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**Work, Relations and Forms of Cooperation in Transylvanian Rural Economy**

**– abstract of the PhD thesis –**

In my thesis I treat a topic which I have been interested in for a very long time: the functioning of self-organized associations and other forms of cooperation with a leading, an orienting role in rural economy, and the system of connections surrounding them. I am focusing on three areas: the Lower Nicău, the Middle Târnava Mică and Upper Trei Scaune region. The starting point of the study and of the whole research is represented by the autonomous popular institutions meant to fulfil communal functions and the deficits of official law making and economical organization, which – regardless of their state of institutionalization or their functions – are related to production and the distribution of goods, meaning no simple economic relations, but also personal and social ones. Basically I consider as such institutions the *kaláka* (traditional reciprocal work) and other reciprocal works, the organizations controlling animal husbandry and communal benefits along with the institutions appearing near specific agricultural sectors. Because of reciprocity I also add to these the communities organizing the rites of passage and the mutual help during crisis. And with another step, in the interest of analyzing other levels of associations and relations, I shall include in my research all forms of non-symmetric relations, inner or outer ones, therefore I touch upon the relations between farmer and day-labourer – considered by myself as a relation between owner and client –, but beyond these I also try to present the relations between the farms and the city.

The question is regarding the organization from below, the mechanisms of self-organization both when it is cooperation between equal parts and when the relation is in some meaning asymmetric. Thus, I think that if I had to formulate the main question of this present thesis, it would be the following: why do the rural inhabitants form a working community of mutual help? Why do they associate, why do they associate in the way they do, what kinds of inner or outer relations do they set up and why do they set up exactly those and exactly in that certain way?

Following an answer to my questions I analyzed different forms of cooperation tied together by reciprocity, by the existence of mutuality and trust, and by the fact that beyond organizing production and distribution, the relations between certain economic units are in every case codified, and finally by the fact that they are a part of an ecologic, social and economic regime characteristic to the Transylvanian village. Therefore, I approach this topic from

several points of view and I try to reveal the contexts, which in my interpretation determine the forms of cooperation.

First of all I touch upon the image of the community and village – that was often identified with the community without any reflection – in order to name all the ideological contents, which I would try to overstep, and then I give an operational definition of the notions in use. The two following chapters can be regarded to some extent as a summary of research history, as in the first one I give a brief presentation of the historical aspects of the works related to the *kaláka*, in order to describe the apparition of this form of cooperation besides its evolution and transformation. With the set up of categories of classification, the aim of the other chapter is to elaborate – summing up the results that exist so far – a well adjustable system at least on the level of a hypothesis. Finally, I present my analysis along some thematic points of reference considered essential in the transmission and change of village organizations' traditional patterns (the situation of agriculture, informality, morality etc.) because in my opinion without this analysis a prosaic typology cannot state anything valid about the functioning of the economical leading institutions.

So first of all I talk about the situation of agriculture in general, then about the existing sources, and I give a brief presentation of the target areas in the same chapter. As a next step of the analysis I touch upon the relation of cooperational forms with informality, and closely related to this I also discuss that of associations and interethnic relations. Because in my interpretation the occasions of work are playing a major role not only in the economic life but also in the maintenance and exposure of a system of knowledge, I also analyze the dimensions of this knowledge related to work, namely morality and rationality. The fact that I do an analysis of a social and economical phenomenon, the cooperational forms, from several points of view, cannot be overemphasized. In my view, without understanding the points of view exposed in this thesis we cannot draw an enough detailed picture about the attitudes shown in rural cooperation and outer relations, therefore in every chapter I explain the different phenomena by involving newer and newer related factors.

The forms of cooperation presented in my thesis are manystranded coalitions in case of which we have to point out on one hand the aspect of the resources that can be found in their motivational structure, and on the other hand the cognitive contents and principles contributing as inner factors to the maintenance of the system. Finally, we have to emphasize the reciprocal effect of them. Thus in the functioning of the existing systems we can discover *cumulative causality*, because there are intertwining factors that can hardly be organized in a causal model. In my thesis, I tried to show and analyze this complex system.