EXPERT PAPER

Comparative study of traditional homesteads located in the ethnographic areas in north-east Romania

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Abstract

The present paper briefly presents the similarities and differences between the two ethnographic regions located in NR Romania (Botosani and Bucovina), for this purpose we have analyzed folk art and architecture, the professions and mainly the setup of traditional homesteads, underlining the main factors that have contributed to their occurrence. This is needed in order to highlight the place of the garden in the traditional homestead, the way ornamental species are positions, the plant assortment used, and last but not least, the role they play in the lives of the inhabitants of these areas. If we can find significant similarities when we think about type of housing, interior organisation and household organization, the other aspects are quite different, mainly due to geo-climatic factors. The flower garden, though it covers the same position within the homestead, is different when it comes to the variety and the quantity of the ornamental assortment used.

Key words: traditional homestead, traditional garden, assortment, ornamental plants.

Introduction

There are different development and approach ways when it comes to the evolution of flower cultivation and the art of gardening in the European area. Even if for the people from a certain geographic area there is a common background and some reciprocal influences, especially there where the living conditions have been similar, geographic, ethnic, historic factors, etc. have contributed to the creation of these differences. (Glăman G., Vlăduț M.N., 2003).

At the beginning of the 19th century, more than 80% of Romania’s population lived in the country, so that the Romanian village is the most expressive and richest document of the people’s history. It represents a specific civilization, characterized by nativity, modesty and simplicity. In the old, local belief, there has always been a strong feeling of solidarity with the whole, namely that the part cannot be understood without the whole (Camilar M., 2002).

In the traditional homestead, even if each elements has a different role, everything is made with the help of a common “language” that invests unity to the entire ensemble. Thus, the elements of the traditional homestead – house, annexes, garden, etc. – can only be analyzed if considered as part of a well-defined whole, of a small universe, where usefulness and beauty permanently meet (Bernea E., 2007).

Material and methods

In order to draw up this paper, we have made a study of several homesteads from Botosani and Bucovina areas, analyzing the natural and geographic background, as well as their ethnographic coordinates. The following research methods have been used: theoretic documentation, systematic observation, case study method and synthesis of the obtained data.
Results and discussion

One of the characteristic traits of Romanian villages represent a topologic variety. If we refer to the different peasant culture and art fields on Romanian territory, throughout history, we have had notable differences from one regions to the other, even from one village to another, in the same region. Thus, in the six traditional Romanian areas- Banat, Dobrogea, Moldova, Muntenia, Oltenia, Transilvania - there are different distinct ethnographic areas, each with its symbolic wealth, and there are both interdependence and similitude among them. Romania’s administrative division into districts only partially fits the ethnographic division, the latter varies depending on the field of study and interest (professional, architecture, folk art, folk dress etc.).

From the ethnographic point of view, North Moldavia - located in the NR Romania, neighbouring Ukraine in the North and Moldavian Republic in the East - include the Botosani (Botosani district) and Bucovina region (Suceava district) (Picture 1). In the latter, if we consider the type of villages, homesteads and households, there are several smaller size areas that do not have clear divisional lines among them, which present dominant traits (Bănățanu T., 1975).

From the relief point of view, the two studies areas are different. If Bucovina is mainly made of a large variety of relief elements, hills and plains, long and large valleys full of ponds. Alongside this factor, the weather, professions, economic and social status, ethnic belonging, etc. have led to the structuring of more types of villages and implicitly lead to the creation of certain types of homesteads that are characteristic to the area, that stand out not only from the point of view of the number and functions of the buildings, but also the structure of the homestead ensemble (Bănățanu T, 1975).

The traditional homesteads from the studied areas enter the larger organization scheme of Moldavian homesteads, the land belonging to them being divided in two distinct functional areas: courtyards and utilitarian garden, with many differences from one area to another. If in the Bucovina area we have homesteads with hardened barns and the Bucovina gate (Picture 2) is a common presence and a symbol-element of it, in the Botosani area, they are missing. We should observe the decorative symbols presented on Bucovina gates, such as the sun (rosettes, circles, spires), „the tree of life” (fir tree) and floral (especially the tulip), that are presented in great finesse and good taste (Camilar M. 2002).

The courtyard, is the actual yard, it includes the house, household annexes, flower or mixed garden. The connection of the courtyard with the utilitarian garden located in the back is made either directly through an access area in the gate that separates them or an attached building with double access, thus insuring the crossing from one side to another. This positioning is specific for the homesteads with hardened barns in the Bucovina area. The differences between the homesteads located in the two ethnographic areas can be found in the number and purpose of the buildings in the courtyard and their size, the ones in Botosani being much more modest.
In Botosani area, given the hill land plain relief of the area, since there are no large wooded areas to provide plenty of raw materials, wood processing has been only a secondary occupation (Paveliuşe-Olariu A.). The flower garden in front of the house is always part of the traditional homesteads from the studied areas. Depending on the position of the house from the limit of the estate, the flower garden may include exclusively ornamental species – in case the distance between the house and fence is small, or mixed – which includes aromatic plants, vegetables, fruit bearing trees or vine besides the ornamental flowers. The positioning of ornamental species is random, depending on the taste and skills of the housewife. There is a tendency towards linear, neat positioning of the decorative plants, especially in the case of the mixed gardens.

The Bucovina gardens (Picture 3) impress through the variety of the ornamental assortment and the number of individuals from the same species, in contrast with the Botosani area, where the gardens have less plant species and a lower number of individual plants (Picture 4).

The garden presented in Picture 3a includes, besides several vegetable rows, a large variety of ornamental species such as: *Gladiolus gandavensis, Dahlia hybida, Chrysanthemum leucanthemum, Dephinium sp., Monarda dydima, Phlox paniculata, Amaranthus hypocondriacus, Coreopsis tinctoria, Dahlia variabilis, Euphorbia marginata, Ipomoea
purpurea, Tagetes sp. and Tropaeolum majus. Picture 3b, presents another garden from the Bucovina area that also has a large variety of ornamental plants: Chrysanthemum indicum, Monarda dydima, Rudbeckia hirta, Physostegia virginiana, Ocimum basilicum, Salvia splendens, Tagetes sp., Zinnia elegans, Rosa sp. and others.

The main flower species present in the garden presented in Picture 4a. are: Gladiolus gandavensis, Chrysanthemum indicum, Callistephus chinensis, Euphorbia marginata, Zinnia elegans etc. Picture 4b. presents a corner of a mixed garden from the Botosani area, where few ornamental species can be found, among them: Phlox paniculata, Lupin sp., Aster sp. and Rosa sp. In some localities from Bucovina (e.g. Milisauti, Radauti etc.), the front garden goes beyond the fence to the road, creating some spectacular flower borders. Picture 5a. presents a flower border from Milisauti village, made up exclusively of annual flower species, such as: Euphorbia marginata, Tagetes patula and Zinnia elegans. The flower border in Picture 5b, besides the annual species, also includes: Amaranthus caudatus, Euphorbia marginata, Nicotiana alata, Tagetes patula and perennial species such as: Hosta plantaginea and Aster sp.

From the inventory of the flower assortment grown in the peasant gardens from the two studies areas, we have ascertained that in Bucovina, 60 flower species are predominantly grown, while in Botosani there are only approx. 36 species. These differences are presented in table 1.
Table 1. Flower species frequently cultivated in the gardens from Bucovina and Botosani areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant category (duration of biological cycle)</th>
<th>Bucovina</th>
<th>Botosani</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perennial geophytes (rustic and semi-rustic)</td>
<td>Canna indica, Gladiolus gandavensis, Dahlia hybrida, Hyacinthus orientalis, Iris germanica, Leucojum vernum, Lilium candidum, Monbretia sp., Narcissus poeticus, Narcissus pseudonarcissus, Tulipa gesneriana</td>
<td>Gladiolus gandavensis, Dahlia hybrida, Hyacinthus orientalis, Iris germanica, Lilium candidum, Narcissus poeticus, Narcissus pseudonarcissus, Tulipa gesneriana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perennial hemicryptopite</td>
<td>Aquilegia vulgaris, Aster sp., Chrysanthemum indicum, Chrysanthemum leucanthemum, Dephinium sp., Hemerocallis sp., Hosta plantaginea, Lupinus sp., Lychnis chalcedonica, Monarda dydima, Paeonia officinalis, Papaver orientale, Physostegia virginiana, Phlox paniculata, Primula acaulis, Rudbeckia hirta, Saponaria officinalis</td>
<td>Aquilegia vulgaris, Aster sp., Chrysanthemum indicum, Heliopsis helianthoides, Hemerocallis sp., Helianthus tuberosus, Hosta plantaginea Lupinus sp., Paeonia officinalis, Papaver orientale, Phlox paniculata, Vinca minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-annual</td>
<td>Althaea rosea, Cheiranthus cheiri, Dianthus barbatus</td>
<td>Althaea rosea, Lunaria annua</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

A series of factors (geographic, climate, economic, ethnic, etc.) have left their mark on the way the traditional homestead is organized. There are similarities, but there are also many differences between the homesteads in the Bucovina and Botosani ethnographic areas, regarding the number and size of the buildings, their volume and aspect, the size of the flower garden and last but not least, the number of cultivated ornamental species.
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