SHAMANISM IN TIMOC

Silvia-Diana ŠOLKOTOVIĆ
PhD Candidate, Faculty of Letters, University of Craiova, Romania
solkotovicdiana@yahoo.com

Abstract

Our paper approaches a certain experience of the sacred institutionalized at the level of popular religiosity and it is documented in the Eastern Serbia at the Romanian speakers. In spite the fact they are Christians, their religion remained unchanged for centuries and it has a pagan root. So, the image of the After Life is one idyllic and the ancestors from the other side have the obligation to protect and help the family, and in change for that they are provided with everything they need to continue the same style of life they have had on the Earth. In order to behave properly, the livings need to receive indications. The feminine magical-religious experiences with ecstatic and trance symptoms and the subsequent acquirement of extrasensory qualities alongside white and black magic are as a brand for Romanian population from this region. As shamans do, the witches and the wizards of Timoc use plants, rocks, animals, potions, magic incantations, and communicate with the world of spirits. Visiting a psychagog or an iatromant isn't something unusual or strange when you live in the Eastern Serbia.

Keywords: *shamanism, Timoc, black magic,white magic, necromancy*

1. Introduction

More than a half of century ago, the French anthropologist Gilbert Durandwrote that the modern thought has to turn over to the study of the myth, archaic religions and oriental mysticism otherwise must be expected a heuristic death for the European way of thinking. Before him, at the beginning of the XX century, Schopenhauer was sure that the disclosure of the Indian thinking would rebirth the European philosophy. In contrast with them, Frazer sorted out all what was different under the characteristic of primitive society and Levy-Bruhl introduced the term of primitive mentality.

Nowadays, because of theoreticians as Eliade or recently Castaneda, no one uses anymore the term of primitivism in order to refer to archaic way of living of some communities.

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

Meanwhile the researchers were and still are interested in exotic places from Asia, America, and Australia. But there are places in the Eastern Europe where the communities conserve their archaic way of living. Such as a region is the Timoc Valley (a term which recently became popular for indicating the Eastern Serbia).

2.1. About shamanism

The cradle of shamanism is considered Siberia. MirceaEliade has thought that the phenomenon of shamanism is so important that it must be included in the general history of religions. He has believed that its roots are in the ancient world and the shaman's ecstasy, which is its clue, is inherent to man as such. He has written that the first figurative display of a single séance is on the walls of the cave Laszlo, but this view has been decisively rejected by, among others, the famous English historian of religion, Lord Raglan.

On one hand, shamanism is based on a psycho-physical dualism on the understanding that a soul can for a certain longer or shorter time, leave the body without affecting that peculiarly human individual. On the other hand, shamanism implies a split in the lurch of sanctity, which means that with good spirits appear and the evil ones and there is where the protection of the community is needed. Hence, the dual attitude towards shamans concreted in both: admiration and fear. Shaman represents the ultimate dangerous face so he/she is called just as an ultimate solution or in the cases where nowadays communication is not enough. In his/hers journey, the shaman visits the upper and the lower world and at his return brings information about the future and messages from the dead.

The phenomenon of shamanism is a spread one in time and space. Shamans are all over the world and through all human ages. In the modern world they are no longer analyzed as a part of a primitive society, but as a form of spiritual evolution.

The new „social class" of shamans fulfills the Internet. In West, the shamans are not natives anymore, but they are educated people who work alone or in crews and gather their knowledge from many different parts of the word creating their own, personal kind of shamanism. They don't offer anymore only their services for help, but they present the modus and the knowledge of becoming a shaman as the way of resolving the present world crises. Shamanism is perceived as a high level of acknowledge and understanding the self, the individual as a part of the whole, and through this, the functional mechanism of the world.

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

In some regions of the South-Eastern Europe, the society remains in some sectors of spiritual life unchanged for centuries.

„Amuary de Riencourt argues that prophecy is a form of religious expression that arose with the patriarchal revolution and betrays its etymology of belonging to the masculine world as opposed to mysticism that indicates its belonging to the feminine world, having its roots in the cult of the goddess Big Mother of the Bronze Age. The prophets are more recent than the representatives of mysticism. They have introduced faith into a supreme god alongside other deities. The observation body has become the ear, the knowledge of the world moves from space to time, from nature to history. With the inclusion of world mythology in the subconscious psychology analysis, Jung declared mysticism as a leak of the object in the subject as a return to the undifferentiated state of the collective subconscious as an increase to individuality or integration of personality, or more precisely, a fusion of consciousness with the subconscious. The feminine side of mysticism is obvious. It belongs to nature or God, it is not important, but what is meaningfulit is the anticipatory state of the spiritual ecstasy that characterizes it and a certain cognitive quality of it. (Riencourt, 1998, pp. 314-322)”(Sholkotovich, 2017, p.236).

2.2. Witches from Timoc

In the TimocValley the term of shaman is not known, but is used that of wizard (*vraci)* or witch (*vrăjitoare*). Hence, their characteristic actions are the same as that of the shamans from Tibet or South America or Africa. Their soul travels through the worlds from above and beyond ours bringing messages. They cure with smoke, tea or tincture of herbs. They have magic rituals, use the forces of nature and live in concordance with them.

The feminine magical-religious experiences with ecstatic and trance symptoms and the subsequent acquirement of extrasensory qualities such as talking to the dead (necromancy) and predicting the future (divination), performed in various forms (genuine or specialized) and on different occasions (the religious calendar feasts or on demand) alongside white and black magic are still well-known in Timoc.

In times not long gone, the witches from Eastern Serbia had an important social and community function. They were chosen to occupy the position of physician and sometimes judge, set social behavior norms, mingled in community relations, and sometimes even served religious rituals, similarly to Indian wizard. "Italian scholar Carlo Ginzburg, who studied the witchcraft

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

phenomenon in Europe for 25 years, concluded that witchcraft was still practiced in some Eastern European regions at the end of the 19th century as a direct derivative of shamanism. [...] How can we explain such an astonishing continuity? The explanation such as the genetic transmission or the useless vagueness of the assertion that some collective unconscious is behind our individual psyche does not have a cognitive basis. The best possible explanation is that of the cultural tradition which is, as we have seen, complex and does not depend on the compounded transmission of ideas' sets. "(Culianu, 2002, pp. 47-48)

Talking with the dead people or asking for help in different cases when medicine is useless is not a rare occurrence in Timoc. And even the people who never visit a witch[41] are aware to the fact they exist nearby. Also, no one disregards or despises the power of the witches, no matter of age or level of education one has.

The phenomenon is generally known as „Vlach magic" and there is the black magic and the white one. The black magic's characteristics are the journeys into the other worlds in order to find answers. It is used in gathering, for talking with the spirits or for spells. The white magic is known for the specific techniques of healing: ritual incantations, spells, and use of herbs. During researches in the field, I recounted specialized witches in one or in other kind of magic or in both. As I found out, the shamanism in Timoc is a forced way of living for some people, not a way of ensure the material resources. As a demonstration of this affirmation, I mention that not only there are no taxes for visiting a witch, but they are giving their help for free sometimes through the modern ways of communication or announcing the future to the crowd gathered around their places in the periods they wake up from a trance. In the past, the historians recorded the premonitions of Vlach witches regarding the assassinations of the King Alexander Karageorgevich and of the Prime Minister Gingich or, more recently about the election of the President Vuchich. Meanwhile, the collective memory recalls facts about ordinary people, ancestors or contemporaneous relatives.

Nowadays more and more people think that, parallel with the material world, palpable, there are other worlds where one could approaches extrasensory. This isn't something new, a discovery of an increasingly technological world, but it is a permanent presence, from the depths of the time it has reached and comes

[41] I use the term of witches because in the field of magic in Timoc I recounted only 2 sorcerer (in fact, one was more seconding his mother, the witch) and because its specificity, this domain is known as belonging to the feminine part of population.

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

through an inheritance, we can say, genetic and that is the magic path. The initial term is described by its pejorative use, but in its classical essence it is any attempt to awaken the internal power through various methods: rituals, spells, spells that enable the person with paranormal qualities to come into contact with nature and the world beyond. "Ethnologists (who study the endless faith of peoples in the extrasensory) make the difference between the multitude of clairvoyants and healers born throughout Serbia and those heard from Timoc because, as they say, the magic in Serbia is not of a modern, prefabricated factor. As it is recorded in many works existent in the archives of the Academy of Science and Art of Serbia and of the Ethnology Section's Library of the Faculty of Philology Belgrade, above all is an intrusion in the collective mentality of the Vlachs. A manifestation of an old legacy of more than a thousand years that is in general a women's privilege"(IoichPavlovski, 2009, p.13)

Someone's call to deal with magic is divine, says the Eastern Serbia's inhabitants. It is the gift from a supernatural being, from the Mother of God or Saint Paraschiva, or it is genealogic inherited, usually but not necessarily, on the female branch. This gift is received by the pure ones, and they receive it before entering into puberty. Similar to this, Eliade, speaking of the teaching of shamanic powers, says that the title of shaman is obtained in two ways: by inheritance or due to the innate gift (calling or choice). (Eliade, 1985, p.35) Although researcher LiubinkoRadenovich of the Balkan Studies' Institute says in the TV documentary at "Prima" Serbia, "Život je život"[42] in March 2016:„once taught is transferred from the elderly witch to the younger one, the older has to withdraw", I met two field cases in which three people from the same family used magic simultaneously. In the first case, the father, the daughter and the nephew (though the daughter and the six years old nephew who from now has visions only, use their gift only for the very close ones) and in the second, a women withher son and his daughter.

In the same documentary, IasnaIoichPavlovski shows that when the magic skills do not appear at childhood, and the witch wants to teach her offspring, then they have to meet certain conditions and demonstrate certain skills to be elected as followers of the oral delivery of knowledge in magic and when once process completed, she is withdrawing from activity. Ioich says no one issues a certificate of witch occupation. That nobody is born as a witch, but it is a gift that is not implicitly inherited and that no one become a medium simply

[42] „Life is life" – translation from Serbian.

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

because one wants it. Discovering this talent is something spontaneous. Spontaneous is also the help they offer and not premeditate."Almost all individual traditions [...] are based on sets of rules and these are more or less similar. In many cases, we can establish that the rules are so dependent on shamanism that they are probably derived from it. [...] These rules can be for example: «there is another world; the other world is located in heaven; there is one body and one soul; the body dies and the soul goes to the other world»."(Culianu, 2002, pp. 47-49)

I would like to mention that oneiric is almost institution-based in Timoc, and, combined with manism, has maintain the necromancer profession from extinguishing.

"... In the cities and villages of this region they are not and never have been agencies of foresight, nor luxury offices for the dissolution of the evil eye. Timoc's witches do these things at home or on their property. Rituals are said to be part of their everyday life. They have thecalling on helping people who are in trouble, and they haven't desire to learn this, but have acquired this science unexpectedly so they do not ask for money for their help. Each of them is guided by his own intuition, but also by the tradition old of thousands of years - that here, right next to us, there are supernatural forces and beings to which man is subordinate. They are convinced that they have learned from their forefathers to recognize these beings, to get in touch with them, to communicate with them, and when one needs them, to ask them to mix in the ways of destiny and to help. That's why it is probably believed in the power of Timoc's witches, and many people, regardless of sex, age or profession, are looking for them. "(IoichPavlovski, 2009, pp. 13-14)

In rituals are often invoked *Father of God (TaicaDumnăzău), Mother of God (Maica Precistă), Saint arhanghel (Sân Aranghel)*, the 44 celebrations of a year, *Saint Friday (SfântaVinerea)*, etc. These characters come from the oral tradition of primitive Christianity, more exactly from the belief in the existence of the Creator, the Supreme. "The old beliefs have not been totally lost, they have only been adopted to the new conditions. Despite the repressed habits from the pagan context, theycontinue to exist in a partially Christian form." (Iovanovich, 2005, p.13)

To illustrate the attitude towards the church, I use a quote on the research: "... of the region where faith in God is magic and animism." (Stoianielovich, 1990, p.18). Romanians (from Eastern Serbia), „didn't show enough respect for the

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

Christianity and the clergy that was imposed, so that only when the word priestis mentioned, at it is added the curse *Let his head creaks, so help me God* (*Pocńi-ar capu, să đa Dumńe-Zău*) and their attitude towards confession and communion is the same, so many have declared that it is barbaric, forgetting that Romanians «kiss their God and their demons through magic rituals … the rituals against the evil eye are their prayers … razor blades, willows, chamomile and Devil's grass are the cross and the demonic premonitions of this people. The crossroad, the threshold, the estuary, the whirlwind and the fireplace are the altars for their gods and their demons».” (Gatchovich, 1999, p. 11)

The dialogue between a necromancy and the priest[43] is illustrative of what other elderly people have told me about their attitude towards the church.

N: - I have my grace from the fairies!

P: -You have no grace, only we have it!

N: -You do not! You learned it from the books! And that is not grace! I received it! And if you say you are priests, you are not! You are just thieves!

Gatchovich reports the following story[44]:

„Once, in the middle of winter, God left on horseback on the Earth, and when he reached the crossroad, he saw a witch standing on a little chair with a brass pot before where water was boiling without fire. Then God said, «Wait, pot, do not boil». And the boiling stopped, but the witch turned and said: «Stand still horse, don't go». And it stutters.

(A pl'ecatvr-o dată Dumńe-Zău pe pamînt calare pe cal la mijocuierńi și cînd a-juns la vr-o rascruče a vazutvrăjitoarĭa cu polomĭacađe aramă înainće pe scauńel mic în care fierbe apa fără foc.Dumńe-Zău atunča zîča: <Stăĭ, căldare, nu ferbĭa.>Sta caldarĭa și-ngheta,Da vrăjitoarĭaăiîntorča:<Stai calul'e, nu merga.>Și sta calu-nțăpeńa.)”(Gatchovich, 2002, p.11)

In the Eastern Serbia there are witches who are specialized in communicating with the world beyond, belonging to dark magic, without using this realm and for charms, spells or other acts that can harm someone, those dealing with black magic in all its spectrum of activities, then the „universal” ones (use both: white magic that aims homeopathic healing and black magic) and the healers. I met witches who said that they were once „universal”, but now they are just healers because whenhelped someone with spells, in the same time someone else suffered. And they couldn't bare this suffering anymore.

[43] Recorded in 2016 in a village near Bor, Serbia.

[44] 20 years ago I heart the same story from an elder women from VelikaVrbica, near Kladovo, Serbia.

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

2.3. Information about some of the necromancers in Eastern Serbia and my personal experiences with them:

1. Tania, born in Kosovo in 1959. She currently lives in Negotin and is a housewife. Education: general school. She had four children, the first one died at six. Since then she can communicate with the world beyond. Get in touch with the dead by calling their names and surnames in a special room builtfor this activity in the extension of her house. There are icons on the east wall. On the west side there is a window, beneath it, next to the wall, a narrow, four-person table with two chairs at its ends for Tania and visitor. Underneath the icons there is a table on which you can see all sorts of offerings, and a bank on which the companions of the visitor sit. On the bank and under it there are stacks of towels, handkerchiefs, etc.Although it gives the impression of carelessness, the air inside the room is not stubborn, nor is it dirty inside. Those who go to call someone beyond, carry an unburied candle, food and drink, money (which she does not mention when she tells you what to do and is not a fare for necromancer's services), all of which are placed on the table below the window and named for the deceased. Both the house and the yard are relatively new and modern, but at a closer look a dose of carelessness can be distinguished in spite of the recently cut lawn and the fountain in the middle of it.

The visitor must bring an uninitiated candle and what the dead liked to eat, drink. Tania doesn't ask, but same visitors brings towels, handkerchiefs as it's customized at funerals. Tania lights a thick candle that's on the table in a support (not the one visitorbring), next to which is a book that resembles a Bible, but it's not a holy book, it's a sort of zodiac. She ask the visitor for date of naissance. Then write down with a pencil their name and surname and the place where the visitors lives. The visitor is asked to look at the icons and Tania starts a prayer. Then, the procedure is as follows: visitors ask questions, the spirit responds through the medium. I was cautioned that I must be short, because there is no time. Contrary to what I was told, neither the spirit, nor Tania hurried. I've been in for more than an hour.

The invocation of the spirit begins with "Our Father in Heaven, we have visitors, we have visitors, we have visitors! We have visitors, Y[45]., we have visitors, Y., we have visitors! ". When the spirit came, she blew the candle. Tania speaks mixed not only from a linguistic point of view: Serbian with words in Romanian, but also from the point of view of mediation, goes from the story of

[45] The name of the dead person for whom is the call.

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

Y.'s thoughts to his own without any differentiation. I do not even get the first question prepared about what I need (as I was told that I first have to ask if he has what he need and then what interests me) that I become the subject of interrogation. I find it hard to look at the icons, for I always tend to look back to Tania to answer the questions. She constantly looked at the icons, almost never to me and spoke. She spoke a lot, in a great hurry as she was afraid to lose something, as she mustn't forget something to say. A few times I had a weird feeling that she can't transmit what the spirit said or she didn't want to because she suddenly stopped and stare at me for a moment. When dialogue finished, she asked me to light my candle and to name the stuffs I brought to Y.'s soul.

2. Rosa, born in Gamzigrad in 1949, where she lived all her life and still do. Housewife, without school education. The room where Rosa operates is separated by a courtyard that serves as a parking for visitors' cars. The room is part of the animal housing building, and is large, dark, with old kitchen furniture, a wood-burning machine and an almost new cooker. It looks like a cave. The initial shock from the sun to the darkness of the room that looks like entering the in a hut, darkly interrupted only by the window from the door leading to the courtyard and by a light bulb hanging from the ceiling at the end of a yarn above the square table is attenuated by the sensation the calm and warmth uterus like that surrounds you when you get inside. Although there are animals nearby, from the poultry I saw through the courtyard, to those I guess according to the shape of the animal building, it does not smell bad, nor the sound is like in a farm. The initial shock at the entrance due to carelessness caused by the hoar and not by the lack of cleanliness is alleviated with the passage of time. Baba Rosa calls in a glass with water situated on the table under the light bulb. Behind the transparent glass, a white vase with blue geometric patterns (just the contour of them) with a narrow neck of which comes out a thick candle that lights up when she calls.

The visitor brings a towel, a candle, food and drink according to the preference of the one she calls. Everybody puts money as many as he/she wants. Baba Rosa receives only on Thursday and Friday. From time to time she falls in a trance, but not when she receives visitors. And she gives news from beyond speaking all the time she is in trance, but when she wakes up remembers nothing of what she said. She speaks Serbian, but his mother tongue is Romanian. She talks like she's tired. After hours of queueing, even having a schedule, and considering the number of those in the yard, I mustn't be surprised at her tiredness, especially that I learn that she works day and night in that two days of reception.

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

The séance begin with an incantation: „Saint God, Saint Archangel and Saint Jones and the 44 feast of the year, bring Y. to me to sayfor who feel pity,who misses, for who is sorry, what is longing for, what has and what hasn't and have to be sent to him"(*SinteDumnezeule, SinteArangeleșiSinteIoanește,ivoi cele 44 de praznice de piste an,să-l scoateți pe Y., să-l duceți la mine săspună de care i-e milă, de care i-e dor, de care-i-e pare rău, cecată, ce are, ce n-are șicetrebuiesă-i maitrimetem.)*. She repeats this three times. And then we were waiting for minutes. She call Y. again, and the same, nothing. After a while she asked me if I had brought a photo.At my negative answer, tried again. After few seconds she asked me to come behind her and look at the looking glass from the surface of the water to see Y. when the dialogue finished, I light the candle and named all staffs for Y. and take the candle to the Y.' grave and light it in order to completely burn there.

3. Liubinka, born in Bor, in 1941. Retirement, education: general school. She is a fortune teller in wheat beans and tarot cards.She goes to monasteries, respects church feasts and does not work for those who believe in the Devil or name his name. She had a twin sister who died, and his mother, too, and the first grandson of her only son, is also dead. She came into contact with the world beyond at the age of twelve when she awoke from a coma that lasted three years. When she awoke from the coma, she realized that she had learned many things in those three years, including the Romanian regional dialect she hadn't known before becauseit wasn't used in her family. She dreamed of St. Roman and went to his monastery in Pomoravlie, near Aleksinatch, where he handed her the gift to see more than a normal person does. She says that her grandmother from her mother "knew with the dead," but she was raised by her father's grandmother, who did not know, so all she learned about the other side, dreamed or learned from the spirits.

At the entrance to the Liubinka'shouse, there is a large window on the east wall, a kind of closed balcony, then next to the door on the south wall, an icon wall, beneath which, stuck to the wall, there is a table with three chairs. Visitors sit on the side seats, Liubinkaon the middle one. Visitors go to her with the first water of the day (that is, as you wake up you fill a 2 liter bottle of water tap), "because the ancestral souls are also in the fountain or the source of water for household." (Tchaikovich, 1994, V, p.83). At first, Liubinka tell the fortune of visitor gathering in 44 corn grains.

Liubinka writes on a paper the first name and the name of those for whom she "searches". In bottle's water, after seeing all that is to be seen, she pours some

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

liquid from her bottle with sanctified water from three monasteries, throwsa corn grain from the ones she used for gathering in the first place, anddrops three burning matches. Then she constantly shake from top to the base of the bottle a bunch of basil tied up with a red wool threadon a knife. During this action, she is singing a ritual incantation (*descântec)* in Romanian dialect.

Sometimes ago she worked with dark magic (by this, also understanding direct communication with the spirits and her passage to the other worlds), but now she affirms that she is dealing only with the white magic (meaning that she "sees" only for the living ones).

When I visited her for the first time, there was very noisy at her: in each of the three rooms of the house some gadget was turned on: two radios fixed on different stations and a television. At the second visit, 13 days after the first, the house was completely quiet. From the conversation I deduced that the spirits of the other realm are looking for her, trying to contact her, so to cover the noise they make, their voices, Liubinka uses the sound waves emitted by household appliances. Trying to bring her to my field of interest, direct communication with the Underworld, I upset her, and then I found out that the spirits visit her only when the moon is growing. At home, I consulted a calendar and discovered that the moon was decreasing, hence the explanation of the peace in Liubinka's house. From her neighbors I found out that after her nephew died in one of the trespass falls she met her dead mother-in-law with her grandson in her arms and told her to remain in the world beyond and take care of her nephew because she got tired. Liubinkaget so scared so she never deliberately tried to get in touch with that world. However, during an involuntarily tress by, he saw Y., who, in the form of an angel, did not allow her to cross the bridge which separated the world beyond. And this was the starting point for my visits to her.

4. Stana was born in the village of CiganskoGroblje, she doesn't know when, she only know that she is around 90. She has no birth certificate or any other act. She doesn't possess a health care card because she has never been to see a doctor, no bank card because she has never had a job. In fact, she left her village only once in her childhood with her mother to pay a visit to a witch from other village.

She is the last of the family and the only girl in five surviving children. Because her family was very poor, and the closest school to Jabukovac (about four hours walk), she didn't go to school. Her brothers went to school a year (in fact, all at the same time, despite the age difference) to learn to read and write in the official language, Serbian, a language that no one in the area used. They told her that she didn't need school to look after sheep and goats.

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

As a child she went out on the clearing and watches the stars, and at some point, she didn’trealized how it happened, but the stars lose their golden glow and receive a silvery one. Lather she realized that the phenomena foretell the death of someone nearby. Her premonitions had always proved true. When she was 13, her father banned her from leaving the house during the night. Closed in, she could not fall asleep. So, during her usual writhing, she realized at some point that she had numbed and then even stuck her body, that if she tried to touch any part of his hand, she did feel nothing as if it were the body of a stranger. She began to tremble and to hush, and in a very late time she fall asleep. In her dream appeared the deceased from the surroundings. Every night she saw them in the posture they died: home, in the field, in the woods, etc. For some of them only saw their head or bust, for others the whole body. Some were in the shadows, others in full light. So, the nights were exhausting and all day she had to work. She did not dare to tell the parents anything, but she weakened, became pale, and stopped growing.

The spirits began to appear during the day: her body was stifling, trembling and she started to hiccups. In her visions appeared now people who she did not know, but her intuition told her they were dead. Eventually, she confided to her mother what was going on. She led her to a witch and then to the Vratna monastery where the monk Maksim read prayers for her. It was the only time when she left her village. When they returned home, her mother brought home a neighbor whom mother had recently died. Her father and brothers were busy with fieldwork. Stana, without anyone having taught her, took the icon of the Mother of God and put it on the table, sat down and began to pray to her and to all known and unknown saints to find her neighbor's mother after her first name and surname. After praying, in her own way, three times, the already known signs began: numbness, stiffness, and hiccup. The room around her shimmered, so did the people, and she felt herself sinking into a fog that became dense and hotter. On the left side of the icon, in the shadow, appeared the image of the searched woman, and thus began her first dialogue with the world beyond. All Stana had to do was to tell the son what his mother said, because she heard it all without having to address to her.

Since then the world has come to look for her. At first, the father was upset, resisted, but eventually, he knuckled under the requests of those who needed help. After a while, because of those who came from other parts of the world and the increase in the number of spirits who were willing to communicate, it was very difficult for Stanato find those she was searching. But one night she

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

dreamed a lit candle. And the next day, when she called, she lit a candle for the soul of the searched one. Everything was enlighthened and the gates of Heaven and Hell opened. The light of the candle, symbol of light and brightness of the sky, drew the souls of those called over the boundary that divides the dead. It was then she understood the importance of the candle both for the living and for the dead. Since then, she can see into the candle flame when she lights up to call if the deceased died with or without light. If it is absent, the spirit appears in the dark, alone, without being accepted by the community there. In vain the dead's family light candelsat the graveyard, at memes, gives him/her alms. The soul must be brought to light if it has gone out into the dark. The theory developed by Stana is not only about the importance of candle, but also of incense and wine in rituals related to death. At the same time, she states that the spirit returns to his home every day and that the offerings are very important, but more important are the good deeds and the understanding within the family.

5. Iovanka, born in 1940, in Iabukovatch, where she still lives. Her grace did not receive from herwomen ancestors, nor did she learn it from any book. One day when she was a child (she was not married, if she was, she could not have received the miracle, as she mentions), the lightning struck very close to her and she fainted. When she awoke, there were three earthly beings (Iovanka calls them fairies) and asked of her that as they saved her, she would save the world as well. They endowed her with this grace, and then, one night at three o'clock, she dreamed three young men equally tall, with similar faces, with the same hair, dressed in the same type of gray suit.They showed her how to get in touch with the other world.Iovankasays she has learned nothing from another living being and she doesn't need it. Words come to her on their own. She is a fortuneteller in cards (tarot), grains (corn), she is specialist in spells, white and black magic.

5. Radmila from Voivodani (village near Duboka) falls into trance for more than 30 years, at first, for short periods, every full moon, without being able to bring information from these trips. As time passing by, the duration and the quality of communication increase. Nowadays, outside of the spirits week, she enters into trance once a year, on January 20, by St. John. That does not mean that her predictions and ability to communicate with the world are reduced to these two dates. She can get in touch with those who have died most of the time. When she falls into the trance, during the day she helps those in need, and at night she mediates the dialogue with the dead. When she returns from her ecstatic trips, she does not remember anything.

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)

3. Conclusions

To pay a visit to a person (usually a woman) which has magical-religious experiences with ecstatic and trance symptoms, performed from time to time or on different feasts, and as subsequent she has acquired extra-sensory qualities, such as talking to the dead (necromancy) and predicting the future (divination), performed in various forms (genuine or specialized) and on different occasions (the religious calendar feasts or on demand) it's a constitutive part of life in Eastern Serbia. Manism is a characteristic of the inhabitants of Timoc Valley so they are trying to do the best when someone dies. As a consequence of that, many of thevisits paid to witches have led to the resumption of certain mortuary rituals or even their realization because they were not known, or were ignored or forgotten. In my field research I found out that regardless age, education or place of leaving (urban or rural), the population of Timoc know about this persons and if one hasn't experienced, one has a relative or a friend who has visited a witch. And even sometimes the dialog with the other world wasn't satisfactory, no one denied the possibility of healing through spells and potions or the communication with the other worlds.

Bibliography

Culianu, Ioan Petru, 2002, *Călătorii în lumea de dincolo,* Iași: Polirom.

Čajkanović, Veselin, 1994, *Studije iz srpske religije i folklora,* Belgrad: Srpska knjzevna zadruga.

Eliade, Mircea, 1985, *Šamanizam i arhajsketehnikeekstaze,* Novi Sad: Matica Srpska.

Gacović, Slavoljub, 1999, *Putevi istine. Polemika o vrednosti jednog naučnog rada*, Zaječar: Matična biblioteka „Svetozar Marković".

Jovanović, Bojan, 2005, *Magija Srpskih obreda (Magiaritualurilorsârbești),* Belgrad: Narodna Knjga Alfa.

JojićPavlovski, Jasna, 2009, *Vlaškamagija,* Novi Sad: Prometej.

Nikolić-Stojančević, Vidosava, 1967„Dubočke *rusalje*ili*padalice*kao predmet kompleksnihnaučnihstudija" *Razvitak,* no. 2, year I, Zaječar, pp. 86-93.

Šolkotović, Silvia-Diana, 2017,*Ritualurile de trecere ale comunității vorbitoare de limba română din arealul estic al Serbiei,* in manuscript.

BDD-V4491 © 2017 Sitech
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 19:50:58 UTC)