

The Ministry of Culture Romania  
“Dimitrie Gusti” National Village Museum - Bucharest

Portraits of peoples

Displaying traditions from over 20 ethnic communities living in Romania

The topics pertaining to intercultural, multicultural or interethnic relations are topics of a general interest to the Romanian society as they have been at the same time and especially recently an occasion for public or private debates as well as for political or emotional speeches widely disseminated by the Romanian or foreign media.

The respect of the Other for your own national, cultural or ethnic majority identity is also an opportunity for systematic research and an interesting problem for the Romanian ethnologists, who approached on various levels either the problem of ethnic communities developed as autonomous groups that carry specific cultures, or the problem of intercultural and interethnic relations that developed at the level of regions or places where different ethnic groups coexisted. No matter what the level of discussions about the ethnic groups living or having lived in Romania is, they reflect a very clear reality that can be proved by means of statistic data: the traditional culture in the Romanian area has developed based on the basis of multiethnic relations, combining at the same time very different types of information coming from both Western and Eastern Europe. Historians and historians of civilization as well as the specialists in the field have come to accept the truth that Romanian civilization represented a bridge between the West and the East, two areas that were the sources of populations that settled at various stages of history on the territory of Romania alongside the Romanian population that has always been the stable element of cultural community. The originality of Romanian civilization, however, is represented by the way in which it has managed to fuse in the cultural melting pot various elements coming from different cultures and brought by populations with which the Romanians coexisted peacefully throughout centuries on the same territory. This did not lead to cultural uniformization, but to a richness of forms, colors and customs.

We can thus talk without hesitation about multiculturalism and we can mainly prove that Romania generated an European pattern of ethnic cohabitation where groups that have been recorded as ethnic entities in recent statistics preserved their own culture and personality along, in some cases, hundreds of years. We are talking about Saxons, Hungarians, Lipovan Russians or Romani people without leaving aside other ethnic groups such as the Italians, the Ukrainians or the Greeks.

On the other hand, we must emphasize the dynamic character of ethnic groups. Their number varied in time depending both on historical realities (the two World Wars, the creation of the Romanian united state in 1918, the winning of national independence in 1877 and the inclusion of Dobrogea in the territory of Romania etc.) and on the assuming of their national identity by various individuals (see the case of the groups of Romani people).

The exhibition organized by one of the most prestigious museums in Romania, the “Dimitrie Gusti” National Village Museum that celebrates, this year, 74 years since its inauguration, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1936, is meant to illustrate, with the help of photographs coming from either the museum’s archives or from recent field research the ethnic dialogue on the Romanian territory as well as the beauty of the costumes, of the textile decorations for the interior of the dwellings or of the furniture typical of every ethnic group. One of the sections of the exhibition renders the anthropology of the faces - illustrated by images that reproduce ethnic peculiarities with the help of the camera. Faces

of old people, of children, of women coming from the mist of time can thus be compared to the expressive faces that have been recently photographed within the programme of study of contemporary ethnic groups currently living in various geographical areas of Romania.

By organizing this exhibition we also want to emphasize the cultural diversity that sets its print on the human landscape of Romania (pictures of villages, of traditional architecture, of various ethnographic landscapes) and to create the image of a Romania whose history, with all its intricate branching, has been generous in preserving the image of the various cultures that generated a diversified cultural model that took shape in the wider universe of cultural interaction in an area where the phenomena of acculturation cannot be ignored.

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