

Occupational tradition and modernity in rural Romanian environment

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The peasant world become more a place of life than a place of agricultural production"

Henri Mendras, 1989

The rural has been studied very long time in terms of ethnography or geography. Along time, several research paradigms¹ have been outlined:

1. The traditional model, which considers rural area, respectively village, as the true possessor of spirituality, specificity and originality of a culture, of a society, this kind of research seeking to show the traditional rural values, behaviors and symbols;

2. The meliorist model, which considers rural as the genetic form of a society, but insufficiently evolved to be brought to the level of urban structures. Researches in this area measure the gap between urban and rural incomes in perspective, of income, education, comfort and productivity;

3. The ecological model, which reveals the specificity, particularities and advantages of contemporary rural life;

4. The cronoregressive model used generally in the rural settlements monographs (*see Durand Drouhin, LM Szwergub, V. Mihăilescu*).

The transition from traditional occupations to modernity in occupations development, particularly in rural areas, can not be addressed in a comprehensive analysis; this thing is possible only from the perspective of class stratification of Romanian rural area.

In traditional societies, those who practiced economy based on domain, class stratification represents a reality, both at the level of property, power and prestige as well as the social inequalities. This has not only manifested by the difference between the boyars and villagers (clăcași), but even among those villagers who worked for the boyars there was a social stratification, obviously on social categories, but as expression of social inequalities.

In traditional Romanian society, class stratification manifested differently. For Moldova and Wallachia there was the same hierarchy of the rural world, while in Transylvania, stratification had other actors.

For example, in "Descriptio Moldaviae", drawn up in the year 1714, ordered the Academy in Berlin, Dimitrie Cantemir noted the boyars and the

¹ see *Dicționarul de sociologie*, 1994, coord. Vlăsceanu, Zamfir

villagers named „târgoveți” and „răzeși”. In previous documents, such as Calimachi Code, says that the society is composed of "oblăduitori" (boyars) and "oblăduiți" (peasants), which is relevant for the patriarchal mentality of that time, when there were tensions and conflicts between peasants and boyars, as happened after the Organic Regulation in the first decades of the XIX century and especially in 1848 when peasants supported the revolutionaries, due to the conflicts generated by above mentioned "regulation".

During the period of traditional society, social stratification was expressed in separate categories for the boyars (rural aristocracy) and peasants (folk class). For example, in XV century, Wallachia and Moldova there were great boyars (great owners of land, members of country divan and masters of areas and villages) and small boyars, named: „logofeți, pitari, cneji and legal waivodes”, surrounded by second-hand or third-hand servants, with specific tasks in the house and household² operation, named "slugi domnești".

In Wallachia among the boyars, there was an upper class (the great „ban” of Craiova, the great „vornic” of the „Upper Country”, the great „logofăt”, the great „spătar”, the great „vizitiu”, the great „postelnic”, „vel-clucerul”, „vel-paharnicul”, „vel-stolnicul”, „vel – comisu”), a middle class („vel-serdar, agă, vel-medelnicer, vel-pitar, vel-armaș, vel-portar, vel-șătrar”, the second „vistier”, the second „postelnic”, other „logofeți and grămătic”, the capitain of „dorobanților”, „vătaful apozilor, vătaful vistieriei, polcovnicul”³ etc.)

Beyond the distinction between "superior", "medium" and "inferior", is observed in this stratification an organizational structure of administrative functions that were based on states of traditional society. We are dealing with a strict social hierarchy, closed and strongly oriented towards the cultivation of boyars upper class welfare and social control, especially through the "lower class" of those boyars. In this way, the boyars dominated the state structure of traditional society.

Among the peasants, social stratification for traditional society, included: "free peasants", "seated peasants" and "țărănimea aservită."⁴

In „free peasants” category was entering "moșnenii” from Wallachia, "răzeșii" from Moldova and "nemeșii" from Transylvania, the local peasants that earned small areas through the famous "diploma" puted into circulation by imperial authority from Vienna, after 1699. The „seated peasants” category was composed of "oameni de moșie”, "oameni slobozi" in Moldova and Wallachia and „iobași" in Transylvania.

The category of „țărănimea aservită” was composed of "rumâni" and "vecini" that could be sold along with that land they worked.

² Rosetti, Radu, „Pământul, sătenii și stăpâni în Moldova, de la origini până la 1834, vol.I, Socec & Co, Bucuresti, 1907, pagina 40.

³ Bilciurescu, St.Constantin, „Ghidul Bucureștilui”, f.e., București, 1903, pagina 41042

⁴ Ilincioiu, Ion, „Țăranii, pământul și moșierii în România 1864-1888”, Editura Politică, București, 1982.

In the nineteenth century, due to the occurrence of capital in its commercial and financial form, in the Romanian rural world appeared a social category named "arendași", land administrators who, after taking over the social and symbolic functions of boyars, made up a class of its own. At the beginning of the XX century, in the year 1907, in the old kingdom, among the 5212 properties, only 2336 were farmed by the owners, and the rest were administered by 3051 „arendași” of whom 2054 were Romanian, 553, Hebrew, 261, Greeks and 83 other nationalities⁵.

In the interwar period, based on Census in 1930, in rural Romania existed the following social stratification: „codași” peasants, „mijlocași” peasants, „chiaburi” peasants and citizens farm owners, „moșierii”.

A change in social stratification of the Romanian rural world intervened after the agrarian reform since 1945, when large areas were "nationalized." "Moșierii" disappeared and the agricultural community registers introduced after the year 1950 portrayed the following categories: "chiaburii", with properties from 5 hectares up to 50 hectares, "mijlocași peasants", with properties between 2 and 5 hectares, and "poor peasants", with properties under 2 hectares or without property.

In traditional society, and even in the industrial and information society, residents of rural communities have had and still have two types of occupations:

- Primary (agriculture, livestock farming, fruit-tree growing, viticulture) and

- Secondary (hunting, fishing, bees raising, forest exploitation, peasant mining, crafts imposed in traditional communities), the last ones being identifiable in an increasingly number of smaller communities.

A family from rural area constantly practiced primary and secondary occupations. It does exist, even specialized occupations, in each rural community existing in addition among "plugari" (farmers) and "shepherds" (animal breeders), „rotari”, „blacksmiths”, „cojocari”, „millers”, „potters”, „opincari”. The industrial society imposed in rural communities new occupations: „drivers” and „tractor-drivers”, „small craftsmen and artisans”.

An occupational stratification functioned in rural communities in the period of socialist "agricultural cooperatives", in which sociological researches have identified "several socio-professional groups among the workers named „cooperatori”:

- the group of leaders at different levels of organization;
- the group of those who worked in administrative activities;
- the growing group of people with skills and technical and mechanical activities;
- the group of those who worked in agricultural activities;
- the group of „cooperatori” with constant activity along the whole year and with corresponding earnings (especially those in zootechny);

⁵ Scraba, G.D., "Starea socială a săteanului", Carol Gobl, Bucuresti, 1907, pagina 33

- the group of pensioners „cooperatori”⁶.

Sociological researches of those years revealed developments of active population in Romanian society, from which we can say that during the period 1956-1966, the number of „cooperatori peasants” increased from 797 thousands in 1956 to 4.737 thousands in 1966, and the number of individual peasants decreased from 6152 thousands in 1956, to 700 thousands in 1966⁷.

Status sites in rural communities, namely the social positions of individuals, manifested themselves in a relatively simple structure. We can distinguish as follows:

- the local elite, consists of mayor and priest, teachers and doctors, agronomists and veterinarians;
- the group of local officials: veterinary agent, fiscal agent, agricultural agent, postman, nurses, local councilors;
- other inhabitants of the community, which can be farmers, workers, pensioners, unemployed.

In general, both individuals of the local elite and those in the group of officials assumed the roles of farmers and employers, of mediators between the local community and whole society. In rural family and household, status distinguishes itself as primarily "the head of the family" and it may be farmer, but also as "singer at church," member of state local council or another occupation^{8,9}.

LABOUR MARKET IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

In 2006, the existing population in Romanian rural area totalized 9,670,427 inhabitants¹⁰, which represents a 44.8% share of total population in Romania.

In any causative model, standard of living is influenced by existing human capital, by the quantity and quality of labour resources. The employed population in rural areas amounted, in 2006, 4.198 thousands of people, in compared to the urban – 5.115 thousand people, the rate of employment being higher in rural areas (61.1%) compared with the urban (57.2%)¹¹.

Although employees in Romanian agriculture are still one of the most numerous in Europe, the dynamics of its share falls on a downward tend, from 40.9% in 2001 to 30.5% in 2006.

⁶ Cernea, Mihai, "Sociologia cooperativei agricole", Editura Academiei, București, 1974, pagina 161.

⁷ Neamțu, Octavian, "Cultura ca acțiune socială", Editura Academiei, București, 1976, pagina 83.

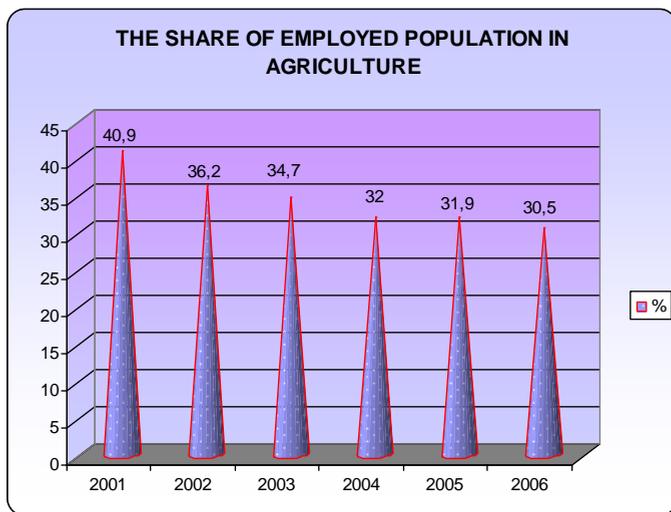
⁸ Mendras, Henri, "Elements de sociologie", Armand Colin, Paris, 1989.

⁹ Vedinaș, Traian, "Introducere în sociologia rurală", Editura Polirom, 2001.

¹⁰ Anuarul Statistic al României, 2007

¹¹ Anuarul Statistic al României, 2007

The highest rate of employment in agriculture is recorded in the North-East and South West, due to the high degree of population ageing and the predominance of agricultural activities in rural areas. Such a situation has a negative effect, being an obstacle to the modernization of agriculture through the perpetuation of practicing the traditional inefficient or extremely low efficient agriculture. That explains that the regions in which the share of young people under 35 years is greater, have a higher degree of economic development (North-West, Centre and Bucharest).



Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Romania, 2007*

The rate of activity in rural areas recorded a seasonal trend during the year, with lower levels in the quarters I and IV, and much higher in the quarters II and III. In a large extent, this development is due to the dominant branch - agriculture, and especially growing plants, which requires a higher volume of work during inseminations and harvesting periods. Seasonal activity is a factor that may negatively affect households income and reveal that resources are not used working with the same intensity along the year.

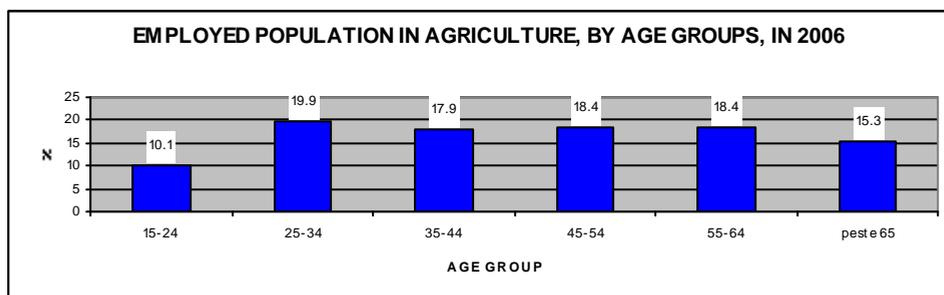
BIM unemployment rate was in 2006, 5.6% in rural areas, far from the urban - 8.6%.

The structure of the rural population by sex is relatively balanced, the number of women (4.854,1 thousands of people, namely 50.19%) is almost equal to that of men (4.816,3 thousands of people, namely 49.81% - *Statistical Yearbook of Romania, 2007*).

The age of the rural population is relatively unbalanced, process of ageing being obvious. The population over 50 years is numerous, one of three people in rural areas falling within this age bracket, compared with one in five of the city. The process of ageing appeared in the same time with reducing natality and

decreasing of the number of mature people, following the massive migration in the last decades, a process that is stresses in recent years, relatively different in the territory. In 2000, 52% of the population employed in agriculture had 45 years and over, and about 23.1%, 65 years and over. Only 28.6% of the population employed in agriculture was represented by young people under 35 years.

During the period 2000 - 2006, the rate of employment by age groups signed up on a downward trend, so that the end of 2006, the structure of the population employed in agriculture, by age groups, was presented as follows:



There is a positive aspect in terms of structure by age, at least temporarily. The quota of youths aged between 15 and 24 years old, who has remained in rural, entered into the category of employment resources, thereby contributing to the renewal of their being relatively easy to format and targeted both for agricultural activities and for activities non-agricultural.

MOBILITY OF LABOUR IN RURAL AREAS

Increasing urban unemployment and restoring agricultural land by Law 18/1991 have contributed, directly, at changing direction and intensity of internal migration flows. The trend is specific of periods of crisis in modern societies, agriculture representing a refuge for a part of the workforce released from the non-agricultural sectors.

In 2006, the rate of flow of rural-urban residence due to the change of residence was 9.7 ‰, compared with 7.8 ‰ in 2001.

The highest rates of migration to other areas were recorded in the very weak and poorly developed counties of Eastern and Southern regions of the country and the most mobile population, from the residential point of view, were young people aged between 20 and 29 years.

The analysis of statistical data presented above shows that employment in rural areas bearing the imprint specifics of the rural economy, dominated by the primary sector. Thus:

- rural population is mainly employed in agriculture;

- high percentage of the employed population can be explained by the slow pace of reform in agriculture;
- agricultural work is done manually in many cases, mechanization and other activities specific of intensive farming involving costs deemed inaccessible by individual producers and owners;
- credits are very expensive and very difficult to access;
- aid from the state come often too late to be used.

THE PERSPECTIVES OF INCREASING EMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURE

Analyzing data on the evolution of the total herd of animals at the national level, included in the table below, shows that during 1998 - 2007, it had been reduced the total cattle herds with 12%, while the pigs herds had been reduced with 34%. The number of heads of sheep and goats rose by 9%, the birds, by 5.6% and the number of families of bees, by 75%.

		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Cattle	Thou heads	3143	3051	2870	2800	2878	2897	2808	2862	2934	2762
	%	100	97.1	91.3	89.1	91.6	92.2	89.3	91.0	93.4	87.9
Pigs	Thou heads	7194	5848	4797	4447	5058	5145	6495	6622	6815	4789
	%	100	81.3	66.7	61.8	70.3	71.5	90.2	92.0	94.7	66.6
Sheep	Thou heads	8409	8121	7657	7251	7312	7447	7425	7611	8405	9787
	%	100	96.6	91.1	86.2	87.0	88.6	88.2	90.5		
Goats	Thou heads	585	558	538	525	633	678	661	687		
	%	100	95.4	92.0	89.7	108	115.9	112.9	117.4	93.5	108.8
Birds	Thou heads	69480	69143	70070	71413	77379	76616	87014	86552	84990	73373
	%	100	99.5	100.9	102.8	111.4	110.3	125.2	124.5	122.3	105.6
Bees	Thou heads	620	614	648	745	781	840	888	888	975	1086
	%	100	99.0	104.5	120.2	126.0	135.5	143.2	143.2	157.2	175.1

From an analysis of farm-dimensional structure of the Romanian zootechnic sector (classified according to statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development¹² based on the number of heads on 30 April 2008) finds the following:

- the cattle and heifers farms with 1-2 head represents 91% (totaling 863,830 animals, and 91% of herds), while the largest, more than 100 animals are almost non-existent (0.02%) and include 47,531 heads, that is 3%;

¹² Statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, at April 30 2008

- considering the fattening pigs, the situation is as follows: farms with 1-2 head represent 93% (including 1.777.130 animals), while the largest farms, over 500 animals, are almost non-existent (0.01%, including 784.569 heads, namely 24%);

- at sheep, holdings of 10 heads represent less than 79% of the total and consisted of 2,012,228 heads, that is 28% of the total herd of sheep. Farms with over 500 heads represent 0.2% of the total and have 11% of the herds (775,245 sheep);

- dimensional structure of farm goats reveals that the lowest, under 10 heads, represent 92.4% and hold 52% of the herds (that is 399,108 animals), while the highest, over 50 heads, represent 1.5 % and have 22% of the herds (167,462 goats);

- considering the birds, the smallest farms, under 25 heads, represent 76% (totaling 27,480,125 animals, and 31% of herds), while the largest, over 1,000 birds, are almost non-existent (0.01%), but comprise 32% of the birds (28,230,000 heads)

The data presented reveal that specific activities are mainly practiced smaller farms (households), which explains the slow pace of growth of herds and reduced quality of genetic material in relation to European standards, which does not allow obtaining qualitative and quantitative production.

DYNAMICS OF OCCUPATIONS IN ROMANIAN AGRICULTURE

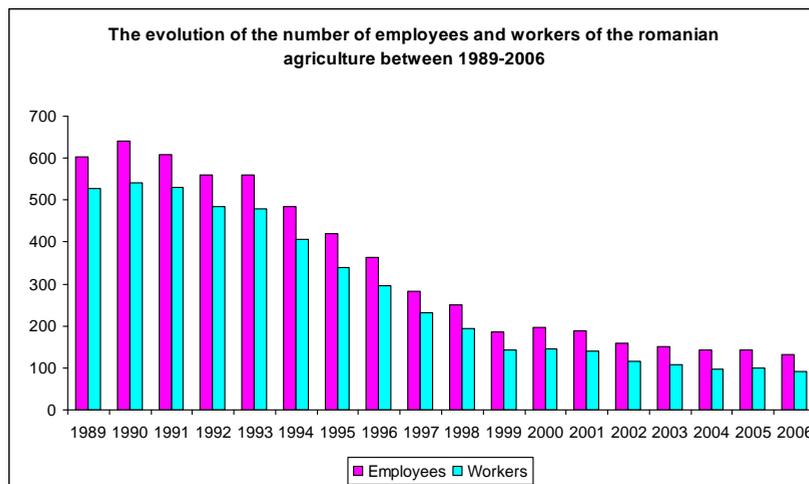
Between 1951 and 1989, when it was practiced a centralized agriculture, the number of specialists who worked in this sector has been constantly increasing. Hereby, the number of agricultural specialists with higher education increased by 608% (from 5,533 in 1951 to 33,629 in 1989) and the number of high school graduates, with 1010.4% (from 3,162 in 1950, 31,948 în1989). With respect of the tractor-drivers, their number has increased by 505% (from 20,700 in 1951 to 104,521 in 1968).

In 1951, in Romanian agriculture were employed 3,383 agronomist engineers, 496 zootechnical engineers, 1,245 veterinarians and 179 mechanical engineers. The number has increased steadily until 1963, when they reached the following figures: 10,800 agronomist engineers, 1,800 zootechnical engineers, 3,000 veterinarians, and 1,550 mechanical engineers.

Between 1963 and 1968, we can observe a decrease of the number of specialists with higher education employed in agriculture. After 1968, it was the growth resumed trend in the number of persons with higher education employed in agriculture, reaching in 1989 the following figures: 14,363 agronomist engineers, 6,361 zootechnical engineers, 3,004 veterinarians and 4825 mechanical engineers. After 1989, the economic and social organization of Romanian rural area has been marked by several factors. In a shortened period of time, took place significant changes the structure of land ownership, disappearing the socialist agricultural establishments and being replaced by new

types of holdings (individual households, family associations, agricultural societies, businesses etc.), in this way, whole economic and social organization of agriculture being radically transformed.

It is noted after 1989 a pronounced reduction of the number of employees in the Romanian agriculture. In 1990 were 640 thousand employees in agriculture of which 542 thousand workers, reaching, at the end of 2006, 133 thousand employees in agriculture of which 92 thousand workers. Of the 2,840 thousand people employed in agriculture in the year 2006, employees represent only 6.3%, the vast majority is made up of workers on their own account 51.4% (1.459,76 thousand persons) and 42% (1.192,8 thousands of people) being family workers without remuneration. Large share of these categories employed in agriculture is the result of economic restructuring and of the way in which was carried out privatization of agricultural land, which led to the active population migration to rural areas.



Source: Statistical Yearbook of Romania, 1964 - 2007

After the Revolution of 1989, occupational structure in Zootechnics has changed, so that, currently, Classification of Occupations in Romania includes a number of 41 occupations specific to this area, some of which are new: technological engineer in Zootechnics, design engineer in Zootechnics, operator artificial insemination of animals, vegetable crops and animal farmer. Seven occupational standards were elaborated:

- Farmer in animal production (COR code 131104 - farmer in animal production)
- Mechanical operating in Zootechnics (COR code 833105 - mechanically operating in Zootechnics)
- Pig Farmer (code 612106 COR - pig farmer)

- Cattle farmer (code 612105 COR – cattle farmer)
- Birds farmer (code 612201 COR – birds farmer)
- Vegetable crops and animal farmer (code 613001 COR - farmer crops and vegetable producer)
- Chief of agricultural farm (code 122111 COR - chief agricultural farm / agrozootehnical).

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