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THE ARCHAIC TIME PERCEPTION IN THE MODERN TIMES.
AN ETHNOLOGICAL APPROACH TOWARDS A RELIGIOUS MINORITY

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Abstract: The present study focuses on the religious minority arising from the implementation of the Gregorian calendar in Romania. Christian religious community of the Old Style is defined both historically and through psycho-social elements that caused the secession of believers together with clerics from the Romanian Orthodox Church. Special attention is given to magical-religious beliefs observed with ethnological research tools, including: magical perception of time and especially of the agrarian calendar, faith in miraculous natural signs, survivals of animist religion.

The study of this religious community provides information on internal mechanisms for the appearance and development of minority phenomenon. The research is conducted beyond the issue of minority ethnic differentiations that has dominated multiculturalism studies. On the contrary, the existence of this religious minority in the third millennium, that is intra-ethnic developed and defined by ethno-cultural values eminently conservative, may explain a specific paradox of the strong Romanian religiosity which is essentially a rural and traditionalist one.

Key Words: Old Calendar believers, folk religiosity, religious minority, time perception, Orthodox Church, belief, holiday.

The socio-anthropology of religion has over-discussed the relation between folk religiosity and the institutionalized one. We shall highlight here this connection with an analysis on a religious minority that lives in Romania and also in a couple of other South-East European countries. The decision taken in 1924 by a group of clerics and laics to detach themselves from the Romanian Orthodox Church had a motivation that should be related to the collective archaic perception on how sacred time is measured. Although the arguments of this resistance movement have gathered ecclesiological and dogmatic elements throughout the decades passed, we believe that it is important to underline the affective reasons of the peasant imaginary which have determined their retreat from the life of the Orthodox Community. The attachment of the villagers from Moldavia towards the Julian calendar might be characterized by the Romanian “fatalism” category that Mircea Vulcănescu spoke of, as a result of the “integration of the being to the universal rhythm, which is considered to be a sign of God’s will”¹. The same Romanian philosopher with sociological education noticed the Romanian “theophanic personalism”, our constant affiliation to the rhythms of the universal existence. The addiction of the rural life to the natural evidences which correspond to the divine will contradicts the modern society “disenchantment” (*Entzauberung*), sustained by Max Weber.

The Emergence of a Confessional Attitude. Historical and Cultural Context

During the Pan-Orthodox Congress from Constantinople, in 1923, the Romanian Orthodox Church adopts the Gregorian calendar, together with other Orthodox churches from South-Eastern Europe. Since it was felt as out of the canon by a part of the cleric, this change will break the Orthodox world into two irreconcilable parts and also tears the Romanian Orthodox community. The members of the Orthodox clerk that initiated this resistance mainly belonged to the Old Tradition congregations from Moldavia (Neamț Monastery, Secu, Sihăstria and so on). These clerics were led by the monk Glicherie Tănase and afterwards by the bishop Galaction Cordon (starting with the year 1955). The conservative fracture of the Orthodox Church started as a spontaneous reaction and became soon a true institution, with a hierarchic structure – a Synod led by an archbishop – and a considerable number of ecclesiastical settlements, built exclusively with funds from the believers.

Today, the church that maintains the old way watches over a growing number of adherents, mainly because of the mix marriage, which determines the conversion to the Old Style for the partner initially baptized by the official Orthodox Church. Unfortunately, the exact or at

least approximate number of the Old Rite believers is hard to estimate, because of the means census was carried on with: the forms did not specify a certain type of Old Calendar believers². Still, we can estimate a large number of believers from the great amount of churches and monasteries which can be found mainly in the districts from Moldavia. As we have already noticed, the churches, which were built before, and preponderantly after 1989, had the exclusive financing of the religious community members, even more so, the laic priests or the monks manage to survive thanks to the same financial support, unlike the official Orthodox Church performers who benefit from a budgetary income. The map of the places where these churches were built shows the existence of the initial nucleus that agglutinated this religious community. The 34 churches from Suceava and the 32 from Neamț, along with numerous settlements from other Moldavian districts (Bacău – 14, Vrancea – 13, Iași – 11 etc.) and fewer in Galați, Brăila, Botoșani reveal without doubt the initial situation of this spiritual resistance movement. The majority of the rebels against the calendar change were obviously located in the districts that held a large number of parochies. In time, Old Style churches appeared in Muntenia (București, Giurgiu, Dâmbovița, Prahova) and Dobrogea (Tulcea), and later even in Transylvania (Covasna, Maramureș, Brașov, Hunedoara, Caraș-Severin) or Oltenia (Gorj). In two well-known cities from Italy which host numerous Romanian emigrants, Rome and Torino, churches were also built for the Old Style Romanian Believers. The number of these ecclesiastical monuments is the only concrete piece of information on the rise this religious minority has registered, as weakly recognized by the Romanian cults officials, as it appears to be.

The event from 1924 generated a series of discriminations and even persecutions conducted by hierarchic authorities, but initiated by the religious ones and put into practice by the state administration – a phenomenon that took place mainly in the period from 1935 to 1939. The Romanian society conflicts between the resistance movement representatives and the members of the innovating church can be compared to those produced by Nikon's reform in the heart of the Russian Orthodox Church. This comparison is relevant also for the names Old Believers get from the community. While analyzing the sociological meanings of the term *rascolnic*, O. Vințeler is fully motivated to observe that the opponents of the Nikonian reform were called beyond reason “schismatic” or “sectants”, because „Sectarian, which means ‘intolerant with the beliefs of others, exclusive’, can very well be applied to the Nikonians”³. Consequently, the Romanians that decided to keep the Old Calendar have been named “stylists” or even “calendarists” by their fellow compatriots who adhered to the calendar change. Moreover, the religious persistency has been qualified as a sectant behaviour, institutionalized as a variant of the Romanian Orthodoxy.

Actually, the Romanian Old Style Church, with its Mitropoly in village Slătioara from Suceava district (and the religious settlement built during 1947-1948), received a juridical identity as late as in the year 1990 (February, the 19th), thanks to the post-revolutionary context. The official given name for this religion was “The Organization of the Romanian Old Style Church believers”⁴. Terminologically speaking, the ecclesiastical institution that remained constant in following the Julian Calendar was forced to use differentiating elements in the official papers, although it did not cause change. The dichotomy created by the old – new opposition was followed by a series of discriminating elements that appeared spontaneously in the Romanian public spoken and written perception. In the end, it all turned into the general tendency of the crash between identity and otherness. “Stylists” are considered not only a religious minority, but also an ethnical one and are commonly mistaken as Russians (especially from The Republic of Moldova) and, more frequently, as Lippovans. A similar phenomenon subjected the Catholics from Moldavia or the Unitarian Church members to the identity misunderstanding: the majority of Orthodox people have the impression that they are of Hungarian origins.

Some wrong labels have been used for the Christians belonging to this Orthodox minority, in the Romanian public opinion after December 1989. It goes without saying that it is the case of a widely spread social process of the majority ruling against the minority by diverse means which are more or less conscious. Today, we even speak of a mass-media effect on the labels production and repetition, a phenomenon that is provoked by “different theologies and ontologies of media”⁵.

The fact that Old Style Orthodoxies are assimilated to a different ethnicity, meaning the slave origins minority, is easy to understand if we think of the brotherhood between the Romanian Old Style Orthodox Church and the other churches, especially from the East, that have also maintained the Julian Calendar (a part of the Bulgarian Church, of the Russian and of the Greek one, the Patriarchy from Jerusalem, The Holy Mountain, the Serbian Church). After the year 2000, the Romanian Old Style Church decided to change its official name into the *Romanian Eastern Orthodox Church*. This change was supposed to help avoiding the contrast to the official church; hopefully, the new name would even succeed in discouraging the inappropriate use of the term “stylism” when talking about this community. It is noteworthy that other Julian Calendar churches intended to highlight in their names the divergent faith and also their loyalty to the calendar: *Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece*. *Synod in Resistance* or *Bulgarian Old Calendar (True) Orthodox Church of Bulgaria*.

Although it is not the purpose of our paper, we shall observe the fact that from a theological point of view, the Old Style clerics sensed the actual expression of a long term crisis that affected the heart of Orthodoxy embodied by the calendar change. The crisis was produced by the

ecumenism and secularization phenomena, both threatening the purity of the traditional Orthodox doctrine. On their turn, these inside movements were caused by a menacing proselytism induced by the powerful occidental, non-Orthodox churches. The Gregorian Calendar was promulgated by the papal bull of Gregory the XIII, from 1582. Thus, the New Calendar fixed the difference of the number of days between the church calendar and the astronomic year, which appeared as a consequence of the Old Julian Calendar Sosigene established by the order of Julius Caesar.

The Holy Chair used its authority to force this change in central and Western Europe until the 18th century. As for the Romanian society from the beginning of the 17th century, it noticed the Gregorian Calendar threat, because Catholic and Protestant officials and believers from Transylvania had adopted this innovation during 1602-1611⁶. Hence, the Gregorian Calendar followed by a part of the Romanian population already created the imminence of its general implementation. Soon, the simultaneous use of the two calendars would create difficulties for the state administration and especially in the foreign affairs with the occidental states. At the same time, both its versions started to circulate, as a common calendar for the folk environment. It is the case of the well-known calendar printed by Simeon Manguia in Oravița, in 1882⁷, which became a reliable source of information on that time's traditional holidays, for the folklorists. Romanian church calendars from the centuries to come after the Gregorian reform speculated the cleric's fright and passed it on to the folk environment which hosted the circulation of these writings. For example, in a manuscript calendar written during 1785-1798, traditionally containing *Pascalie* (the calculation of the Easter date) for the next one hundred years, reads at the end the punishment anticipated by the Church against those who would like to change the Julian Calendar with the Gregorian one⁸.

Such threats by a certain magical value existed in collective imaginary and they had a powerful magical effect towards the Romanian religious mentality, known for its conservatism in relation to sacred ecclesiastical discourse. After the annexation of Transylvania, it is known that the Habsburg authorities tried to impose to Greek Catholic and Orthodox population the Gregorian calendar that became official to all religions in the provinces. However, their motives were not religious, but more economical, because the set of pre-Christian feasts fanatically held by the Romanians in Transylvania threatened the productive life. The fact that the imposition of the Gregorian calendar have this active economic determinant is demonstrated by Illyrian Regulation in 1771, when the movement started by a decree of Hapsburg in 1732, will be dropped, provided that the Romanian and Serbian bishops, who are tolerating the Julian calendar, to make proposals for reduce the number of holidays.

The Perception of Time in Traditionalist Societies

Romanian folklore of the late Middle Ages recorded a huge number of non-working days, whether they were connected with Christian holidays, whether they were a result of vision rather superstitious or taboos created by folk religiosity. This intense need in the collective psychology to harmonize profane and sacred time intervals, inimical and favorable time intervals is *par excellence* the result of a ritual vision of time. Ritual time is a cyclic time, a time of “eternal return” as Mircea Eliade observed. This qualitative determination and individualization of temporality were specific differences that anthropologists have sought to make a link between measuring time by modern civilization (the time clock, a universal, abstract and linear time) and the folk cyclical time measured by *Sun’s Pillar*, *Year’s Hand*, and *Moon’s Pillar*, like Romanian peasants said.

Collections of astrological data, combined with the purely religious ones as *Astrologul*, *Gromovnicul*, *Vrăjălnicul*, *Trepetnicul*, were very popular in medieval Romanian rural areas and they suggest that there were established harmonious relationships between folk religiosity, the official one and the semi-scientific information about the clues of nature. As many researchers have shown, in medieval mentalities, lower stratum of society could do not distinguish between purely rational data source and the so-called “popular science”.

The taking into possession of time by Christianity was harmoniously accepted in traditional civilization, because theophanic time of Judeo-Christian origin overlapped perfectly over cyclical and qualitative pre-Christian time. Discussing the specific of „the Church’s time” in ancient Christianity, Jacques Le Goff notes the circularity of sacred history, so that of theological time: “For the Bible and primitive Christianity, time is primarily theological time. It begins with God and it’s dominated by Him”⁹. The implementation of Christian values in archaic societies also meant the taking into possession of time by ecclesiastical institutions. It really was accomplished the transition from a measuring system based exclusively on natural signs to a system being under *dominatie dei*? The problem is discussed by the medievalist Jean-Claude Schmitt, who wonders if church bells rang in unison with the crowing cocks¹⁰.

In order to try to reconstruct the border between the archaic measurement of time and the occurrence of pre-Christian calendar in archaic society we can successfully call the situation revealed by anthropological research of exotic tribes Christianized only in the modern era. For example, to Indians surveyed by Hallowell, the introducing of temporal divisions by the Christian missionaries is immediately felt as a sacred law, and not as what actually was, a secular attempt to implement landmarks of civilization in these preliterate communities: “Consequently the week is now recognized as a unit of time among the Christianized natives and there is a term for it. It is interesting to observe, however, that

this temporal unit was assimilated as part of a new *religious* orientation, rather than as a secular temporal concept as such”¹¹.

Before measuring time by scientific means, pre-Christian societies organized their existence only by “reading” environmental signs so that the seasons correspond to the phases of the changings in nature. Thus appeared stellar calendars used especially in nomadic crafts as shepherded or shipping, solar or lunar calendars, preferred by populations which were involved in farming. For primitive farmers a year was an interval since the sowing of plants to plant’s harvest. For people of exotic tribes of hunters and fishermen, it worked a timekeeping system that was directly influenced by the zoological rhythms. For example, the deep-sea fishing of the Yami population on the island of Botel Tobago is a whole year ritualized event¹². In addition, the calendar makers in primitive societies were invested by the social group with superhuman characteristics, the gift of reading signs of plants, animals or stars¹³. The necessity of calendars was felled by the must archaic civilizations and the idea to report the passing of time with some ritual events is also very old; Plato in his *Laws* prescribes that the legislation shall arrange the festivals according to the decrees of Delphi.

Units of time are no longer in ritual existence, units of measure, but a subdivision or an alternating rhythm of states, always sending a generic value so that the entire cycle of time is strictly divided in baleful and beneficial. The repeatability of temporal circumstances in magic and religion is also observed by Mauss and Hubert: “The same religious or magical acts are performed in the same circumstances of time, accordingly some symmetrical points of a system; such is the partition of time, common calendars or special calendars, astronomical time. This proves the great care taken in complex rituals to indicate for each rite its temporal conditions”¹⁴.

We notice here that according to the archaic mentality, time is not unidirectional and linear as highly civilized people perceived it, but is heterogeneous, charged with a content that is always affiliated to a goal. Time linked intensely to human experience is the one that appears in the Romanian vision of existence and the one in which the magic ritual takes place. In Romanian folkloric imagery, time is perceived in its functional heterogeneity. Thus, it can be understood as either cyclical or recurrent, like in the perception of ancient Greeks, or linear and teleological, as in the Old Testament, or seasonal (depending on farming-related activities), social, historical, etc. In an attempt to systematize the various facets of social time in the Romanian pre-modern society, Nicu Gavriluță identifies four categories: 1) natural time or cyclic time, 2) Christian time, 3) institutionalized time of the State and (4) a newer commercial time¹⁵.

Archaic perception of temporality involved obedience to the rhythm favorable-unfavorable and attention given to variations of profane time (human) and the sacred (hierophanic) time. Arbitrary occurred because of

the schedule changes that produce uncertainty in the qualitative perception of temporality. Perceived as an intrusion, the new measurement of time was automatically rejected, as any other phenomenon imposed from outside in the ancient community life. Implicit negotiating of renewals placing in the functioning of traditional societies should be made within a period of time, depending on the specific psychological and social impact of their communities, and especially their resistance to change. Therefore, collective perception of temporality, as part of the cultural heritage of the Romanian rural environment, has suffered a sudden stroke.

In this complex context we must understand the distrust of farmers for whom, in 1924, the changing of a calendar system invested with the force of tradition and perfectly coordinated with magic, ritual experience and technological development of the Romanian village, was seen as a great danger. An important testimony on the perceptions of the Romanian peasants related to the reform of calendar is provided by results of surveys coming from sociological campaigns of the school led by Gusti. Also, a reaction of intellectuals grouped around the magazine "Cuvântul" reconstructs a particular current of public opinion. Articles signed by Nae Ionescu, Mircea Vulcanescu have a central criticism of the Church and the State of disinterest shown towards mysticism in the Romanian villages¹⁶. Nae Ionescu notes that the reform had affected mostly the peasants of Moldavia where religious sensitivity is stronger. In 1925, Vasile Băncilă, being an apologist of "holiday spirit", discusses the problem of forced reform in the magazine „Ideea europeană”¹⁷, and later Nicolae Iorga, in *The History of Romanian Church*, emphasizes the same conservative and mystical folk psychology, which prevented the Romanians to accept the change¹⁸.

Sociologist Ernest Bernea, member of the school coordinated by D. Gusti, is one who has examined the problem of measuring time in traditional societies and exemplified this discussion with his interlocutors in the villages where the sociological campaigns were conducted. The ethnologist notes the value of the sacred calendar in the Romanian villages, because people deplored the cruel fate to have come to live such apocalyptic times and almost lost their reason to live, for example, a woman in Northern Romania states: "I do not want it! They take a knife and cut me, and I still will not respect the new calendar!"¹⁹. The chaos produced in the laws of human existence and in vegetal cycle by the Gregorian calendar has been interpreted as signs of the coming end of the world, so that farmers were waiting for nature to be destroyed by drought and loss of the fruit crops. The refusal of the new calendar is expressed in the attitude of all peasants to separate the measurement of time walking from the one officially imposed: „ (...) let the calendar to to continue so, let judgments to continue so, but the days let they be as Lord Christ said.”²⁰. The farmers observed that the nature continued her cycle in conformity

with the Old Calendar: “Old Calendar is the good one, all trees leaf and bloom in the old time measurement not the new one, cuckoo sings in the old time measurement in the new one we don’t hear it.”²¹.

The Romanian sociologists encountered an interesting situation of both multi-ethnic and multi-religious matters in the village Cornova from Basarabia. The local cultural diversity positively influenced the capacity of some groups (Romanians, Russians, Ukrainians, Jews and Gypsies) to maintain their national characteristics, in the context of an urbanization process implying the loss of traditional values. Using the field investigation data, Sanda Golopenția keenly observes the phenomenon and explains the mingling of the two calendar reference types as a range of tensions: “(...) the rapidly urbanizing Cornovans of the thirties were living at one and the same time in a sacred era, one strongly marked by the tension between Greek Orthodox religion and the flourishing Russian sect of the Inokentists, or by the struggle between the New and Old Calendar systems”²². The intercultural conflicts from the inter-war Cornova could have eventually caused, by all chances, a deterioration of archaic beliefs and also could have induced the Julian Calendar abandon. Surprisingly, sometimes it is the multi-identity environment that supports people’s conservatism and the acute maintenance of inherited values. Being probably encouraged by a Russian Julian tradition church more powerful than the homologous one from Romania, people of Cornova and from Basarabia in general remained faithful to the Old Calendar in a large majority. As for the traditional environment, this resistance was noticed in a project of returning to Cornova ran by researchers from Basarabia. At the end of the 90’s, peasants had the same confidence in the Julian calendar truthfulness and also in the fact that nature unfolds itself according to the old measurement of time²³.

In an article about the ethnic minorities in Romania, published in 1940, Nicolae Iorga remarques the attempts of the Romanians from Bassarabia to identify themselves with the Russian minority because the last ones have preserved the Old Calendar: “In Bessarabia, the priests representing the official religion do not have the confidence of the majority of the faithfuls. The Russian clergy took advantage and created clashes between the churches”²⁴.

In Search of Identity

With respect to the traditionalism of the abroad Romanian communities, we notice the attachment Romanians from Serbia have for the Julian Calendar, a tendency owed mainly to the fact that the whole Serbian Orthodox Church kept the Old Calendar. The situation that Romanian Orthodox from this country stand upon is similar though to the one of the Old Believers from the historical Moldavia. It is the

language of the religious procession and not the calendar that took them apart from the majority of people. By refusing to attend the ecclesiastical establishments (because it is not permitted to the priests to perform in Romanian language), the Romanians from Serbia developed an introverted religious cult, inside the family, with *pater familias* as a main sacerdotal authority. We invoked this present reclusive cult circumstances from Serbia because they correspond to the Old Style Orthodox case. The respective Christians felt they were not understood by the ordaining priests who failed to keep up the traditional calendar and had no other solution but to abandon and to act religiously outside any institutional context. It is the case of Old Faith Orthodox families from the first decades after 1925 and the phenomenon should be approached in a dialectical manner, imposed by the clash between the official or institutionalized religion or the religion of “There” and the familial or domestique religion of “Here”²⁵, in addition to the conflict between the “great tradition” and “the little tradition”²⁶. It is a millenarian old opposition between the collective and social environment of the religious manifestation (widely discussed by the sociological school of Durkheim) and the private cult of the pray uttered in privacy, within the family.

The incapacity of some Moldavia people from the third decade of the last century to follow the decision taken by the ecclesiastical institution manifested itself spontaneously, in various places from this region and the few insurgent groups did not meet each other until late and even then thanks to the short geographical distance among them. We have to take into consideration the poor means of rural communication, not to speak of the difficulty to preserve the message and the correct information in such conditions. Hence, in the coming years, when the clerics resistance group already managed to create a fable institutional organization and some religious settlements, the peasant from Moldavia villages found out they were not an unique case and started to cross the mountains from Suceava shyly or more likely blindly, in order to look for that monastery they heard of, which was served by priests “of their own”. Still, the sometimes too long distances among the native villages and the few churches did not allow the peasants to be pilgrims too often during the year. This inconvenience led to the tendency to preserve the private cult along the religious year and to impressive gatherings of believers in Old Faith churches while celebrating parish fairs or important holidays of the religious calendar.

In order to demonstrate that the resistance of Moldovian peasant was in line with the deepest feelings of the ancient spirit, we bring the issue before a similar behavior in the lower stratum of French society in the years following the imposition of the Gregorian calendar. Jérôme Delatour, a historian who has made a medieval fresco of the French society moment emphasize that despite the authority of the papacy in a country where the overwhelming majority of the population was Catholic religion, Vatican

edict, dated 24 February 1582, was hard to put into practice in terms of administration and, when change came, however, it has sparked a series of psychological, political and cultural events²⁷. Since this is a culture in which a mass of the population benefit from literacy and popularizing books explaining the New Calendar changes and the reason for such a change, this ought to calm any unrest and discord. But resistance to change was manifested in particular, as for Romanian rural society of early twentieth century, in the lower stratum of the social pyramid, still attached to the rhythms of nature and dependent on the agricultural cycle. In his *Essays*, Montaigne observed with astonishment that calendar reform occurs in rural neighbors as a true apocalypse: "It was like the sky and the earth were moved at once"²⁸. As in the Romanian villages, French farmers observed by Montaigne no longer knew how to calculate "the time of their sowing, the convenient moment for their business, the harmful and the favorable days"²⁹.

Apologists of New Calendar ridiculed this evidence of folk obscurantism and they discouraged the superstitions of the peasants who did not understand how they will make the state institutions to stop riding the sun for 10 days in order to make the Sun to concord with the new measurement of time. Coming as to confirms rural apocalyptic fears, astronomical and predicting literature of that period confirm and summarize these spontaneous beliefs. Forecast fateful signs that will show on the sky or the nature of the outburst, coming close to a second Flood, are found in books written by Nostradamus The Young and Edmond Le Maistre and reinterpreted according to the new situation. Although Montaigne's French people are separated from the peasants investigated by Ernest Bernea by more than three centuries, the same mystical attachment to the Julian Calendar characterizes both.

Eternal Past and Surviving Present of the Romanian Orthodox Old Calendar Belivers

Today, this religious minority keeps its number of followers sometimes increased due to marriages with the Orthodox majority members. In addition, as a millenary mechanism to attract new followers in a traditionalist communion, Orthodox believers dissatisfied with elements of secular worship renewal from the dominant cult turns to Old Calendar parishes. Although their separation was made official due to the changing of the calendar dogma, Old Style Church has gradually diversified its ecclesiological discourse adding to the reasons for disagreement with the secession of the Romanian Orthodox Church renewal trends. Among these, the representatives of the Old Church criticize, relying on the strict letter of the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, the tendencies towards ecumenism, simplification of Sacraments (baptism by sprinkling rather than the old baptism, by immersion), and

various signs of secularization. However, it seems that great mass of Old Believers had maintained as main argument of their secession the Calendar argument.

I especially noticed two beliefs that maintain their attachment to the Julian calendar. This mechanism of creating and validating beliefs is an example of the use of reason in the religious knowledge, as Michael S. Jones pointed out³⁰. Their beliefs are used like reasons to maintain and legitimate their state of disaffiliation. One belief is generated by the familiarity to nature and the environment, the place in which they exist. So the agricultural cycle begins and ends according to the Old Calendar. Religious holidays have penetrated so deeply into the life of rural communities because they were main mark moments, such as those of the organization of major intra or inter-community processions as blessing of water services (Epiphany), of the fields ("green holidays") or processions in which they invoke the sky hail and lightning to not come to their fields, protected by Saint Elijah. Christian holidays overlap the marks of animist religion, and thus they reflect a superstitious fear generated by the wish of not disturbing the nature or the God, master of nature by the lack of these invocations or inattention given to the saints who ensure the communication between sacred and profane.

The food taboo before the "first fruits" or "new fruitage" belongs to the same category. In the medieval West, this reminiscent of the animist religion was taken into possession by the priestly institution, through various rites of blessing of fruits or trees and identified by specialists in the collection of prayers by Pope Gregory XIII and that of Pope Paul V³¹. For example, the blessing of "November grapes" on August 6, the date in which is celebrated the *Transfiguration of Christ*, is attested both in the East and the West since IX-XI centuries³². Unwritten law or tradition of not to eat the fruit up to a feast, when they will be consecrated by the priest hides the older human being superstitious fear of not interfering with the rhythm of nature and not eat a kind of fruit before it reach maturity. Moreover, these fruits are connected with ancestor worship by the prior practice of alms, when they offer these fruits in the memory of their ancestors at the great summer celebrations. For example, in villages mostly affiliated to the Old Church the Orthodox people narrate about the arising of "the Apple of St. Elias" on the sky at sunrise in the celebrating day of St. Elijah (August 2, New Calendar), the traditional patron saint of these fruits.

A second belief that maintains the vitality of this religious minority is linked to the New Testament revelation of divinity in nature. We mean the legends spread by pilgrims to the places of Sacred History; these stories tell these believers about miraculous signs shown for celebrations of the Julian calendar, understood as a desire of the divinity to confirm the validity of the Old Calendar. We take for example Descent of the Holy Light in the night of Easter, a bright cloud on Mount Tabor, the place of the

Transfiguration of Christ, on 19th August (New Calendar) or the return of the Jordan river in the morning of Epiphany, miraculous phenomenon that happens every year on 19 January, and not on January 6 as the Gregorian calendar assumed. These legends circulating among the minority community belong to the so-called perceptions of religious imagery in natural phenomena (*pareidolia*), a syncretism of the nature worship along with formal belief systems. In traditional societies, the miracle is perceived in terms of a necessary response that the partaker of a ritual drama is expected from the transcendent-receiver. Members of these societies, through the ritual waiting of the miracle, of the extraordinary, they experience a paradoxical state of “normal” miracle³³. By becoming a traditional element, the miracle confirms every time and location the need of celebrating and of regular reference of human being to sacred. Thus, Old Style Orthodox Believers revives their faith in the authenticity of celebrating while they wait for miraculous signs, either the divinity appears in their native village whether in the consecrated topography of terrestrial Jerusalem.

The fact that this superstitious attitude is a widespread one, apart from the religious minority discussed here, is the survival celebration of some important holidays in the Old Calendar interfering with the New Calendar ones. A recent intensive investigation in the rural community of the *Momarani*, a group of villages situated in the mountain region across the Jiu River, in the Southwestern Transylvania, describes the folk religious calendar of these conservative peoples, which includes, besides the Orthodox Gregorian holidays, the celebration of Saint Elijah “in the Old Style” (“pe vechi”), or the Epiphany, Saint John, Saint George etc.³⁴ The superstitious attachment of Transylvanian peasants for the old holidays is motivated by the fact that especially these holidays are essential marks of the natural calendar. Anyway the *Momarani* don’t celebrate the holidays of some religious minority. The well-known conservative way of life of this community and the region they live in, far enough from the core of the Old Calendar believers, deny any phenomenon of acculturation or any possible influence.

Strong attachment to traditional values, magic perception of time as heterogeneous, living in the phenomenological horizon of the miracle and introverted contact with remnants of animist religion are fundamental features of this religious community, even in the third millennium. We think that the main feature of this minority is related to the fact that it takes its roots from the patriarchal life of the village. Although a great number of Old Style parishes are built in urban areas, it is known that in Romania, urban social life is still dominated by psychosocial profile of a rural population, only recently immigrated to the cities. Religious sociology revealed the important role it plays the rural parish in preserving the traditional religiosity. The French sociologist, Gabriel Le Bras traced the lines of relationship which extend from basic theological

doctrine through the complications of administration to the simple life of the parish peasant³⁵. This scientific opinion, expressed in the first part of the last century, when Western theologians had observed the changing of some deep structures in the religious sensibility of the masses, is an appropriate example for understanding the 21st century situation of the Romanian religiosity, which is close related to the rural way of life. Recent Romanian sociological studies show that in rural communities, elderly category is what keeps the greatest attachment for an intense religious life³⁶. We think that considering the psychosocial mechanisms of folk religiosity can be a way to explain certain paradoxes revealed by researchers who have pointed out that in Romania the great importance of religious values is not in direct proportion to the presence of ethical values³⁷.

To explain these phenomena, it should be taken into account the individual efforts to adapt the rules of the global society, which often ignores the subjective, spiritual needs, and despite the fact that in Romania, the State financially supports the Church and takes into account the religious necessities of the Romanians. Canadian sociologist Raymond Lemieux tries to explain the emergence of religious minorities occurred by secession from the great traditional religions just as subjective manifestation against the loss of individuality in capitalist society. To choose a different direction than that followed by the majority is explained as an indirect opposition to “meta-myths” of social mechanism and as a return to the source of those “small beliefs” that exist in the history of private life³⁸.

According to the characteristics of the minority group³⁹, we can say that the religious minority discussed here suffers from a certain discriminative attitude; the adepts of the Old Calendar are sometimes more discriminated by the Orthodox majority than the adepts of the neo-protestants cults who are normally perceived like more distinct ecclesiological speaking from the Orthodox point of view. This situation is sociologically motivated by the initial state of clandestinely religion practice⁴⁰ of some of the traditional Orthodox believers, those who live in communities with a very small number of their own confession. So, they tended to hide their beliefs and to deliberately ignore the visible habitually actions of the Orthodox practice, as a regularly attendance at the religious service or the receiving of the priest in their homes. In the small communities with a great number of churchgoing, this attitude was socially disapproved by the majority. Another discriminative situation of the majority towards the minority is the necessary submission to the system of the public holidays established according to the official religious calendar. The theoretician of the minority group, R. A. Schermerhorn named those groups “cultural subordinates” because of the relation of power manifested by the dominant group towards the minority one⁴¹.

An exclusionist attitude of the Orthodox majority derives from the ethnic discrimination discourse of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Analysts of the Romanian religious phenomenon observed the autochtonism of the Romanian Orthodox believers, especially in premodernity⁴² and also in communist society. In F. Lobonț words, “nationality, that is the affiliation to an ethnic nation, is considered inseparable from Orthodoxy and any citizen who does not belong to Orthodoxy excludes himself from the present Romanian nation”⁴³. As we already pointed out, the Romanian Old Calendar believers, associated with slavic ethnic minorities, are victims of this anti-minority attitude. The paradox of this situation is exactly the mark of ethnonationalism in the discourse of the religious minority in question. Their public and clerical members manifest themselves as the last and most loyal representatives of the Romanian Orthodox inheritance and of the folk tradition. An indirect external proof of this auto-perception is the presence at their religious assembly of nationalist political leaders. Therefore, an appropriate attitude towards this religious group would have to take into account its cultural differences, not its ethnic ones, a necessary distinction that Sandu Frunză rightfully emphasized in a general discussion about religious communities and multiculturalism: “We discuss multiculturalism not according to its ethnic aspect, but according to a cultural one, and according to this aspect religion occupies a central place”⁴⁴.

The Romanian Old Calendar Believers have a deep sense of their distinctive condition and of the cultural traits that set them apart and which are disapproved by the dominant part⁴⁵; they share a sense of collective identity and respect for traditional Orthodox values. Following the importance given in traditionalist societies to the familial rites and the many pagan survivals kept by these ceremonies⁴⁶, the members of this religious community prefer to marry or to choose godparents inside the group. This group identity is encouraged by the Church, by some internal publications, edited in their own publishing houses, like the review “Tradiția Ortodoxă” [*The Orthodox Tradition*]⁴⁷. These believers also share the piety towards the memory of their first Mitropolit Glicherie Tănase, considered a zealous fighter for the Orthodoxy, sanctified in 1999⁴⁸.

The rise and configuration of a religious Southeastern European minority reveals the need for appropriate instruments of collective psychology, in its eternal confrontation with different reasons of action. The decrees of actors vested with decision-making capacity in modern society can produce profound changes in the perception of social groups still remaining, even in our century, in a pre-modern way of thinking. Although he theorized detachment of modern society's perception of the magical vision of the world, Max Weber acknowledges that sometimes religious ethics works similar to magical way of thinking. The social imagery of that class of religious people are still in direct relation with the rhythms of nature, the laws, forms and rules of their religion may be

perceived as intangible and immutable⁴⁹. The sacred conventions or stereotypes, raised to the rank of tablets of laws that human beings can not change again. Only if another Moses would lift up the mountain, people would accept the new law. In the plan of studying contemporary religious behavior, the experts are discussing the growing problem of recurrence superstitions in contemporary human existence⁵⁰, which leaves open the path of research psycho-social implications of mythical and magical type in the evolution of the great religions of our time and their historical roots.

Notes:

¹ Mircea Vulcănescu, *Dimensiunea românească a existenței*. Ediție îngrijită de Marin Diaconu [*Romanian Dimension of Existence*, ed. Marin Diaconu] (Bucarest: Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1991), 115.

² The population census in 2002 includes a section for Old Style Christians, but the ethnic criterion reveals that many of those believers actually belong to the other religious associations, like the Lippovans.

³ Onufrie Vințeler, "The community of Lipovean Russians from Romania," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, Vol. 1 Issue 3 (Winter 2002): 164.

⁴ <http://www.mitropoliaslatioara.ro/istoric.php>.

⁵ Patrick Eisenlohr, "The anthropology of media and the question of ethnic and religious pluralism," *Social Anthropology*, Volume 19, Issue 1 (February 2010): 53.

⁶ Toader Nicoară, *Transilvania la începuturile timpurilor moderne (1680-1800)* [*Transylvania in the Early Modern Era*] (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 2001), 59.

⁷ Simeon Manguica, *Călimdriu iulian, gregorian și poporul român pe anii 1882 și 1883* [*Julian Calendar, Gregorian Calendar, and the Romanian people, for 1882 and 1883*] (Oravița, 1882).

⁸ G. T. Kirileanu, "Din cărțile vechi ale Ținutului Sucevii. Un vechi Calendar manuscript, 1785-1798," [*Fragments from the Old Books of the Suceava County. An Old Calendar in manuscript, 1785-1798*] *Șezătoarea*, Vol. X, 1907-1908, No. 3-4 (November 1907): 43.

⁹ Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. A. Goldhammer (Chicago, 1980), XIV.

¹⁰ Jean-Claude Schmitt, "Religion populaire et culture folklorique," *Annales. Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, Vol. 31, No. 5 (1976): 947.

¹¹ A. Irving Hallowell, "Temporal Orientation in Western Civilization and in a Pre-Literate Society," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 39, No. 4, Part 1 (Oct. - Dec. 1937): 658.

¹² Edmund R. Leach, "Primitive Calendars," *Oceania*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (June 1950): 260.

¹³ Martin P. Nilsson, *Primitive Time-Reckoning. A Study in the Origins and First Development of Art of Counting Time among the Primitive and Early Culture Peoples* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1920), 350.

¹⁴ Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert, *Études sommaire de la représentation du temps dans la religion et la magie*, in *Mélanges d'histoire des religions* (Paris : Librairie Félix Alcan, 1929), 15.

¹⁵ Nicu Gavriluță, *Fractalii și timpul social [Fractals and Social Time]* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 2003), 56.

¹⁶ Nae Ionescu, "Dificultăți bisericești," *[Difficulties of the Church]* Cuvântul, Year 4, No. 1123 (1928): 1; Mircea Vulcănescu, *Bunul Dumnezeu cotidian. Studii despre religie*. Ediție îngrijită de Marin Diaconu *[Good Lord of Every Day. Religious Studies]*, ed. Marin Diaconu (București: Humanitas, 2004).

¹⁷ Vasile Băncilă, "Reforma calendarului," *[The Reformation of the Calendar]* *Ideea europeană* VI, 159-161 (November 1924-January 1925): 1.

¹⁸ Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii românești și a vieții religioase a românilor*. Ediția a II-a, revăzută și adăugită, *[The History of the Romanian Church and the Romanians Religious Life. Second Edition]*. Vol. II (Bucarest: The Ministry of Cults and Education, 1932), 307.

¹⁹ Ernest Bernea, *Cadre ale gândirii populare românești. Contribuții la reprezentarea spațiului, timpului și cauzalității*. Cu o postfață de Ovidiu Bârlea *[Romanian Folk Thinking Frames. Contributions on the Representation of the Space, Time and Causality. With an afterword by Ovidiu Bârlea]* (București: Cartea Românească, 1985), 197. See also Ernest Bernea, *Trilogie sociologică [Sociological trilogy]* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 2004), 345-348.

²⁰ Ernest Bernea, *Cadre ale gândirii populare românești*, 197.

²¹ Ernest Bernea, *Cadre ale gândirii populare românești*, 199.

²² Sanda Golopenția, "Love Charms in Cornova, Bassarabia," in *Studies in Moldovan. The History, Culture, Language and Contemporary Politics of the People of Moldova*, ed. Donald L. Dyer. With a Foreword by Bernard Comrie, East European Monographs, Boulder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 197.

²³ Vasile Șoimaru (coord.), *Cornova* (Chișinău: Museum, 2000), 177-178.

²⁴ Nicolae Iorga, "Les minorités en Roumanie," *Politique étrangère*, No. 2 (1936): 30.

²⁵ Johnatan Z. Smith, "Here, There and Anywhere," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, ed. Scott Noegel et al. (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 21.

²⁶ Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: T. Smith, 1978), 22-8.

²⁷ Jérôme Delatour, "Nôel le 15 décembre. La réception du calendrier grégorien en France (1582)," *Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes*, Vol. 197, No. 157-2 (1999): 370.

²⁸ Michel de Montaigne, *Essais* (Paris: Edition Victor Lecou, 1853), 652.

²⁹ M. Montaigne, 652.

³⁰ Michael S. Jones, "In Defence of Reason in Religion," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2002): 128.

³¹ Jean Delumeau, *Liniști și ocrotiți. Sentimentul de securitate în Occidentul de altădată*. Traducere de Laurențiu Zoicaș *[Reassure and Protect. The Sense of Security in the Old West]*, trans. in Romanian by Laurențiu Zoicaș. Vol. I (Bucarest: Polirom, 2004), 47-48.

³² Jean Delumeau, 37.

³³ See Paul P. Drogeanu, *Practica fericirii. Fragmente despre sărbătorește* *[The Practice of Happiness. Fragments about Celebrating]* (Bucarest: Eminescu, 1985), 9.

³⁴ I. Lascu, *Satul de la capătul vremii [The Village at the End of Time]* (Craiova: Autograf MJM, 2010), 76.

³⁵ Gabriel Le Bras, "Pour l'étude de la paroisse rurale," *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, Vol. 23, No. 101 (1937): 492

³⁶ O. Soare, "Biserica și comunitățile umane din mediul rural la începutul secolului XXI," [The Church and the Rural Human Communities at the Beginning of the XXIst Century] *Review of Research and Social Intervention*, Iași, Vol. 19 (2007): 21.

³⁷ Sorin Dan Șandor and Marciana Popescu, "Religiosity and Values in Romania," *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, 22 E (2008): 180.

³⁸ R. Lemieux, "Sur le sens d'être minoritaire," in Bertrand Ouellet et Richard Bergeron, ed., *Croyances et sociétés* (Montréal: Les Editions Fides, 1998), 28.

³⁹ See the definition of Louis Wirth, "The Problem of Minority Groups," in Ralph Linton (ed.), *The Science of Man in the World Crisis* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1945), 347.

⁴⁰ See in the recent number of *Revue de l'histoire des religions* (No. 2, 2011), some problems of the religion in clandestinity.

⁴¹ R. A. Schermerhorn, "Toward a General Theory of Minority Groups," *Phylon*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 3rd Qtr., (Clark Atlanta University, 1964): 238.

⁴² "(...) for the mentality of that time, God's justice helped to legitimate the repressive measures directed here against foreigners". Andrei Pippidi, "Chronologie, eschatologie, confession dans l'espace roumain au XVe siècle," *Revue des études sud-est européennes*, XLVIII, No. 1-4 (2010): 178.

⁴³ F. Lobonț, "Romanian Orthodoxy, Between Ideology of Exclusion and Sécularisation Aimable," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, Vol. 8 Issue 24 (Winter 2009): 52.

⁴⁴ Sandu Frunză, "On Religious Communities and Multiculturalism in the Romanian Cultural Space," in *The Challenges of Multiculturalism in Central and Eastern Europe*. Edited by Sandu Frunză, Nicu Gavriluță, Michael S. Jones (Cluj-Napoca: Provopress, 2005), 104.

⁴⁵ Joe R. Feagin, *Racial and Ethnic Relations* (Prentice-Hall, 1984), 10.

⁴⁶ Paul H. Sthal, "La conversion incomplète. Les rituels du cycle de la vie," *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica*, 2 (1996): 57-70.

⁴⁷ "Tradiția Ortodoxă". Revistă de cultură teologică ortodoxă "[The Orthodox Tradition. Orthodox theological culture magazine]. Edited by Slătioara Mitropolie, No. 23 (June 2011).

⁴⁸ Mitropolit Vlasie, *The Life of the Holy Hierarch and Confessor Glicherie of Romania*, trans. by Sorin Comanescu and Pr. Gheorghe Balaban, Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, (Etna: California, 1999), 61.

⁴⁹ Max Weber, *Sociologia religiei. Tipuri și organizări comunitare religioase*. Traducere de Claudiu Băciu [The Sociology of Religion. Types and organization of religious communities, trans. in Romanian by Claudiu Băciu] (Bucarest: Teora, 1998), 207.

⁵⁰ See the anti-weberian statement in an Oxford conference, in 2008: „Clearly, despite Weber's prediction, superstition lives in the modern world". S. A. Smith, "Introduction," in *The Religion of Fools? Superstition Past and Present*, eds. S. A. Smith and Alan Knight (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8.

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