

FIRE IN RITUAL PRACTICES FROM BANAT

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Abstract. The general origin of fire divinities lies in the need of the primitive man to keep the fire alive, and in later periods to avoid the difficult re-firing of another fire. The fire considered as divine spirit, was sacred in all religions, in the form of absolute veneration and has many coincidences in the Romanian mythology area of Banat, being mythologized as a purifying ghost in the image of the living fire, as an internal fire taking the form of the Flying, and as a celestial deity through St. Elijah. Even today in some areas of Banat can be discovered some elements of the ancient ritual practices dedicated to pious energy, especially on the occasion of the mythological-folkloric feast Alimori, but also on the Great Thursday before Easter, by the Martyrs, Saint George, when are made fires for the purpose of cleaning and purification of animals or of the St. Dumitru the trees to produce fruit. On these holidays the domesticated fire is lit, sacred, source of good, venerated by the Masonic fraternity and treated as a living being, better suited to be considered light, in order to distinguish himself from the fire of Geehenna having an evil action.

Keywords: ritual practices, live fire, Banat

INTRODUCTION

Discoveries of isolated objects as well as those that prove the early habitation of the area called Banat, as unique elements or cultural rarity, highlight both fireplaces and heated furnaces, housing executed with great ingenuity. Significant in this respect are some data relating to the existence of steel works, the mineralogical research of the slags leading to the conclusion that the fire was used at low temperatures in this area.

The critical review by the specialists, in a complex optic of the archaeological discoveries of Paleo Christian fact, in collaboration with those discovered in other parts from Romania's territory, helps to highlight the historical-cultural role that the autochthons had in this area, to the possession of this purifying ghost, the fire, mythologized in the image of the living fire, which lit ritually at the most important ceremonies with religious character or calendar holidays [4,5,7,14,16,17].

The fire has been considered by the specialists, a god even since the moment of his dominion by the man, feared and revered, this god appears in the form of the fire light by the sun, of the fire of the house's door or the fire coming from within the human being, his celebration in the traditional community from Banat, overlapping with the celebration of Christian saints, in an strictly integrated organic order in archaic culture.

Being a multicultural space, is seen in archaic Banat culture Slavic, Hungarian, German influences, but also the habits of burning fires on holidays on feast remain an indisputable individuality as well as the Masonic lodges as a sacred fires with a sense of light. [1,10,11]

The history of this habit of living fire overlaps with the image of the village, identifying itself in traditional gestures and mentalities, of animals and plants purification, being traced from the beginning of the Middle Ages, being considered by the church to be a habit that venerates some pagan gods [3,6,9,10,15].

Today can be traced rituals in the Romanian cultural area and Banat area certain ritual practices on the occasion of some holidays at Romanians (Easter, Martyrs, St.

George, St. Dumitru), Serbs (New Year) and less to Hungarians and Germans [2,8,12,13,18].

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to put in value the traditional Banat cultural heritage, we consulted the opinions of some specialists in the field and we searched to rediscover in the archaic communities some mythic-symbolic customs, that are still preserved, in order to be promoted through cultural tourism, as components of culture, putting into a favorable light this cult of the sun with generating power in nature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the Romanian archaic culture from Bucovina, it is believed that the Earth, with everything that will be on it, will perish once and once consumed by fire in this way:

- after great battles and illnesses after the werewolves will eat the sun, and God will shed rain of fire in order to melt the earth;

- only then the fire will be extinguished when on the seventh day the Holy Elijah will pass over and all the souls of men will come out from the mound in sheep and goats, which will be separated the sheep going to Heaven and the goats in Hell;

- the earth burns and will be smooth and will follow the judgment, by the good ones will be taken by God, and by the evil ones the devil will burn them in the fire. The Mother of the Lord has to moisten the son of Epiphany in the fire three times and has to bring out souls; for this reason, women give the Epiphany to the cross the longest throats.

Also in the popular Banat calendar there is still kept a form of light, which symbolizes life, creative power, love, purification, live fire with the elements of some ancient ritual practices dedicated to pious magic that can influence the course of life:

- in good or evil the earthly life;

- in better or worse the celestial life of man.

These ritual holidays in the archaic community have fixed or variable dates as follows:

- On the 9th of March, the Martyrs or the Mothers are celebrated in Banat, and then there is a feast of the living fire, through which the evil is burned and the goodness is brought to light. In the ancient archaic beliefs on this day, the cycle of the 9 old ladies ends, from the Geto-Dacian belief, and the beginning of the days of the forefathers. On this day, a series of ritual practices are made in order to hurry the coming of spring:

a). the elders bat the earth with beats to awake through their magic action the asleep forces of the earth;

b). are lite ritual fires over which the young men leap for purification;

c). the garden is smoked, in order to remove the caterpillars and the snakes stating-get out snakes and frogs under the sole of our house;

d). the yards are blotted and the garbage are burned;

e). the house and the stable are burning;

Some researchers from Banat (Evseev I and Turcuş A.) consider that these celebrations dedicated the forefathers reveal a cult of ancestors that represents the backbone of all traditional religious beliefs and practices at the Romanian people. We believe that due to this fact on this day there are notable memorials for the souls of the deceased ones and the magic practices of defense against evil spirits who can come into the household along with the spirits of their ancestors or belong to mythic characters, Iele, Joimarita.

- on the 23rd of April St. George's day, which in the tradition of Banat is called Sangiorz are practiced the following rituals:

- a) lighting fires for purification;
- b) the animals are passed through smoke.

This saint is invested with the attributes of an indigenous divinity, protector of children, dairy animals and agricultural crops. He has powers over time, opening the spring season, restoring nature together with his brother of Samedru (Saint Dumitru) has control over pastoral years. In the folk vision from Banat, the new pastoral year begins on April 23 at Sangiorz, unlike Agrarian New Year beginning at the spring equinox. On the night of Sangiorz in some Banat hill villages, it is watched from the high places on the treasures, which are believed to burn with flame in that night. Also in this night are unleashed some evil forces, who are people alive predestined that after death to transform in poltergeist. They can take:

- the richness of the fields,
- milk from cows and sheep,

For their removal, the breast from of animals producing milk will be anointed with garlic, louse or nettle.

- the flames of Saint Dumitru lit on the evening of October 25, in special places suitable for the participation of benefic spirits, having a double magical function in Banat:

- a). to warm the dead;
- b). To remove wild beasts from households.

Some researchers (Turcuș A.) show that the main traditional desideratum of the traditional Banat community was to win the spirits of the ancestors, in order to integrate them into the life of their ancestor. In the popular view, the nation was consisted from the living and the dead, and there was a special communication between them, both of a religious nature and a spiritual metaphorical binder. On the eve of the feast day, it is shouting "Come on to the fire of Samedru", the children take a little smut and cast them through the plum gardens to be rich harvests.

On the Friday before Easter, fires are fired for the warming of those who come from the world beyond, in Banat there is a fire from the fighting near which is placed a chair with a new pot with water. On Saturday before Easter is made a fire of joy for the resurrection in the fire burning weeds and blossoms for the smell to reach God.

In the Faget area and in the villages of the Mures meadow, this habit is called Alimori, having two variants called Alimolile in villages from hill and mountain and another Priveghiatul to lowlands.

Practicing the habit of firing fire and jumping over the fire takes place after the candles are lit at the tombs and the pomp is divided into the cemetery. The ritual fires intensify during the Easter period and in order to prevent the evil fire from spreading in the archaic communities of Banat, are kept the days of the holy Christians, which have replaced the heathen divinities of the fire.

In some localities, is practiced watching the dead or Moroleuca, in the hills or hillsides areas, where in the evening, in the traditional evening-Wednesday or Thursday of Easter Week, groups of citizens, especially the youngest, but also children, climb up the hills, or go on the streets of the village or in the cemetery and light fires that they keep late in the night. In the hills villages, fires are fired in viran places, which are maintained by children and young people assisted by elderly people.

They make torches that they sprint and spin them over their heads or throw them up. The practice of habit takes place regardless of the area, the hill or the plain only after:

- candles were lit on the graves of the near;

- were shared different kinds of goods in order to remember the dead persons at the cemetery.

In the calendar of customs from Banat of Mangiuca S of this celebration are related to a series of beliefs and customs such as: making the fire at the cemetery to the deaths of the family, calling and coming home of the dead ones, shedding the dead water on the grass, dividing 40 coils, walking through the village, opening the heaven and hell, making garlands for family members.

Some researchers have shown that this custom has its root in the ancient cult of our ancestors, but has undergone changes, becoming: a robust manifestation of folk humor, through which some aspects out of community patterns were subject to the knowledge and judgment of the community.

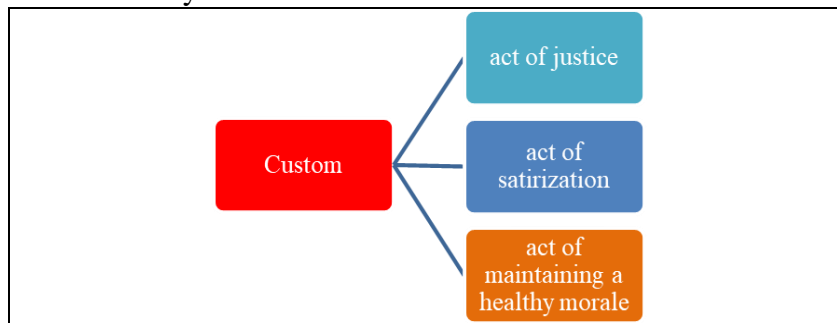


Figure 1. The custom in the rural community from Banat

The habit represents for Banat's rural community: (Figure1)

- an act of traditional justice that is very important for the rural community of the Banat Mountains and hills areas;

- an act of satirization of some facts that must be known and controlled by the community from this area investigated only partially in this approach;

- an act of maintaining a healthy morale and unaltered preservation of the rural spirit of traditional communities.

CONCLUSIONS

The living fire that lights at the calendar holidays is the sacred fire, the spirit of God, a spring of purifying life, appearing in archaic traditions and customs as a god in the form of the fire lite from the sun.

On the territory of Banat there are a series of ritual practices and beliefs marking the beginning of the agrarian year, the coming of the spring, the beginning of the pastoral year, the banishment of the evil forces, and the spirits of the ancestors.

The fire burned at St. Dumitru in special places, favorable to the participation of beneficial spirits, has a dual magical significance, to remove the wild animals from households and to warm the dead. Saint Dumitru is an agro pastoral divinity in the local cultural tradition like his brother St. George, they living in opposition, first by swinging the summer and undoing the forest, and the second celebrating the installation of the spring.

The ritual fires grow during Easter period, in Holy Thursday and in Easter Saturday. In order to prevent the evil outbreak of fire in the archaic communities, are kept faithfully the days of the saints from the Christian calendar, which have replaced the old pagan divine goddesses of the fire, Saint Elias, lightning and thunder.

These metamorphoses have produced living impressions on archaic people, impressions crystallized in mythologies that are grouped around the great pious divinities.

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