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**In the footsteps of a rural tradition from Tara Motilor
(The Stone Land): the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina**

PdD THESIS ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Keywords: *"Maiden Fair", Mount Găina, Țara Moșilor (The Stone Land), population, moși (inhabitants of Țara Moșilor), Vidra de Sus, popular celebration, oral survey, traditional crafts and trade, personalities, cultural heritage, Apuseni Mountains.*

Țara Moșilor (The Stone Land) is known for its cultural richness and lively rural traditions. In this context, the 'Maiden Fair' on Mount Găina is a particularly interesting and significant cultural phenomenon, which deserves to be explored in detail. The "Maiden Fair" is an event with a long history and a deep significance for the inhabitants of the Stone Land. Its study offers one a unique opportunity to explore important aspects of the social, economic and cultural life of this region and to bring to light the traditions and practices handed down along the generations.

The study of rural traditions is a part of history and anthropology, as it provides insight into how communities perpetuate their customs and cultural identities over time. The "Maiden Fair" on the Mount Găina is an emblematic example of a rural tradition in the Stone Land, a region rich in history and culture. This work focuses on the analysis and understanding of this traditional event, and its innovation lies in its interdisciplinary approach, by using varied sources, new interpretations and rigorous methodology.

The thesis analyzes the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina, a rural tradition part of the heritage of our people. The aim of this work is based on the interest in history and folk traditions, on the economic, cultural and social relevance of the subject, as well as on the will to contribute to the knowledge and preservation of Romania's cultural heritage.

An innovative feature of this work lies in the diversity of sources used to investigate the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina. In addition to traditional historical sources, the work is also based on ethnographic and anthropological sources. Th interviews with fair participants and participatory observations provide a special insight into the significance and evolution of this traditional event. We also used old photographs, audiovisual documents and digital materials to supplement the historical record and to highlight changes in the fair over time, thus contributing to a comprehensive picture of the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina.

Through on-site research, observation, oral history research , consultation of archival collections, newspaper collections, research in museums and university libraries, consultation of reference works, capitalizing on the publications and periodical press as a historical source, as well as through own research, we try to contribute to a better knowledge

of the Găinii Fair. We provide an overview of this ancient celebration of the Romanians of the Stone Land, its genesis, evolution and significance, all in close relation to the economic, social, political, national and cultural situation, both general and local.

Historical research is often anchored in classical studies and conventional methods, but this work brings a new perspective and approach to the field of history. It proposes an analysis of a traditional cultural phenomenon through the interdisciplinary method, which led to a deep understanding of the historical context. We also used the method of analyzing the information found in archival documents and the inductive method to reach conclusions from particular facts. The aim was to find explanations for economic, social or cultural phenomena and to provide a contemporary perspective for their understanding and interpretation. In order to understand the present, we need to understand the past, so the comparative method was also used. Historical comparison, carried out with a critical spirit and respect for the truth of historical facts, can highlight not only the similarities but also the differences between the cases under consideration¹. In this approach, we used explanations of historical facts, such as descriptive explanations, which establish the successive stages of development of a historical fact (its genesis). In addition to descriptive explanations, we also used the definition of historical concepts or terms, given that the full form of explanation in history is that which investigates the causes of a historical event, phenomenon or process.

At a time when historical studies are traditionally based on written sources, this work brings a change by incorporating oral sources and ethnographic methods into the research process. Interviews with fair participants and direct observations bring a vivid and authentic perspective on the phenomenon under study. These sources provide insight not only into the formal aspects of the fair, but also into the personal perceptions, experiences and meanings associated with it.

The direct involvement of the local community in the process of research and interpretation is central to this work. The active participation of the inhabitants of the Stone Land in interviews and discussions provides an authentic and contextualized perspective on the fair and its importance in the daily life of the community. Moreover, this involvement reinforces the social relevance of the research, making it a useful tool for the preservation and promotion of local cultural heritage.

The paper addresses continuity and change over time in a balanced way. While many scholars focus exclusively on the traditional aspects of a cultural phenomenon, this work

¹ Bogdan Murgescu, *Metodologia cercetării istorice. Prezentare sintetică*, in *Studii și articole de istorie*, LXVII, București, 2002, p. 117.

also examines how it has adapted and evolved in the face of modern social and economic pressures. By tracing the evolution of the fair over the centuries, we find a deeper understanding of historical dynamics and cultural resilience.

The topic chosen for this paper is important because it offers a new and detailed perspective on the phenomenon of the "Maiden Fair". The proposed study brings to the fore unexplored or insufficiently documented aspects, providing a broad and rigorous analysis of this traditional event. It contributes to the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the Stone Land by exploring and documenting the 'Maide Fair', highlighting local values and traditions and encouraging their preservation for future generations.

The analysis of the "Maiden Fair" involves aspects of history, anthropology, sociology and economics, providing the opportunity for interdisciplinary approaches and collaboration between different research fields. It also contributes to the development of knowledge in the field of local and regional studies. By studying an event specific to a particular region, this work brings new data and interpretations that can be useful for further research in the field of local and regional history.

This research also has relevance and impact for the local community. The results of this research can be used to promote local traditions and culture, as well as to develop tourism and other economic activities in the region.

The objectives of the thesis are: to study historical documents and oral traditions in order to identify when and under what circumstances the "Maiden Fair" came into being and how it developed; to explore the evolution of the fair from its initial appearance to the present; to examine how the fair has adapted and evolved in the face of social, economic and cultural change in the Stone Land; to analyze the significance and impact of the fair on the local community and in the Apuseni Mountains region; to investigate the changes and transformations of the fair over time, including in periods of social transition; to assess the impact of the fair on the memory of the participants and its role in strengthening cultural and community identity; to assess the role of the fair in promoting local traditions and culture and in maintaining community cohesion; to identify directions for revitalizing and preserving this traditional event in the context of contemporary social and economic changes.

These objectives reflect the complexity and diversity of the issues and demonstrate the importance and relevance of the topic to the field of history and cultural studies. In order to achieve the objectives, the thesis used a variety of research methods, including analysis

of historical documents, interviews and direct observation. Secondary sources, historical and anthropological works were consulted to complement and contextualize the data obtained.

This PhD thesis contributes to the understanding and appreciation of rural traditions in the Stone Land, providing a new and detailed perspective on the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina. Exploring the history, significance and current status of this traditional event, we highlight its role in the cultural identity of the local community and identify ways to preserve and revitalize this cultural heritage.

The structure of the thesis is organized in several chapters, each dealing with specific aspects of the "Maiden Fair" and involving specific methods of research and analysis. This structure allows a comprehensive and detailed approach to the subject and aims to provide a complex and balanced picture of this cultural phenomenon.

In order to assess the level of knowledge on the research topic, in a first stage of bibliographical documentation, we identified the most important reference works and we studied scientific articles and books on the subject proposed for research in libraries, documentation and information centers, as well as in accessible databases. On the basis of the bibliographical files, in which the information known in the scientific literature on the research topic was collected, in the first chapter, *Current state of knowledge / History of the topic*, the works considered valuable and relevant were summarized, commented and assessed.

In the second chapter, entitled *Țara Moșilor (The Stone Land) and their inhabitants*, we discuss key aspects related to the geographical extent and boundaries of the Stone Land, highlighting the ethnographic profile of this area and the particularities of the local community, given that the "Maiden Fair" is considered the largest popular open-air celebration in the Stone Land. In order to fully understand the significance of the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina, it is essential to carefully examine the historical and geographical context of the region in which this event takes place. The Stone Land is a remote mountainous area in the heart of Transylvania, inhabited by Moși for centuries, a community with a distinct identity and rich culture. We investigated the history of this region and its role in the cultural development of Romania.

In the third chapter, entitled *Demographic evolution, structure, emigration and immigration of the population of Vidra de Sus (from 1924 Avram Iancu Township)*, we analyze the demographic evolution, social structure, emigration and immigration of the population of Vidra de Sus, later Avram Iancu Township. These aspects are considered essential for the understanding and interpretation of the old rural tradition of the "Maiden

Fair" on Mount Găina, an event that took place in the territory of Avram Iancu Township and that involved the population of Vidra de Sus over the centuries, which played an important role in initiating and organizing the fair. The chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the demographic evolution and population dynamics of Vidra de Sus in the research of the rural tradition of the "Mountain Fair" on Mount Găina, thus contributing to a deeper and more comprehensive interpretation of this cultural and social phenomenon in the history of the region.

By integrating the population of Vidra de Sus into the research on the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina, the researcher can provide a holistic perspective on the rural tradition of the Stone Land and how it is influenced and perpetuated by its inhabitants. This contributes not only to the understanding of the event itself, but also to the wider rural history and culture of the region. The analysis of the demographic composition, social and economic structure of this population provides relevant insights into understanding the context in which this custom took place and has been passed down over time.

In Chapter IV, *The emergence, evolution, survival and metamorphosis of the "Maiden Fair "*, we analyzed the evolution of the Găina Fair from a historical and chronological perspective, starting from the first available information about this great celebration in the Stone Land and up to the mid-20th century, covering the communist and post-Decembrist period. At each stage of its evolution, the functions of the fair have changed, transitioning from its original social and commercial functions to a tourist function. The aim of this paper was to provide a descriptive analysis based on accessible sources of information and to re-evaluate the mythical perception or "standard knowledge" of the fair in Romanian society.

Chapter IV analyzes and captures the evolution of the Găinii Fair from a historical and evolutionary point of view. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina, we considered appropriate to present and analyze aspects such as: the emergence of the first event on the area of Mount Găina, the first certain documentary attestation of the pastoral festival (fair, celebration) on Mount Găina, the known and recorded names of the celebration, the date of the celebration/fair on Mount Găina, prohibitions and postponements of the "Maiden Fair", etc.

In the fourth chapter, the aim was to clearly identify how the functions of the fair have evolved from its beginnings to the present day. The evolution of these functions influences the evolution of the fair as a whole. We also attempted to demythologize the event taking place on Mount Găina and to bring it closer to the present reality, whether it be economic, socio-cultural, identity or tourist aspects, based on the real needs of the

communities of the Stone Land, to which the tourists attracted by this event through the promotion made by the organizers can be added.

Chapter V, *Găina Fair as recollected by participants*, presents and analyzes aspects of the organization and atmosphere of the Găina fairs in the middle and second half of the 20th century, corresponding to the 4th to 7th decades of this century. This was based on interviews with elderly people from the localities around Mount Găina, in the counties of Alba, Bihor, Hunedoara and Arad, using the memories and recollections of the participants of this event. The more than 20 interviews carried out between January 2020 and September 2023, show how the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina used to be, seen from the perspective of the participants, the people from the rural areas.

The method chosen for this research was based on interview. Interviews are a major method of gathering information through oral methods along with questionnaire and observation. Interviewing a well-established sample is a qualitative method used to obtain information needed to understand or explain certain aspects, interests or opinions of the respondents. Through this, the chapter aims to make a significant contribution to the understanding and documentation of this important traditional event in Romanian history and culture. Through a thorough investigation of oral history sources, archival documents and previous studies, we aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of the origin, evolution and importance of the "Maiden Fair" for the communities of the Stone Land. Through an interdisciplinary approach and the application of innovative research methods, the aim is to contribute to the development of knowledge in the field of ethnography, cultural anthropology and local history.

In the light of these interviews, we aim to reconstruct and analyze the way in which the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina was experienced and perceived by those directly involved in this tradition. Through the recollections and stories of the participants, the aim is to capture not only the tangible aspects of the fair, but also the emotional and cultural impact that this event had on the local community and those who took part in it. In this respect, we intend to highlight the role and profound significance of the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina in the collective memory of the inhabitants of the region and in shaping the cultural identity of the Stone Land.

By bringing to light the voices and perspectives of those directly involved in this traditional event, the aim is to provide a deeper and more authentic understanding of the meaning and evolution of the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina, thus contributing to the

consolidation of the cultural and historical heritage of this mountainous region of Transylvania.

The chapter entitled "*Găina Fair as recollected by participants*" is dedicated to analyzing and interpreting the memories and experiences of those who took part in this traditional event over time. Through this chapter, it aims to bring to the foreground the participants' perspective and highlight their importance in understanding and perpetuating the tradition of the "Maiden Fair" on the Găina Mount from the Stone Land. We explored the memories and stories of those who witnessed or actively participated in the Găina Fair, as they are invaluable sources of information for a deeper understanding of the significance and evolution of this traditional event. Through these accounts, details and aspects that might be overlooked in other historical or documentary sources will be brought to light.

We also explored how the collective memory of the local community has influenced and shaped the understanding and perpetuation of the tradition of the Găina Fair. We analyzed the impact this event has had on the cultural and social identity of the local people and the ways in which they transmit their memories and values related to the "Maiden Fair" to future generations.

Through this chapter, we provided a comprehensive and detailed insight into the role of the participants in perpetuating and reinterpreting the tradition of the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina. We explored the diversity of individual experiences and interpretations, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of the cultural and social impact of this traditional event in the history and identity of the Stone Land community.

In the last chapter, Chapter VI, *Personalities at the "Maiden Fair" and on Mount Găina*, we achieved a chronological analysis and offered a detailed description of the important personalities present at the "Maiden Fair" and at the events on Mount Găina. In addition to the population of Vidra de Sus, the shepherds of Mount Găina and participants from the Stone Land, there were numerous personalities present, including politicians, heads of government, ministers, parliamentarians, high church dignitaries, monarchs, presidents, as well as military personalities, music performers, soloists and dance teams, bands and musical ensembles, marching bands and popular music bands. They took an active part in the event, together with exhibitors from all over the country and tourists from home and abroad who visited the memorial house of the national hero Avram Iancu, an important part of the festivities.

The Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph I was a remarkable personality who, during a visit to Transylvania in 1852, at the insistence of Avram Iancu, climbed Mount Găina and

participated in the Fair here. It was on Mount Găina that the sovereign was to meet Avram Iancu and decorate it. However, Avram Iancu did not want this, and that is why he did not meet the monarch in 1852, neither at the Fair on Mount Găina, nor anywhere else. He remained consistent with the idea he had stated a year earlier in Vienna, that he did not fight for the decoration, but for the royal dynasty and for the Romanian nation, and that first of all he wanted that the promised rights be granted to the Romanian nation² .

Another great personality present on Mount Găina was the Romanian King Ferdinand I. In 1924, when the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Romanian national hero Avram Iancu was celebrated, the first honorary president of ASTRA, King Ferdinand I, accompanied by Queen Maria, Crown Prince Carol and Princess Elena, who also arrived on Mount Găina, attended the celebrations initiated by the Association for Literature and Culture of the Romanian People (ASTRA), organized by the Association with the help of the state.

Other personalities presented in the work are the French professor Pierre Chanier and the German photographer Herbert List, who left us numerous photographs of the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina during the interwar period, historical sources that provide information about the past. We also provide relevant data on the participation of personalities from the communist and post-communist period, such as Adrian Păunescu and Traian Băsescu, and we mention the ensembles, soloists, teams, bands, music and dance groups present at the "Maiden Fair" over the years on the stages of Avram Iancu and Mount Găina, indicating the genre of music for each.

In this work, in addition to the references consulted and the archival fonds, photographs, documentary programs and interviews have been used to provide relevant information on the Găinii Fair. We encountered difficulties in the process of data collection, largely due to the nature of these works, in which the wealth of information is combined with research, systematization and collection work, with the aim of rendering the truth and the complexity of historical reality

The "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina is a tradition deeply rooted in the history and culture of the Stone Land, playing an essential role in preserving and promoting Romanian cultural identity. This event is not just a simple fair, but a symbol of social cohesion and

² Silviu Dragomir, *Avram Iancu*, București, Institutul de Arte Grafice "România Nouă", 1924, p. 126-127; Silviu Dragomir, *Avram Iancu: o viață de erou*, Cluj-Napoca, Școala Ardeleană, 2022, p. 421; Florian Dudaș, *Avram Iancu în tradiția poporului român*, Timișoara, Facla, 1989, p. 199; Iosif Sterca Șuluțiu de Cărpiniș, *Avram Iancu. Biografia din 1897*, Baia Sprie, Cetatea Romei, 2021, p. 76.

local cultural richness, reflected in folk costumes, traditional crafts, music and dances specific to the area.

The whole endeavor aimed at presenting the fact that the Găinii Fair is a living phenomenon, in constant metamorphosis and readaptation. We presented the historical-evolutionary milestones in the unfolding of the "Maiden Fair", expressing a point of view in the light of the research carried out.

The history of the fair, marked by significant transformations, has been influenced by the political and social context, in particular by the communist regime, which tried to control and adapt the event. After 1989, however, the fair was revitalized, managing to maintain its authenticity and adapt to new economic and social realities. This adaptability has been crucial for the continuation of local traditions and values, providing the community with a place of cultural and commercial exchange and meeting.

By transcribing the interviews conducted on the "Maiden Fair", focusing on the lived experiences of the witnesses, we used oral history research in order to highlight various aspects of the history of this event and other local traditions. This method allowed information to be collected and recorded, providing a detailed insight into the development of the fair and its impact on local communities.

The oral survey carried out as part of the research on the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina provided a broad and detailed insight into the event. It facilitated the collection and preservation of information, traditions and memories related to the fair, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of it.

The participants of the Găinii Fair, coming from the localities around Mount Găina, shared their varied memories and experiences of the event. The community spirit was evident and the cultural diversity of participants' contributions added richness and authenticity to the fair.

It is important to note that the "Maiden Fair" is not associated with the sheep and cattle going to the mountains, but it is a significant social and economic event, which attracts participants from various localities around the Mount Găina and the surrounding areas.

The event was marked by the diversity of products and crafts on display, from textiles and woodwork to agricultural products and traditional food. The presence of diverse crafts and products reflected the richness of local culture and traditions, adding value to the fair experience.

Various commercial and cultural activities took place at the Găina Fair, including craft exhibitions, folklore performances, agricultural and food trade, as well as socializing

and entertainment activities. The Găina Fair has always been a central event for the local communities and has been a meeting and socializing occasion for Moți and Crișeni, where many couples started their love story. These moments contributed to the vibrant and lively atmosphere of the event, providing an opportunity to preserve and pass on local traditions and customs.

The cultural events and entertainment activities added value to the event, and the participation of political, cultural and artistic personalities added to the popularity and recognition of the Găina Fair, strengthening its status as a cultural event of national importance.

The oral survey highlighted the importance and impact of the fair in the collective memory and culture of the local community. The revitalization of the "Maiden Fair" requires the active involvement of the local community and authorities in the promotion and organization of the event, together with efforts to preserve and promote local traditions and customs. The oral survey has contributed significantly to the understanding and valorization of the cultural and historical heritage associated with the 'Maiden Fair' on Mount Găina.

From a social and economic point of view, the "Maiden Fair" represents a unique opportunity to strengthen social relations, including marital relations, and to stimulate the local economy through the sale of handicraft and agricultural products. The participation of cultural and historical personalities at the fair has underlined its importance, bringing national and international recognition and contributing to the cultural prestige of the event.

The anthropological and demographic analysis of the communities involved in the organization of the fair highlights an evolution influenced by factors such as migration and economic changes, contributing to the understanding of the social and economic dynamics in the area. The fair remains a vibrant event, reflecting the continuity and adaptability of the Moți inhabitants culture in a modern context.

The "Maiden Fair" is characterized by a variety of handicraft products, ranging from agricultural tools and household items to handmade and decorative products. This diversity reflects the cultural richness of the region and the adaptation of the event to the modern tourist context. The importance of the fair is also highlighted by the participation of cultural and artistic personalities, who have contributed to the recognition and popularity of the event.

In order to preserve and promote this special cultural event, we recommend modernizing the infrastructure, including access roads, and establishing a Museum Information Center to provide visitors with a complete cultural experience. The organization

of an international folk art and crafts fair could also attract a diverse public and contribute to the sustainable development of the region.

The "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina is an event of profound cultural and social importance, reflecting the identity and values of the local community. More than just a fair, it is a pillar of Romanian cultural heritage and a symbol of national identity. The paper emphasizes the importance of the "Maiden Fair" not only as an economic event, but also as an occasion for meeting and preserving local traditions, playing an essential role in the cultural and social life of the region. Preserving and reviving this tradition is essential for ensuring cultural continuity and strengthening community ties in the Stone Land. Continuing efforts to preserve and promote this event is vital for the preservation of the region's cultural heritage and for strengthening the Romanian cultural identity.

Overall, the paper emphasizes the major role of the "Maiden Fair" in preserving and transmitting the local cultural identity and underlines the importance of continuing efforts to preserve and promote this traditional event. Future research in the archives of the "Maiden Fair" organizing institutions and in central newspapers such as *Universul* or *Curentul* may bring new data and clarifications on the recent or more distant history of the Fair on Mount Găina.

The "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina is not just a cultural manifestation, but a symbol of rural identity and tradition in the Stone Land, with the potential to positively influence the life of the community and contribute to the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the region.

The "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina has been a central element of the socio-cultural and economic life of the community in the Stone Land area. Over time, this traditional event has survived and adapted to political, social and economic changes, continuing to play an important role in promoting cultural identity and strengthening social cohesion among the inhabitants of the area.

This work brings to the field of history and cultural studies a number of significant innovations. Through its approach, use of oral and ethnographic sources, exploration of continuity and change over time, involvement of the local community, and contribution to methodological and theoretical development, this work establishes itself as a reference in the study of rural traditions and cultural heritage.

This work represents a significant contribution to the understanding and appreciation of the "Maiden Fair" on Mount Găina. Using a wide range of sources, new interpretations and a rigorous methodology, this work provides a fresh and insightful perspective on this

traditional event and its role within the local community and cultural identity. The work also contributes to the preservation and promotion of the region's cultural heritage and a deeper understanding of the past and present of this vibrant celebration.

The references include the primary and secondary sources used in the research, providing a solid theoretical and documentary framework for analyzing the fair. The appendices contain supplementary materials including interviews, archival documents, images, maps and relevant data that support the research and provide a detailed understanding of the subject. They illustrate the issues discussed in the thesis and are essential for further research and verification of the sources used.