

## THE ROLE OF FOLK CALENDARS IN LIFE ORGANIZING IN OLD TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES

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**Abstract:** *In the traditional community of Banat, a component part of Romania, oral folk calendars played a fundamental role in the cyclical organization of people's lives because they contained non-riten pagan oral feasts and feast with fixed dates dedicated to the saints. In many localities, the celebration of the pagan divinities overlapped over the celebration of the Christians saints, in an extremely original vision, secular vision, and in the course of time developed a severe popular calendar system that was organically integrated into the folk culture. With regard to such a process of cultural origin, the Banat comes with an special ethnological dowry of archaic nature and quantitative of informational nature but consumed on social plan. This traditional heritage is a significant testimony to highlight an ancient mark of an powerful ethnic and cultural identity of the Romanians in this province, a phenomenon that provides a strong basis for the research of the multiethnic common Banat fund of the popular archaic culture specific to spoken languages and folk calendars.*

**Keywords:** *communities, folk calendars, Banat*

### INTRODUCTION

The folk calendars, in Romanian space, have special meanings within the traditional communities, the giving of alms and other offerings in many days of the year, it means a very strong cult of the dead and a special significance. In the local folk mentality, the family or relatives is composed of both the living and the deceased, the axis of the connection between the living and the dead being the immaterial soul. Within the traditions related to the popular Banat calendar the soul is given a great cultural attention according to the majority of the specialists in the field: [2,4,5,9]

- caring for the soul - perpetual rejuvenation or moral purity;
- regenerating the soul ritually, by involving the family;
- communication among others.

For today's man, we consider that the most important lesson he can learn from folk customs, traditions grounded in traditional communities, is that of communication between individuals of a small community, of communication between large ethnic groups, of communication between nations in the face of divinity. [3,8,10,13] Today, in the archaic village of Banat, there can be rediscovered cultural calendar traditions, real magical-symbolic experiences. The pagan or Christian traditions are related to a fixed calendar date or a variable date being synthesized in many specialized studies [5, 6, 11, 13].

These traditions constitute a significant testimony to highlight an old and stable ethnical identity to Romanians, the historical Banat through its archaic culture, having a distinct individuality has in the multiethnic background both native elements and Serbian, German or Hungarian elements [3,5,12,13 ], predominantly being astrological, biological, religious, and social elements that can influence in good or harm the earthly or celestial life of man.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

In this scientific approach, I reviewed, consulting the existing writings and the opinions of some elderly people, the fundamental role of folk calendars in organizing life in traditional communities in the multiethnic space that is Banat where, somewhere in the past, celebrating, honoring the herds, the souls of the ancestors were ritual practices with a fixed or variable date. In the paper are presented some traditions described in the specialized researches, from the multitude of the unwritten and orally transmitted in the area called Banat, which during the history was, part of the Hungarian kingdom, autonomous province of Lugoj-Caransebes, Turkish Villayet, Austrian province, council of Vojvodina and of Timis Banat, which spreads today in three countries, Romania, Serbia and Hungary.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the multitude of traditions existing in the area called Banat, a component part of Romania, we present: fixed-date and variable date holidays from the first half of a calendar year, following that the next half of the year to be the subject of a future research.

### A. Holidays with fixed day

*1. The New Year, Sanvasai (January 1st)*, when was made the onion calendar, in 12 sheets, the equivalent of each month of the year, salt was added to the maximum level. If on the New Year's night the sky was clear, it was considered that the year would be dry, and to the cloudy sky there would be heavy rain. Like the meteorological calendar of onions, in some Banat towns on the eve of the New Year, a calendar of luck was made, the onion sheets with salt were designed for the family members. Those who found water on the sheets of onion in the morning of the New Year, it was believed that will have luck all year long, and those of whose leaves were dry were unlucky. [13]

The most common ritual practice was guessing the fate, the custom being named in Banat also Sanvasai. Onions and garlic along with bread are placed on the table of the chosen ones, being the food most often quoted in traditional spirituality. The onion sheets that overlap one another give the impression of an emptiness, of a church dome, in the mystery of which unexpected things are hiding. The bulb shape can be remembered by an ancient pagan religious entity, which is protected by pungent odor. It is considered to be an entity, combining maternal symbols, intrauterine existences of beneficial and malefic, erotic beings, due to aphrodisiac, cosmic virtues (tears, aquatic symbols), premonitory (onion calendar), rituals.

Divided transversely presents itself as a hypnotic drawing of concentric circles, fantastic serpentine, character at the boundary between the aquatic (the tear generated) and the tellurium (the bulb hidden in the earth), if we think we are born from the earth and in the earth we turn, part of the fates dinner. Onions like ritual food [10] create in this way a perfectly symbolic code folded on the primordial intuition of birth, independent of biblical perceptions: when the woman has nothing to breastfeed the child, she takes her face, binds an onion tightly a spoon, and then he goes three days in the morning, starting tuesday, before the sun rises to a well. Here he draws the bucket, drank water three times, saying after every sip: I drink with water with spoon, to get the milk and then bite three times on the onion she says: I get on the onion to bring my milk. In some villages from the mountain Banat it is still customary that under three plates of burned clay, to put different objects by the mother of the girl who wishes to marry her daughter, and the young woman

in the morning to remove the objects [3, 4,] By anthology with the respective objects the chosen one will be for:

Mirror = cute;

Comb = the chosen one will have big teeth;

Coal = the chosen one will have dark hair.

The premarital guessing practices in Banat were also meant for other symbolic objects, such as the pillar of the fence, where the girl bound to the eye had to choose a pillar, if he was right, the chosen one was just and if he was crooked and the chosen one was the same.

It were also used the magic attributes of some plants, basil, hiker, four-leaf clover, which were put under the pillow to dream the chosen one [3,10].

Traditions from Banat show us that on the night of the New Year the fire must burn all the time, as well as a candle to an icon of the holy of the house, and on the morning of the New Year a man must enter the house for the good of the house.

**2. The Cross Day (January 5).** Part of the magical-religious practices of this day, considered the eve of the Epiphany, are the same as in the New Year's Day, especially the chosen one and the luck, the welfare and the health of the people in the New Year. The young girls take at least one yarn or several yarns of basil from the priest's bowl, which sanctifies the houses before Christ's baptism, and puts them under the pillow to dream the chosen one. It is believed that then the guardian angel shows the boys where they will be lucky in marriage. He fasts all day and in the evening he is praying for prayer. Some people from traditional communities believe that, by doing so they will see the opening of the heavens, being a sacred sign that they are good Christians. [13]

In some villages from the Mountain Banat, to the evening, the custom of the carol with Chiralesia or Siuralesa is practiced, but in the desert villages this object is held the next day and is called Ciurală. Groups of boys, with bells and talons, surround the houses, and especially the stables, playing sticks with agrarian content. The implications of this custom concern both the traditional religious aspect of the day and the cycle of work and magical acts or children's games. [2,13]

**3. Stretenia (February 2)** In popular beliefs, the Bear's Day, according to the oral tradition, would come from Saint Stretenia, nonexistent in the Orthodox Christian calendar, left by God to bring well when people are praying for it. [3,13]The day this holy is evil, with evil heavens, who make wedding in this day will not go well. Traditions show that on this day the bear comes out of the lair and if he sees his shadow come back into the lair and winter will be extended for 6 weeks.

**4. March (March 1st).** The custom of the march is of Roman origin, with the time it was made from a silver coin, drilling through which a string of white and red strands was introduced, becoming a symbol of feminine appreciation and love. In the old days, the children were worn to their wrist, to bring health and good luck, becoming a protective talisman, was worn until a certain feast, Flower, Easter or Arminden, or until the flowering of trees, apple or cherry, or shrubs like the rose. After these dates the girls placed it on the blooming branches, for they be beautiful [9,13].

The habit of the marriage is eloquent in terms of the evolution of a popular tradition from the magical stage to the symbolic one and to a simple tradition in the community. The most common traditional march practices in Banat are related to folklore and are narrative treated: Dochia gammer and Dragobete [3,7,8,13]. Dochia gammer, as a mythical representation, has nothing in common with the Holy Martyr Samaritan Evdokia, celebrated by the Orthodox Church, most of the specialists considering it a feminine goddess in the Dacian Pantheon, or Terra Mater's Latin goddess of the earth, fertility, germination and vegetation.

George Calinescu [3,8,13] considers the myth of Dochia gammer - between the myths, (the mioritic, aesthetic of the Manole Crater and the Flying Master) of the Romanian culture and spirituality, Dochia (joining to Emperor Trajan) would be the myth of the ethno genesis of the Romanian people. There are several stories about Dochia, the mother-in-law who had a son, Dragobete, married, who was naughty with the daughter-in-law, and for eliminating her, told her that it was spring in the mountains, and brought her strawberries, informing her that she could take the sheep to transhumance. She believed that spring came on the top of the mountain, dressed with twelve coats, and was accompanied by his son, started with the flock, being caught for two days and two nights of rain, cause which determined soaking coats with water. He had to strip them off because of the heat, then a cold rain came, frosting his son and her and the flock, pretending to be stone stalls. According to the legend of its many forms, spread in all areas inhabited by Romanians, these stone stalls were identified by locals in different massifs in the Carpathians. In Banat they are considered to be in Semenic Mountain.

This legendary Christian character, Dochia gammer, has symbolic meanings, that link to the renovation of time and the resurrection of nature. In this role, she represents a seasonal divinity that dies and reborn annually, symbolizing the death of the Old Year at the Spring Equinox (March 9th after the Julian calendar) and the rebirth of the New Year. Between the two natural forces in winter and summer, she represents the old season (winter) and its daughter-in-law, the new season (summer). The battle between them is given between 1-9 or 1-12 March. According to most ethnologists of Banat [3,4,5,6,7,15], the entire mythological complex of Dochia gammer can be synthesized in three major components:

- legends about a wicked old lady, who froze during the changing of the passage from winter to spring, climbing up with the sheep in the mountains;
- legends according to which certain rocks in the Carpathians, which have an anthropomorphic aspect, would be Dochia gammer, and the zoomorphs would be their sheep;
- popular beliefs about old women days, in number of 9 or 12, from the beginning of the marriage, when it is considered the transition from winter to spring.

These days in Banat have magical virtues for meteorological forecasts, each day out of the 12, corresponding to one month of the year. The most widespread is the belief that the day of that period, which you choose as yours, as a grandmother, shows you how it will go, good or bad throughout the year.

In the past in the villages of Banat on 1 March, there were certain prohibitions:

- if you work, you get sick;
- it was advisable to twist, because Dochia gammer was climbing up to the mountain, with a twist fork;

- in the evening was organized a meeting for spinning, where the host banged sweet pumpkin and gave it to the soul of Dochia gammer;
- the tools and seeds were sanctified;
- the fruit trees were tied with red thread to make fruits.

**5. The Forefather (Saints) of March.** Some researchers [5, 6, 13] show that in the 9th march the old ladies go out. The old men knock the earth, as for the cold get in and the heat come out. At this time in Banat, in the area of Oravița sacrifices Brindusei, which are coils made in the form of a man, with his head, hands and feet, or he is drawn in the form of a man. With the honey remaining from making this cookies can be done: [13]

- charms for love;
- sorcerers for marriage;
- taking the fruit from the field, from the house or family;
- lustral practices, removal of snakes etc.;

In this period, it clears up the fire, the fire is made, it climbs and fights with the storks in the fire, smokes, surrounds the gardens, to be protected from caterpillars and snakes. The old men represent the popular calendar, a 9-day cycle dedicated to the fathers and ancestors, which continues symmetrically the days of the old women, being opened by the martyrs (March 9th) and closed by Alexius (Alexis) March 17th. In the Julian, Grecian and popular calendar it is stated that there are 18 festivals dedicated to the Romanians: [3,5,8,13]

- The Spring forefather celebrated at the Martyrs on March 9;
- The summer forefather is celebrated on the Saturdays of Pentecost;
- The Autumn forefather celebrated at Saint Mary, September 8, Day of the Cross September 14, Sanedru October 26;
- The winter forefather is celebrated on Saturday before Christmas.

Because Forefather Days are celebrated at the end of the seasons, marked by solstice and equinoxes, it shows that mythical ancestors patronize the cycles of nature and control seasonal activities. Forefather days are associated with traditions and habits, beliefs related to different animals and birds (bear, wolf, stork, cuckoo, dovetail) or sacred plants (the willow at, the wormwood, the lime, prove and are also represent the remains of an ancestral totemism in which the ancestors took the appearance of beings of these kingdoms of nature. [10,13]

In the Forefather Days, the magical defense (apotropaic) practices against the evil spirits have a special importance, which can come with the spirits of the ancestors or belong to mythical characters: Iele, Joimarita, Muma Padurii. In these days in the traditional communities were always present charities that consist in offering of food, clothes, hens and animals, the poor people, for the souls of the dead who according to the popular mentality, return to where they lived before death on some feasts.

## **B. Holidays with variable date**

**1. Santoaders.** Oral tradition related to the name of the Holy Martyr Teodor Tiron, martyred in the days of Diocletian (284-305), by the Santoaders, who are celebrated in almost all Banat during the first week of the Great Lent.

In Caraș Severin County, a strong belief is related to Sântoader's Horses, whose period begins on the first Tuesday of Easter and finishes on the following weekend Friday.

Tuesday, Friday and Saturday of the first week are the days of the Great Sântoader, and the last days of the following week are the lame and blind horses, who can not stand by the others, remain the last. In the popular vision, the Sethadaders are beautiful little boys, made in horses because of committed sins [6,8,13].

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Sântoaders as mythical beings open the agrarian year, the labor prohibition being explained by some ethnologists, even from the perspective of this function of these demigods. Their role is well established, to establish order and balance, by interrupting feast and meeting of meetings girls with boys, because they began agricultural work and the young people had to rest on the nights that shrank until the summer solstice.

The most in dangerous were the young girls and wives, who, if they were torched or weaving, were taken by Sântoaders to a hell of a game that lasted until they died. As for Sântoaders not enter in the house, all the vessels had to be turned backwards.

**2. Easter, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.** On this day, the following rituals, beliefs and celebrations take place: [1,4,5,13]

- Lamb sacrifice at Easter;
- Forefathers of Easter;
- Whoever does not go to church to resurrection becomes ill;
- Whoever dies at Easter will forgive his sins;
- On the Easter day one can see and known the witches;
- On the Easter egg shells stick to the door of the door;
- Charm can be done for soul mate;
- The fire wheel slides off the hill;
- The green glove is set on the threshold of the door;
- On Easter day do not take salt in hand to not sweat;
- The candle lit by the three wakes and the resurrection of the lord, spent in the new Easter-dressed shirt gives health and is good in love;
- The red eggs at Easter and their significance, symbols of immortality and eternal fullness.

This day in popular beliefs there is interest in purification, in the morning practicing bathing of virgins and girls. Watered water is practiced as a purifying act but also a special magic that would speed up marriage.

The red egg, lamb are part of the ritual foods, specific to the great saint of the resurrection. The eggs' shells are thrown to the ground, the practice having a fertilizing function, aiming to increase the abundance of holdings and orchards. Eggs are an ancient ritual that symbolizes the sacrifice of primordial divinity.

**3. The Matcalau (the Monday of the dead).** According to the literature, this celebration always falls on Monday, prayers and memorials are being made at the graves of the family's dead.

Choosing the place where Matcalaul is being developed is the Garden as a sacred center and the Tree, ax mundi, mediates the twinning of the tellurian and the celestial. The tree, the apple or the plum, next to which the ritual is to be carried out, is tanned and a circle is dug around it, the earth is dug, and then it is marked with stones. The actual grooming brings in front two young people, after consuming a little salt and tearing a piece of chop, slam through the wreath, exchange eggs. After the ritual, the crown of flowers hangs in the tree as a symbol of purity and triumph over life. The second moment of the ritual of exaltation is closely related to the first and consists from the traditional feast in green grass with omelets, pomegranate, in an atmosphere of celebration with songs and dance. [3,7,8,13]

### CONCLUSIONS

The folk calendars of the traditional multiethnic communities from Banat include a multitude of astrological, religious and social elements, especially the solstice and equinoxes, astral periods, that can influence the earthly or celestial life of man for good or evil. For these reasons, for every holiday in traditional culture is a great concern for the soul of those living and for the dead.

The celebration of the ancestral souls, through ritual practices, giving of offerings in many days of the year, means a very powerful cult of the dead, where for this multiethnic area, which is the Banat, has a special significance in the local folk mentality. In the traditions related to the Banat folk calendar to the soul is given a great cultural attention: moral cleanliness, ritual regeneration through family involvement and communication with the others.

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