**Spatial distribution of people inside the church: The family *strana***

**(field-notes old and new from Drăguș village, central Romania 1929-2020)**

**Irina Stahl**

Researcher, Institute of Sociology, Romanian Academy

**Long Abstract:**

This presentation was developed from field-notes taken during the monographic campaigns of 1929 and 1932, carried out by the Sociological School of Bucharest led by Dimitrie Gusti, in Drăguș village (Făgăraș region, central Romania). These notes, until recently unpublished, are preserved in the Stahl Family Archive, and refer to the spatial distribution of people inside the church. The reality of the past was completed by more recent fieldwork conducted in August, 2020.

As in many Orthodox churches from Transylvania, in the Drăguș church women and men were separated. The nave, which is closer to the altar, was occupied by men, and the narthex was occupied by women. Unmarried women and men stayed together in the back; children were upstairs in the choir; while gipsies stood next to the door. Despite recommendations of the Church’s representatives, that old people should stay in the front, out of respect, the complex social structure of the village imposed a different rule. All members of the same lineage were aligned in a chain formation inside the church (called the stacidia, in Rom. *strana*,). In it, each member had a specific place. The front position was occupied by the head of the parental household (the father, and after his death by the son, usually the youngest, or the son-in-law, in the case of a matrilocal marriage), succeeded by the other male family members. Women followed the same rule in the narthex, where the chains continued. The distinction between two social categories: the descendants of former imperial border guards (freed peasants, who had received privileges in exchange for their services) and the descendants of the bonded peasants was less obvious, but still noticeable. Thus, the spatial distribution of people in the church reflected the social structure of the community. The same distribution was followed in the cemetery, where each member of the community was buried in his family section, also called *strana*.

Two of the original field-notes were made by Octavian Mureșanu, who only took part in the 1929 monographic campaign. An additional eleven notes were written in 1932, when the monographic teams returned to Drăguș. These field-notes were made by the famous Romanian sociologist Henri H. Stahl, who continued the investigation conducting a series of interviews, assisted by his co-worker Xenia Costa-Foru. Contrary to Muresanu’s notes, Stahl’s interviews were transcribed in such manner as to preserve the peasants’ idiomatic speech and expressions. After writing down the oral testimonies, Stahl verified the information given to him. He tried in vain to find the ”written rule from the ancestors”, however he was able to consult the assessment record of the Church council meetings and transcribed three of them, dated 1902 and 1906.

This talk traces the history of the field-notes (interviews and documents) and comments on the information they provide. Thus, it creates an opportunity for an extensive exploration of the activity of the Romanian School of Sociology and a chance to rediscover the century old church practices, particularly in the Olt region, central Romania. The more recent information provided by direct observation and interviews with several inhabitants of Drăguș village, in August 2020, complete the picture. Religious restrictions during Communism, and more recent social changes, which occurred after 1989, have all left their mark on the current spatial distribution of people inside the church.