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# THE PENTECOST IN ROMANIAN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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**Abstract**

The article represents a research on the Pentecost, (Whitsuntide), in the Romanian contemporary society. The Christian holiday of Pentecost stands for the Christian festival celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples of Jesus after his Ascension, held on the seventh Sunday after Easter. We have resorted for this article to the meta-analytic research method, trying to study carefully the perception that people have on the Pentecost. Although the feast relies on religion, nowadays Romanian people feel more connected to the urban environment, where the rituals have a commercial role. This the reason why during the feasts, the Romanian society leads a continuous fight between what is new and what is old, intending to convince the city dwellers that the traditional elements must remain pure. Tradition is the one that makes the connection between the sacred and the profane.

The traditional Romanian dancers have a special role and they turn into the actors that connect the fantastic world to the real world. By the ritual of the traditional Romanian dancers, people become familiar with their customs and are introduced into a state of liminality. Nowadays, Romanians consider the

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Pentecost to be a reunion of them with God and with all kinds of entities from the times when the traditional village represented the center of customs and traditions. The Christian holiday of Pentecost is also seen by the Romanian people as a reunion with their old self. It is important to know the way of getting familiar with and accepting the creation of a new universe, compatible with the Romanian traditions.

**Keywords**: feast, tradition, anthropology, Pentecost, traditional Romanian dancers, custom

**JEL Classification:** Z13, Y80

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Romanians get back to their daily routine, they no longer fast and they even resort to the profane values. However, on the eve of the Pentecost, they begin to perceive the essence of religious symbolism in the contemporary Romanian society. They return to the rituals, the myths and to the desire to remain somehow connected to traditions. Currently, Romanians are interested in turning from modern people into simple Christians. In our Romanian tradition, there is a series of rituals performed especially in the villages.

In the absence of the villages, traditions would disappear or they would lose from their essence. Knowing the fact that the contemporary society is inclined to the profane (Hill, 2016; Jarvis, 2016; Pierce, 2016), to everything that is commercial, we have tried to discover the magic within the present space. Beyond the rituals, the magic and the stories of our ancients, it is us, an old, but at the same time, new society. The Christian holiday of Pentecost is celebrated by both of the societies, but each in its own way. The village focuses on traditions, on the return to the old values, while the city dwellers consider this

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feast to be a modality of going on vacation again. There is however, in the urban environment, in a continuous progress, focused on the commercial development, something specific to superstitions, to everything that is magic. Actually, the essence remains alive. Even the biggest "atheist" hides something of the magic sphere in his thoughts. This can be observed especially on the eve of the Pentecost.

## PENTECOST

The Christian holiday of Pentecost continues the spiritual preparations in the Romanian society, but its effects are not those expected. The current society knows and accepts the importance of this holiday and it considers it to be almost as important as Easter. In this period, the society gets ready to celebrate the myth of the Ascension of Jesus Christ. These preparations acknowledge the importance of holidays for the Christians. The latter acknowledge Jesus as the symbol of rebirth, of revival and of the forgiveness of sins. The continuation of this aspect determines a revival, in the area of myths, of a special symbolism. The Romanian Christian knows his values and traditions and he even fights for their maintenance. The holiday of Pentecost is seen through the recovery of the lost values.

Being aware of the rituals in the current society leads to a new wish of the Romanian people to remain somewhere in the area of the folklore. "On Pentecost, the treasures are burning. The fires are seen only by the good-hearted people. These can also see the fairies "floating gently" through the air. On Pentecost, the water is and the girls wishing to marry wash themselves with this water. People drink wine with wormwood to be healthy during the whole year. If the weather is fine on Pentecost, it will be fine during the whole summer" (Rusu-Păsărin, 2005). During the Pentecost, these words can be heard from people, that

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admit that there is a series of traditions, or better say superstitions that connect them to everything that is magical. They become more connected to the traditional values, while the girls, that are the most exposed to these ritualic processes, admit that they do their best to observe at least one of the customs, the most imporatnt one being that related to predestination. We have noticed that this custom is still observed by the girls, even in the urban environment. Regardless of the fact that some of them observe the ritual just for the pleasure of it, the fact that they take part in it helps them penetrate into another, different environment. They grow away from the real space they live in and get into that magical time, they take part to the rites of passage, spiritually preparing themselves for a change. It is that that the man destined to them, meant to them, appears under different forms, during other holidays as well and the girls have this thing in view. This superstition relies on the symbolism of magic, of the time when people believed that observing these rituals, they would come to discover the things searched for. Although our society is traine dto live in a reality where nothing is believed to be true, unless it is demonstrated, the power of magic remains somehow strangely located and it turns into a power itself.

Actually, the tradition can lose its importance with time, as long as we do not make the most of it by observing the various rituals. These rituals can be noticed all over the country and they are intertwine with the values that people bring out into bold relief by their participation in the ritruals. People must become aware of the phenomeon related to the Romanian traditions and implement their experience in the future. Romania relies on the folklore. If the latter loses its essence, the country will experience the alienation from its ancestors, from the perception they had on the establishment of a new vow. The ordinary Romanian people need to return to their roots, acknowledge their

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values and associate them with good causes. This is the reason why the folklore must live through us.

The traditional Romanian dancers turn into the main actors in our world. The profane becomes captive and it can no longer be distinguished in front of the masks that hide the secret of tradition, of the ancient customs. The traditional Romanian dancers are perceived as gods by the ordinary people. They revive the long-forgotten or lost mystery. The traditional Romanian dancers connect the neutral spirit of the ordinary Romanians to the magic of a sacred society and by their ritual, they bring peace again among their fellows. The dead persons are seen as some entities disposed to bring about chaos in our world and the traditional Romanian dancers turn into our protectors. By evoking dances and songs, they gice shape to real rituals meant to clean the magical space of our society from demons and other bad entities. The traditional Romanian dancers bring us peace and people must show them respect, according to traditions. Thus, we have noticed that nowadays, people admire the traditional Romanian dancers, they are fascinated by their ritual and they relate them to God. Their sending to earth and the getting through several rites of passage meant to clean the world from gloomy values, is the best way to acknowledge that God takes good care of us. We turn back to religion, because in the absence of religion, the traditional holidays would lose their essence.

The liminal space is represented by those people that live estranged from religion and from everything that is related to traditions. They do not admit their affiliation to certain religious spirits, but surprisingly, on the eve of and during the Pentecost, they return to the old customs. This is due to the fact that the religious spirit becomes moral (Colhon, 2015; Федотова, 2016; Ланцова, 2017; Meyer, Meyer & Kot, 2017). They feel guilty if they do not accomplish those things that they learnt during their childhood, if they do not feel a calling,

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or if they do not actually believe in these rituals. Moral guilt determines them to keep on learning things about the Romanian traditions. The simple presence at the dance performed by the traditional Romanian dancers carries them into a world that they finally accept, willingly participating in the phenomeon of the rites of passage. This participation offers them a new series of creeds and maybe the most important one is related to the fact that the Romanian people, regardless of the moral, financial or spiritual value, acknowledge or try to return to the places that emody the old traditions.

On the eve of Pentecost, the traditional Romanian dancers get ready for this ritual and they assume the responsibility to share the mysteries of a magical world. No matter whether we consider the current society to be laic, or more commercial than traditional, when the holidays draw near, the Romanians begin to remember that the traditional values still exist and that they did not lose their essence. They know everything about the traditional things and if they do not, they are interested in learning about them. This is the reason why, numberless manifestations of the traditional rituals have been noticed lately, together with the wish to shape a Romanian future depp-rooted in traditions and rituals. On the eve of Pentecost, the myth becomes a way of acknowledging that something different is going to happen for the society.

Presently, the traditional Romanian dancers no longer go to each house to dance, they dance in the public spaces, such as markets, being convinced that people can better understand the values there. The traditional Romainian dancers try to find other ways of remaining close to people. The organization of festivals for example helps them to carry the people back into the past, in a magical world. Suddenly, the markets turn into sanctuaries meant to connect the profane to the sacred, an altar and a gate to another world. It is important that the participants know the value of this dance and accept the fact that it

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represents a spiritual salvation. The essence of this dance is to help us remain magical in a profane world.

During the rites of passage, the housewives prepare traditional food, to give away for the dead, shaping thus a connection between the reality and the imaginary. In our culture, the dead play a role. The Christian holiday of Pentecost consists of the preparation of a holiday meal to celebrate the connection between the dead and the living people (Bușu, 2015; Călin, 2015; Villa, Goncalves & Villy Odong, 2017)). The holiday itself divides time into two distinct moments: on the one hand, there is the natural moment, concerned with the creation of rituals meant to bring forward the traditions and celebrate the folklore, (especially by the traditional Romanian dancers) and on the other hand, the acquirement of a gate that can carry them into a world totally different from ours, a world we will all peneterate into, at a certain moment: death. Mister Nicu Panea was mentioning in his book entitled "The bread, the wine and the salt" that: "the death of our fellows makes us become aware of our responsibility towards them; death reveals the fact that man dies to be reborn" (Panea, 2005, p. 131). Thus, during the Pentecost, the dead are unleashed and they can "attack" the living people. Here, the role played by the traditional Romanian dancers is primordial. Death is seen as a revival in this case, but under a macabre, not innocent and cheerful form, as it happens with the Jesus Christ the Savior. Death is seen as one more tradition of the our nation. It is considered that the dead persons have powers, being able to harm the living people. This is the reason why, our tradition knows so many superstitions related to ghosts and demons. However, on the eve of Pentecost, even the dead are subjected to a rite of passage. According to the tradition, they are taken out of their time, unknown to the living people, and they are brought into the real world, totally different from what they had experienced. The powers of the dead people are negative. They

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have the possibility to harm the living people (Ferencová, Ślusarczyk, Kot & Mišenčíková, 2016; Popescu & Stefan, 2014; Kot, Tan & Dragolea, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

The Christian holiday of the Pentecost revives the revitalizes the symbolism of some old traditions, of a time different from the one we are familiar with. The various manifestations of the rituals arouse the people's wish to learn more. We have noticed that people are curious and they are more willing to discover their culture as it is, without the modern aspects that transformed it. The folklore is revived. By the rituals observed on the eve of Pentecost, the folklore acquires even more importance. We have tried to notice the people's way of receiving these holidays, as well as the way they conserve their energy in order to keep step with the things they need for the rituals. On the eve of Pentecost, people are subjected to different rites of passage, necessary to help them become aware of the symbolism related to customs and traditions.

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