

THE SOURCE

One Day in a Roma Settlement in Romania

2009 (40 minutes)

- Jaap de Ruig -

Credits:

Photography, sound, music and editing: Jaap de Ruig.

Synopsis

Hetea is an isolated settlement of Roma in Central Romania. Hidden deep in the hills, around 350 people live in handmade huts. In *The Source* we experience a day in Hetea. The film starts with long, static shots of the beginning of a new morning. A pastoral way of life takes off: guiding cows and horses, getting water, building a new wooden house, doing the washing etc. In the afternoon suddenly the fat is in the fire. People scream and threaten each other. Little by little the serene atmosphere returns, but while the sun is going down the aftereffects of the quarrel are still audible.

Statement of the director

This film has been prepared during seventeen years and recorded in one day. Since 1991 I have been visiting Hetea. I have learnt Romanian, so I could talk with the people who live there. In the nineties I stayed at their homes for weeks on an end.

Romania is developing very fast, especially since the inclusion of the country in the European Union (January 2007). Prices in shops have risen to a Western-European level. These Roma are dependent of their sales of the wild herbs and mushrooms they collect in the woods. They also do simple day labourer jobs for farmers. But the interest in their products goes down and work on farms is mechanized. They have a lot of stress. Every afternoon a quarrel breaks out. The reason is mostly futile. They create their own 'soap-opera' as a kind of purifying ritual. You could nearly call it group therapy.

Hetea once developed because of the source. Life still circles around it. But the title of this film also has a broader meaning: we observe a way of life which is the essence of human existence. That's the reason I chose not to subtitle. The sentences which are said have a dimension which can be compared with the singing of the birds, the barking of the dogs or the whinnying of a horse. In case I would have subtitled, I would have given too much meaning to words which divert from the universal character of the images.

Being originally a photographer, I entered the world of visual arts around ten years ago. I started to work with video: single-screen films of a few minutes and life-size installations. In the case of *The Source*, my first film of considerable length, I became more or less the solitary photographer I once was. Like a photcamera a modern camcorder can be operated by one person. I filmed on HDV with the Sony V1, without any assistance. The inhabitants of Hetea wouldn't have accepted a crew of *gadje* interfering in their life. During recent years the remote settlement has become a ghetto in which even I am hardly welcome. One day of recording by one person they know since a long time is their maximum. One more day and I would have become myself the cause and the target of the next quarrel.

Jaap de Ruig, January 2009