The Ingenious Non-Typical Protagonist in the Transylvanian Rural World. Case Study: Ştefan Rus from Marna Nouă

Răzvan ROȘU*

Keywords: *Habsburg Monarchy*; *Transylvania*; *peasants*; *innovations*; *Țara Moților*

1. The ingenious non-typical protagonist – an unexplored subject

Ştefan Rus (1899–1974), a villager from Marna Nouă, a locality situated in the north western corner of Transylvania, was a strong supporter of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Still, at the end of the First World War, he defected from the Austro-Hungarian army and fled, as a war refugee, to France. In his personal life, he had many consensual extramarital affairs, but at the same time he is remembered by his relatives as a good head of family. This article aims to understand the behaviour of such people who came from a rural background, and made the switch to a modern or urban world during the first decades of the 20th century. To what extent such characters belong to the traditional world? Where is the line between tradition and innovation in such a character? Thirdly, how did academic literature deal with such topics?

In the past century, one can observe a tendency of some field researchers to look for individuals that have a character as archaic as possible. In this romantic approach, the ideal informant for an ethnological inquiry would be illiterate and have a narrow cultural horizon. The preferred focus would be on shepherds living on the outskirts of the village.

During the 20th century, Romanian ethnologists had different opinions about the classification of the informants and the methods used in field research. For example, Ion Muşlea had a more conservative position (Cuceu 2003: 281). He pleaded for research inquiry subjects who were less touched by modernity. Ovidiu Bârlea had a more nuanced approach in his book *Metoda de cercetare a folclorului* (Bârlea, 2007). In his work, he preferred to deal with peasants with an archaic behaviour. However, those with a broader cultural horizon were not excluded. In order to better capture aspects related to his/ her biographical trajectory, Bârlea recommended the creation of detailed informants' index cards containing personal data (Rom. *fişă de informator)*. The reason for such a methodological approach was to differentiate among the cultural horizons of the informants. Bârlea gave the example of a woman who never left her native village, someone who went only to

* "Babeş-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania/ The University of Vienna, Austria (razvan_motzu@yahoo.com).

„Philologica Jassyensia", an XIV, nr. 2 (28), 2018, p. 227–246

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

the nearest city for specific reasons, versus a man who lived for years among "strangers" (Bârlea 2007: 63–64).

The Monographic School of Dimitrie Gusti[1] positioned itself opposite. With an elaborate research method, as a result of the pioneering field researches in the Romanian villages before 1940, the members of the Monographic School were concerned with the elaboration of an informant's typology (Bădescu 2009: 55–61). They even identified and defined the type of the ingenious non-typical protagonist and named it *leader* (Rom. *fruntaş*) (Herseni 1940: 140). In the collective work of the Monographic School can also be found a questionnaire for this typology of informant (Herseni 1940: 140). Unfortunately, after the instauration of the communist regime in Romania, the Monographic School was denounced. Afterwards that, Romanian ethnologists and ethnographers only rarely used the monographic method.

The Romantic way of doing ethnology favours the research of individuals who are anchored strictly in the traditional world. Such an example is the one of Annemarie Sorescu Marinković, who conducted an admirable research about the Romanians in Vojvodina. When faced with a non-typical informant, "without traditional features", but with university education, who had been to America and returned to his home village, she asked herself a legitimate question: in what way could such a type of subject prove useful in a classical ethnological inquiry (Roşu 2006: 122).

By taking into consideration the existing schools, my paper wants to fill an academic gap. One has to deal with another type of peasant: the ingenious non-typical protagonist of the traditional community. From the beginning I must point out that the person under study is a result of the meeting between traditional structures and modernity. The analysed type of individual is the one who stands out from the crowd of the rural world, takes a step forward and makes contact with other worlds than the one enclosed within the boundaries of his home village. This typology has not received enough attention in the ethnological or anthropological research for the already mentioned reasons. On the other hand, historical studies have focused mostly on the common protagonists.

2. The ingenious non-typical protagonist in the traditional communities: prototype, variety and transethnicity

In Transylvania such ingenious peasants have been mentioned since the end of the 17th century. The best-known case seems to be that of Horea, Nicola Vasile Ursu (1731–1785), a peasant from Arada (back then the village Râu Mare), the leader of the Rebellion of 1784. Horea possessed a native intelligence. Thus, he travelled four times to Vienna together with other "helpmates" from the hamlets of Țara Moților. This was very unusual for a protagonist from such an ethnic and social background. Horea was even received in audience several times by the Emperor Joseph II (See Prodan 1984). Oprea Miclăuş from the Mărginimea Sibiului region seems to be a predecessor of Horea because he also went to Vienna accompanied by

[1] Dimitrie Gusti (1880–1955), sociologist and ethnologist, founder of the Monographic School in Romania.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

several Romanian peasants from the southern part of Transylvania (Lupaş 1927: 105–116).

Toader Nicoară remarked that, in the context of the political and economic turmoil of the 18th century, groups of Romanian peasants travelled as far as Karlovic, Vienna, Buda, Moscow, St. Petersburg (Nicoară 2001: 42–43). Still, the same author points out the restricted character of this phenomenon (Nicoară 2001: 44). After the incorporation of Transylvania in the Habsburg Empire, numerous peasants had to serve in the army in distant regions. At the same time, the access to printed materials was easier for the peasants and the rural elites. Such new references in the mental map of the peasant came mostly from sacred writings. These were, for instance, cities like Jerusalem, Constantinople, Rome, Moscow; or countries like "Hungarian Lands" – (Țara Ungurească), Poland, "The Turk's Kingdom" – (Împărația Turcului), "The Land of Moscow" – (Țara Moscului), "The German's Kingdom" – (Împărăția Neamțului), France, England, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark (Nicoară 2001: 50–51; Pop 1980: 221–232).

Next, I will outline the portraits of such non-typical peasants, who, though they may not be entirely contemporary and come from different parts of Transylvania, preserve the characteristics of the non-typical protagonist. Badea Cârțan (1849–1911) is a character who, famous as he is, was intensely used in the nationalist propaganda. Simultaneously some aspects of his biography were taken out of context (e.g. Cărăbiş 1985; Giurgiu 2008). As far as our subject matter is concerned, it must be pointed out that Gheorghe Cârțan, a self-taught peasant from Cârțișoara, Făgăraş region, had been driven, ever since his youth, by a great interest for culture, particularly for history and justice. In this context, he travelled as far as Vienna, where he requested an audience with the emperor Franz Joseph. Also, he went to Bucharest many times, returning with an impressive number of books written in Romanian for the Transylvanian Romanians, who back then had a restricted access to books printed in Romanian language. Yet, his most famous journey was to Rome, where he wanted to see Trajan's Column. He was interviewed by the Italian press and invited to participate at dinners hosted by the authorities. Badea Cârțan also reached Jerusalem and Constantinople (Sădean 2011: 51–63).

In a dialectal text from Tache Papahagi's book (1925), *Graiul şi folklorul Maramureşului,* one can also find a non-typical protagonist, Todor Tincu from Sat-Şugătag, Maramureş region, who was 93 years old back in 1923. It is easily noticeable that Todor Tincu had kept many of the traditional stereotypes. Nevertheless, he roamed numerous battlefields of the empire, and made contacts with the personalities of the time. One of them was the priest Vasile Lucaciu[2], with whom he was imprisoned together in Szeged (Rom. *Seghedin*) (Papahagi 1925: 169–170).

Vasile Blidaru (1911–1968) is another example of such a type. A native of the village Odeşti from the ethnographical area of Codru, Blidaru became a harsh anti-Communist fighter following a conflict he had with the authorities. With a rather poor educational background, but endowed with ingenuity, Blidaru was a master of several crafts. For instance, he devised weapons on his own or built camouflaged

[2] Vasile Lucaciu (1852–1922) was a Romanian Greek Catholic priest and a fighter for Romanian rights in Transylvania.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

huts in the woods which were almost undetectable by the secret police officers. He managed to cross the border to Yugoslavia illegally, in the fifties, and got as far as Italy where he underwent training in an espionage school in Trieste (Rogoz 2012: 21). He returned to Romania, landed with a parachute. After visiting his lover, he was shot by the Communist secret police officers. His image still lives on even today, mythologized, in the villages of the Codru area.

Sometimes, albeit rather rarely, the researcher stumbles not just upon non-typical men, but also upon non-typical women. This is also the case of Pelaghia (Palad'ia) Roşu from Mărişel, fighter and heroine of the resistance in the Apuseni Mountains, led by Avram Iancu[3] in 1849, akin both to the author, and to the character that is to be presented. Pelaghia Roşu (1800–1870), daughter of the local mayor – „bd'irău"[4], nicknamed „Dascalița", pursued her studies in Budapest, and during the revolution, together with her son Indrei, elaborated ingenious fight tactics against the Hungarian revolutionary army. Pelaghia is the one credited with the idea of having dressed the Moți-women in men clothes in order to bewilder the opponents. It must be also mentioned that Indrei Roşu was decorated by the emperor Franz Joseph[5].

I also found ingenious non-typical protagonists during the field researches carried out in various areas of Transylvania. Worthy of mention is the nonagenarian Császár Sándor from Frata (Hung. *Magyarfrata*), Cluj county, who impressed me with the deep interpretations he gave to various facts and also with the accuracy with which he grasped the political realities of the time. While his educational background was rather short-lived, thanks to the knowledge he acquired as a self-educated person, Császár Sándor, is at least on a par with a village teacher. He has not only gathered photos and documents related to the history of the Hungarians in Frata, but has also set out in writing his own musical repertoire consisting exclusively of traditional pieces, and systematized it. Hermann Mannherz from a Swabian village, Petreşti, (Germ. *Petrifeld*, Hung. *Mezöpetri*), Satu Mare county, is no less impressive, because of the philo-German attitude that he displays in the half-Magyarized community he came from (Roşu 2016). Although much younger than the other informants, Hermann, a Swabian peasant – who has become, in the meantime, teacher – from a village that still perpetuated numerous traditional patterns, dedicates his free time to a Swabian folkloric group and a male choir. He is also interested in compiling various collections regarding certain aspects from the life of the Satu Mare Swabians. He writes poems in German, and has a thorough knowledge of the Hungarian, German and Romanian language.

The examples mentioned demonstrate that the non-typical man or woman can be encountered not only in the Romanian communities of Transylvania, but also in Hungarian and German ones.

[3] Avram Iancu (1824–1872), Romanian lawyer from Ţara Moţilor, Transylvania. He played an important role in the local chapter of the Austrian Empire Revolutions of 1848-1849.

[4] birău – village mayor, from Hun. *biró.*

[5] Fond k.u.k. Kriegsministerium-Militaer-Liquidierungsamt, Österreichisches Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, p. 1328.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

3. Ştefan Rus – an ingenious non-typical protagonist from Ruseşti hamlet and Marna Nouă. The characteristics of the ingenious non-typical protagonist

After outlining the portrait of the non-typical protagonist, the following question arises: How can an ingenious non-typical protagonist in a traditional community be recognized? What are his dominant features? In what follows, I will use the case of Ştefan Rus from the Moţi-colony Marna Nouă, close to Carei (Germ. *Großkarol,* Hun. *Nagykároly*) to illustrate the characteristics of the non-typical ingenious protagonist. For such a purpose, I will use the material collected during the field researches in Marna Nouă village, Satu Mare County and in Ruseşti hamlet from Mărişel village, Cluj County. The interviews were realized during 2010 and 2016 with members of Ştefan Rus's family and other persons who interacted during their life with him. The resulting material was transcribed in the Moţi patois of the Romanian language, according to the rules used in dialectology (See Rusu 1984).

Here are some biographical references of the protagonist: Ştefan Rus was born on January 17th 1898 in the hamlet Ruseşti of Mărişel[6]. As he came from a poor family background, under the circumstances of those times he would have never attended school. Due to his innate intelligence, he attracted attention already at an early age and was helped by the local mayor of Lăpuşteşti. He went to Gilău (Hun. *Gyalu*) and attended school together with the mayor's son[7]. After seven years of school he became apprentice to a Czech merchant (Rom. *orhat*[8]) from Gilău, whose brothers were important businessmen. They had a genuine distribution network for wood and other commodities throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Having served his apprenticeship, he returned to Ruseşti, where he was regarded as the most literate person of his native hamlet (See Leu 1996). Shortly thereafter, he was enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian Army and sent on the Italian front. Following that, he was dispatched in another region, on the French front. There, he reached the northern French region called *La Marne.* Here he also participated in battles as a soldier of the Austro-Hungarian army. In a given situation, he let himself be captured by the French Army. As a war prisoner, he worked for a French landlord. After the creation of Greater Romania, Ştefan Rus came back to Ţara Moţilor with a very ambitious plan in his mind. He planned to return to France together with his fellow villagers. After the First World War, France lacked labour force because of its war casualties. The French landlord had encouraged Ştefan Rus to come back with some fellows and to work there. Rus came back to his village and tried to convince the villagers to move to France for to the technical superiority and the productivity of the soil in the proximity of the river Marne. However, the locals were reluctant to his idea and did not want to move in another country. Though, they moved to another region of Romania, near the border with Hungary. Rus was among

[6] File no. 562 of the colonist Rus Ştefan, fond Oficiul Naţional al Colonizării, Arhivele Naţionale Bucureşti, p.1.

[7] Informant Nicolae Vădan (N'iculaĭe a Petrii Curtii), born in 1921, Curteşti hamlet, Râşca commune, Cluj county.

[8] orhat – is a corrupt form of *horvat* – Croatian, from Hung. *horvát*. For the Moţi the word *orhat* was the name of all Slavic peoples from the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

the leaders who established a Moți-colony in the Plain of Carei, Marna Nouă. There he was, in turn, delegate and mayor[9].

The term "non-typical" may be used for several categories of individuals. The *outsiders* of a community, even the offenders may be non-typical. But such categories fall outside the aim of the present research. This study refers only to the ingenious non-typical protagonist. Another difficulty could be that of differentiating between the ingenious non-typical person and the emancipated peasant. By analyzing the fieldwork results related to Ștefan Rus's case, I propose the following characteristics of the non-typical ingenious character:

The ingenious non-typical peasant sets himself apart from the emancipated peasants. In case of rural communities, one must carry out a detailed stratification in order to be able to truly identify the ingenious non-typical protagonists. This differentiation has to be done also in the case of the community in which Ştefan Rus lived, Marna Nouă. Ştefan Rus, a man with a "school background", cannot be considered on a par with some of his fellow villagers that were either illiterate or had attended school for two years at most. It could be mentioned here: "Onuț Pocşa aĬanculį, Ĭuŭăn Purčel a Mituleşt'ilo, Iliĭe Nęmęş a Guşii"[10]. Even though their universe was rather limited, those listed above had a frequent contact with state institutions, which they would often turn to for defending their rights or asking certain favours. Impressive is the case of Ilie Nemeş, who had memorized all the laws of colonisation and would cite them any time, paragraph by paragraph, faultlessly[11]. In other words, it is not sufficient for a peasant to have an innate intelligence, he must cultivate this gift. That is the only way he is able to afford escapades in worlds other than that of the village.

Multilingualism. A constant of the non-typical protagonists is multilingualism, particularly in a region like Transylvania, known for its multiculturality. For the ingenious non-typical protagonists, foreign languages are a must. However, there is also a risk: learning a foreign language can position him outside of his native community. However, such characters have to interact with other linguistic environments. That is how Ştefan Rus gets to know five foreign languages: Hungarian, Italian, French, Russian and German. For sure, the level of communication in these languages was a minimal one, limited to conversation. Still, this helped him to understand a text easily. It is obvious that he did not master the grammatical structures or the subtleties of the language:

> he knew French because he stayed in France and that rug was brought from there. He also knew Italian because he was there during the war. He learned a lot. He was a fast learner, my father... He knew also Russian, a little bit of German, but not perfectly. But Hungarian he talked perfectly. Then my brother also learned it, he knew a lot of languages.

[9] Informant Ştefan Rus (Nicu lį Șt'efan), born in 1933, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county, deceased in 2008.

[10] Informant Silvia Pocşa (Pocşǫĭe), born in 1927, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county.

[11] Informant Sabin Nemeş (Sabinu lu Ilişagu), born in 1927, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county, residing in Baia Mare town, Maramureş county.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

[șt'iię frančeză că o stat în Franța și paretaru ala d'-acolo l-o adus. Și limba ital'ïană că o fo p-acolo cînd o fo războĭu. Tare mult o învățat. Ĭel una doŭă prind'ę, tata... Ruseșt'e maĭ șt'a, n'emțeșt'e un pic, da nu așe la perfecțiïe. Da mad'ara, aĭa o șt'iïę la perfecțiïe. Apoĭ o maĭ învățat și frat'e mn'eŭ, că frat'e mn'eŭ șt'iïę tare mult'e limbd'[12].]

A particularity of Ştefan Rus was that he did not settle for just speaking the languages he knew. He also procured books, newspapers, magazines in several languages that he held in high esteem, even if the time he dedicated to reading was limited:

He used to read a lot, he liked it. He had books, newspapers. But he didn't have enough time because it was a lot of work to do.

[Cit'ę, i plăčę mult. Avę cărț, gazet'e. Numa nu prę avę timp că ĭera mult d'e lucru[13].]

The desire to be up to date. The ingenious non-typical protagonist, through his inquisitive nature, wants to keep up with the news of any kind: political, social or technological. It is this very feature that distinguishes him from the rest of his fellow villagers. They see in him a source for spreading the information that has been filtered and brought to the level of understanding of the common peasant. Ştefan Rus was a well-informed man. His knowledge originated from the journals of the time and from his own books. Secondly, he kept permanently in touch with the urban world. On every market day („lun' ĭera zî d'į pt'ațˮ[14]) he would go to Carei city, where he procured his gazettes.

Ingeniousness, mastering new inventions and technologies. The majority of the ingenious non-typical protagonists stand out for their interest in innovative technologies. In some cases, however, they take a step forward and become „inventors" themselves. Ştefan Rus would amaze his fellow villagers by building seed drills, a plane, headphones for listening to music, but also by mastering several crafts:

My father made seed drills, cooking stoves and he also made a plane and he wanted to fly with it. And you know what else he did? He dug a hole in the stable, where he had the cattle. He hid the plane there. Because after that a lot of villagers were beaten by the Hungarian gendarmes... He knew to do a lot of things such as: brickwork, stoves, chairs, windows, tables. I kept that stove a lot of years, after that they took it to the museum in Bucharest or I don't know where. And he also made wooden whirlpools for the lords. Because he was a man who did everything that he saw... And he made for my boy a violin, a swing from this walnut tree to the other. And the children swung. And also, that thing that they put to their ears to hear music.

[Tata mn'eŭ făčę mașin' d'e sămănat, sobe d'e gătit și o făcut un avion cu care ĭera să zboŗe aičę. Și șt'iț č-o făcut? O săpat în grajd acolo und'e avę vit'įle. Acolo l-o ascuns să nu-l vadă, să nu-l bată. C-apoĭ ĭ-o bătut pă mulț, jăndarmi mad'ar'ĭ... Tăt'e

[12] Informant Mihai Mareș (Mn'ihaĭu Mituleșt'ilor), born in 1930, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county, residing in Satu Mare town, Satu Mare county.

[13] Informant Ştefan Rus (Nicu lį Șt'efan), born in 1933, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county, deceased in 2008.

[14] Informant Sabin Nemeș (Sabinu lu Ilișagu), born in 1927, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county, residing in Baia Mare town, Maramureș county.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

čęlę le şt'iię să le facă, to-to tot: zîdăritu, sobă, scand'e, fereşt', męse. Pînă amu tîrzîŭ am ţînut-o soba aĭa, că o dus-o la muzeŭ, la Bucureşt' saŭ nu şt'u und'e. Şi vîltor'ĭ l´-o făcut la domn'ii ăĭa. Acolo, la Mărişel, o mărs şi l'ĭ-o făcut. Că o fo un om če o văzut ŭăt'ii, mîna n-o lăsat... Ş-o făcut la băĭatu mn'eŭ şi viǫră şi şodroc d'ị čela d'e la nucu aĭesta pînă la čelalalt. Să dăd'ęŭ copt'ii. Şi d'e ăla d'e ascultat muzica la urek'[15].]

It must be pointed out that the type of the master craftsman who is a jack-of-all-trades became a popular role model particularly in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. Especially in the areas of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe that were much more archaic and conservative than the ones in the Western world, the Industrial Revolution took the rural world by surprise (Stears 1993, Ziegel 2005). The characteristics of the master craftsman have been accurately described by Claude Lévi-Strauss using the comparison between *artist*/*bricoleur* and the engineer for showing two different ways of thinking, which, nevertheless, are surprisingly similar in certain points[16]. A short definition of the *bricoleur* would be that he works with the objects that he has ready at hand. The common Moţ was afraid, would wonder, and would try to stay away from the new inventions he came across in the urban centres he regularly visited. Ştefan Rus not only accepted them, but incorporated them into his life and became finally their artificer.

The involvement of the non-typical person in the political and social life. The non-typical protagonist is most of the time driven by the members of his own community, but also by his own interest, into offices with social or political significance. The depicted case is illustrative. Ştefan Rus was delegate and later on mayor of the Moţi from Marna. Insofar as his political orientation is concerned, he was a supporter of Iuliu Maniu, of the PNŢ (National Peasants' Party):

He was also involved in politics. With Gavrilă lui Onuţ and others. He had a song with Maniu, but I can't remember it now.

[Şi politică făčę. Cu Gavrilă lị Ŭănuţ, cu ĭeşt'a. Avę şi un cînt'ec cu Maniu, da nu-l maĭ ţîŭ mint'e[17].]

This fact was not an obstacle for him to get in contact with other parties as Ploughmen's Front [Frontul Plugarilor] and its leader Petru Groza (1884–1958), hoping that they will bring a new agrarian reform:

he went to Carei and spoke with Petru Groza. And Nicu shook hands with him

[s-o dus la Carăĭ ş-o vorovit cu Petru Groza şi Nicu o dat mîna cu ĭel[18].]

[15] Informant Silvia Pocşa (Pocşǫĭe), born in 1927, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county.

[16] "The artist perceives it from without as an attitude, an expression, a light effect or a situation, whose sensible and intellectual relations to the structure of the object affected by these modalities he grasps and incorporates in his work. But the contingent can also play an intrinsic part in the course of execution itself, in the size or shape of the piece of wood the sculptor lays hands on, in the direction and quality of its grain, in the imperfections of his tools, in the resistance which his materials or project offer to the work in the course of its accomplishment, in the unforeseeable incidents arising during work. Finally, the contingent can be extrinsic as in the first case but posterior, instead of anterior, to the act of creation" (Lévi- Strauss 1966: 20).

[17] Informant Silvia Pocşa (Pocşǫĭe), born in 1927, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

The positions or offices held by the non-typical protagonist can put him often in unpleasant situations or even turn him into a victim. Ştefan Rus got into such trouble when he did not share the extremist convictions of the Iron-Guardist teacher in the village, Vasile Savinescu[19].

Representative of the state on the local level. There is a tendency of the common members of the community to associate the non-typical protagonist with a contemporary personality. People do not pick a random role model. The non-typical protagonists are associated with the image of certain leaders of the time. In the chosen example it is obvious that the image of Ştefan Rus is associated with that of Iuliu Maniu: "He met Iuliu Maniu because he was his friend. He told everyone to follow Maniu". („Cu Ĭuliu Maniu s-o întîln'it că ĭera pręt'inu luĭ. Tăt zîcę cătă tătă lumę să să înscriĭe la Maniu"[20]). In one of the texts analyzed one can observe that Ştefan Rus speaks directly with Iuliu Maniu, a fact that shows the familiarity between them[21].

---

[18] Idem.

[19] "The Iron Guardists threatened my father. Our teacher Savinescu was a notorious Iron Guardists. He wanted to shoot my father. Because my father was on the side of Iuliu Maniu. And when they shot at him, he had pillows with him, because he said that the bullet doesn't go through. My father suffered a lot. He was away. He stayed hidden. And he didn't tell us, his family, where he was... because Savinescu hated him: - *Long live the Iron Guard and the Captain!* The devil take them".[„Lejionarii l-o amenințat pă tata. Învățător'ĭu d'e la noĭ, Savinescu, ala ĭera mare lejionar. Ş-o vrut să-l împuşte pă tata. Că tata ĭera tare mult cu Ĭul'ĭu Maniŭ şi ĭera mulţ d'-aičę. Şi cum o tras în ĭel, pun'ę n'işt'e pern'e că zîčę că în alę nu trečį glonţu aşę. Tata o suferit tare mult. O fo şi plecat. S-o ascuns să nu-l găsască čin'eva. Şi n'ič nǫŭă, la familiĭe nu n'-o spus und'e o fujit... că Savinescu avę mare bǫlă pă tata că tă: - *Să trăĭască lejiun'a şi căpitanu*! Şi dracu să-ĭ ducă".] Idem.

[20] Idem.

[21] "So, my father, Ştefan Rus, took some Moţi delegates such as: Rus Ion Ioşca, Roşu Petru a Mării, Roşu Niculaie a Manului and they went for colonisation. The government from that time, in 1923, brought them in a sandy region, on the border with Hungary, where today there is Horea village. But there was only sand there. And my father didn't like it. And he went back to Bucharest and took Ioşca Răuşii, Niculaie a Manului and they went to Iuliu Maniu: - *You have mocked us! You did with us this and that! What grows there? Nothing grows there.* We stayed there for one year. We were poor, all 12 families, at the beginning. He spoke with Iuliu Maniu, then he went to Miron Cristea, because in 1923 he had become patriarch, and to King Ferdinand and asked for a land as he had with his nobleman in France. He went back to Iuliu Maniu and told him: – *You, Moţ, tell me what kind of land would you like to receive? – We want the land from the state reserve that was confiscated from Degenfeld, black soil, because there is enough near Carei.* He made a written request and received the black soil and in souvenir for river Marne, he chose the name of the village, in '24, Marna". [„Aşa că tata, Şt'efan Rus, o luŭat o delegaţiĭe d'e moţ printre care ĭera: Rus Ion Ĭoşca, Roşu Petru a Mării, Roşu N'iculaĭe a Manulį şi s-o dus pentru colonizare. Guvernul d'e atunč, în o miĭe nǫŭăsute dǫŭăzăč şi tri, ĭ-o adus în zona d'e nisip la graniţa cu Ungariĭa d'e atunč, în satul Hor'ĭa de astăz. Da numa nisipur'ĭ ĭeraŭ acolo. Şi la tata nu ĭ-o plăcut. Şi tata s-o dus înapoĭ la Bucureşt' şi l-o luŭat pe Ĭoşca şi pe N'iculaĭe a Manulį. Atîta, ĭeĭ treĭ or plecat şi s-o dus la Iul'u Maniu: - *V-aţ bătut joc d'e noĭ! Aţ făcut cu noĭ aşa şi aşa! Acolo ce cręşt'e? Nu cręşt'e n'imic!* Am stat acolo un an. Vaĭ d'e capu nostru, doŭăşpe familii ĭeraŭ la început. A vorbit cu Iul'u Maniu, s-a dus şi la Miron Cristĭa că în o miĭe nǫŭăsute dǫŭăzăč şi treĭ l-a făcut patriarh şi la regele Ferdinand şi ĭ-a soličitat să-ĭ de-a un pămînt ca la domnu luĭ d'in Franţa. O mărs înapoĭ la Iul'u Maniu şi ĭ-o spus la tata: *-Moţule, spun'e-mi če pămînt vreĭ să-ţ daŭ? -Noĭ vrem pămîntu, d'in rezerva d'e stat d'e la Degęnfęld, pămînt n'egru, că ĭeste d'estul în juru Careĭuluĭ.* O făcut o čęrere în scris şi o primit pămîntu n'egru şi în amintir'ĭa de pe rîŭu Marna, ĭ-o pus numele în dǫŭăşpatru, Marna Noŭă".] Informant Ştefan Rus (Nicu lį Şt'efan), born in 1933, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county, deceased in 2008.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

An interesting case that illustrates such a situation is that of the peasant protagonist nicknamed "Maniu" from Giurtelecu Hododului (Hung. *Hadadgyőrtelek*). His community nicknamed him that after the former Prime Minister in the interwar period. Being in conflict with the communist regime, he spent several years hiding in the woods, as it arises from the research of the ethnologist Viorel Rogoz. He got the nickname "Maniu" for his close association with the political figure. The community saw in him not only specific political values, but also moral principles which were dawning in socialist times[22].

The image of a misunderstood, of a quaint man. Another aspect related with the type of the character analyzed is that he cannot be fully understood by the members of his own community. That is why the fellow villagers perceive him as a quaint man who does senseless things and strays from the ordinary occupations. In the case of Ştefan Rus, things even devolve into contempt. These attitudes often originated from envy as well:

> He was a good man, a man that gave his interest for the village. He wanted to make good things for the village and the village to be appreciated... They mocked him when he was dead: -*Destroy that stable! What does Ştefan want to do now when he is dead? A plain, an airplane?* They were against him. He liked the honesty and the good things. And he did only good things. But he was mocked. Because there was a disagreement between Ştefan and Savinescu ... They argued about the Iron Guardists. My father was also attending them.
>
> [O fos om ca lumę, om care ș-o dat interesu d'ị sat. Să rid'iče satu sus, să facă pîntru sat, să h'iĭe satu văzut... L-o bajocurit pă cînd o murit. -*Da că desfačiț gr'ĭajdu ala! Če vr'ĭa să facă amu Șt'efan acolo că o murit? Avion, airoplan?* Ĭera pă capu lị Șt'efan. Ĭ-o plăcut omịn'iĭę la omu ala și lucrurile bun'e. Și bun'e o făcut. Da pă ịel l-o cam așezat. Că nu ĭ-o plăcut la Șt'efan și la Savinescu... Nu s-o înțăles cu lejionarii. Și pă acolo, umbla și tata mn'eŭ[23].]

4. The Moț features of Ştefan Rus. Sketching a psychological profile

By identifying the characteristics of the ingenious peasant as in the case of Ştefan Rus, I highlighted only a part of his personality, that is different from the other individuals of his community. Therefore, I shall also present in this chapter the peasant side of Ştefan Rus. It is a well-defined component of the ingenious non-typical protagonist: he belongs simultaneously to the peasant world and to that of the rural elite of the region. I will argue that the following characteristics are present for such protagonists:

He would make use of violence in his relations to those around him. In the crisis situations that Ştefan Rus had to face along his life, he would react using the violence specific to Moți people. It can be noticed that he would become violent when his fellow villagers mocked him:

> There were some as Gheorghe a Ioşchii as Tuțu who mocked him. They fought on the street...

[22] Information extracted from an unpublished field notebook of the ethnologist Viorel Rogoz.

[23] Informant Florica Roșu (Florica lị Pavăl), born in 1931, Marna Nouă village, Sansilău commune, Satu Mare county.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

[Da o fo alți care l-o cam josat cum o fo D'ord'e a Ĭoşki, cum o fo şi Tuțu. Ĭeĭ să băt'ęŭ pă uliță...[24]].

Ştefan Rus would often act from instinct. He would solve his conflicts by using violence, which is specific for the communities of the Moți, who would never turn to court, regardless of the regime:

> My father had an argument with Ştefan. They had a problem with the house. Because it was not built as it should have been. They had a hayfield at Ciumeşti, at Kis Tog, and they started fighting. Ştefan was drunk and came with a scythe to beat my father. My father took the wooden part of the yoke in his hand. As Ştefan came, he stumbled over. My father took his scythe and said: – *Watch out, now I could cut off your throat!*
>
> [Tata ĭera čertat cu bad'a Şt'efan. O avut problema cu casa, că nu ĭera construită cum trebe. Ĭeĭ av'ĭaŭ fînaț la Čumeşt', la K'iş Tǫg, şi s-o luŭat la harță. Bad'a Şt'efan o ven'it băut şi cu cǫsa, să îl bată pă tata. Tata o luŭat rest'eu d'e la jug. Cum o ven'it bad'a Şt'efan s-o împ'ĭed'icat. Ĭ-o luŭat, tata, cǫsa şi ĭ-o zis: – *Bagă-ț mințile în cap, că acuma aş put'a să îț ĭaŭ capu!*[25]]

He had extramarital affairs, engaging in consensual sexual relationships. A greater freedom regarding extramarital affairs can be identified in the communities of the Moți, as compared to other ethnographic areas. Ştefan Rus, too, engaged in consensual sexual relationships. One of his love affairs that is known to this day is that with Maria lu Pavăl:

> When the people from Marna came back from refuge they lived in the castle and in the count's houses. They lived together in these rooms. You passed from a room into another. And godfather Ştefan, the main organizer, went to Mărie lu Pavăl. Then Mărie's man came and caught them. Godfather Ştefan ran. Mărie's man said: – *I will catch Ştefan, but now I will beat you. Why did you do this? – You don't have any reason to beat me: If he asks you to give it to him/ You cannot say that you don't have it*, told Mărie.
>
> [Cînd o vịn'it mărn'ęn'ii napoĭ d'in refuj o stat în castel şi în căsîle grofulị. Acolo stăt'ę grămadă în n'işt'e cămăruță. Intraĭ d'int-una în alta. Şi nănaşu Şt'efan, mare diręptor, męre ĭel la Măriĭę lu Pavăl. Şi vin'e bărbatu la Măriĭe şi i prind'e în pat. Nănaşu Şt'efan să luŭă şi fuji. Zîčị bărbatu: – *Pă Şt'efan îl maĭ prind ĭo, da amu pă t'in'ị t'-oĭ bat'e. Apị d'e č-aĭ făcut tr'ĭaba asta? – Tu n-aĭ d'ị če să ma baț: Dacă-ț čęre, i daĭ/ Nu poț zîče că n-aĭ*, o zîs Măriĭe[26].]

One such affair resulted in a child. Ştefan Rus did not try to hide this from the community:

> My father went with Nicu at Constanța, at the spa. My brother took him there. And he told him on the train: – *Be aware, Niculaie a li Dumitru is your brother.* And then Nicu told us: – *Be aware, Niculaie a li Dumitru is our brother.* Since then we are still brothers". [„Să duče tata cu Nicu la Costanța, la băĭ. Că frat'ị mn'eŭ l-o dus

[24] Idem.

[25] Informant Sabin Nemeş (Sabinu lu Ilişagu), born in 1927, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county, residing in Baia Mare town, Maramureş county.

[26] Informant Victoria Rusu (Vitoriĭę d'e la gară), born in 1942, Luncani village, Luna commune, Cluj county, residing in Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

acolo. Şi i spun'e pă tren că: – *Aĭ grijă că N'iculaĭe a lị Dumn'itru, ți-i frat'ị*. Ş-apoĭ Nicu ĭară n'-o spus: – *Aveț grijă că N'iculaĭe i frat'ile nost*. Ș-apị d'-atunč tă fraț sînt'em[27].]

It must be pointed out that according to the information obtained during field research, such practices were commonplace in the community of the Moți from Marna Nouă[28].

Cheerfulness. Ştefan Rus used to sing traditional songs and drink. Particularly when he got older, Ştefan would not miss a chance to entertain himself[29]. He was a renowned performer of traditional songs in the village, he would attend dances or meetings, but he was at his best in his own home, on the bench chatting with close friends from his village. This went on before the 1950s, when the mayor established a pub in his own house. During the communist regime, Ştefan Rus used to drink „Monopol"[30] brought from the cooperative of the village. For a bottle of „Monopol," Ştefan paid the mayor three eggs[31].

A cultural openness limited by the precepts of traditional mentality. As a rule, the non-typical protagonist shows much greater cultural openness than the common peasant or the enlightened one. Yet this openness too is limited by certain precepts of the traditional mentality, especially on moral and religious issues. The most obvious fact that suggests a partial cultural openness of the mayor of Marna are the clothes he wore. He never gave up his peasant attire to which he would add some articles of "bourgeois clothing". That was the suit which was wore by the urban class of the 1920s. The reason was to draw a line between himself and the fellow villagers of an inferior cultural condition. One of the collected testimonies reflects Ştefan's patterns of traditional thought. He would not put up with women wearing trousers: "Nicu brought a teacher from Timişoara and she read in our garden. And my father didn't like her. He said: – *What, women started to steal men's trousers?*" („O adus Nicu o profesǫră d'e la T'imişǫra şi čit'ę în grăd'ină la noĭ. Şi la tata nu i plăčę. Că zîče: – *Če, o ajuns muĭerile să fure nădrajii d'e la bărbaț?*"[32])

In what follows, the aim is to (re)create a psychological portrait of Ştefan Rus, which is relevant for the close relationship between cultural anthropology and psychology (See Gavreliuc 2001). Only by subjecting the collected material to an interpretation similar to that of the psychologist, the researcher is able to achieve a clear-sighted analysis. It can be considered that Ştefan Rus's picture from his youth is a metaphor that illustrates eloquently the extent to which the two components, the educated one and the peasant, the Moți one, can be found in him. The interior is

[27] Informant Silvia Pocşa (Pocşǫĭe), born in 1927, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county.

[28] Informant Victoria Rusu (Vitoriĭę d'e la gară), born in 1942, Luncani village, Luna commune, Cluj county, residing in Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county.

[29] Idem.

[30] The name of an alcoholic drink produced industrially since the interwar period, popular during the communist regime. "Monopol" refers to a monopoly which a Jewish factory owner had in selling alcoholic drinks in the interwar period.

[31] Informant Ştefan Rus (Nicu lị Șt'efan), bornin 1933, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county, deceased in 2008.

[32] Informant Silvia Pocşa (Pocşǫĭe), born in 1927, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

represented by the clothes closer to his body – the shirt and the jerkin – that are peasant attire, whereas the exterior – the coat – is gentlemanly. Thus, his interior stays traditional, archaic, whereas the exterior is modern, just like his clothing. Ştefan Rus's most obvious characteristics, making up the framework of his psychological portrait, would be: the leader's personality type, open to innovation to a certain extent, with a dedicated capacity for cognitive, intellectual effort.

Undeniably, Ştefan Rus also had numerous frustrations related to the environment he lived in. That is the reason why he frequently sought refuge in the urban environment. Another fact he was unhappy about was the ingratitude of the people he led. Something interesting occurred in the last years of his life, namely Ştefan Rus would handpick his interlocutors. He would defy those he did not consider true to their word by not returning their greetings:

> Godfather had a bench in front of his house and he stayed there and sang. If somebody he liked crossed over, he invited him for a glass of wine. If it was somebody he didn't like, he did not pay attention to him, he continued to sing. He didn't stop from singing to greet him.
>
> [„Nănaşu avę o lad'iță în fața căsî şi acolo stăt'ę şi horę. Dacă trečę čin'eva cu care să-nțăleję i da bin'ęte, îl maĭ şi t'ema la un păhar'ĭ d'e vin. Da care om nu i plăčę, n'ič cătă ĭel nu cota, horę maĭ d'ĭpart'ĭ. Nu să oprę d'in horit să îl salut'e[33].]

The peasant could afford to be on bad terms with a limited number of fellow villagers, but could not ignore a significant number of people from his community. The memoirs of Avram Iancu kept the evidence of such a selective behavior. The Romanian revolutionary behaved similarly with his fellow men, towards the end of his life, when he was beset by disappointments (Teodor 1972). These feelings were more intense, since the cultural horizon of Avram Iancu was much wider than the one of those around him. Interestingly, however, in the case of Iancu it was reversed. He was not a non-typical peasant, but a non-typical intellectual, because he had kept numerous peasant qualities till the last moments of his troubled existence.

Coming back to the case of Ştefan Rus, it can be inferred that he had a certain contempt for the social structures that had a lack of functionality in his eyes. Likewise, he was aware of his superiority within the community. To show the educational level of the persons that interacted with Ştefan Rus on a daily basis, I cite here the narrative related to the visit that the Moți colonists of Marna Nouă made to Bucharest:

> He went several times to Bucharest to trade land. He went once even with his godson Ioşca, he was his godfather, with Gavrilă li Onuț and with another person I can't remember. He took them as representatives. When Ioşca arrived in Bucharest he said: "– *Good day! Good day! Good day!* My father told him: – *Godson, here they only greet those that they know. Be aware because if you continue to do this until evening you will be exhausted.* He continued to shake his head: – *Good day! Good day! – Godson, didn't I tell you that here they only greet those they know?* My father was laughing at him. My father was always telling us this story.

[33] Informant Victoria Rusu (Vitoriĭę d'e la gară), born in 1942, Luncani village, Luna commune, Cluj county, residing in Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

[O umblat mult la Bucureşt', ca să sk'imbe pămîntu. Odată s-o dus tata şi cu h'inu Ĭoşca, că ĭ-o fo naş d'ị curun'iĭe, cu Gavrilă lị Onuț şi încă nu şt'u cu maĭ čin'e. Ca delegaț ĭ-o luŭat şi pă ĭeĭ. Cînd o ajuns Ĭoşca la Bucureşt': – *Bună zîŭa, bună zîŭa, bună zîŭa.* Zîčị tata cătă ĭel: – *Măĭ, h'inule, mă, aičę nu să salută numa pă care-l cunoşt', că pînă d'ị sară i vaĭ d'ị t'in'ị...* Tăt aşę făčę d'in cap: – *Bună zîŭa, bună zîŭa*. – *Nu ț-am spus h'inule că aičę numa care să cunoşt'e să salută*. Atîta tăt rîd'ę tata d'ị ĭel. Tăt n'e spun'ę tata[34].]

It can be inferred that Ştefan Rus felt many times an anxiety towards his own collectivity, a feeling that oscillated between boredom and disgust[35]. His anxieties originated precisely from the fact that he was aware of his superiority. This motivated him to accept the office as delegate of the state during the communist period, although he was not a supporter of the regime. Being the "shepherd" of the community meant not only an increase in reputation. The offices he held brought him many times in the position of a victim, as in the examples above.

5. The mythicized portrait of Ştefan Rus. The founder's myth

It can be noticed a tendency of mythologizing the non-typical protagonist in his community. The process already starts during his lifetime and continues after his passing. Even if certain events from the life of Ştefan Rus occurred less than a century ago, his memory lives on through his mythologized figure. *Myth* has become a common labelling for everything that veers away from reality. Under the designation "myth" is understood an imaginary construct that observes old archetypes, deeply symbolic and which presents mostly ethical teachings. Here and there the phenomenon of mythologizing that can be found in the traditional world exhibits resemblances to the "historical myth", as defined by Boia (Boia 2002: 54).

During the interviews I noticed such mythologized representations of Ştefan Rus. As a leader of the community, he had the idea of founding a colony in the lowlands area. Moreover, in various situations, he made the best decisions and solved the problems of the inhabitants from Marna in the most difficult situations[36]. Here are two examples of narratives in which Ştefan Rus is mythologized. In the first, he appears as an all-knowing leader, who leads his people through tensioned times. He knew that the place where the inhabitants of Marna had settled down was an ominous one.

In forty-five we ran from Luncani to Blaj. We ran because of the Hungarians. There in Blaj we stayed five weeks and we ate only grapes and plums. And when we wanted to start a fire to fry some potatoes Ştefan told us: – *Don't start the fire because we will not stay here for a long time!* And when he finished saying that, a bomb almost killed us. He knew, Ştefan knew.

[34] Informant Silvia Pocşa (Pocşǫĭe), born in 1927, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county.

[35] Informant Ştefan Rus (Nicu lị Şt'efan), bornin 1933, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county,deceased in 2008. Regarding fear and its reflection both in the case of individuals and in society. See also (Bourke, 2005).

[36] Informant Elena Iancu (Lina Tuţulị), born in 1928, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

> [În patruşpatru am fujit d'in Luncan' pînă în Blaj. Am fujit d'e ungur'ĭ. Acolo la Blaj am stat činč săptămîn' şi am mîncat numa strugur'ĭ şi prun'e. Şi cînd am vrut să făcem foc să frijem pičoč o zîs Şt'efan: – *Nu făceţ foc că noĭ nu stăm mult ači!* Şi nu bin'e o zîs că o dat o bombă maĭ să nu n'e omǫre. O şt'iut ĭel, Şt'efan[37].]

The second testimony shows Ştefan Rus as a person who had well-founded intuitions, who realises that he lived in historically unique times and awakens those around him by saying that they will remember such moments[38]. At the same time, the delegate of Marna was aware that the only channel through which experienced history can be conveyed in traditional communities is oral[39]. An interesting fact is that the mythologized image of Ştefan Rus can also be found in the Romanian, Hungarian or Swabian communities from the villages situated in the vicinity of Marna: Sanislău (Hun. *Szaniszló* Germ. *Stanislau*), Ciumeşti (Hun. *Csomaköz* Germ. *Schamagosch*) and Petreşti[40].

6. Ştefan Rus – a result of the social and historical factors of the Austro-Hungarian Empire

Finally, one looks at the dynamics of individual and context. Indeed, the individual is also the result of the social and historical factors. In other words, in order to understand a certain individual, one has to analyse the context, in a Foucauldian way (See Smart 2002), for instance the regime during which he or she developed as a person. A Ştefan Rus born during the interwar or communist period would have looked completely different.

The multi-ethnic empires that had survived till the beginning of the last century granted a wide cultural, linguistic openness, notwithstanding the discriminations that led to the existence of second- or third-class citizens (Ciufoletti, 2011; Ley 2004). Paradoxically, Ştefan Rus owes his cultural openness to the multilingual and multi-confessional educational system of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, that seemingly put Romanian students in an inferior position. Let us not forget that, despite the various discriminations, both the Romanian intellectuals and the educated Romanian citizens of Transylvania would end up, almost by inertia, speaking at least two more languages: Hungarian and German, sometimes even Latin. This situation ceased to be after the foundation of the national states, when Romanian became the prevailing medium of teaching. A good example is the novella *Budulea Taichii* written by Ioan Slavici (1848–1925), which shows the efforts made by a Romanian peasant's son from Transylvania or Banat in order to attend the schools and universities of the empire (Slavici, 1995). Many had to deal

[37] Informant Elena Iancu (Lina Tuţulį), born in 1928, Marna Nouă village, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county.

[38] Idem.

[39] "I was washing clothes in a wooden wat with lye, where the school was... And uncle Ştefan came from a meeting at the school and told me: – *Oh my dear, you will remember about all these*". („Spălam haĭn'į înt-on čubăr, la şcǫlă, cu leşiĭe... Vin'e bad'a Şt'efan d'e la o şed'intă, d'e la şcǫlă şi mn'-o zîs: – *Eĭ puĭu moşulį lį pomen'i tu astę*".) Idem.

[40] Informant Rák Mária (Kormos Marcsa), born in 1939, Sanislău commune, Satu Mare county; Informant Gheorghe Igaz (Igǫz D'uri), born in 1939, Ciumeşti commune, Satu Mare county; Informant Stephan Rimili, born in 1926, Petreşti commune, Satu Mare county.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

with a similar situation, with the "national indifference" (Zaha 2010: 93) and their own attachment to the empire (See Judson 2016).

World War I was the revelatory event for the analysed protagonist. On the frontline he learned several languages. Due to this event, he reached the domains of the French count in Marne department, where he got up to date with state-of-the-art technology. The military barracks, the hospitals were important factors in the formation of the soldiers, as Otilia Hedeşan demonstrates. She argues, by focusing on the Romanian storytellers from Hungary, the educating and, to a certain extent, standardizing role played by the caserns in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Hedeşan 2007: 4–12).

Such tensions in the Austro-Hungarian context, regarding inclusion and exclusion, are present also in literary works. One example, even if from a different, more bourgeois context, could be Robert Musil. In *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß,* he depicted life in an Austro-Hungarian military school, with its rigors, multicultural character, but also with its absurdity. Similarly, in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften,* Musil managed to render moods, tableaux and feelings inspired by his own experience from the time he had fought on the Austro-Hungarian front.

Not least, Ştefan Rus was the embodiment of the ideal citizen of the empire, whose main characteristics had already been laid down by the Habsburgs back in the Josephine absolutist times: enterprising, technical and polyglot (Bocşan 1977: 483–484). Ştefan Rus had lived in the Austro-Hungarian caserns and the front lines under similar conditions as his fellow villagers. In his case the trigger did occur, in the case of the others it did not. This is yet another fact that sets the ingenious non-typical protagonists apart, maybe the most important one: readiness for change.

In conclusion, one shall further focus on understanding such ingenious non-typical protagonists. Their position does not deserve to be avoided on account of preconceptions that they might have been perverted by culture. One of the limits of this study is the lack of comparative sources with such protagonists from other former Austro-Hungarian regions. In this regard, a collective volume comprising researches carried out in the mentioned areas would offer the chance of dealing with the issue from a comparative perspective.

An interview carried out by the ethnologists of the time with Ştefan Rus himself would have been more than useful for present-day researchers. Ştefan Rus was a more representative subject than those with a limited cultural horizon. First, his memory enabled him to remember more folkloric productions, then his intellect offered him the chance to filter the more significant pieces. That is where the idea of anthology (bouquet, flower, the desire to collect the most beautiful pieces) comes in. A possible interview with Ştefan Rus would have represented a further advantage, as it might have rendered the vision of the one who practiced, performed traditional songs and experienced certain everyday scenes from the life of the community. The priest or the village teacher could not offer such perspectives for research.

The character analysed in this paper was also an individual engaged in the realities of his own community, yet, on the other hand, he was able to detach himself, seeing it from the outside. Thus, the ingenious non-typical person is the product of two worlds, of the village one and of the educated one, respectively,

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

worlds that he assumes simultaneously. But, paradoxically, he remains stuck between the two worlds, not being fully integrated in either of them.

Bibliography

Arhivele Naționale București, Fond Oficiul Național al Colonizării.

Bădescu 2009: Ilie Bădescu, *Şcoala Gusti: universalitatea paradigmei gustiene a sociologiei rurale*, in Ilie Bădescu, Ozana Cucu-Oancea, Gheorghe Şişeştean (coord.), *Tratat de sociologie rurală*, Bucureşti, Editura Mica Valahie, p. 55–61.

Bârlea 2007: Ovidiu Bârlea, *Metoda de cercetare a folclorului*, Alba Iulia, Reîntregirea.

Berti 2003: Mariano Berti, *Famiglia d'altri tempi. Viaggio nei passato con le famiglie di pase*, Paese.

Bocşan 1977: Nicolae Bocşan, *Contribuții la bibliografia literaturii române din Banat în epoca luminilor*, in "Banatica", Reşita, p. 483–484.

Boia 2002: Lucian Boia, *Istorie şi mit în conştiința românească*, Bucureşti, Editura Humanitas.

Bourke 2005: Joanna Bourke, *Fear: a cultural history*, London, Virago and Emeryville.

Cashman, Mould, Shukla 2011: Ray Cashman, Tom Mould, Pravina Shukla (eds.), *The Individual and Tradition: Folkloristic Perspectives*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

Cărăbiş 1985: Vasile Cărăbiş, *Badea Cârțan: propagandist de cărți româneşti*, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiințifică şi Enciclopedică.

Ciuffoletti 2011: Zeffiro Ciuffoletti, *Das Reich der Habsburger 1848–1918. Photographien aus der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie*, Wien, Brandstätter.

Cuceu, Muşlea 2003: Ion Cuceu (ed.), Ion Muşlea, *Arhiva de Folclor a Academiei Române. Studii, memorii ale întemeierii, rapoarte de activitate, chestionare 1930–1948*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene.

Deák 1983: István Deák, *Assimilation and nationalism in east central Europe during the last century of Habsburg rule*, Pittsburgh, Russian and East European Studies Program.

Eggmann 2013: Sabine Eggmann, *Diskursanalyse. Möglichkeiten für eine volkskundlich-ethnologische Kulturwissenschaft*, in Sabine Hess, Johannes Moser, Maria Schwertl (eds.), *Europäisch-ethnologisches Forschungen. Neue Methoden und Konzepte*, Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, p. 55–78.

Gavreliuc 2011: Alin Gavreliuc, *Psihologie interculturală. Repere teoretice şi diagnoze româneşti*, Iaşi, Editura Polirom.

Giurgiu 2008: Ioan Giurgiu, *Badea Cârțan: un ambasador al cărții româneşti*, Sibiu, Editura Arhip Art.

Hedeşan 2007: Otilia Hedeşan (coord.), *Dacă n-ar vu fi, nu s-ar vu povesti...: Antologie a povestitorilor români din Ungaria*, București, Editura Paideia.

Herseni, 1940: Traian Herseni (ed.), *Îndrumări pentru monografiile sociologice*, București, Institutul de Ştiințe Sociale al României.

Hess, Moser, Schwertl 2013: Sabine Hess, Johannes Moser, Maria Schwertl (ed.), *Europäisch-ethnologisches Forschungen. Neue Methoden und Konzepte*, Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag.

Judson 2016: Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire. A New History*, Cambridge, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

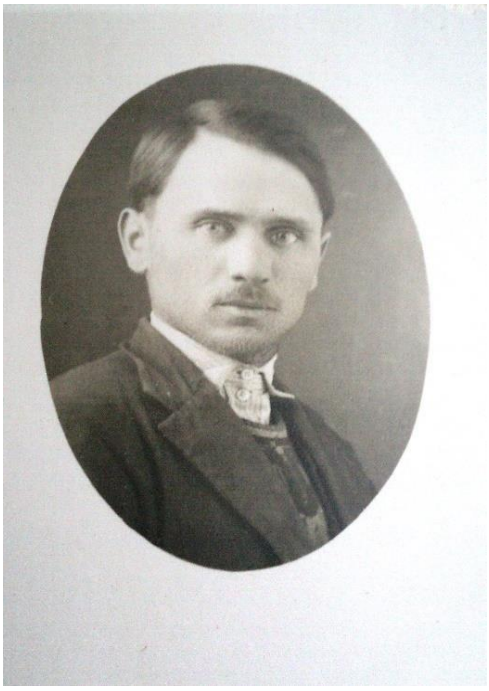
Leimgruber, Andris, Bischoff 2013: Walter Leimgruber, Silke Andris, Christine Bischoff, *Visuelle Anthropologie: Bilder machen, analysieren, deuten und präsentieren*, in Sabine

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

Hess, Johannes Moser, Maria Schwertl (ed.), *Europäisch-ethnologisches Forschungen. Neue Methoden und Konzepte*, Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag, p. 247–282.
Leu 1996: Valeriu Leu, *Plecarea la şcolile de la oraşe sau traversarea orizontului* in *Identitate şi alteritate. Studii de imagologie,* Reşiţa, Editura Banatica, 1996.
Lévi-Strauss 1996: Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage mind*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
Ley 2004: Michael Ley, *Donau-Monarchie und europäische Zivilisation. Über der Notwendigkeit einer Zivilreligion*, Wien, Passangen Verlag.
Lupaş 1927–1946: Ioan Lupaș, *Doi precursori ai lui Horea în audiență la curtea împărătească*, in *Studii, conferințe şi comunicări istorice*, Bucureşti, Cluj, Sibiu, V, p. 105–116.
Mitu 2014: Sorin Mitu (ed.), *Building Identities in Transylvania. A Comparative Approach,* Cluj-Napoca, Argonaut Publishing.
Musil 1994: Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, Hamburg, Rowohlt.
Musil 1978: Robert Musil, *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törless*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, Rowohlt.
Nicoară 2001: Toader Nicoară, *Transilvania la începutul timpurilor moderne (1680–1800)*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia.
Österreichisches Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Fond *k.u.k. Kriegsministerium, Militär-Liquidierungsamt*.
Papahagi 1925: Tache Papahagi, *Graiul şi folklorul Maramureşului*, Bucureşti, Cultura Națională.
Prodan 1984: David Prodan, *Răscoala lui Horea*, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiințifică şi Enciclopedică.
Pop 1980: Ioan Aurel Pop, *Aspecte de istorie universală în cronicile din Şcheii Braşovului*, in "Buletin ştiințific studențesc", Cluj-Napoca, p. 221–232.
Oyserman, Elmore, Smith 2012: Daphna Oyserman, Kristen Elmore, George Smith, *Self, Self-Concept, and Identity*, in Mark R. Leary, June Price Tangney (ed.), *Handbook of Self and Identity*, New York, London, The Guilford Press, p. 69–95.
Rogoz, 2012: Viorel Rogoz, *Etnologul în epoca de aur. Blidaru în posteritate*, in "Acolada", nr. 3, 4, 5 (53, 54, 55).
Roşu 2006: Costa Roșu (ed.), *Torac – metodologia cercetării de teren*, Novi Sad, Editura Fundației.
Roşu 2015: Răzvan Roșu, *Zur Identität der Sathmarer Schwaben*, in "Zeitschrift für Balkanologie", no. 51: p. 236–251.
Rusu 1984: Valeriu Rusu (coord.), *Tratat de dialectologie românească*, Craiova, Editura Scrisul Românesc.
Sădean 2011: Adriana Sădean, *Badea Cârțan – exponent al educației populare*, Sibiu, Tehnomedia.
Smart 2002: Barry Smart, *Michel Foucault*, London, Routledge.
Slavici 1995: Ioan Slavici, *Moara cu noroc*, Bucureşti, Editura Fundației Culturale Române.
Stearns 1993: Peter N. Stearns, *The Industrial Revolution in World History*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press.
Ştiucă 2006: Narcisa Ştiucă (coord.), *Povestiri din prezent. Studii şi note asupra narațiunilor şi narativității contemporane*, Bucureşti, Editura Etnologică.
Teodor 1972: Pompiliu Teodor, *Avram Iancu în memorialistică*, Cluj, Editura Dacia.
Thompson 1988: Thompson Paul, *The voice of the past. Oral History*, Oxford, NewYork, Oxford University Press.
Trower 2011: Shelley Trower, *Place, Writing & Voice in Oral History*, London, Palgrave Macmillan.
Vansina 1997: Jan Vansina, *Oral tradition as history*, Oxford, James Currey Ltd.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)

Woodward 2004: Kath Woodward (ed.), *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class, Ethnicity*, London, New York, Routledge.
Zaha 2010: Tara Zaha, *Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis*, in "Slavic Review", no. 1, vol. 69, p. 93–119.
Ziegler 2005: Dieter Ziegler, *Die Industrielle Revolution*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.



Ştefan Rus in his youth. Source: *Bucharest National Archives*, Corpus *National Office for Colonisation*, file no. 562 of the colonist Rus Ştefan, f.1



Ştefan Rus in the communist period. Source: private collection

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)



Iuliu Maniu with peasants from Bădăcin in 1928. Source:
http://www.skyscrapercity.com/ showthread.php?t=1588533&page=15

Abstract

This paper aims to present a typology of the peasant, including the ingenious non-typical protagonist of a traditional community. The present study will focus on the case of Ștefan Rus from Marna Nouă village, as it aims to exemplify the characteristics of such an ingenious protagonist. Such typology has not yet received enough attention in ethnological and anthropological studies. One must point clearly that the studied person is the result of the meeting between traditional structures and modernity. This type of protagonist is the one who stands out from the crowd of the rural world and takes a step forward. He embodies his world's contact with worlds otherthan the one enclosed within the boundaries of his home village.

BDD-A28918 © 2018 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 13:13:50 UTC)