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**MARRIAGE AND WEDDING RITUALS FROM VICARIATE OF RODNA IN THE
MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY PERIOD**

- RESUME -

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Key words: marriage, wedding rituals, Vicariate of Rodna, modern period, parochial registers, dowry, announcements, exemptions

This study is imposed by the need to fill a lack and to present a complementary character. Wishing to research the marriage phenomenon on a certain region, the first impulse is to make an ethnographic research that more often is limited to description of the ceremony, without clarifying several facts preceding specific rituals, due to the fact that until wedding there are many phases that are not less important, several acceptances from the legal, political and religious point of view which are usually left in the shadow.

Thus, this study does neither aim to be exhaustive nor intend to make a history of the marriage regulations and laws from a specific period of time, work already done by the previous scientific essays, it rather aims to underline as practical as possible what a couple has to do starting from that period until the wedding begins as a representation of the transition ritual.

How can the ethnographic information be completed? Using the historical information, by a thorough research of the archives, by getting into contact with some old preserved documents, especially the documents of births, deaths and marriages kept by the churches, the parish registers who represent a great wealth of information concerning the everyday life of the persons from certain communities. Here we can find bright images of certain persons that existed only in fiction, they were born, loved, married, had children, buried their newborn children, fought, reconciled, divorced, their spouses died and then they remarried, etc. which represents another vision about the village world.

Due to the fact that I performed the study in the Nasaud region, while researching the archive we somewhat extended the area and covered the region of the former regiment from the border settled by Maria Tereza, respectively the area of the later military district, which is more specifically the whole area ecclesiastically owned by the former Foraneu Vicariate of Rodna (having the main office in Nasaud), all forty-four villages from the border located on the Somes valley, Bargau valley, Sieu valley and two villages from the Mures valley, where all people excepting those from the Bargau valley are Greek Catholics pertaining to the Vicariate of Rodna. As a result, the study is based upon the marriage documents found in the Vicariate records of Rodna, the State Archives from Bistrita – Nasaud, excepting the files held by each parish. However, due to the fact that on the one side the information that can be found in the parishes had already passed through the Vicariate, much part of information can be given twice, and on the other hand the multitude of files kept in the Vicariate makes physically impossible that in a given time to consider separately the forty-four parishes, which will be further considered in separate studies. In the Vicariate records, each year we may find documents like *marriages proofs*, death testimonies, statements related to divorces, etc.

however incomplete, sometimes just one page from an uncompleted file. In addition, I have studied the parish registers from ten villages considered as a representative sampling in order to form an opinion related to the phenomenon of marriages in the entire vicariate, but again due to the impossibility to research them all, the registers of the married people from vicariate, several marriage documents from the border regiment pertaining to the personal archive of Iulian Martian, official record of marital status of Rebrisoara, etc. Moreover, in order to perform this study, I have consulted the required bibliography consisting of historical anthropology works, ethnology works, general essays, periodicals and books of worship, as mentioned in the reference list.

Regarding the time interval that I have decided to investigate, the lower limit was easy to set, as there is only a single option: 1850 due to the fact that all documents of the vicariate are lacking earlier this year being turned to ashes by insurgents during the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-1849, as Macedon Pop himself said in a letter to Iacob Mureșianu in the 7th of March 1851, the vicar of that period, fact also regretted by the pastor of Rebrisoara, Grigore Pop, the one that remained deputy vicar while Macedon Pop retreated in Moldova, stating that there is no document that may guide him. Although many of them appear in some personal collection or in the documents of the parishes, some leaflets and other documents are absent, so I started the study considering the period from 1850. The upper limit I set it to the year of 1900 as the end of the century, thus observing the second half of the nineteenth century.

As a main working method I used the observation and the analysis of documents, I performed several statistical series, out of which some concerns the general behaviour and the attitudes related to marriage, but also the comparison and critical reflection can be synthesised. Records of the married people from nine localities were non-nominal analyzed as for Rebrisoara village I used the nominative analysis for all three registers, thus revealing some family records.

The part comprising the ethnological research will aim to find all information that can be found related to the wedding, while focusing on the dynamics in time of the habit and on the specific elements of the researched area or on more special elements, as well as on bibliographic elements which I intend to revise by a careful placement in a particular context. This research outcomes primarily from the desire to make a thorough monography of a traditional wedding in the Gersei Valley (the Rebrisoara village, the Bistrita - Nasaud county, the Somes valley, at the Rodna mountains feet) and secondly due to some ideas issued by various authors of works on the subject of wedding that raised my curiosity.

Therefore, I intend to achieve *something different*, which is to make verifications directly on the field (considering of course, that the authors make some general assertions in terms of other researched areas, where the situation could be different) the opinions which seemed inappropriate to see if things are in reality in that way or not. The project attempts to recreate the old traditional wedding both for a diachronic and integral study of this ritual of transition made on Gersei Valley and for finding explanations for certain actions that can be observed today, but whose origins are impossible to be found without going back in time. I would also, as far as possible, to do the researches on wedding like the autobiographical stories, a record of the oral history due to the fact that besides the information strictly related to the wedding ritual, I will find some aspects of the lives of those who performed the habit in another manner than today and thus finding valuable details (an example would be that in the past due to the small space of the houses where the wedding was celebrated, the youth was always sent outside to dance without granting them too higher importance).

For a proper performance of the project, I consulted several works on this subject, such as: Simion Florea Marian, *Romanian Weddings*, Nicolae Constantinescu, *Family relationships in traditional societies*, Vasile Tudor Cretu *Existence as a foundation*, Arnold van Gennep, *Rituals of transition*, Artur Gorovei, *Our traditions at birth and wedding*, Gail Kligman, *The wedding of the dead. Ritual, poetry and folk culture in Transylvania* Tudor Pamfile, *The love in the tradition of the Romanian youth*, Mihai Pop, *The myth of the great transition*, Elena Sevastos, *Folk Literature. Moldavian songs. Romanian wedding*, Ion Şeuleanu, *The folk wedding poetry* and Gheorghe Vrabie, *The folklore as object, principles, methods, categories, etc.* In addition to these studied works, I attended traditional weddings both as an outsider and as an insider that were celebrated in the last about nine years, which gave me the opportunity to be in trend and as possible to gather the right questions in the questionnaire that will be submitted to the informants, a questionnaire that will be more in the matter, since it refers specifically to the custom of that particular village.

The first chapter contains the theoretical part that presents the external interactions, and the whole set of rules that the people who desire to marry have to comply with in order to meet both the social laws and the church and state requirements, the reasons that make them to contract a marriage, the chosen person, the necessary documents, the proclaiming and impediments that occur, but also the manner in which the engagement or the marriage took place.

The second chapter deals with the issue of exemptions starting from the presentation of the relatives, the classification of the impediments and then describes the procedure of exemptions and ends with the qualitative analysis of exemptions.

The third chapter contains a number of statistical analyzes as a result of processing the vicariate archives and the parochial documents of civil status. The records of married persons from ten parishes are analyzed and at Rebrîșoara parish were analyzed all parochial registers, achieving a nominative approach.

In the fourth chapter is presented the research of ethnographic character made on the field in the Gersei Valley. The research presents the nuptial rituals as they are currently practiced, but with a constant reference to the transformations undergone over time.

From those presented in this paper we may conclude that in a society where survival is solely based on self-production, where *to be* is equivalent with *to own*, and the latter cannot be separated from the term *to work*, between 1850 and 1900 the marriage is more a business, an economic recovery by acquiring new labour force. In case of the first marriage we can assume that there is some attraction between the bride and groom, but finally the groom is oriented towards a bride driven by the qualities that he or others see in that person, qualities focused on a well family name, but also on the skills of the bride to manage with the household. Therefore, quite often, people with certain qualities are interchangeable, the qualities and not the person prevail.

Moreover, the emphasis is put on the economic development, it is desirable that the future wife or future husband to be as gifted, and to own as many agricultural lands or animals. Often the lack of dowry means the lack of suitors.

Although during the military border and later during the military service, men had the possibility to leave the village and see new people and places, yet they dared not to take wives from faraway villages because of the fear of the unknown. Exogamy is rare and usually they prefer people from neighbouring villages.

Very few members of the society are outside the patterns imposed by it, so that the majority of those at first marriage know that it is good but also necessary that at a certain age to establish a family. This age is around 24 years at boys and 20 years at girls, others that exceed these limits are always in danger of being stigmatized by society. Similarly, young people cannot disobey the parents will, as keepers of some predestined orders, parents who may require them to do only what is right in terms of society, and their consent to the marriage act of the children is mandatory.

Since the mortality is high and the demand of labour force in a household is large, not only the young have access to the marriage, but in principle the remarriages are as common as marriages and those in remarriage usually prefer people who were never married.

Until marriage, the couple must go through a long and arduous road to succeed in observing all rules imposed by both the church and the state. By 1896, the church had full jurisdiction over marriage; the institution of marriage celebrated in front of the priest and registered in the parochial records became legal documents with legal value in front of the state bodies. However, this process does not remain non-supervised by the state that imposes different rules, some according with the church rules but sometimes in contradictory, depending on its needs. So to be sure of a number of active soldiers in armed conflicts, the state imposes a lower limit to the age of boys at marriage. Also, although theoretically has the power to make a valid marriage anyway, the priest is obliged to wait for all the political or military power exemptions before he starts. Also, it is the priest who must carefully examine each couple in part who must demonstrate the capacities required to be a parent and to establish a family. Not always the priest fulfils all these requirements and therefore reaches to a conflict with the authorities.

Since the beginning of the marriage until its celebration different obstacles can arise from the parents' non-agreement to the family relationship (kinship) related impediments. Only when the groom sees the approval of the vicar, can know for sure that he will marry.

The number of marriages celebrated is directly proportional to the population with uniform distribution in years; however we can notice that the year of 1868 registered the highest rate of marriages. As a monthly distribution of these marriages as well as in the whole Transylvania, the residents of Rodna vicariate prefer the months of February and November to celebrate a marriage.

In addition to all the rules imposed by the state and the church, at the marriage celebration the bride and the groom must respect every step of the ancient wedding ritual as an expression of the mythical and cosmic or as a renewal of the social relations as it is noticeable in a field study.

Revealing all these aspects may lead to a better understanding of the mentalities related to the marriage in the modern and contemporary society.