ROMANIAN CULTURE WITHIN UNESCO CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Abstract:
Romanian cultural heritage, whose extreme diversity has been shaped in the course of Romania's entire history, does not only represent an asset of national importance, but, due to the uniqueness of its elements, it is also an integral part of world cultural heritage. Romanian ethnographic heritage – difficult to measure and quantify – can and should contribute to the wealth of global culture.

Key words:
Heritage, doina, călușari, Horezu ceramic art, carol, band

Heritage, which is a word of Latin origin – from *patrimonium*, which means "paternal inheritance", subsequently extended its meaning to that of "family goods". UNESCO gives the following definition: "Heritage is the inheritance of the past which we still enjoy today and which we will transmit to the future generations". In the year 1959, André Malraux, the French minister of culture, stated that the minister had the mission of raising public awareness of the values of their cultural heritage.

Initially, the concept of cultural heritage especially referred to material heritage elements, such as monuments, archaeological sites, works of art etc., and the global list of 1972 comprised only some hundreds of sites from the entire world.

This view has evolved fundamentally over the last decades. In 1992, a WorldMemory database was created, which reviews collections of documents of universal interest (like the Declaration of Human rights, the establishment of the metrical system, etc.).

In the year 1997, UNESCO defined the notion of the "Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, consisting of traditions which must be safeguarded – endangered languages and cultures, almost extinct artisan crafts or forms of folk artistic expression which must be handed over to the next generations. This extended the scope of the preoccupation for the preservation of world heritage.

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Over the past decades a new concept has emerged and evolved – that of *vernacular heritage*, meaning the ensemble of artifacts which in the past had utility in everyday life (mills, attics, fountains, ovens, chapels, objects found especially in rural areas, in spaces where modernization did not manage to inflict significant changes).

Another concept which seems to have gained ground in later years as a component of UNESCO world heritage is that of *natural heritage*. In France this is defined as "the ensemble of goods whose existence, production and reproduction are the result of nature's processes, even if the objects that compose them suffer subsequent modifications from human activity".

At national level, the regulations regarding the protection of the national cultural heritage are, unfortunately, far from a unitary framework, being dissipated in a multitude of normative acts referring to:

- **Immovable Heritage**:
  - Immobile heritage – historical and archaeological monuments Law no. 43/2000 and Law no. 422/2001
  - Mobile heritage– museums and collections Law no. 182/2000
- **Movable Heritage** – Law no. 26/2008.

Unfortunately, at this moment Romania does not have a comprehensive law regarding cultural heritage, a unitary law subsuming all the disparate legislative acts.

On 12 November 2013, the Permanent Common Commission of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate Chamber celebrated for the first time the UNESCO World Heritage Day in Romania. The Parliament Commission also adopted the declaration regarding the protection and promotion of Romania's heritage sites on the UNESCO list. On this occasion, the day of 16 November was declared the *UNESCO World Heritage Day*. 16 November 1972 represents the day when The Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage was signed in Paris. It was during the 34th session of the Commission for World Heritage that the day of 16 November was decided on to be celebrated as World Heritage Day. Seven years later, Romania also sanctioned the celebration of this day.

According to the last updated estimates (November 2013), the list of world heritage sites contained 981 protected sites, considered by the UNESCO Committee to be of exceptional value. Out of the 981 sites from

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160 states on the UNESCO list, most of them, more exactly 759, are considered as being cultural heritage sites, while 193 belong to the category of natural heritage. There are also 29 mixed heritage sites.

Romania has no less than 32 places, grouped in 7 sites, included on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

On October 17 2003, "The Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage" was created in Paris, which Romania ratified in 2005. Later on, in 2008, the *UNESCO List of Humanity's Intangible Cultural Heritage* was drawn up.

At present Romania is represented in the UNESCO List of Humanity's Intangible Cultural Heritage by four elements:

- *Căluşul* Ritual (included on 25 November 2005)
- *Doina* (2 October 2009)
- Horezu ceramics (3-7 December 2012)
- Carol Singing Men Bands (alongside with the Republic of Moldava on 3-7 December 2013).

1. The *Căluşul* Ritual

(Application filed 2002, nominalization accepted 2005)

An inherent part of Pentecost celebrations, the Căluşul ritual opened and closed this holiday. *After God's Ascension towards Heaven on the day of Ispas, the Earth and the world are left without divinity for ten days, until the Descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost day. It is the most critical period of the calendar: the Lord rises to the Heavens without the Holy Spirit descending to the Earth. The Pentecost remedies this situation, when the rebellious souls of the dead who refuse to leave in the world bring great afflictions to the earthlings* (Ghinoiu, 2003, p. 28-32).

In order to appease them, people give alms on the Pentecost Saturday or on the Pentecost morning, calling them endearing names such as Fairies, Beauties, Şoimane etc. In order to chase away the Pentecost evil spirits, the villagers resort to a magical rite: the *Căluşul* dance.

The Romanian encyclopedic dictionary defines *Căluşul* as a *Romanian popular dance practiced especially in the ancient traditions of the Pentecost.* Dating from the pre-Christian period, the *Căluş* is danced in groups of 7-11 men (*căluşari*) wearing sticks in their hands and a special outfit (with ribbons and bells around their legs).

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The dancers named ***căluşari*** *gather once a year and dress in women's clothes. On their heads they place interlaced coronets of absinth adorned with flowers: they speak like women and, in order not to be recognized, they cover their cheeks with white cloth. In their hands they all have swords without scabbards, with which they would cut whoever would dare to uncover their cheeks. This power has been given to them by an old tradition, so they cannot be blamed when they kill somebody in this way.* (Cantemir, 1956, p. 248)

Romulus Vuia, in *The Origins of the Căluşari Dance*, mentions that the players are the personification of the Fairies themselves, fact indicated by the very appearance of the dancers.

The ritual is based on the performance of the *band*. Made up of an uneven number of members, from 5 to 13 (like the number of the Fairies), the *caluşari* band is led by a character named Bailiff and almost everywhere by a masked personage, the Mute.

The *căluşi* band was constituted by the swearing of an *oath*. The oath of the Căluşari band is made in front of the Mute, whose mask embodies the caballing god, and of the Căluş flag, unfolded on the Pentecost Saturday. The ritual is called the *Binding of the Flag* or the *Oath*. The ceremony takes place in secret, in a place guarded from the prying eyes. The oath grants the band's unity and solidarity through the days during which the Căluş is played, which also required faith to the Căluş, total submission to the Bailiff, and the relinquishing of earthly pleasures.

The dancers pronounce in chorus, after the Bailiff: "I swear with Zău, on the soul of my ancestors, on my horses and cattle, to respect the Căluş and its law until the untying of the flag! I swear I will serve the Căluş in faith, honesty, submission and fear of God!" They also swear "not to get drunk and to get along", "to keep clean, with no sexual relations, to heal people". The only character who doesn't take the oath is the Mute who promises „not to talk so that the Pentecost should not take him". Participation in the *Căluş* band was usually pledged for three, five, seven or nine years. "*The one* who *was received in such a band must come each time, for nine years, in the same band; if he is missing, the others will say that he is tormented by evil spirits and women genii*" (Cantemir, 1956, p. 249). The oath was renewed each year, especially when a new member was accepted in the band.

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The most important accessory in the game is the *flag*, a rod of over three meters, on the top of which is tied a wimple and plants considered by popular belief to have healing or prophylactic effects, such as garlic and absinth. The flag is made by the dancers during a certain ceremonial before swearing the oath. During the execution of the ritual, the flag must be held by one of the men, usually the first in the band, and it is not allowed to fall. There is the belief that if it falls, a calamity will happen to the band.

The *Căluş* is the most important folkloric manifestation in which dancing, as a means of expression, has a predominant role. Generally, the men know many dance steps. In the traditional development of the game there were many special moments, like the *căluş hora* (circle dance), in which women gave the dancers small children to play with in order so that they would be protected from illness; they also danced around a salted tripe and a wool stack, which was meant to bring richness to the flocks. *Because they have over a hundred of various games and they are so featly, the ones who play don't even seem to touch the ground and they seem to fly in the air.* (Cantemir, 1956, p.248)

The tradition is still practiced today, especially in southern counties such as Olt, Argeş, Giurgiu, Vâlcea, Dâmboviţa, Dolj andTeleorman.

2. *Doina*

(Application filed in 2008, nominalization accepted in 2009)

Doină, a feminine noun, designates a genre of Romanian folk lyrical poetry and musical folklore, which expresses a feeling of loss, longing, mourning, love, revolt etc. From a musical perspective, it is a lamenting song based largely on improvisation, by using numerous rhythmic and melodic ornaments. It is also known under the name of "long *hora*", "prolonged song" etc. The literary genre of the *doina* was also adopted by literary poetry. (M. Eminescu, G. Coşbuc, Şt. O. Iosif etc.).

Doina can be sung anytime and anywhere (while working in the field, at home, at the village dance), always solo, with or without instrumental accompaniment (flute, pipe, drone, other improvised instruments, especially wind instruments). The song expresses the emotions and the virtuosity of the composer-singer and makes use of a wide expressive and thematic range – joy, sadness, loneliness, love, social conflicts, etc.

The song, transmitted orally, especially in the family, is attested in documents of the 17th century and is performed in different styles in the

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representative regions – Maramureş, Oaş, Năsăud, Făgăraş, Banat, Mehedinţi, Gorj, Vâlcea, Dolj, Teleorman, North Moldavia, Vrancea.

Specific to the song is the fact that the stress is placed less on the text than on the singing technique, which is idiosyncratic and defines the individual character of this lyrical expression, considered by the literary critic Dumitru Caracostea "the meridian of Romanian folklore".

3. **Techniques specific to Horezu traditional ceramics**

(Application filed in 2011 – nominalization accepted in 2012)

Horezu traditional ceramics is made in the locality by the same name and in the village Olari, where most of the craftsmen are working. Horezu ceramic culture is unique, different from the productions of other pottery centers from the Vâlcea county and the rest of the country. This particular style was attested over 300 years ago.

Processed manually, the production of such pottery includes different processes: from the extraction of the clay, from a place called the Ulmet Hill to fermentation, battering and the formation of "gogoloţ", the clay clump which the potter "feels in his hand" and which the Horezu craftsmen know to transform in unmistakable forms and sizes – bowls, cornered plates, simple tankards or with a "necklace" of cans or hangers, bowls and cups, cooking pots.

They all keep the traditional decoration techniques, the specific motifs of this pottery center: the cock is the mark of Horezu pottery; the tree of life, the snake of the house, the spiral of life, the wheat ear, the bride's crown, other vegetal or zoomorphic, geometrical or cosmic motifs.

The specific decoration procedures for traditional Horezu ceramics is "jirăvitul", by which the color is placed on the vessel with the aid of the horn and is pulled, by moving the direction of the initial model with the aid of the "jay", a stick with pig hair at one end, used to make very fine drawings. Sold as souvenirs of a rare beauty, Horezu ceramics articles are both useful and decorative earthenware.

4. Carol Singing Men Bands in Romania and the Republic of Moldova

(Application filed in 2012, nomination accepted in 2013)

The men caroling band, a product of folkloric oral culture, is a hibernal ritual, attested since the 17th century. Initially, the carols marked the winter solstice, probably a ritual having Roman origins. Subsequently, it

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assimilated a Christian message, becoming thus a syncretic ritual (pre-Christian and Christian). Today it is practiced in most Romanian and Moldavian villages, around Christmas and on the Christmas night (24 - 25 December) of each year.

A band of unmarried youths (there may be even several bands in bigger villages) go to each house in the village, singing ritual songs, named *carols*. After singing at one house (the performance is vocal, with minimal instrumental accompaniment), the members of the band are rewarded by the hosts with money and ritual gifts (the Christmas bagel). From the money gathered as gifts for their carol singing, the youths organize a party with music and dance, played by hired fiddlers. In the Republic of Moldova, if a larger sum is gathered, the band builds a fountain in the field or buys a present for the local church.

In some areas, caroling also includes choreographic elements. The repertoire of a men band includes a series of carols destined for certain life situations in the traditional village; there are carols for children and elders, for married and unmarried young people, for shepherds, fishermen, priests etc. The end of the caroling is marked in certain areas by Zorit, the interpretation of a carol addressed to the ritual time, followed by the band's festive dinner. If a host does not wish to receive the band, they sanction the house by an "anti-rite", named "dis-caroling". The men caroling band has many functions: announcing a holiday, good wishing, ritual-augural spells, keeping the community's identity.

The Romanian ritual of Christmas Caroling Men Bands is handed down from generation to generation by the youth from the villages in Romania and The Republic of Moldova. The men singing ritual songs (carols) at every house, receiving in exchange symbolic gifts and money, have the important function of keeping the social and cultural identity of the inhabitants and to ensure the cohesion of the communities in which it is practiced, according to UNESCO.

The Inter-governmental Committee for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage decided that the ritual of caroling fulfills the criteria for being included on this list, presenting a series of arguments in this sense. Among these arguments is the fact that the ritual of caroling is transmitted from generation to generation in an informal manner and that it confers the participants from the villages in Romania and the Republic of Moldova a sentiment of shared identity and prestige.

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Another argument mentioned in the official release is that the introduction of the caroling ritual in this list may have the effect of promoting the visibility of this cultural heritage tradition and encourage the dialogue between communities from both countries.

The inclusion of men caroling bands on the UNESCO List of Humanity's Intangible Cultural Heritage signifies a major step taken towards the preservation, but also the transmission of this ritual to future generations.

From Christmas Eve to Epiphany and Saint John, the entire village community takes part in the ritual of caroling: bands of children, lads or men and, more recently, mixed groups, in their quality as heralds, while others (women, householders) in their quality of hosts, each playing a well-defined in the season festivities. In order to gain this recognition, two teams of Romanian and Moldavian specialists undertook an assiduous task for one year, writing letters of intent, reporting on field documentation and the making presentation films. Once the file was finished and sent to UNESCO, the international forum verified the elements proposed to enter the UNESCO list. The criteria can be described as follows: "First of all, the element must be part of the intangible cultural heritage of the proposing countries, namely to be belong to the domains: oral traditions, performance arts, social practices, festive rituals and events, knowledge and practices which regard the nature or the universe or techniques and knowledge regarding the traditional crafts. Second, the vivid element, as it is now encountered on the field, must be part of the recognized cultural practices of the communities they belong to, and have been transmitted from generation to generation, thus giving these communities the consciousness of their identity and its continuity. At the same time, they have to demonstrate the contribution of the communities to the completion of the candidacy file and to show that both the proposing state and the communities recognize this element as authentic and are able to protect it and propose it in its authentic forms", explained Dr. Ioana-Ruxandra Fruntelată, Associate Professor at the Department of Literary Theory, Universal and Comparative Literature, Ethnology and Folklore of the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest. She is also a member of the "National Commission for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage", and contributed to the completion of the candidacy transmitted to UNESCO.

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The presence of these traditions on the UNESCO list guarantees the preservation process, but also the transmission to the next generations. "The Ministers of Culture from Romania and the Republic of Moldova are forced to include in their budgets, starting from 2014, the funds for implementing a program for caroling safeguarding, as it was formulated and accepted. Every two years, the proposing states present a report to UNESCO, in which they have to demonstrate that concrete measures are being taken in order to safeguard the traditional element. Otherwise an element can be withdrawn from the representative list", explained the abovementioned specialist. At the same time, Dr. Ioana Fruntelată underlines the fact that "UNESCO recognition ensures the international visibility of the respective element". The authorities encourage the non-governmental associations and organizations to develop projects which involve the promotion of traditions "with respect for its authentic characteristics". "The safeguarding of the ritual's genuine aspects can only be achieved by the communities which benefit from this heritage, of course with the specialists' help. One of the methods may be encouraging the informal transmission of the knowledge about the ritual, by involving children and youth in educational projects which valorize the local cultural heritage", declared Dr. Ioana-Ruxandra Fruntelată. She went on to observe that, deeply rooted in the history of the Romanian people, caroling represents without any doubt an important element of national identity and cultural continuity: "*Caroling men bands were attested in Transylvania from the second half of the 17th century, but the tradition is without any doubt much older, as most of inherited oral cultural phenomena are. Being initially a hibernal calendar ritual, associated with the winter solstice, with multiple origins, but with one of its roots in the Roman Saturnalia, this ritual subsequently assimilated Christian significations, becoming a ritual of great impact, in which Christian and pre-Christian elements interlace in a «popular course» of the oral tradition*".

Finally, on 20 March 2014, the National Commission for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage made the decision regarding the two candidature files proposing the inclusion on the UNESCO

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Representative List of two other traditional elements: "Cultural practices associated with the day of 1 March" (Mărţişor) and "Maidenly dance in Romania".

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