

## Censorship and Self-Censorship In the Traditional Romanian Village Preliminary Aspects

– An anthropological addendum to the interpretation of censorship –

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**Keywords:** community, good traditions, solidarity, control, self-control, common laws, consciousness, respect, ancestry, belief.

**Abstract:** The Romanian traditional village, within a historical reality that validates the concept of “tradition” regarding the entire rural geospace with a multi-millenary, as well as multicultural habitation, is abruptly eradicated, during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, synchronously, the millenary values of the community fading away in increasingly dim touches, assumed by censorship and self-censorship, coordinates of a “hygienic mentality”, shaped from conventions, rules, customs and common laws. Two of the major categories responsible for the functional capacities of censorship–self-censorship, likened one to another, enter within an area of vulnerability. These two categories are equally impropriated by the official institutions (the church, political and administrative structures), respectively by the levers of the community (the council of the elders, evening village sittings, group work, the fair, to become the talk of the village, customs and traditions characterized by a significant and crucial impact...)

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*We may* open a discreet and subtle incursion into the authentic universe, characterized by the archaic nobleness of the traditional village, just as we open the gate of a fairytale with “*once upon a time*” and this because the *village* itself, devised by the millenary virility of the *community*<sup>1</sup>, exhaustedly laid down in a crepuscular area.

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<sup>1</sup> Specific, especially to the middle period (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries), the community has its origin in the Dacian-Pre-Roman era and later in the Post-Roman stage, when the inhabitants of the Carpathian and North-Danubian space knew a superior level of social organization – the one of *the village community of vicinity* or of territorial type, led by a village headsman (judex) and a council formed of people “*elders and grandparents*”, according to the Romanian ancient law *Jus Valachicum*. This institution organically connected to the specific space of *the lands*, assured, in time, the background of ethnical survival, of the language, as well as of a geographical mindset governed by the attributes of the human verticality. The early existence of such administrative, political, military and economic entities prove the existence of a sedentary population, organized in steadfast settlements, established especially in mountainous and hillside regions, and secondary, in the shelter of the forests and the forest steppe areas. Moreover, an essential fact is that on a time-space scale, the community was formed into an embryonic structure, found at the origin of a complex territorial and social organization, a gearing in which each subsystem functioned simultaneously, both as a singular system, and as a subsystem integrated functionally, within the dynamics of the superior hierarchic

In this light, “*allowed*” by the sunset, but also by the agony of certain “purposes”, having the role of structural pillars for such a long time, the image of the ancestral rural, bashfully emerges, just like the ashamed shadow of what once was a tree, nowadays sapless, fleshless, but still anchored with profound *roots*.

*The roots* meaning here – *customs, traditions, mystical and magical rituals, conventions, common laws, specific institutions* etc. – will represent fundamental landmarks to us, on the path of analyzing the condition of the *ancestral communities*. The disinterment of these values, their resuscitation, and their progradation represent our chance to define our identity, an absolutely “*aristocratic*” identity, through the promoted norms: *decency, politeness, good faith, good traditions, right-judgment, humility, solidarity, ability to give and to devout yourself*...

Then, from the perspective of the same pattern of identity, but referring to its intensification as well, the addressing of the mentioned values within a tridimensional level which transcends into a veritable “*axis mundi*” is crucial. It is a vector that unites, within an experience that is unanimously accepted, “*the present world*” as a collective of the living human being (“*the white world*”), with the “*after world*” – turned into a ritual by the patronage of *the elders*, and, an undeniable fact, with *the land (the property, upturned land)* giver of all things, but a threshold between two worlds as well.

As far as the desire to distinguish between the valences is concerned, so generously nuanced, impropriated to the concepts of *ensorship and self-censorship*, in an archaic geography, found under the sign of the sacred, it is mandatory, as a primary action, to investigate with the attribute of the centrality of the village community, an institution that crystallizes a very rigorous construction grounded on the matrix of a corpus of judicial, moral, economic, political-administrative laws(unwritten) and implicitly laws of strategy (military).

Before we would ask ourselves “*why?*”, within our endeavour regarding the community, the investigation, however brief it may be, is in the highest sense of the word, necessary. Therefore, as a forefront of impact, we set two other concepts, respectively *semiotics and imagery* – coordinates that will accomplish the plenitude of the initiated analysis.

Returning to the public communities, in regard to *ensorship and self-censorship*, a systemic and logic approach must be equally imposed, the taking into consideration of two primary guiding marks: *time* – when the community consecrates itself as a coherent entity, well articulated from the functional point of view and a clearly defined lever of power, respectively *the environment* – as an existential space and as a space of evolution – that will imprint upon the two commandments, the specificities common to folk culture. By placing the *time<sup>1</sup>-community-censorship* vectors into a

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unit. The excellence of the model was later taken, in time, by the Romans and later by the Hungarians, the Seklers and by the Saxons living in Transylvania – advancing therefore the longevity of the community into the modern era (19<sup>th</sup> century). Angelica Pușcaș, *Țara Chioarului. Studiu de geografie regională* (The Land of Chioar. Study of Regional Geography) (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitara Clujeana Publishing House, 2007), 29–30.

<sup>1</sup> According to Marian Petcu “ensorship seems to have appeared even before receiving a designation, beginning with the early forms of wording, as it is attested by the biblical texts”. A first testimony in this sense is brought by the New Testament (The Book of Acts – chapter 19:19), according to which the Apostle Paul in the city of Ephesus, famous for the practicing of magic and witchcraft, determined through his preaching the public destruction of the inscriptions of the

relation of interrelation, this clearly detaches, on one side the *censorship-power* synchronism and a decrease during the pre-Christian times – on the other side – when *control and self-control* were plenary manifesting themselves, we observe – through the agency of orality – dictated by the behaviour of an archaic mentality, inhabited by spirits, by superstitions, by heroes, by solar and moon deities, by the cult of the dead, by submission before the sacred power of the fire, by the fascination and/or the spending of life (birth, wedding-marriage, death) and of nature, from one cycle to another, by the umbilical connection to the earth, by the rites of passage, etc.

All these signs take us to a history of *time with purpose, of the quiet time*, implicitly of the *sacred time*<sup>1</sup>, dimensions of time which, through a perfect syncretism between time and spirit, will be transformed anthropologically, into the human being whose conduct will be intensely marked by a number of restrictions, coming from the outside, but mainly from within himself: *sin, shame, fear, “he is not free”, it is improper, entering the society, mockery, the wisdom of a lifestyle that is faithful to the self and to the community* etc. Attached to these desiderata, a drastic measure of control or of censorship must be imposed, with a severe malefic charge, exercised both on the level of the individual and on that of the community, is “*the uneven curse*”, a product of the rigors of ritualistic essence.

We therefore notice that for the ancient, pre-Christian individual, censorship was promoted and carried out, not only by *certain “public” institutions*, whose intervention will be subsequent and particularly persuasive, but by instincts strongly anchored in mythology, magic, or esoteric, in secret, of *certain songs, incantations, carols, games, mysteries of initiation* or even within the spirit of *the feared plants* (mandrake, henbane, ivy...).

It is the moment, without being exhaustive, to attempt a typological revealing of censorship, implicitly of self-censorship against the background of a network of criteria, whose order, far from being “*fastened with nails*” manifests a flexible game regarding time, *inhabited environment* (rural and/or urban), *the degree of the training of the actors*

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exorcists”. Within the same context, the author reveals other types of consumptions of censorship or it emphasizes it by using more descriptive terms. Therefore, we find out that “the supreme organ of justice of Athens, the Areopagus, was to be condemned to burning, the masterpieces of Protagoras, for the fact of doubting the existence of the gods, as well as the writing of the philosopher Numa, by a decision of the Senate of Rome (272 A.D.)”, or the syntagm of “inquisitor of the faith”, first appeared in a law given by Emperor Diocletian (313 A.D.). Further following this author, we observe that his pleading from the perspective of etymology, comes to confirm the deep lode of the phenomenon of authoritarian control, showing that “censorship is connected to cens, the census of the Roman citizens and of their fortunes, accomplished by censors, whose attributions expanded into the political life as well: censorship as magistracy of the politicians emerged, it seems in the year 443 B.C.” (Marian Petcu, *Cenzură în spațiul cultural românesc*, (Censorship within the Romanian Cultural Space) (Bucharest: Comunicare.ro, 2005), 9.

<sup>1</sup> *Purpose, rest, the sacred concerning time*, assume fluent and beneficial harmonies of the rural calendar, a syncretic image in itself regarding the time of God, a result of conversion to Christianity, sanctioned during the 4<sup>th</sup> century, with the *time of the gods, of the spirits, of vegetation and of the living beings*. What it is important, for our topic, is that “it” imposes, naturally, both to the reason and to the soul – *self-censorship*, while another period of time – defined by ideology and politics, founded by force, ignoring the *taktika* (from the Greek word – *to arrange*) – *censorship*, an allochthonous and conflicting dimension of tradition (the author’s observation).

(the illiterate and/or the literate), *the profile of the inhabited geospace* (morphological, latitudinal, longitudinal...) *the ethnical and cultural personality, the social segregation, the psycho-behavioral character, etc.*

When we corroborate this eclectic corpus of peculiarities, it almost appears as a certainty, the synchronous debut of the *censorship-strength* pair, during a period of time which surpasses, as far as the age is concerned, the Christian era, a point where the ensemble of corrections are branching out on axels that are well shaped by two primordial factors: the environment of habitation (see the emerging – rural settlement/ boroughs and/or polis), respectively the social stratigraphy. We, therefore, are in the possession of a taxonomy of censorship, articulately integrated both in horizontal and vertical (hierarchical) plans.

Certainly, these two plans, considered to belong to the universal field of censorship, are not disjunctive; rather certain projections will resonate in unities of image and content, nearly homogenous or somehow complementary.

Two major classes of censorship will logically emerge, namely:

- Censorship: *borough/polis/city* – attached to *writing* and correlatively – to the segments of population with a medium-superior training;
- Censorship: *community/village* – attached to *orality* and governed by a mythological cosmogony;

As a consequence, an individualization of the directions of decisional action emerges, with prevalent features induced by the pattern of these two mental geographies.

One aspect that may catch our interest, by relating our issue to the universal cultures and civilizations, emerges, even though paradoxically, from the large chief characteristic of the resemblances, the distinctions assuming the role of emphasizing, whom being far from dividing the behavioural synonymies, rather approaches the semiotic effervescences developed by multicultural nuclei, an action that has both a competitive and a distilling impact upon the authentic values.

For instance, it is not at all unusual, referring to the type of *obedience* – that connects, within an equation of the order regarding the commandments (unwritten) of the community, with the ones (written) found in *Sharia*, in Islam, or of the *Torah*, in the Judaic universe, the examples being easily transferred into a dialectics of divergences and convergences, either in the similar cultural source or in mental fields pertaining to the geographical diversities.

Fundamental questions gradually emerge by regarding these issues:

- ✓ How and in which directions have censorship and self-censorship operated?
- ✓ How severe (censorious) was it and how far did it spread its tentacles?
- ✓ Which is the level of perception and of the ability of responding of the receivers?
- ✓ A priori, was there only obedience, regimentation, persecutions or other actions of resistance as well?
- ✓ Between order and chaos; between the beneficial and to irretrievably caused injuries – people, communities, means of expressing (custom, book, art...), where does censorship stand?
- ✓ What types of institutions are exercising it and where did they establish the balance of a good measure or were these institutions able to establish it?

✓ Were there compatibilities of censor-protector-guarantor type or where there ever, situations when censorship and self-censorship became identical, within a protective matrix?

These are question marks (see the cunning winding of the reptile) that are triggered instinctively, and invade, “bite” the mental, spontaneously speaking.

A gliding of the problematic into the sphere of reason, imposes itself as a decisive spring within the setting of the foundation of the nature of *to be* and of *to be but not anyhow*, but a conscious and watchful presence – wired to the values of the unwritten law and/or to the civic values. By taking advantage of this juxtaposition, of two systems of value, distinctly attached to the rural and to the urban<sup>1</sup>, we will make a digression, with the purpose of a brief projection upon the censorship of the “borough”. In this sense, we reinstate the pre-Christian antiquity of censorship and we come to the assistance of the already suggested examples, by invoking another infallible argument: *the multi-millenary antiquity of the cities* (starting from the 8<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C.), systemic organisms, extremely complex and evolved, from which, regarding our own interest, we select one single phenomenon – *gaining individual freedom*, a new concept, which developing simultaneously with the great process of labour division, introduced, in a very spontaneous and natural manner, a differentiation of the mentality in comparison to the rural, this meaning, the shading off the spirit of organic affiliation to the community of ancestry and class, strongly fused together by *blood* and *unwritten laws*, in the exchange of the emphasis of *individuality*. Rather emptied by spirituality, the “*citizens*”, namely the people of the borough – become a multitude animated by antagonistic, centrifugal, subjugated interests or better said “brought down to their knees” in front of a new belief, rapacious in its essence – pragmatism.

On the other hand, time is burning its stages faster here, evolution and/or involution being formed on a spiral, with fulminatory increase, frequently accompanied by a downfall. This is the reason why the city appears in a “hasty, artificial” historical perspective. They arise, grow, become mature, then dominant and then they decay and perish. The functions of the city proliferate, the phenomenon of risk taking the shape of the same “rapidity”, but “hygienic structures” of progress emerge as well – within the most diverse fields, including the areas where “*games*” are performed by the freedom of the spirit, unrestrained, alive, dynamic (see – science, philosophy, arts, training...). Or, precisely this spectrum, through its provoked liberalism, proved to be extremely dangerous, proportional to a society “cradled” in some kind of a rough pragmatism. And which was the consequence? A force of coercion had to be constituted: censorship, and the most powerful authority in this sense was, by far Religion, with its class of priests, and later the institution of the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Within the sociologic and mental plan, an important condition intervenes in defining the urban, the *quality of life* or the *urban lifestyle* (“type of life”), the later being assimilated, firstly with a certain attitude or behavioural pattern, marked out by moral values: *politeness* (rules, habits...imposed by the borough/polis), *civic sense*, *responsibility*, *multicultural communion*, etc. considered to be in interrelation, those certain rules were integrating a system mandatorily involving censorship. In order to make a comparison, the city develops synchronously a malefic interface as well (the ensemble of the phenomena which represent a social and/or environmental risk) that demands, consideration, the intervention of censorship that regards objective recovery correction and not one of eradicating the *freedom by right* (the author’s observation).

Therefore, the interference of the Church in stigmatized, “cursed”, areas, will not know any boundaries, censorship taking seismic proportions within the borough. In front of these attacks the rural environment is either sheltered, or the punishments take other shapes. The pre-Christian ancestral practices are found in complete opposition to the Church.

Here is where we mark a first distinction and we will also close the parenthesis, (this thematic not representing the object of our analysis) but not before pointing out the directions serving, “by excellence”, the censorship of the “borough” such as: science, music, literature, art, philosophy, and later correspondence, clothing, the press, motion pictures, photography, etc. Furthermore, “the borough” manifests itself through a fanatical censorship, towards the ethnical communities and “their production” (religious, cultural, behavioural, financial, etc.), aspects that within the traditional village are much shaded away or even inexistent.

What does *censorship and self-censorship* represent within the traditional Romanian village? A very simple answer, striped by any reference, might be the content of the phrase – *a good and organized functioning of the community*<sup>1</sup>.

How can this state be attained and lived? The answer can be reduced, this time as well, to *the essence – faith*; then it can be distinguished by invoking *conscience, respect, ancestry* (blood bonds and the exploiting of the unity of the family at the level of the entire community) its accepting as something *given (a gift) of the traditional individual and collective customs*. All these attributes (or good practices) and others we have mentioned before, mark the universe of the village to its last details, regarding *its cycles (the living, the dead, the precincts of the village, the estate)*.

As far as *faith* is concerned, the essence of the mentality and actions of the village universe, it does not relate strictly to something in particular. The understanding – is a “polyphonic” one. It is not only about faith in God, faith being precursory to Christianity, but about some kind of *habitation with faith, a lifestyle of faith*, of all and of

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<sup>1</sup> As far as the intimate gearing of the rural community is concerned, it was determined and supported, on the foundation of certain principles and inalienable unwritten laws, such as: *the material equality of the members of the society* (especially during the first phase); *the reciprocity of the services*; *the joint responsibility in proportion to the hierarchical authorities*; *the keeping and the perpetuation of the ancestral traditions*; *the mixed character of the real estate*; *the embracing of a simple, austere behaviour, based on authentic Christian values and of rejecting the deviant influences for the community*. From the organizational perspective, the leadership position of the community belonged to the village headman – chosen by the large family, called the community, based on the criteria of worthiness and moral integrity – invested with polyvalent functions (economic, administrative, judiciary and military) and to a *council* – of *good elderly people*. These particular levers watched over the interest of the community, judged the disputes between its members, according to certain unwritten laws – the so called tradition of the land “*Jus Valachicum*” – and the representing of the community in its relations with the superimposed military hierarchies or of other nature, relations formed through the payment of tithe consisting in products. Therefore, the community was jointly answering in case of criminal offence committed on its territory, as they were also jointly performing the duty to defend themselves in case of attacks coming from the outside. Another dimension regarded the organic communion of the entire community, even if structured on contingents of age or on “worlds” marked by the attributes of the genders. As a consequence, the community articulated a homogenous human nucleus, without severe social dysfunctions, depositary of immaculate traditions (Angelica Puscas, *Țara Chioarului. Studiu de geografie regională*, 45-46 )

everything: man, land, household, the animal found in the trodden patch or outside of it (see for instance Filipi), the grain of wheat, water, salt, vine, the tree, the fruit tree, the days of the week, feasts and festivals, birth and death, the mythological universe, ploughing and planting, offering the fruit of the harvest as sign of worship, the sacrifice and the ceremonial sacrifices...even those that refer to *the “accursed” one (the Devil)*.

As a matter of fact, the defeating, by faith, of *the Evil one*, represents the great mystery and magic of the universe of the village. For this purpose, man is *censored* and he *self-censors* himself or, in other words, we might say: man is taught and guided, then he “carefully” answers the advices and teachings, in order to be seen as the *worthy* one and not a *reject* (*a nobody in this world, someone who became everybody’s laughing stock, a degenerate...*). For the latter, the ones who bring damage to the unwritten laws, left alone by the community, at the mercy of fate, life, practically, ended. They were a kind of “shadows”, exposed to evil, but, at the same time, a lever, by whom, the *ensorship of the community* was taking action over the youngest segment of the population. Within the context mentioned above, I made a reference regarding the censorship of the community and to some extent, to its abilities, aptitudes and force, to preserve the concept of *humanity*<sup>1</sup>, within the community.

Which are, however, the justified means which possess the ability to set “*the pedals of censorship*” in motion, a censorship of a productive manner (sometimes subtle, other times emphasized or in given moments – compelled to apply sentences, certainly, with a distinguished degree of severity).

From this perspective and by invoking a minimal synthesis, a potential taxonomy, would register, at the base of the pyramid, two categories of organisms, namely: *official institutions* (*the church, the school, political and administrative structures*), respectively *institutions of the community* (*the council of the elders, evening sittings of the village people, group work, the market, shouting over the village, customs and traditions*<sup>2</sup> – with a crucial educational impact...).

We can also extract, from the described standardization, another order divided into: *ecclesiastical institutions* (church-priest), *civic institutions* (school-teacher, political and administrative authorities, family), including *institutions of the unwritten law*.

Regarding the way they acted, the prevalence of some or of others within a given temporal segment, there certainly existed, numerous mutations. It was a time of censorship, exclusively conducted by the unwritten laws, by mythology and by folk

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<sup>1</sup> “The idea of humanity..., regards not only the interpersonal relationships but the attitude of our peasant as well, towards the natural universe in which he lives and with whom he became as one by humanizing it”. Dumitru Pop, *Crepusculul unor valori si forme ale vechii noastre culturi si civilizatii* (The downfall of certain values and forms of our culture and civilization) (Cluj-Napoca: Studia, 2004), 16.

<sup>2</sup> “We value traditions because of the role these had in keeping the moral purity of our people, for its educational function fulfilled by it in different circumstances of family life and of the large family of the village that existed during the olden days. Together with other areas of folklore, traditions represented, for ages, not only *a manual of percepts*, from which the main form of culture was translated...but also of pedagogy, from where they learned the behavioural patterns of the people in certain important situations of life and generally, in everyday life. For *the ploughman* who during spring season went out with his plough, for the first time, was honest..., just as *the girl* who got off the right way of the traditional rules and standards of conduct, became the topic of the sarcastic ridicule of *crying over the village*”. Ibid., 16.

cosmogony. Later, conversion to Christianity, tipped the scale towards *the Church*, without the need for the village to deny its remaining archaic traditions, even if in secret, these are considered to be more intimate.

Hereinafter, the times and man worked in the favour of syncretism between tradition and religion, consolidating a *behavioural pattern of double censorship*, but, apparently, never equally expressed, man quickly acquiring the art of choosing, according to the circumstances, the most favourable path for him.

Actions are established in a certain similarity into the field of training as well, the precepts of the family and of the community being much older. Quite late, school became a scientific institution, the option for it being one of the free agency, destined for another stage, which counted generations. The important fact is that during this time, while school joined the universe of the village, two other pillars of light were also established: *the priest and the teacher*, which alongside the consecrated mission, are actively involved with the so called "*patience of educating*", and perceptibly better built on the foundation of the older structures.

Furthermore, censorship coming from these two institutions is rather consecrated as a *behavioural guide* and it acted, predominantly, as an act of preventive custody. From this perspective, censorship assumes the abilities of the *wakeful state*, capital to the harmonious evolution of the community. However, occasionally, the priest and the teacher, as literate persons, would take the position of a *guarantor*<sup>1</sup> on the behalf of the villagers confronted with certain causes, vulnerable for them.

Most assuredly, there were also situations which required interventions with a higher degree of amplitude, but within the rural environment for example, the Church did not reach, in neither circumstance, the severity, most of the times a "criminal" one, of the censorship occurred in the cities.

It is a paradox that, at present, the censorship of the Church, generally takes a more aggressive shape, both in proportion to the *individual* and with the ancestral *traditions* - whom it attacks virulently. Therefore, we witness the formation of a more abrupt fault between the Church and the Community, (identical to the time that is lived), more striking within the urban environment where a heinous breach is directed against

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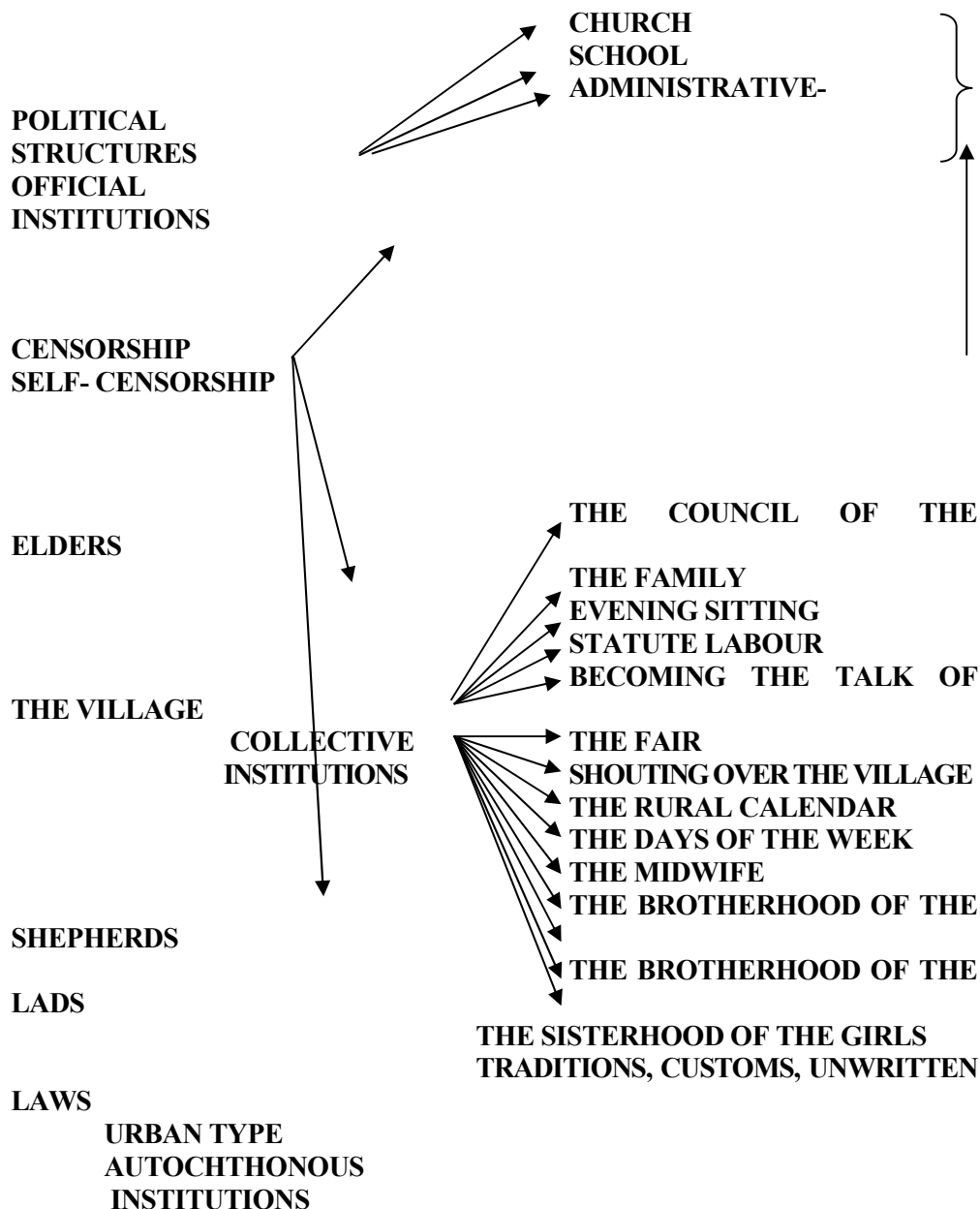
<sup>1</sup> We can find such an example in the work of Gherasim Rusu Togan – *Dimensiuni ale imaginarului popular* (Dimensions of the rural imaginary), where while the author analyses "the ecclesiastic protocol" of Chijasa de Sus Commune – Sibiu, dated to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, emphasizes the following passage: "I have listened to my Christian, dedicated to my church, Herciu Sava Moise, whose strength was weakened by an old illness, fact known by anyone, and therefore with the help of God, I vouched to be, from now on and forever, his watchman, since before all the other matters of his family, he puts first his eldest son Toader, so that he would be the one to carry on in leading the household and to decide, under my care, what would be the best for its progress. And I, as his helper, will do my best to meet his needs, in case, by the will of God, other trials may fall upon this household. God willing! Priest Veltean". Further on, the author informs us that once the eldest lad becomes "the head of the family" he will also take on the duties of a censor, "beginning with the mother and to the youngest brother or sister, having the right to decide regarding the way they will ever leave the family, by marriage, in the case of those who reached the right age, by becoming the servant of a master, or by moving to the city, finding a job or going to school, in the case of the youngest brothers and sisters." Gherasim Radu Togan, *Dimensiuni ale imaginarului popular – dezordini, temeri, închipuiri* (Dimensions of the rural imaginary – disorders, fears, imagination (Bucharest: Libra Cultural Foundation, 2009), 11.



the top hierarchy of the church, respectively the civilian society. Therefore, all history does is to reinvent itself. Its cyclicity, similar to a metronome, only moulds new forms built on a fundamentally unaltered content.

Here is a synthetic and synoptic representation of our previous considerations:

# **ASPECTS OF CENSORSHIP OR A POSSIBLE TAXONOMY OF CENSORSHIP AND SELF-CENSORSHIP**



Nevertheless, we cannot move forward from the topic of the marriage between Church-School censorship, without “uncovering” and restoring the right of respectability yet to another key factor, in which censorship and self-censorship, both objectively and responsibly, become synthesized. We are referring to a behavioural pattern, imposed by the valour and integrity of “the most remarkable” householders, generically called, according to the geospace they inhabit: *kulak*<sup>1</sup>, *bocotani*, *culaci*, *găzdaci* (Romanian archaic terms used for kulak – translator’s note), and so on.

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of the *kulak*, an extremely delicate one, can be, on the one hand, clear to be synthesized, starting either from the etymology of the term in the Turkish language (*kibar*) or from the Russian word *kulak*, both indicating the condition of the prosperous, rich peasant. Further, the dynamics of time and of the inhabited space develops a corpus of kindred concepts, from a certain angle (susceptible of confusions), but by a trenchant distinction within the area of certain realities which correlatively intersect geographical- historical information, as well as social and cultural (ethnographical) ones. A primary aspect that stands out, without doubt, is the one of the hierarchically-social affiliation of the *kulak* (*bocotan*, *culac*, *găzdac*...), the layer of peasantry. We firmly point out this element here, fact that prohibits the sliding towards any other social category (boyars which became members of the divan, natives and/or allochthonous; petty countryside boyars; tenants; imperial nobility, etc.). As far as the semantic nuances are concerned, synonyms, regarding their content, with the term *kulak*, they belong to the diversity of the geographic field. The dimension that places us in front of a detached-distinct concept – even though fundamental, it belongs also to the peasantry – is the historical-political one perceived throughout temporal evolution. We are referring to the *voivode-average nobleman-marksman*, which designates, delicately nuanced, social segments of the peasants and/or serfs, raised to the state of gentility (average nobleman), specific to certain “land” type regions located within the inner side of the Carpathian arch. The cause which is obviously responsible for the superiority of this particular condition is the unconditional assuming of the condition of soldiering, in other words, of employed soldiers in the service of the feudal aristocracy. The latter observation, leads towards the elimination of the double confusion regarding the kulaks versus the average noblemen. A primary factor is represented by the time element, which verifies the longevity of the voivode-average nobleman state, during the entire duration of the Middle Age period, and the one of the kulak, during the period of Modern Romania. The second element is vindicated by the active function, proportional to the type of labor economy, a military-political one for the first category, respectively, an agricultural one by excellence for the kulak householders. Another factor of influence which introduces a detached differentiation, regarding the historical time, between the two units of wealthy peasants, is, amongst other signs regarding identity, the right of the average noblemen to bear a crest – a clear indicator regarding the perspective of the superior condition of an owner, extrapolated (see the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries) to the number of villages. For a better understanding, we appeal to a series of excerpts taken from the work entitled: *Țara Chioarului. Studiu de geografie regională* (The Land of Chioar. Study of Regional Geography). “...throughout the Middle Ages, within the Land of Chioar, a consistent social class of gentry and free Romanian peasantry succeeded to preserve itself. This social class was a beneficiary of a number of privileges contracted through the valorization of their military and organizational skills, as well as their abilities to be productive. This situation is very well exemplified around the year of 1615, by Prince Gabriel Bethlen by the terms “around the beginning, in the Land of Chioar, there were more likely boyars (Boierok), from amongst them some were made into average noblemen in each and every village and these were called voivodes or princes (Vajdak)”, then adding “that they have privileges regarding freedom, received not only from the ruler of the country or from the lords of the provinces, but from the ancient kings and princes, bearing the

Was it an institution, a pseudo institution, a person of impact...? It is difficult to elucidate.

However, most assuredly, they lived and acted while being in a key position that coagulated the conscience, the quality and the competition, both for them and for the community. Therefore, looking from more than one perspective, and where we can allow ourselves to explicitly detach the economic function, or in other words, the size of the real estate, of the estate, the *kulak/kulaks* represented, within the segment of the elite of the traditional village or, this value compelled of organically involved, a way of being qualitative, exceptional.

Conduct was, rigorously severe, attached to the fundamental pillars of the community, whence the necessity of a "*life protocol*", a resultant of the equilibrium between a self-imposed censorship, proportionally dominated by a coercive approach exercised upon the members of the "*circle*" which incorporated, by communion, the community.

Therefore, we emphasize, quite emphatically, regarding the more objective understanding possible, that censorship, arising from the direction of the respective social segment, both *sparing and keeper* of the rightful practices, both in the field of the economy of labour and in the field of the traditions and Christian faith – was rather a *moral guide*. Moreover, the superior economic capacity, preserved and progradated, simultaneously, generation after generation through work; *moderation* (especially assimilated from the outside, of greed); *a specifically demographic behaviour* (reduced to one, at most two children - heirs); *a wise and constructive cooperation with the leaders of the village* (the jury, the priest, the teacher) or *with institutions and important people from the outside*, occupying high positions, implicitly with a "*hygienic*" mentality, originating from a *sever training* - placing them, very naturally, within the matrix of Maecenatism, a system of the spirit of generosity.

Very often, they were founders of churches, of schools, the predecessors of introducing techniques regarding tillage, spiritual parents (god parents), benefactors (and here we can speak about the culture/the economy of the gift) for the "pure belonging to the nation", dealing with hardship (widows, orphans, burdened families, etc.). They

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duty to serve the borough." Angelica Pușcaș, *Țara Chioarului*, 76. "...the nobility here, was rather a state of mind, voluntarily embraced and materialized in a behavioral pattern whose fundamental values were *honesty, pride, moral integrity, nearly physical attachment towards the property and companionship or brotherhood*. On the other hand, we cannot speak about national reasons and emotions. Military engagement, directly under the command of the borough... determined the development of a powerful local affiliation." (Ibid., 77). "Historical time imposes – on the background of the existent political, social and military circumstances – the taking into consideration of a social category with a military nature. A new institution emerges...from amongst the class of serfs, free peasantry and even the petty voivodes, the institution of <<*the nobility of the marksmen*>>, founded by Gheorghe Rakoczi II. The marksmen (professional soldiers, rifle bearers) ensure their privileges, respectively their investments and the keeping of their nobility directly proportional to the efficiency of the performed services. They were actually subjects exonerated from public and serfdom duties, in exchange of complete commitment towards the borough and its master. The measure of the devoutness was acknowledged by the prince by promoting them to the rank of *petty nobility* – certified by the so called *nobleman's book (armalis)*, frequently consolidated through a crest as well." Ibid., 87

appointed young girls, especially, esteemed for their worthiness (a special kind, in a way, with the purpose to honour Saint Nicholas), they used to send to school and support in school, children who loved to study, they used to organize feasts on important days, involving the entire community, they were supporting “the brotherhood of the lads”, from the point of view of the logistics and spiritually, both in fulfilling the customs of the ancient traditions, and on their path towards the position of mature manhood.

Further on this discourse and within the same content, it is necessary to refer to an *entity* that is well outlined by exigencies such as: censorship – self-censorship, respectively, *the family of the kulak*, a structure of superior quality within the archaic universe of the village, an attribute doubled by its configuration on circumscribed levels, related one to another functionally, hierarchically and as a way of communication on the pattern of the radial-concentric “texture” to the “father-nucleus”. Without any doubt, all the signs lead us to the understanding of a patriarchal community, nothing artificial, yet, within a social universe established under the same sign, all the more so, the state of homogeneousness of the community – where the patriarchal “vectors” were diligently shaping “the order”. Returning back to the family of the kulak, we are speaking here, not about the restricted family, the blood family, coordinated by “canons” distinctly-attached (hierarchically, regarding the age, gender, the right of the first born, etc.), to each member, but about the *enlarged family* (servants, day laborers, impoverished relatives...) located in a privileged area of protection (assistance).

We know and we assume the responsibility for the fragility of certain terms we are using, yet, exactly at this point, we must open up for a rational way of thinking, cleansed by “the anathematization” of a destructive ideology, injected during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by a political system, not only foreign to us, but in opposition to the traditions of the land<sup>1</sup> as well.

It is the moment when the Romanian village is strongly and irreversibly shattered, amputated by its purposes. The values are “unappealably” overthrown and destroyed. The elite of the community, in other words “the hinges” of the village, which lasted for ages, is exterminated and, a tragic fact, its break down comes from the inside, respectively from the earlier mentioned segment, under the expressions of: a nobody in this world, rejects, people who became everybody’s laughing stock..., but, paradoxically and difficult to justify – from the perspective of the virtues of the community –

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<sup>1</sup>Beyond the aesthetic, the mystical and magical interfaces, the unchaining experiences, beyond the feasts, etc..., the traditions encipher profound meanings regarding the relations of man with the surrounding world, with nature, regarding the interpersonal relationships, the natural course of the social life and regarding the solutions that, during an evolution which lasted for several millennia, were discovered by humankind, in order to cause things to get back to normal, in a time when the good order of the world was, from one reason or another, broken... From this point of view, the customs express the social life of the human communities, different aspects of its organization. It expresses them and in the same time contributes to achieve them. These are expressions of the social life and mechanisms by which social life functions.” They are also intimately “correlated with human life, with the lifestyle of the people as a fundamental cell of our traditional society, with the lifestyle of the smaller or larger, local or regional communities”. Mihai Pop, *Obiceiuri tradiționale românești (Romanian Traditional Customs)* (Bucharest: Univers, 1999), 7-8.

condemnation comes with an obstinate virulence from the very bosom of the enlarged family, suddenly transformed into a inquisitorial unit. With their moral “thinness” – ignoring the natural side of the family and community connections, and supported politically (through the agency of a petty exchange: *treason-acceding*) they claim themselves to be the lever of absolute power.

Without further gliding into the depths of this certain issue – the fields of other sciences, owning here a very clear competence – we are augmenting the parenthesis we opened, based on reasons which refer to the culture of the traditional village.

A final “protest” is the one of recovering the honour and worthiness of those who once were “the leaders of the villages”, a “caste” that has never been served, but it served the tradition and the state of order of the village. Another proof is the synchronous breaking (approximately 1947-1958) of “the rural aristocracy” along with the traditional village itself. In fact, to speak about a presence of the traditional village is either a conscious and mean defiance of reality, or a lack of knowledge. Certainly, there still exist customs, traditions, folklore..., but under a chopped off shape, from the perspective of identity, and with a use placed either into the service of superficial amusement, or, even more critical, “far-fetched”, in the sense of a sparkling “ethno-folkloric blend”, served to a social section, more often a super-technologized, curious or even honest-desiring to rediscover archaic societies, closely connected by the rhythmic progress and in balance with nature. Within the present context, these manifestations would rather integrate within the category of “*show-business*”.

Another form of protest is the necessity to put exclamation marks at the end of the questions left, more or less intentionally, in suspense.

Turning our eyes towards the system of the public institutions, from the traditional village, we will observe an authentic presence of censorship and self-censorship. Both of them have developed a determined, twinned strength, and manifested from the gentlest way to the most caustic one possible.

For a better understanding, examples are required, recollections developed on a scale of detail, of the everyday life. In actual fact, it cannot be spoken of the *pulse*, outside censorship and self-censorship, the last one, coherently analyzed, reveals the rhythms of the dominant character.

We asserted that life, in its entirety, is put under the sign of self-control, naturally assumed by each person, from a very early age – when the family owned the prerogatives of being the censor, respectively under the sign of the social and spiritual mechanism of tradition – led, in a balanced manner, by the community (“*the council of the elders*”). These two structures, family and community, acted exclusively in the sense of interrelating, of the unity, the only way of resistance as against the autochthonous pressures.

Another form of protection and of surviving was the expulsion from the interior of this world of individualism, voluntary actions, not being anchored to the common frame, being factors which caused unbalance and had an impact by breaking the order.

This is the explanation why, since the birth of the child into this world, he is not only the child of his parents, but a desired and valued member of the community as well. *Each age stage*<sup>1</sup>, increases the degree of involvement and responsibility, and in the

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<sup>1</sup> “At the same age, children were sent to drive geese, then the sheep and the cattle; approximately around the same age they were beginning to go to weeding or to gather the hay, and so on..., just

moment of crossing adolescence, the young man/woman organically enrolled to the behavioural code that was specific to the community, whom, in its turn delegated them *rules* (regulations) – see the surveillance of the borders of the estate synchronous to the oath made at the border stones, the watch over the flocks, crops, vineyards and springs; helping the elderly people and the powerless through activities of statute labour, accomplishing the rituals of initiation etc. – as well as assistance<sup>1</sup>, not few being the cases when on the same topic help and censorship enter in some sort of osmosis.

Side slipping outside the unwritten laws was strictly sanctioned not only by “*the council of the wise men*” – whose mission was to be a guidebook of deviant behaviours – but especially “*becoming the talk of the village*” – fertile when it comes down to establish anathemas, impossible to be “washed” off, even if “affections”, let’s say were “cured”.

### Conclusions:

We stated that censorship and self-censorship distilled from: conventions-rules-customs and unwritten laws are a part of what defines each member of the community and at the same time establishes a place in the hierarchical structures of the community.

Particularly targeting these plans and their exhaustiveness, we will attempt, before entering any more detail, to point out the future directory coordinates of the investigated concepts:

- ✓ The sacred connection with the land (estate);
- ✓ The respect given to the wise men (“givers of laws and traditions”);
- ✓ The cult of the dead and/or of the ancestors;
- ✓ Assuming all the differences regarding the behaviour of the community;
- ✓ Acknowledging the significances of the rural calendar;
- ✓ Preparations for the cycles of life – rites of passage, rites of initiation, states of divination;
- ✓ The impact of censorship and self-censorship regarding clothing;
- ✓ Allowed/ forbidden food or gastronomical behaviour;
- ✓ The control of the good practices in magic and/or rural medicine;
- ✓ Protection regarding evil spirits;
- ✓ Vigilance and the preservation of beliefs, practices and traditions;
- ✓ To respect and worship sacred elements (earth, water, fire, wind, salt, vine, milk, and so on).

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as these were the first notions of mythology, first songs and learnt games”, regarding the perpetuation of the national state. Dumitru Pop – 2004, page 44.

<sup>1</sup> The ecclesiastic protocol of Chijasa de Sus Commune – Sibiu (referred to in a previous paragraph as well), mentions, on the date of 10<sup>th</sup> of April 1856, that: “the council of the community...made the decision that Onul Sântâi (Sântea Ioan), should not move in with the bride chosen by him, from the village of Vecert, but to stay in the village, due to the fact that he is useful with his skills of tending to the sheep, sick with rabies (to trepan!). And because he was a poor man, with the purpose to start his future family, it was decided to be given to him, four hectares of tillable land and two hectares of hay-field, located within the precinct of the village, with legal documents, to become his property forever, added to what he already owned from his parents, so that he may be within the pale. Gherasim Rusu Togan, *Dimensiuni ale imaginarului popular*, 8.