național din 1848–1849* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2011).
32. Bârlea, *Perspectiva*. The manner in which the identities and loyalties of Ardeal Romanians (including the peasant ones) have been reconfigured through the military service in the Habsburg army was analyzed by Liviu Maior, *Romanians in the Habsburg army: Forgotten soldiers and officers* (Bucharest: Military Publishing House, 2004). Id., *Habsburgii și români: De la loialitatea dinastică la identitate națională* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2006).
33. Regarding the reflection of historical reality in folklore see the considerations of some folklorists: Vladimir I. Propp, *Rădăcinile istorice ale basmului fantastic* (București: Univers, 1973); Paul Simionescu, *Etnoistoria: Convergență interdisciplinară* (București: Editura Academiei, 1983); Nicolae Roșianu, *Eseuri despre folclor* (București: Univers, 1981), 102–127; Mihai Pop, “Caracterul istoric al epicii populare”, *Revista de etnografie și folclor* 9, 1 (1964): 5–15; Alexandru I. Amzulescu, *Cântecul nostru bătrânesc* (București: Minerva, 1986), 1–41, 97–124, 125–165. A historical applied study that puts into value the folklore creation: Maria Crăciun, “Elemente de viață cotidiană în basmele populare românești: Instituții—vasalitatea”, in *Viață privată, mentalități colective și imaginar social în Transilvania*, ed. Sorin Mitu, Florin Gogâltan (Oradea: Asociația Istoricilor din Transilvania și Banat, 1996), 120–131.
34. Sabina Ispas, Doina Trușă, *Lirica de dragoste: Index motivic și tipologic*, vol. 2 (București: Editura Academiei, 1986), 112–113, 268–275.

35. Ibid., 272.
36. Bernea, *Spașiu*, 86–87.
37. The formulae „we, the village” is frequent in the notes on the books (Ștefănescu, *Sociabilitate*, 76–80).
38. For example in traditional mentality „the Romanian maid” from the song was a peasant girl „ours,” and not a woman from an educated family or even less a boyar woman from Pricipates. For the gatherer or the interpreter having a modern vision, obviously these were all equally „Romanian.”
39. Ispas, Truță, *Lirica*, vol. 2, 269.
40. Ibid., 272.
41. Ibid., 268.
42. Ibid., 269.
43. Ibid., 272.
44. See Stahl, *Triburi*, 153–158.
45. Ispas, Truță, *Lirica*, vol. 2, 270.
46. Ștefănescu, *Sociabilitate*, 139–140.
47. Ispas, Truță, *Lirica*, vol. 2, 271.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid., 270.
51. Ibid., 273.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., 272.
54. Ibid., 269.
55. See Anne-Marie Thiesse, *Crearea identităților naționale în Europa, secolele XVIII–XX* (Iași: Polirom, 2000), chapt. “Folclorul”.

### **Abstract**

#### **Romanian Peasant Identities in Transylvania: Sources, Methods and Problems of Research**

The paper is presenting the bibliography and the sources referring to the problems of Romanian peasant identities in Transylvania in the modern epoch. After reviewing the bibliography, a classification and an analysis of sources is made, divided into sources that “go in” (religious, educational and school literature, calendars, churchly memoranda) and sources that “go out” from the village world (official inquiries, notes on the book and folklore). Further on the author insists upon the folkloric sources being analyzed a series of folk texts relevant for the problems of identity. The conclusions highlight the similitude between identity mechanisms at the level of peasant mentality and the modern ones.

### **Keywords**

Peasant identities, historical sources, folklore, Transylvania, 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries