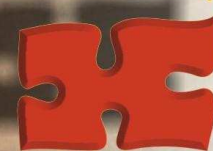


Traditions and legends from Dăbâca commune



Dako-Gräff N.

To search for legends and traditions about the rural area is like climbing into an old and dusty attic to find a forgotten treasure. The old people are mostly the ones that still remember tales from their youth or traditions that were held when they were young. Concerning our village, Dăbâca, most of these memories and traditions have been recorded by Pintilie and Dorin Pintilie in their monographic study published in 2001 and based on a manuscript written by the priest Father Rațiu.

Long ago, young girls and boys from the villages of Transylvania used to have a party around New Year's Eve, commonly called Vergelul¹. Apparently, the name of this tradition comes from the objects with which a ritual was commonly performed during the celebration in order to foresee the future of unmarried girls. According to the monography, however, in Dăbâca the tradition was practised differently although the name remained the same.

At Christmas, the young boys and girls from the village organized a party where the youth used to gather and have a good time with a lot of music and dancing, led by the fiddlers. The boys were the main organizers. They divided themselves between “chezăși” and “chemători”² and had specific tasks. One group had to go through the village and invite the unmarried girls to the party, and the others were responsible for finding the musicians and also to figure out a way to pay them. The boys had a specific saying when they arrived at the door: “Am auzit că aveți niște

băiețele de cinste și de omenie/Dumnezeu să vi le ție/Să le îngăduți un ceas sau două/Cu noi de-mpreună/ La un ceas de voie bună/Ziua bună a lui Crăciun”³. The girls' parents invited the boys inside to show them hospitality. The girl was very happy mostly if among the ones that came was also the boy she liked.

Afterwards, in order to attend the party, she had to prepare, together with her mother, a large cake called “colac”. Upon arriving at the party, this was given to a person called “staroste” who was in charge to keep the good spirit of the party. He recited a rhyme to praise its beauty and heaviness and then the dancing began. After several hours, the girls were asked to stand behind their own “colac” to receive a symbolic blessing from the staroste. Then, everybody ate cake and cheese and drank plum brandy.

As the party progressed, there was lots of shouting and ironic rhymes recited: “Tot am vrut bade să-ți spui/ Câte blide ai în cui/Trei cu blidul mătului”⁴; “Haide fată să te joc - Dumnezeu deie-ți noroc”⁵. The celebrations continued until midnight when everybody went home but only to return the next day.

After three days of celebration, the fiddlers were compensated with food and money. They used to put their gifts on several sleighs in order for the whole village to see. Again there were specific sayings to end the celebration.

Nicolae Grigorescu,
The girl with her dowry, undated,
National Museum of Art of Romania



¹ VERGÉL, vergeluri, noun, f: 1. stick on which the threads used for the weaving machine were fixed 2. Party organized in rural areas on Christmas Eve or New Year's Eve, during which, through some magical rituals, it is believed that the future can be foreseen (source: <http://dexonline.ro/definitie/vergel>).

² Chematori = “callers”; chezăși = “bailers”.

³ “I heard you have some good girls around/May God held them in good health and strong/Allow them a while, may you/For a good time to spend, an hour or two/On the good day of Christmas”.

⁴ “I wanted, dear lad, to tell you first of all/How many plates you have on the wall/One and two and three – oh but that's the cat's property”;

⁵ “Come on dear girl let me dance you this song/May god give you luck and make you strong”.



Păpălugara



Păpălugara was, and in certain regions still is, a custom held around the celebration of St. George (23rd of April) at the beginning of the spring. It has the role of an enchantment performed upon nature in order to have a prosperous and wealthy year. Other words for „papalugara”¹ are paparuda, papaluga, paparuga, peperuia, pipiruda, babaluda, matahula. The tradition is performed in different ways. For the Dăbâca region, according to the monographic study, two young boys, called „papalugari” used to cover themselves with leaves until they became unrecognizable. Others formed a protective body around them and so they went through the village.

The people had to try and discover the identity of the boys while being careful not to be hit (gently) with sticks by the protectors. Water was also thrown over the covered boys whilst reciting a spell: „Așa să fie hotarul de ud - cum ud eu Păpălăgura - Și cum e omul ăsta îmbrăcat - să fie

hotarul de bogat”².

These practices were held mostly until the beginning of the Second World War, after which they were simplified to the mere practice of throwing water over each other. However, there are still certain villages where this tradition lives on, and Mr. Petrindean, the current mayor of Dăbâca commune, hopes to reinstitute it in his commune as well.



Păpălugara in Dăbâca.
Photo: Gidofalvi Eva, 1937



In the Transylvanian villages, as in any small community, the collective voice was a harsh judge of any kind of behaviour that seemed out of the commonly established norms. It was therefore a guardian of the moral values, and deviant behaviours were regulated or adressed at least symbolically. One of the ways in which this coercive character of the community was enforced was through a tradition called vilitul, also performed in Dăbâca, during which so called shameful deeds that happened over the year were brought to light. According to the Romanian explicative dictionary, “vil”³ is a term and describes something that monography of Dăbâca also acts were considered

V I L I T U L

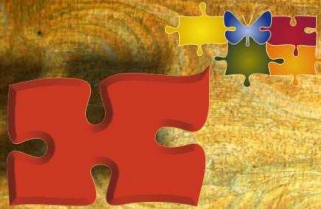
inspires discontent. The describes what kind of inappropriate and signaled during this event (Pintilie & Pintilie, 2001). They varied in gravity, from the mere fact of not taking care of the household to living with a concubine which decades ago was impardonable. Young boys used to climb the hills near the village and shout very loudly: „Vili, vili mă? - Ce ți-i ție mă? – Ai auzit de care...”⁴. This tradition in fact still exists. People gather on New Year's eve and read small ironic rhymes made about each other which are a combination of humorous descriptions, ironies and facts which draw attention to bad things that the person did in the precedent year.

¹ See source here: www.pipas.ro

² “May the water pour on the land such as I throw it on this lad/ May the harvest be as rich as Papalaruga's cover”.

³ VIL ~ă (~i, ~e) which shows lack of dignity and loyalty; inspiring discontent (fr. vil, lat. vilis).

⁴ “Vili, vili you?/ What do you want?/ Did you hear about X that did Y?”.



The fortress of Gelu from Dabâca

There are a lot of stories about the fortress in Dăbâca. Some say that it was the main dwelling and fortress of voievode Gelu. According to a local, in the northern part of the ruins there is a well where prisoners and other people were thrown as a punishment. Also, it might be that the fountain was actually a secret passage used in ancient times. "The fortress was built on the ruins of a Dacian construction... They say there might be a secret passage underneath. They leave it like this to be a mystery" (Maria Robu, teacher).



Dako-Gräff N.

Source: Pintilie Mariana, Pintilie Dorin, 2001, Comuna Dăbâca - *Studiu Monografic*, 2001 EURODIDACT Cluj Napoca



www.mozaic-romania.org

Design: Natalia Timuş
Text: Roxana Negoită
Proof - reader: Laura Sutcliffe



Funded by the European Commission (DG Env) through the EFNCP 2011 work programme and by the German Federal Foundation for Environment (DBU).

This publication does not necessarily reflect the views of the funders.