

ION PETRICĂ, *Religiozitatea și instituțiile sociale în România* [Religiosity and social institutions in Romania], Iași, Editura Institutul European, 2013, 137 p.

In Romania, systematic research in the sociology of religions began in the period between the two World Wars, under the excellent auspices of what is known as the Sociological School of Bucharest, led by Dimitrie Gusti, following which, not very long afterwards, the school was closed by the communist regime. As was also the case in the other states in the communist bloc at that time, the sociology of religions was diverted from its legitimate purpose to become a propaganda tool, with sociologists becoming party ideologists. Today, 26 years after the political regime change that followed the events of December 1989, we feel that laudable progress has been made in this field, but that this progress remains, unfortunately, insufficient. In this context, the publication of Ion Petrică's volume entitled *Religiozitatea și instituțiile sociale în România* [Religiosity and social institutions in Romania] is all the more praiseworthy and appreciated.

How religious are Romanians? How secularised is contemporary Romanian society? What are the dimensions and particularities of this phenomenon at the level of Romanian society? What is the place and the role of the Orthodox Church in the current Romanian social context? These highly topical questions, currently very much on the minds of Romanian researchers in the field, are also tackled, directly or in passing, in this volume. However, the book particularly explores the theme of collaboration between the Orthodox Church and the State in the area of social assistance (child protection). The author – both sociologist and theologian – has an advantage in this endeavour, in the sense that he is both a servant of the Orthodox Church in a state institution and an employee at a County Directorate of Child Protection (DGASPC). The book therefore has the quality of bridging the gap between the sociology of religion and that of social assistance, an aspect that is clear even from the beginning in the construction of the work's main chapters.

We cannot overlook the fact that, in his capacity as a professional practitioner in the field, the author demonstrates (should we say?) exaggerated optimism, in our opinion, when he asserts that he has chosen to address these specific themes (in reference to the concrete nature of the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the State in the field of child protection), since “this is one field in which the reform of the entire system has been achieved in a very unique and extremely efficient way, such that, today, Romania has become a model for many European states” (p. 86). We will not push the point, as this is a delicate subject capable of drawing us away from the arena of the strictly scientific and into that of social and political debate.

The first part of the book is exclusively theoretical and is dedicated to general themes in the sociology of religion, such as “Classic and Contemporary Sociological Approaches to Exploration of the Religious Phenomenon” (Chapter I) or “Religiosity and Contemporary Social Assistance” (Chapter II). Later on, Chapter III – “The Church and Social Involvement in the Romanian Public Sphere”, and Chapter IV – “Child Protection in Romania. Development of the System over Time”, draw a connection between the general theme presented in the first two chapters and the concrete ways in which the Romanian Orthodox Church contributes to providing and improving social services in the field of child protection. The Bibliography is one of quality, extensive, coherent, and as up to date as it could be; the author shows a real capacity for selecting and systematising the vast range of bibliographic resources that he has explored.

The main merit of the author's approach is that he leaves behind the strictly theoretical aspects of this issue, taking it further, into a realm much more prone to capture the reader's interest; one which is truly practical and pragmatic and which takes the form of two studies, one undertaken at a

„*Revista română de sociologie*”, serie nouă, anul XXVII, nr. 1–2, p. 155–158, București, 2016



Creative Commons License
Attribution-NoDerivs CC BY-ND

national level and another one undertaken at a regional level (Chapter V – “The relationship between DGASPC and Church at a Romanian National Level”). In terms of methodology, we shall not dwell on technical details, but it should be mentioned that both studies were undertaken to impeccable scientific standards, in terms of the working instruments used, the concept operationalization procedures, and the processing and interpretation of empirical data.

In the case of the first study, undertaken at a national level, questionnaires were completed in the 47 specialist institutions in each county in the country, the results of which revealed the precise situation concerning the following aspects: 1) the presence of **priests** (employed or volunteers) in over 70% of public child protection institutions; 2) the presence of **churches**, chapels or other places of worship within 34% of DGASPCs, as well as the massive attendance (66%) at local church services by institutionalised children; 3) the existence of **official documents** (partnerships or collaboration agreements) or **unofficial collaboration** on the basis of unwritten agreements, between DGASPCs and local church institutions (parishes, archpriestships, archbishoprics, metropolitanates, etc.) in each county, with the exception of Vâlcea county.

The second study was undertaken in Caraș Severin county, on a sample group of 112 DGASPC employees. Its objective was to test the hypothesis of a direct correlation between the religiosity of the employees and the efficiency of their activities. The results obtained confirmed that, firstly, the more religious employees manifested more social involvement and community commitment than those who were less religious, and secondly that numerically speaking, the majority of employees were very religious. In the author’s opinion, this data is consistent with the values recorded at a national-level, offering sufficient grounds for concluding that “beyond the formal institutional engagement of the Church in specific social work activities, the community involvement of social workers also depends on their own personality profile, in which religious variables play a remarkable motivating role. Thus, public policies should reconsider religious variables as personal and institutional resources, as well as their inclusion in all organisational diagnoses and interventions, as they are liable to optimise the activity specific to this social territory” (p. 118).

Probably the first ever study into religiosity in Romanian social assistance institutions, *Religiozitatea și instituțiile sociale din România* confronts us with a new and original scientific action. It illustrates the cooperation between the Orthodox Church and the State in contemporary Romania, in the field of social assistance, and offers specialists broad possibilities for interpretation of the Church’s presence in the public sphere, the religiosity of Romanians and the secularisation of the Romanian society.

Manuela Gheorghe

(Translation from Romanian by Irina Stahl)

TATIANA MINNIYAKHMETOVA and KAMILA VELKOBORSKÁ (eds.), *The Ritual Year 10. Magic in Rituals and Rituals in Magic*, Innsbruck, Tartu: ELM Scholarly Press, 2015, 598 p.

The tenth volume of The Ritual Year series reunites papers presented at the 10th annual conference of the Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore (SIEF) Working Group on The Ritual Year, that took place in Innsbruck (Austria), 25–27 September 2014. The imposing volume brings together fifty-seven studies dealing with the conception of magic and magical rituals performed throughout the year and their correlation with religious ceremonies. It also presents articles dealing with contemporary magical practices represented in the year cycle and in the everyday life of practitioners of magic. The task of dealing with this large number of articles was well managed by the editors, Tatiana Minniyakhmetova (Research Fellow, Institute for History and European Ethnology,

University of Innsbruck, Austria) and Kamila Velkoborská (Independent Researcher and Assistant Professor, University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic).

The volume is divided into eleven chapters, of which the first two are dominant, with nearly 40% of the total contributions. In the first chapter, “The Ritual Year and Magical Features”, articles dealing with magical rituals performed at specific moments during the year are regrouped. Special attention is given to Christian celebrations and their relation with magic or what is considered to be magic at times. The opening article by Emily Lyle (founder of The Ritual Year Working Group and honorary chairman since September 2014), deals with the Indo-European pagan times cosmology, in which space and time were equally important and the year was divided according to eight key points. The study is the result of a ten years’ interest in creating a model of the year cycle, started in 2004, when The Ritual Year working group was created, and matured now, in this synthetic study. In the following article, Terry Gunnell (co-chair of The Ritual Year Working Group) discusses the nature and background of rituals and prayers used by the contemporary Icelandic *Ásatrúarfélag*, a society which involves the active worship of the Old Nordic gods. Leading the readers further South, Eivy Johanne Håland compares ancient and modern Greek festivals and rituals around the year, revealing the importance of fertility magic in ensuring the harvest for both ancient and modern farmers. Referring to another Mediterranean society, Marlene Mifsud Chircop looks into the transformative ritual in Good Friday processions in contemporary Malta. Cozette Griffin-Kremer chooses to write about doing things rightways and three times, with a particular focus on May Day and maying in the British Isles. Other articles in the chapter, signed by Katya Mihaylova, Božena Gierek, Anna Multari, Aigars Leilbārdis, Alessandro Testa and Billy Mag Fhloinn, discuss Polish and Coptic magical rituals, belief in catholic saints in Latvia, carnivals and propitiatory magic in Italy and Czech Republic, and also sacrificial magic in the Irish ritual year.

Chapter two, “Symbolism of Fire, Food, Ritual Objects and Magical Spaces” treats the issue of magic in relation to fire, food, beverages, various objects and space. Irina Sedakova (co-chair of The Ritual Year Working Group) writes about the magico-religious symbolism of the candle in the Slavic calendar rituals. Also writing about fire is Tatiana Minniyakhmetova, who discusses the importance of ritual fire in the annual cycle of the Udmurt calendar customs. Urszula Wilk analyses the process of *Las Fallas* in Valencia, a festival which ends each year in March with the burning of giant statues, while Katarina Ek-Nilsson discuss Swedish traditions about bread and bread baking. Other contributions by Mojca Ramšak, Sergey Rychkov, Natalías Celia Sánchez, Konrad Kuhn, Nadezhda Shutova, Andrey Khudyaev and Kincső Verebélyi deal with wine and toast, magical poppets in the Western Roman Empire, carnival masks from an alpine region in Switzerland, Udmurt sacred space, spatial structure of magical rituals in North Eurasian people and the sacred space of the household, in Hungary.

Changes in various traditions involving magic are discussed in the third chapter, “Innovations in Traditions”, bringing together the contributions of Iris Gareis, who writes about the Peruvian ritual year, Aida Rancane, who discusses the motifs of sacrifice in the context of present-day search for spiritual experience in Latvia and Skaidre Urboniene, who writes about the destruction of crosses and shrines in Soviet times in Lithuania and the magical elements in the stories which accompanied these acts of violence.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to divination and fortune-telling. Vilmos Voigt writes about rebus, Agnes Christa Tuczay about necromancy, Žilvytis Šaknys about marriage divination in Lithuania, Ksenia Klimova about fortune telling in modern Greece and Nina Vlaskina about types of divination used by Don Cossacks.

Astral objects, plants and magic in healing strategies are discussed in the papers found in the fifth chapter. Mare Kõiva and Andres Kuperjanov analyse the symbolic rites involved in healing strategies as well as incantations; Oksana Tchoekha writes about lunar magic in modern Greek traditions; Georgi Mishev discusses magical healing practices using ash from Starosel, Bulgaria; Aleksandra Ippolitova discusses the particular ritual of circumscription, involved in collecting plants and described in Russian herbals from the 17th till early 20th century; Svetlana Sidneva writes about magic herbs in modern Greek and Italian calendar customs.

Chapter six deals with shamanism, neo-shamanism, paganism and neo-paganism, as well as with Wicca in old and new traditions. While Snjezana Zoric writes about the performance in Korean shamanic rituals, Meret Fehlmann develops the image of seasonal neo-pagan rituals in popular culture. Kamila Velkoborská addresses magic as practiced by the Brotherhood of Wolves, a group of Czech pagan practitioners; and Joanna Malita with magic in everyday life of Polish Wiccans.

Articles by Eglė Savickaitė, Laurent Sébastien Fournier (board member of The Ritual Year Working Group) and Josip Zanki, in chapter seven, discuss various approaches to magic, each author from a different perspective: the one of Lithuanian students, French traditional game players and West Balkan artists.

The eighth chapter provides the reader with articles on sorcerers, witches and magic practices. Marina Baiduzh writes about the image of the witch in contemporary Russian beliefs and practices, Raluca Betaea about the magical beliefs of stealing animal milk in Romanian villages in Transylvania during the 18th–19th centuries. Based on German sources, mainly trial records, Johannes Dillinger compares two sets of magical beliefs that had to do with the economic aspect of magic: treasure hunting and the belief in Drache, a household spirit. Yana Sivilova analyses a world-spread anecdote in which pottery breaking has a specific symbolic value.

Magic and rituals in family tradition are the subjects of chapter nine: Rasa Paukštytė-Šakniėnė writes about godparenthood in Lithuania, Guzel Stolyarova about magic in the Russian population of the Mari region, while Nadezhda Rychkova deals with magic as communication in family rituals of Russians in Tatarstan. Oksana Mykytenko discusses today's widespread practice of attaching padlocks to bridge railings and throwing the keys into the water, from the viewpoint of the Slavic tradition which considers the padlock and the key as attributes of wedding.

The tenth chapter, "Beyond the Threshold and Magic Value", explores magic involved with the communication between living and the dead. Éva Pócs writes about the communication between the living and the dead during the winter solstice in Central Eastern European beliefs. Irina Stahl (secretary of The Ritual Year Working Group) presents the case of a ritual developed around nine miraculous graves from a Catholic cemetery in Bucharest. This ritual, started sometime in the beginning of the 20th century, combines Christian and magic elements and persisted through the communist era despite the efforts of authorities to curtail it. The purpose, persistence and origin of the ritual are presented along with a history of the graves. Starting from the example of Joan Didion's book *The year of Magical Thinking*, Ruth Neubauer-Petzoldt discusses the rituals and magical thinking in autobiographical literature of mourning.

The last chapter is a collection of studies based on new field research. Yulia Krasheninnikova discusses magic beliefs and practices of Holy Thursday in modern traditions of peasant population of the Russian North. Ekaterina Iagafova and Valeria Bondareva write about traditional festive rituals in modern Chuvash culture. Iryna Koval-Fuchylo writes about Ukrainian calendar laments. The last article in the volume is an original contribution by Dorothy Clark Graden, who describes the way her art is inspired by prehistoric magical rock sites.

The volume closes with a listing of The Ritual Year Working Group's activities through the years (inaugural meeting, conferences, publications) and some photos taken during the last meeting, in Innsbruck, in 2014.

The studies in the 10th volume of The Ritual Year series stand out by the large variety of fieldworks and documented cases discussed in relation to magical practices and beliefs. The great wealth of information in this volume provides opportunities for future comparative studies which could shed light upon each other, as predicted by Arvind Sharma in his "reciprocal illumination" theory (Sharma, 2005).

Irina Stahl