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**TEZĂ DE DOCTORAT**

***PARADIGMA VRĂJITORIEI ÎN CONTEXT COMUNIST.  
CONTURAREA UNEI SUBCULTURI AFLATE ÎNTRE ILEGALITATE ȘI  
TOLERARE.***

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The doctoral thesis *The Paradigm of Witchcraft in a Communist Context* explores the phenomenon of witchcraft during the communist regime in Romania, analyzing how magical practices survived and coexisted with the official ideology of scientific atheism. The phenomenon of witchcraft during the communist regime in Romania is a fascinating topic, given the tension between the regime's official ideology - scientific atheism - and the persistence of magical practices among the population. During this period, the communist regime tried to build a modern society based on science and rationality, in which traditional beliefs and practices considered 'superstitious' were seen as an obstacle to progress. However, witchcraft not only survived, but managed to adapt and manifest itself in new contexts, sometimes even coexisting with the official structures of the regime. The communist regime in Romania, established after the Second World War and consolidated under the leadership of Gheorghe Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and later Nicolae Ceausescu, promoted atheism as part of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Religion in general was marginalized and the church was under strict control. In this context, witchcraft was labeled as a retrograde practice, incompatible with the ideals of a modern and scientific society. However, these magical practices were deeply rooted in Romanian popular culture and passed down from generation to generation. They represented both a form of cultural resistance and a practical solution for individuals seeking answers and solutions to everyday difficulties, especially in a repressive political and economically precarious context. In some cases, these practices attracted the attention and tacit collaboration of local officials. There are testimonies of Communist Party leaders turning to witches to solve personal problems, demonstrating a separation between official discourse and individual behavior. The aim of the research is to understand the role of witchcraft in communist society, the impact on local communities and the response of the authorities. Although officially discouraged, witchcraft continued to be practiced covertly, especially in rural areas, where traditions had a strong influence. In cities, the phenomenon has adapted, sometimes integrating elements of modern discourse. Witchcraft practices, such as reading books, incantations, fortune telling, and protection rituals, remained popular among people who felt the need for emotional support or control in an unsafe environment.

In terms of methods, the study uses an interdisciplinary approach, combining the analysis of archival documents, witness accounts and contemporary literature. The structure of the research is divided into three levels. The first consisted of direct interviews, which involved fieldwork. The second level concerned clerical attitudes, which led us to study the archives of the Archdiocese of Vad, Feleac and Cluj. The third level of research was that of the courts from which we were able to deduce the position of the authorities in relation to this phenomenon. From the point of view of secular legislation we took into consideration the penal code before and after its change in 1968 (witchcraft falls under the penal code being considered a crime of deception.) As for the position of administrative authorities against the phenomenon of magic we conducted research in the archives of the Turda Court, the Dej Court and the Cluj Court. The propaganda of the authorities, the intervention of the Securitate and the militia in detecting and observing the practitioners, their recruitment and collaboration with the Securitate is the primary hypothesis from which our research started, and for this purpose we have extended our research in the CNSAS Archives and the National Archives Cluj - fund 13, Central Committee of the P.C.R, Propaganda and Agitation Section 1921-1976 and fund 209, Militia Inspectorate Cluj 1942-1975, inv.1171 - Ministry of Internal Affairs. General Directorate of Militia. In the CNSAS archives I studied the file of the priest E.M whose case I first identified in the files of the Eparchial Consistory in the archives of the Archdiocese of Vadului, Feleacului and Cluj and which for me became one of the two case studies presented in the paper. I also obtained additional information by accessing the CNSAS website on the Supervised Romania fund, where declassified information from the communist period is made available to the public. The structure of the documentary material (the position of the church and the position of the authorities) also determined the structure of the work, the religious and the secular, or in other words the way in which magic was perceived in everyday social realities. The research has very slight extensions of historiographical time, with reference to some articles and historiographical writings from the inter-war period, otherwise we stay on the time axis 1950-1989. As far as the research area is concerned, I limited myself to the Transylvanian area, where I gathered oral information from the villages of Meseșeni de Sus and Meseșeni de Jos, in the county of Sălaj, the village of Luncoi, Hălmagiu, Băraști, the town of Brad in Hunedoara, and the town of Cugir. We used semi-structured interviews as well as open dialogs of the life story type. In approaching this information coming from the personal history interviews, we have to take into account the avatars of the long-term memory of the interlocutors as well as

the fictionalized dimension of memory through which we understand the ways in which each person rewrites his personal history in the act of telling a story. Our experience was strictly narrative, the interlocutors' statements were self-referential for the most part but we also collected referentials that may have different degrees of fictionalization. In spite of the fact that the subject of magic has been treated by many scholars and is still of interest, the angle from which it was investigated this time is absolutely new. Research has shown that witchcraft continued to be practiced, despite pressures from the communist authorities, and was perceived both as an act of cultural resistance and as a source of spiritual support. Witches had to reinvent themselves to survive in this hostile context. They began to use language that did not contradict the regime's ideology or provide an acceptable justification for their activities. For example, some witches presented their practices as 'natural remedies', avoiding explicit associations with the supernatural. At the same time, witchcraft continued to be a space of individual freedom and symbolic resistance against the regime. In a society where state control was pervasive, these practices offered a spiritual and cultural alternative that escaped the control of the authorities. Wit witchcraft had a dual role: on the one hand, it satisfied the spiritual needs of the population, and on the other, it functioned as a mechanism of community solidarity. In a regime that discouraged trust between individuals and encouraged denunciations, these rituals created bonds of trust between participants, giving them a sense of belonging. Throughout our research we found magic in almost every aspect of life. We analyzed it over forty years as far as the archives allowed us. Interviews have revealed the coexistence of these two planes of the real and the magical in the minds of individuals. One can support the theory that secularization has created that diffuse Christianity sensitive to the intrusion of parallel religions, but from our research we observed how the vitality of magic has not been diminished by any political or religious aspect. It remained constantly lived in the forty years we studied and the reasons for turning to magic sprang from the same afflictions, sickness or unhappiness. Despite the atheistic-scientific propaganda with which the communist regime intoxicated society, its failure probably underlines the limitations of an ideological system that focused exclusively on the material dimension of existence. Magic, whether seen as an expression of traditional beliefs or as a symbol of the human spirit, is something that cannot be completely defeated because it transcends the boundaries of rationality and ideology. Traditional practices (spells, talismans, rituals) were reinterpreted to fit the political and ideological context. Communist authorities considered witchcraft as a vestige of "backwardness" and a threat to social

modernization. Sometimes witches were arrested or investigated. However, witchcraft was also a form of cultural resistance, preserving traditions and collective identity.

The thesis demonstrates that witchcraft under communism was more than an occult practice, representing a subtle form of opposition to the totalitarian regime and a way of maintaining cultural identity. The survival of witchcraft under communist rule reflects the resilience of popular culture in the face of a repressive ideology. The adaptability of these practices, as well as their paradoxical coexistence with the official ideology, underlines the complexity of interactions between state and society. Witchcraft has not only survived, but has become a symbol of the continuity of traditions in an age marked by radical changes and attempts at cultural standardization. The paper explores how witchcraft survived and adapted under the communist regime when spiritual and religious practices were often marginalized or banned. It analyzes the intersection between popular faith culture and official ideology. Under communism, the regime promoted atheism and rationalism, discouraging religious practices and superstitions. However, witchcraft continued to play a role in the life of rural and urban communities, often practiced clandestinely. Folk witches and folk healers operated discreetly, often under the guise of 'traditional therapies' or 'herbal remedies'.

Witchcraft responded to a variety of needs - from personal problems (love, health) to attempts to navigate the socio-economic difficulties imposed by the regime.

Despite ideological pressures, witchcraft remained a living phenomenon, demonstrating the ability of popular culture to adapt and survive. The communist regime, in its attempt to eradicate such practices, paradoxically helped to maintain them, as people clung to beliefs as a form of psychological and social stability.

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