

Dimensions of Cultural Variability among Local Communities in the Town of Ruse (1878-1920 Years)

Lilyana Slavianova¹, Rozalina Bozhilova-Kouncheva²

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to explore culture as a dynamic system affected by various factors. It looks at the political and environmental factors that influence the development of the town of Ruse at the beginning of the 20th century. It also seeks to find out how the dynamics of the political situation in the Balkans and the extreme influence of the river Danube acted on the town and its population. The analysis is based on the exploration of cultural variability according to the views of Kluckhohn and Strodbeck, Edward Hall and Geert Hofstede and states the extent to which the ethnic groups living on the territory of the town of Ruse in the reviewed period illustrate them. Theoretical clarification of cultural variability and practical research of how it is addressed in the material and spiritual context has been made. The findings from this analysis illustrate that the ethnic communities in Ruse during that period combine the contemporary concepts of multiculturalism and the variance of values traced in a diachronic aspect. The research results also reveal that the local community of Ruse and its contacts with other cultural communities are based on established attitudes of tolerance and sustainability and continuity of values that can be given as a good example in a time of growing multiculturalism and globalization, both in Europe and worldwide. It can initiate a further discussion concerning notions as multiculturalism and cultural variability on the territory of the Danube region in the period of transition and democracy.

Keywords: culture; cultural variability; cultural diffusion; multiculturalism

1. Introduction

This paper explores culture as a dynamic system affected by various factors. The word culture has numerous meanings. An early definition was provided by E. B. Tylor (1967), who treated culture as a complex whole of our social traditions and as a prerequisite for us to be a member of the society. Culture can be a set of fundamental ideas, practices, and experiences of a group of people that are symbolically transmitted generation to generation through a learning process. Guo-Ming Chen and W.J. Starosta define culture as “a negotiated set of shared symbolic systems that guide individuals’ behaviours and incline them to function as a group”. Cultures are constantly changing over time. There are four major mechanisms accounting for the change of cultures: technological invention, disasters, cultural contacts, and

¹ PhD, University of Ruse, Bulgaria, Address: 8 Studentska str., POB 7017, Ruse, Bulgaria, Corresponding author: lslavianova@uni-ruse.bg.

² University of Ruse, Bulgaria, Address: 8 Studentska str., POB 7017, Ruse, Bulgaria, E-mail: rbozhilova@uni-ruse.bg.

environmental factors (Guo-Ming Chen, W.J. Starosta). The end of the nineteenth century is characterized by extremely important and dynamic events of national significance, in which the town of Ruse played a great contribution. The paper examines how the dynamics of the political situation in the Balkans and the extreme influence of the river Danube acted on the town and its population. The purpose of the article is to make a diachronic analysis using contemporary concepts of intercultural communication such as cultural dynamics, cultural variability and cultural diffusion, multiculturalism that were applicable in the ethnic, economic and political situation of Ruse and where these concepts were illustrated. The analysis is based on the exploration of cultural variability according to the views of Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, Edward Hall and Geert Hofstede and states the extent to which the ethnic groups living on the territory of the town of Ruse in the reviewed period illustrate them.

2. What is Culture?

The notion of culture can be considered as a complex of subactivations/basic assumptions, values, norms, concepts and attitudes/actions/behaviours, language, artefacts/that people assimilate in the process of enculturation to use them for orientation in everyday life situations.

The ethnic composition of the population in Ruse during this period is a representation of the definition of culture, described at the beginning of the paragraph, namely, that the different ethnic groups in the process of enculturation assimilate typical of the respective ethnoses, customs, values and norms.

The expressed forms of the concept of culture include both material and spiritual means of expression in the different ethnic groups on the territory of the city of Ruse they have the respective manifestation.

3. Multiculturalism, Cultural Variability and Cultural Diffusion among Local Communities

Multiculturalism - The first example of multiculturalism of the local community is the data on the number of the population in Ruse in 1880 where from 26 163 the total number of inhabitants of the town; 11 348 were Bulgarians, 10 252 Turks, 1943 Jews, 835 Armenians, 291 Greeks, 230 Romanians, Russians 171, Serbs 112, Gypsies 95 and others 385. Representatives of the different ethnic groups were carriers of a certain type of culture and values.

Cultural variability - The material culture during the reviewed period is influenced by the religious affiliation of the respective group and manifests itself

above all in the architectural style of the buildings as the most significant representatives. These are examples of cultural diffusion.

4. Cultural Diffusion - Cultural diffusion is defined by Leo Forbenius as a social process, resulting in the spread of beliefs, values and social activities from one society to another. He defined several types of cultural diffusion:

- general cultural diffusion;
- religious cultural diffusion;
- technological diffusion;
- economic cultural diffusion.

The Bulgarian ethnic community as the most numerous on the territory of Ruse is indicative of the complexity of cultural diffusion in the region in the reviewed period.

4.1. General Cultural Diffusion

The location of the city and the influence of the Danube River are the main reasons for the European style/baroque, sessions/of the buildings and the lack of oriental ornaments and structures traditional for other regions of the country. These facts confirm the characteristic of the culture given by Guo-Ming Chen and William Starosta as a dynamic system. There are four mechanisms of change:

- technological inventions;
- disasters;
- cultural contact;
- environmental factors.

The general cultural diffusion can also be illustrated with the Christmas traditions of the city. At the beginning of the century, the elite of the city tried to celebrate New Year's Eve solemnly, as the table was far from being the most important thing in the ladies mind.

For months, they have ordered fashion magazines from abroad and sewed ball dresses. It was a matter of prestige for the family to receive an invitation for the New Year's Ball at the Military Club, whose host was the General of the Rouse Garrison. The preparation was hectic - tailors, hairdressers, dance teachers. The club itself had two halls, one of which was an elegant salon with upholstered furniture and parquet. The General personally opened the dances. Traditionally, the orchestra always played the Strauss waltz first. Dinners were not available anymore and there were no tables in the salon at all. If someone wanted to have dinner, he headed to the other room, arranged for a cocktail. No one had come here to eat, and it was considered as bad manners to spread food on the shiny parquet. Soldiers came with trays on which there were glasses of champagne and biscuits. Thus, with champagne in hand, every guest expected the General's greeting and the first toast at midnight.

4.2. Technological Diffusion and Economic Cultural Diffusion

The city of Ruse is the best example of technological and economic cultural diffusion, these concepts are mutually determined by the fact that new technologies are introduced into economic life and practice and therefore can not be separated. In this regard, the city of Ruse and known as the city of the first things, according to the references of the Historical Museum and the State Archives, the following examples are given:

- 1864 the first modern printing house was opened;
- 1865 Ruse became the first city in which streets get names;
- 1866 between the towns of Ruse and Varna was the first telegraph line;
- 1867 the first railway road between Ruse and Varna was constructed;
- 1868 in Rouse the first trade fair was held and the first alcoholic beverage factory was opened;
- 1876 the first brewery “St. Petka”
- 1879 is based on the outskirts of the town modern farm “Obraztsov chiflik”; in the same year the steam painting factory “Penkov-Pavlov” started working; in the same year the Danube fleet was established;
- 1880 the first Masonic lodge founded by Ivan Vedar “Balkan Star”;
- 1881 the first Bulgarian metal ship was built; in the same year the first private bank “Girdap” was established; the same year a maritime school was set up, moved to Varna next year; in the same year the first fur processing factory was set up;
- 1883 the first meteorological station was built; in the same year the first soap factory was set up;
- 1884 was founded the first Pharmacy Company;
- The first Technical Society was established in 1885;
- 1890 was established the first Chamber of Commerce; the first Bulgarian furniture factory was founded;
- 1891 the first insurance company was established;
- 1896 the first elevator was built;
- 1897 is the first cinema show in Bulgaria;
- 1906 the first import of cars took place in Ruse.

5. Cultural Variability

The city is also proof of a certain degree of cultural variability, which is illustrated with examples from everyday life during the period under review.

Cultural variability can be presented theoretically through the views of Edward Hall, Clyde Kluckhohn and Frederick Strodbeck and Geert Hofstede, and the events in the city of Ruse are examples and proof of their applicability. Multinational empires such as the Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian, British and the Byzantine, have stimulated

day-to-day communication amongst ethnicities. The article focuses on the Ottoman Empire and in particular in Ruse.

6. Edward Hall's Views of the High and Low Context of Communication

According to Edward Hall's views of the high and low context of communication (Hall, 1976) the high context is implicit, encoded, there is much ambiguity and insensitivity. The main function of this style is the achievement/preservation of harmony in relationships. It is very common among East Asian cultures, where for example, direct confrontation or categorical refusal is not accepted. The low context is explicit, with no hesitation. It is not considered improper to declare your opinion, even if it does not appeal to the other side. There is communication between the two types of cultures on the territory of the city of Ruse - the Bulgarian community as a carrier of low context of communication and the Turkish community as a carrier of a high context of communication. The Ruse community is also proof of a monochronic and polychronic attitude towards time and its accompanying behaviour.

According to Edward Hall, monochronic societies view time as a valuable and scarce resource. The English say, "Time is money." Perhaps monochronicity has arisen and established itself in the Industrial Revolution when the pursuit of increased production has led to the introduction of shifts and a requirement for strict working hours to be observed by workers. Analysing the Bulgarian community in the Ottoman Empire, monochronicity was developed on the basis of the heavy tax system on the Christian population in the Empire. As a result, it is evident that the Bulgarians were mainly engaged in intensive types of economic activities which generate high profits, etc. various types of crafts, such as blacksmithing, pottery and furriery, outside urbanized farming areas also trade. In these industries time is a valuable and limited resource.

Polychronic societies are at the opposite pole. They live slowly, take into account the natural biological rhythm of the person and find it acceptable to carry out several activities simultaneously. The emphasis is on people and good relationships, not on achieving higher results and perfect performance at all costs. In such an environment, people are usually interested in how others are, and how their families are, united by things beyond their official roles and duties, sharing their personal experiences and feelings. The Turkish ethnic community was a representative of polychronic societies, including the activities they practice. Many of them did not develop craft activities, as long as they existed, they were concentrated around extensive activities that did not generate high profit, etc. cafes, barbers, which did not require a certain type of working time.

7. The Views for Cultural Variability of Clyde Kluckhohn and Frederick Strodbeck

The local communities on the territory of Rouse are also evidence of the applicability of the views for cultural variability of Clyde Kluckhohn and Frederick Strodbeck (Kluckhohn & Strodbeck, 1961) In their theory, human society and relevant ethnic groups and sub-groups must respond to certain problems with decisions that are made on the basis of their specific culture and familiar universalies. Kluckhohn and Strodbeck offer five types of relationships in which different cultural communities find solutions that are tailored to the specificities of cultural universalies:

1. Orientation and attitude towards time;
2. Attitude towards different human activities;
3. Relationships between individuals inside and outside the group;
4. Attitude towards nature;
5. Characteristics of human nature.

For the local community on the territory of Ruse, very illustrative relationship between individuals in one group is the infamous “Bloody Wedding”. This is a drama that has happened from 21.02. until February 28, 1910, when the army killed dozens of peaceful citizens. The event was waning a few months later.

Today “The Bloody Wedding” in Ruse is part of the city`s legends known to many, multiplied periodically by the media but at the same time a sustainable theme in the city`s history. Part of the collective memory connecting the local community. The subject is perceived with different attitude. For some manifestations of ethnicity are leading, thus, not the tolerance of cosmopolitanism in the Danube city described by Elias Canetti, and the passions of blood. For others, the situation is an example of multiculturalism, the basis of which is love.

8. Geert Hofstede’s Views on Cultural Diversity

Among the local communities in Ruse and the relations between the different ethnic groups, Geert Hofstede's views on cultural diversity are also applicable, grouping them into the following categories:

1. Values;
2. Rituals;
3. Heroes;
4. Symbols.

1. Values are the most sustainable and transmitted through generations beliefs.
2. Rituals are collective activities that are socially important and through which we can recognize the values of culture. For example: the ways people greet, the religious ceremonies, the celebration of admission into maturity.
3. Heroes - these living or dead people possessing characteristics that are considered to be of particular value in a given culture and which by their behavior serve as role models for the members of this culture.
4. Symbols are the last outer circle, they include the words, gestures, images and objects through which members of a society of a cultural environment can be understood. Symbols are the last element because they are the easiest to change.

Tracking the history of the “Holy Trinity Cathedral” in Ruse, examples of explicit proof of Geert Hofstede’s views (Hofstede, 1980; 1983; 1984) will be found. Values and their sustainability are well-represented in the history of the temple with several events. The construction of the temple around a supposedly Christian catacomb of the 5th century is evidence of the continuity of the Christian values that the local community carried long before the official adoption of Christianity as a state religion. In the church’s naos there is a niche for which experts from the Historical Museum in Ruse Teodora Bakardjieva and Stoyan Yordanov say they were either the foundations of a church dating from the time of Sexaginta Pristis or a Roman tomb. During the Ottoman rule, it was easier to issue a permission to build a new temple when there was another. The Ruse Christians used the old structure to obtain permission to build the current temple.

The history of the building of the bell tower of the temple is another fact about the eternity of values, and in the case of the Christian ones. During the Ottoman rule no permission was issued for the construction of bell towers by the unwritten rule “in a place where prayer is read, a bell does not ring.” For this reason, and with the justification that the Turkish population was intolerant to the bell ringing in Ruse the authority did not allowed the bell to be attached to the church.

After long public discussions in which the Russian consul in Constantinople intervened, the bell was placed and used.

9. Conclusion

The findings from this analysis illustrate that the ethnic communities in Ruse during that period combine the contemporary concepts of multiculturalism and the variance of values traced in a diachronic aspect. The research results also reveal that the local community of Ruse and its contacts with other cultural communities are based on established attitudes of tolerance and sustainability and continuity of values that can be given as a good example in a time of growing multiculturalism and globalization,

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