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**Cuvinte cheie:** ceremonialul nunții, uniformizare globalizată, relațiile de neam, statut social, elemente rituale, grup etnic

### Nunta la ucrainenii din Maramureș: perspectivă antropologică

#### Rezumat

Începând cu anii cincizeci ai secolului trecut, în localitățile cu populație de etnie ucraineană din Nordul Maramureșului, fenomenele care au marcat extrem de intens (și ireversibil trebuie să adăugăm) cultura tradițională au fost colectivizarea agriculturii și (mai ales în ultimele două decenii) contactul accelerat cu vestul Europei. Este important de remarcat că, în acest interval de aproximativ șase decenii, mai mulți cercetători au identificat schimbările majore, esențiale în ceea ce privește performarea diferitelor obiceiuri și datini, notându-se mai ales „simplificarea” lor (în special în prima parte a intervalului indicat) respectiv o dureroasă și nedorită schematizare, ca urmare a unui proces de uniformizare globalizată (în ultima parte a intervalului, mai precis începând cu anul 1989).

În cazul ceremonialului nunții, investigațiile de teren confirmă faptul că acesta s-a păstrat, însă evident într-o formă atenuată, dar având încă toate atributele tradiționale, până în momentul marilor transformări sociale, când s-a produs „fractura” ireparabilă în ordinea simbolică a satului ucrainean. Acest ceremonial și tot ceea ce implică el, relațiile sociale și relațiile de neam, precum și complexul sistem al pragurilor de trecere de la o vârstă la alta, respectiv de la un statut și rol social la alt statut și rol social, pot fi și astăzi identificate, chiar dacă nu respectă cu strictețe cadrele arhaice cunoscute.

În lucrarea de față vom evidenția câteva elemente rituale și caracteristicile magice posibil, încă, de identificat în secvențele principale din ceremonialul nunții, performat în sânul acestor grupuri etnice din Maramureș.

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**Key words:** the wedding ceremonial, global uniformization, keen relations, social status, ritualistic elements, ethnic group

## **The Ukrainian Wedding in Maramureș: An Anthropological Perspective**

### **Summary**

Starting with the 50s of the previous century, the phenomena that marked traditional culture intensely (and, if we may add, irreversibly) the villages in which Ukrainian ethnic groups lived, in the north of Maramureș, were related to the collectivization of agriculture, and, especially in the past two decades, the accelerated contact with Western Europe. It is important that we mention that several researchers have identified the major, essential changes as to the performance of various customs, noting, especially, their "simplification" (especially in the first part of the previously indicated interval), and a painful and un-welcomed schematization - a direct result of the process of global uniformization, respectively (in the latter part of the interval, especially starting with 1989).

When we refer to the wedding ceremonial, field investigations confirm the fact that it has been kept alive, but in a faded form, but having all traditional attributes, until the moment of the great social transformation, when an un-repairable "fracture" was produced in the symbolic order of the Ukrainian village. This ceremonial, and everything it entails, the social and keen relationships, as well as the complex system of thresholds that lead from one age to another, or from one status and social role to another status and social role, can be identified even today, even if they do not observe strictly the well-known archaic frames.

The present paper will highlight a few ritualistic elements and magic characteristics that may, still, be identified in the main sequences of the wedding ceremonial, performed within these ethnic groups in Maramureș.

## The Ukrainian Wedding in Maramureș: An Anthropological Perspective

In villages on the Tisa Valley that belong to the Bocicoiu Mare commune (Tisa, Lunca la Tisa, Crăciunești and Bocicoi) one may find a scheme of ethnic interferences, which comprises three communities: Ukrainians, Romanians, and Hungarians.

In the villages on the Vișeu Valley, which are administratively included in the Bistra commune, this scheme is reduced to two ethnic groups: Ukrainians and Romanians. The numerical proportion is, in the first case, of 2 to 1 for the proportion of Ukrainians and Romanians, and of approximately 7 to 1 for the Ukrainians and Hungarians; and of 4 to 1 for Romanians and Hungarians. Their distribution indicates that the balance is "inclined" in the area in the favor of the Ukrainians and Romanians, but the Hungarian ethnic group is, nevertheless, sufficiently represented. This is why the contaminations and inter-conditioning in the area of traditional culture, have imprinted certain "invariables", easily noticeable at the level of the three ethnic groups, but uncertain as to the initial direction they come from.

There is an entirely different proportion of the ethnic groups on the Vișeu Valley (Bistra, Crasna Vișeuului, Valea Vișeuului), where the census in 2002 reported 2.021 Ukrainians, 399 Romanians, and 3 Hungarians. Consequently, in this situation, the proportion is of 10 to 1 of the binomial Ukrainians/Romanians, the Hungarian minority being, practically, not represented at all.

In these areas which have strong Ukrainian communities, the field researches that have conducted in a systematic and periodical manner, strengthen our conviction that customs and traditions are maintained still, but in a toned down way. This characteristic is easy to notice all around the rural area of Maramureș, which means that it does not only appear in the Ukrainian villages, but also in the Romanian ones.

In the past half century, here too, in the Ukrainian villages, where Ukrainian ethnic groups live, the phenomena that have marked profoundly, and irreversibly, the traditional culture were the collectivization of agriculture (in the first period), and the accelerated contact with Western Europe (in the last few decades). Several researchers have signaled essential modifications, starting with the 50s, in the way in which various customs and traditions were performed, noting, especially, their "simplification". Nevertheless, even in this manner of performance of the customs and traditions of the Ukrainian communities of the North of Maramureș, one may notice that the ritualistic vein has been preserved to a great extent, with its magic-religious aspects, which are obvious to the researcher, even if (almost) at all present in the minds of the performers, themselves, who give special attention to the spectacular interpretations, which are predominant.

The sequencing of the main moment of a wedding, in the Maramureș communities where the population is overwhelmingly Ukrainian (in our case, Bistra, Valea Vișeuului) do not differ very much from the well-known scheme of the Romanian traditional wedding. The sequencing of the wedding, as described by Arnold Van Gennep<sup>2</sup> as a rite of passage (which comprises preliminary, liminary and post-liminary rites) imposes at least two necessary stages: a) the first stage, concentrated on the change of the girl's status, and b) the second stage, centered on the moments of the voyage.

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<sup>2</sup> Van Gennep, Arnold, *Riturile de trecere*, Iași, Ed. Polirom, 1996, p. 29

a) The first stage: the change of the girl's status:

- one night before the wedding, at the bride's house they would sow the wreath (*peremitca*) which was arranged on the girl's head, after her hair was braided.

- at the wedding, in church, after the vows, the priest puts a red scarf on the bride's head. That scarf is being blessed, and becomes, thus, a symbol of the married woman.

- the scarf-ing of the bride is, then, done by the groom, who first puts a green scarf on her head; the bride throws the scarf away. Then, the groom tries on her a white scarf, which she also throws away. The third time, he covers her with the read one, which the bride accepts, acknowledging, thus, her status of a married woman. From this moment on, she becomes a



Miri din Valea Vișeului; foto: Colecția Nicolae MARICEC

*molodeni* (a young married woman).

b) The second stage - moments of the voyage:

- the young man goes to the young girl's house in order that they might go together to church. This happens three consecutive Sundays, just before the wedding.
- the engagement - which is performed at least one week before the wedding, with the family and the godfather present: "he speaks there.....the old people speak"<sup>3</sup>
- calling at the wedding: invitations that both the groom and the bride make, separately, with the help of two "*drujbe*" (best men, young men who are friends with the groom), and two "*druște*" (maids of honour, young girls who are friends with the bride).
- going to get the bride: the groom goes with his party, accompanied by the hired band of music, to the bride's house, where they eat and then they leave for church
- at the wedding ceremony: after "*cinstea*" (the ceremonial meal at the bride's house), everybody goes together to church
- at the bride's house: the second morning, the groom with the couple's close relatives, go to the bride's house to get her and her things

It is important for the researcher to note that the transformations that take place, during the sequences of the first stage, constitute a kind of conversion, which happens gradually (and which is permanently performed with the entire community as witnesses), of the girl into a woman. Or, in other words, the voyage from "girlhood" to "wife-hood", which has to be presented to the village, who agree and "approve" of this transformation, precisely by being present and participating to the entire ritualistic chain.

During the sequences of the second stage - the moment of the voyage - there is an evolution (which is as strongly dramatized and visualized for the entire community) of an important social transformation: a young man and a girl, who are part of two separate families, realize, as a consequence of the wedding, a new family nucleus. This act, which leads to the modification of the social state of the village is mandatory to be marked and presented to the entire community. It is clear that the two types of transformations are not very much different one from another, as they have certain points of convergence. Let us mention, then, that at the Ukrainian wedding, as well as at a Romanian wedding in the same area, the strong marking of the passage that the girl has to make on occasion of her wedding, as well as the obvious profoundness of its rites of passage, as compared to those of the young man, are another confirmation for the complexity of the transformation that she has to undergo on this occasion.

During the course of the "*scenario of the wedding*", there are certain oppositions which are very interesting, and which highlight and underline the transformations that occur during this rite of passage. Thus, at the party they call *zabodene*, which is held on the eve of the wedding ceremony, mostly young people participate, whereas on Sunday mostly adults participate, underlining, thus, the opposition young (with the subsequent meaning of unmarried) versus mature (i.e. married).

If at the wedding party on the day the majority of the community takes part, the second day only close relatives go to the bride's home, which means that they signal clearly the opposition between the *large village community*, and the *close community of keen*, respectively.

Finally, if moments during the wedding ceremony with all the stages are observed strictly,

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<sup>3</sup> Inf.: Coriniuc Dumitru, 54, Bistra, the archives of the The County Center for the Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Culture of Maramureș, România

according to the ritual and almost never exceeding a tone of sobriety, the participations on the second day are very *exuberant*, even *licentious* at times. The abrupt modification of the register of the ceremony, with an intend deterioration of sobriety and a slipping towards the hilarious, highlight the dissolution of the nocturnal ceremonies, on the very purpose of indicating this passage (or coming back) to the daily ritual.

As we can conclude, the main criterion in the unfolding of a wedding in the Ukrainian communities is similar to that in Romanian ones: there is a certain sequencing of the ceremonies, which is rigorously established, all stages being compulsory to the letter, and suffering no modification. Similarly, any of the stages once consummated will, necessarily impose a successive series of other stages. This means that the wedding ceremony takes place according to tradition, as the forefathers established it, and none of these traditional sequences can be neglected. To prevent the situation when there are fears that the passage from one stage to another is in danger of not being observed, the community has imposed certain supervising agents, who are meant to overcome disfunctionalities in the ceremonial, to accompany (and verify) the process of transition. This used to be the task of the godparents who, most of the times, were four or six couples. There were even cases (in Valea Vişeuului, for instance) where there were even eight or ten couples who were godparents for the new couple. Their role does not end with the wedding ceremony, they remain as true advisers of the young couple "if they have any problems they would first have to come to the godparents for guidance, for advice, so this is their role"<sup>4</sup>. The relationships between godparents and god-sons and daughters, which are considered by anthropologists as fictive keen relations, are important for the public mentality, as they have to be people of a certain status in the village, people who are respected by the entire community. They even say that godparents need to know the village customs very well, and they also have to be well-to-do.

The following sequence is also part of the "surveillance instance": the next morning the godparents and the close relatives go to the bride's house, as we have already mentioned. Thus the ritual closes, symbolically, with a final moment that marks the return among the close keen community. Leaving, thus, from the close keen (once with the engagement of the young couple), the chain of ritualistic sequences will comprise at one point almost the entire village (the large community which assists, approves and participates in the ritual), and then, eventually, they will end the entire ritual in the same place where they started. All these ritualistic sequences are ordered according to a principles whose dynamics is related to two functional landmarks: firstly, there is the acknowledging of a complex series of transformations in the appearance of the young bride, all of which representing a sign of the accomplishing of another stage within the complicated process of the metamorphosis of the girl into a wife. Secondly, the necessity of going down a very complicated itinerary, formed by certain sequences of a voyage which are very well defined spatially, and extremely important (or exemplary) by their transitory significance.

To conclude, we might note the fact that the wedding ceremony has kept the ritualistic elements, as well as its magical characteristics well enough, not because these communities are conservative, but because (conscious or not), there is a tendency of supporting the ethnic identity of the group, of affirmation of its place in the social field, of its values, beliefs, and norms that characterize it, and which are, then, used the interplay of social comparisons.

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<sup>4</sup>Inf. Spiralic Ledia, 54, Valea Vişeuului

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