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**Doctor Kéri Gáspár's Museum of Galoşpetreu,
Bihor County**

Maria Mateoniu, Rodica Marinescu

In 2002 doctor **Kéri Gáspár** inaugurated in Galoşpetreu, his native village, the first private museum representing the area of the Ier Valley. This initiative stands for Kéri Gáspár's attempt to elaborate a local development programme by making recourse to both old objects and his knowledge of history and regional ethnography.

The village of Galoşpetreu is a multiethnic and multi-confessional village mainly inhabited by ethnic Hungarians. The village lies about 55 km north of Oradea city and 15 km north of Săcuieni. It is situated on the Ier Valley, an area with a particular landscape whose ecosystem was unfortunately dramatically changed in the 1960's following a series of draining and territorial remapping works. Instead, the locals preserve the memory of the Ier Valley as it was before the draining works started, a region, as they say, by far more beautiful than the Danube Delta. Furthermore, says Kéri Gáspár, 'what happened here is even more specific because there was no end of a river, but something which took shape after the Ice Age was over. So this was something absolutely specific.'

In Galoşpetreu doctor Kéri Gáspár decided to set up a museum meant to represent the specific elements of the Ier Valley. His extremely motivating endeavour is stirred by the fact that neither the authorities nor the specialists in the

field took the area of the Ier Valley into consideration before the fall of communism. 'The Țara Crişurilor Museum did neglect this area. And, as a matter of fact, the locals, especially the intellectuals came up with the idea that the area had no specific ethnography. Then I said that God cannot be seen, though He exists. We do have a specific ethnographic area, but it has to be searched for and brought to light. I must say that communism disseminated the idea that this culture of the minorities should not be protected. Nobody studied history, [I am referring to] the history of the minorities. It was forbidden.' Therefore, Kéri Gáspár wants his museum of Galoşpetreu to show the specificity of the area where he was born since it has been long defied by intellectuals and specialists alike.

The idea of collecting old objects in order to build a museum occurred to him after he read a few specialised books that helped him understand what a 'peasant museum' means. 'Where did the idea come from? It came from some books on ethnography brought from Hungary and Cluj. They said that the peasant museum – what does it mean? – is a complete peasant household with all its relevant extensions, which belongs to a certain social situation and to a certain epoch.' In order to set up the museum, the doctor thinks of using his grandparents' house

in Galoşpetreu that was inherited from his mother and aunt.

Kéri thus aims to refurbish his grandparents' household and render its original appearance: 'a household which belongs to a mixed family of middle Hungarian peasants.' Only the house was inherited from his grandparents whereas the rest of outbuildings as well as the great majority of objects are his own. He reconstructed minutely the roof, the gates, the barn at the entrance and the draw well for the house to bear the mark of the original - an image of his childhood. In the neighbouring village of Sălacea he discovered a few old outbuildings (a stable, a shed and a pigsty) that he purchased and brought to his museum of Galoşpetreu. 'First of all, this house belonged to my grandparents. It is a 10-15-ha peasant household. Yeomen, rich peasants and landowners lived here [at that time]. This was a middle peasant too. I looked for a similar stately house [with outbuildings] that was a perfect copy of the same household. This is because a well-to-do farmer had a larger, more stately and different [house]. And then [...] I moved the shed and the stable from just one single yard.'

More often than not, doctor Kéri's museum is well known in the region under the name of 'The Landscape House' or 'The Traditional Peasant House', as the website of the commune presents it¹. The traditional house comprises three main rooms: 'the Protestant room' (looking out on the road) representing the doctor's Protestant grandfather, the kitchen (the middle room) and 'the Catholic room' or the Catholic grandmother's room. He has a rich collection out of which only his grandparents' peasant objects are exhibited in Galoşpetreu: family paintings including the portrait of Sandor Antal, the first owner of the house, icons, Catholic and Protestant books, old documents including a 1899 stamped and sealed certificate of graduation of the viticulture school of Diosig and typical furniture (a table, a bed, dowry chests, kitchen cupboards). Other exhibits worth mentioning are wooden and ceramic vessels originating in Marghita, a ceramics

centre less known by national museum experts, mace reed toys, essential objects like a secret-opening razor, a curling iron, hemp-ironing tools; a boy's and a girl's school sack, a 1901 catechism, a 1914 maths notebook, a geography handbook and a Hungarian handbook of history. Objects indispensable to any peasant household can be found in the pantry, cellar, shed and stable: 'a two-section box where the church's money used to be kept. The priest and the psalm reader had different keys'; pickles, flour and bran containers; [vine cutting] 'trimming scissors'; 'three different and evolution-proof' vine cutting knives engraved with the craftsman's initial letters, wine barrels and glasses; a fishing boat; a net and a fish pond; a sleigh, an archaic plough, a harrow and 'all household stuff [once] used.' Apart from these objects, doctor Kéri's collection also contains archive documents, coins, old books he plans to exhibit in the town museum of Săcuieni. As a matter of fact, doctor Kéri is currently involved in projects meant to save and protect the typical architecture of the area and to revitalize its traditions.

The museum of Galoşpetreu enjoys the authorities' support as much as the EU funds allow it, most projects aiming at reshuffling the infrastructure. '[The doctor's museum] is beautiful and necessary because the collected objects would otherwise be lost. Perhaps it should only develop and benefit from more money. The doctor does everything on his own, without any help from the others. This is his mission and he puts his best into it. If somebody comes here, they will undoubtedly visit the museum. I don't show them the field because they won't see anything there' (Bordaş Carol, mayor of Tarcea commune).

Nevertheless, the museum is appreciated by the small local investors too. Ludovic Kovacs, a guest house owner, states that better roads and 'more museums like doctor Kéri's would be extremely useful for tourism development. If I go elsewhere, I visit museums and churches, [I see] what is the most beautiful and well-known thing

in that specific locality. My wife took her 1st to 4th-grade pupils to doctor Kéri's museum. She can't help taking them there... Anyway, I have an idea of what to do with tourism. A prospectus should be disseminated at different fairs, so we should start together. Accommodation should be promoted, people should know us. Hungary is well organised in this respect. People should learn about us.' (L. Kovacs).

The museum-house of Galoşpetreu is fre-

quently visited by groups of students and teachers from the neighbouring villages. However, despite their educational visits, most villagers from Galoşpetreu still believe that the doctor has a peculiar passion for traditions, which stirs curiosity rather than admiration.

¹ http://www.tarcea.ro/foldrajzi_ro.html







