

THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE WOMEN IN THE YEAR-ROUND TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS THAT PROMOTE HEALTH*

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Abstract: The present study, based on the information provided by the performers from Oltenia, resulting from personal field research, as well as on older documentary sources, aims to analyse the role of women in the ritual practices over the year, meant to promote the health of the individual.

In the first part, we emphasized the relationship between space and well-being, in the context of human existence, which is implicitly determined by the manifestations and developments of the individual, on the social scale, and by his intercommunity and spiritual relationships. Place and existence (man) are two indispensable and intercrossing categories that attest and mark the life and the cultural dynamism of all the people: past, present and future. The human being lives in families, within the nation and in the community. This includes a space: home, household, groups of households.

In the investigation part, we took into account the woman's involvement in the habits over the year in Oltenia, related primarily to the good health of the individual, which, together with the spiritual integrity, is the guarantee of prosperity in all compartments of life.

Keywords: woman, calendar customs, diseases, sick person, Oltenia.

The element that contributes to defining a culture and fulfils an important role in the cultural knowledge is the concept of space, regardless of the multiple meanings it has assimilated over time. Space fulfils a particularly important role in

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the human experience, therefore, “a certain conceptualization of the space gives birth to a certain cultural settlement”¹.

In traditional societies, the space as a vital environment is the one that influences the periodic reaffirmation of a social group, in relation to itself, and in relation to the sacred. Therefore, the space is related to the individual. Henri Lefebvre argued that space is a product of the relationships in society, subjected to changes, precisely because of cultural conceptions. But space is not perceived similarly by all human beings: “There are fundamentally different types of spatial and temporal experience”². Therefore, the space is a subjective category of human sensitivity.

In a sacred-oriented society, man strictly respects and transmits unwritten laws, but, on the other hand, he has the freedom to innovate. Nonetheless, this freedom is not total because, although the group functions only by integrating individual personalities, they all relate to a systematic network of conceptions circulation, which contains a whole series of constant elements³.

Michel Foucault noted that the twentieth century began under the patronage of the “age of space” and “simultaneity”. It highlights the differences between heterotopia and utopia. The first are real spaces, which simultaneously join several social and cultural configurations, are a kind of “effectively realized utopias, in which real locations, all other real locations that can be found within a culture, are, at the same time, represented, challenged and reversed, species of places outside any place, even if they are actually locatable”⁴. Utopias are unreal spaces that maintain a direct or inverted analogy with the real space. Utopian space creates an ideal variant of society. For what he wanted to demonstrate, Foucault takes the mirror as an example of a location designating both representations. This “is a utopia, because it is a place without a place. In the mirror, I see myself where I am not, in an unreal space that opens virtually behind the surface, I am where I am not, a kind of shadow that gives me my own visibility, that allows me to look at myself where I am absent: the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia, inasmuch as the mirror really exists and has, on the place I occupy, a kind of retroactive effect; starting from the mirror, I discover myself absent from where I am, since I see myself in it”⁵.

¹ Ilie Bădescu, Ozana Cucu-Oancea, Gheorghe Șișeștean, *Tratat de sociologie rurală*, Bucharest, Mica Valahie Press, 2012, p. 173.

² Ernst Cassirer, *Eseu despre om. O introducere în filosofia culturii umane*, Bucharest, Humanitas Press, 1994, p. 68.

³ Delia Suiogan, *Simbolica riturilor de trecere*, Bucharest Paideia Press, 2006, p. 51.

⁴ Michel Foucault, *Altfel de spații*, in “Theatrum philosophicum: studii, eseuri, interviuri. 1963–1984”, edition supervised by Ciprian Mihali, translation by Bogdan Ghiu, Ciprian Mihali and Sebastian Blaga, Cluj-Napoca, Diaphora Press, 2001, p. 254.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

In direct relation to space, the concepts of time and culture were placed. In this regard, Gaston Bachelard declared: “Sometimes we think we know ourselves in time, but we only know a suite of fixations in spaces of stability of the being, a being who does not want to pass (...). In its thousands of alveoli, space contains compressed time”⁶. Space and time are an integral part of the existential universe. The space-time ratio is indispensable to all existence.

The relationship between place, space and non-place was analysed by Marc Augé who emphasized the unifying concept of anthropological place as a concrete and symbolic construct of the space. The anthropological place is characterized by four common features related deontologically: identity, relationship, history and intellectual status, to which there are added the reception of the space, time and the individual in a state of excess. The non-place is transitional space, with an abstract identity, a consequence of the supermodernity: “No singular identities are formed, no relationships, only solitude and similarity. There is no room for history unless it is turned into an element of a show”⁷.

We agree with Delia Suiogan's idea that “the man was never conceived as isolated, he belonged to a social group, to a natural environment; therefore, the individual related to the World through his total belonging to a system. The social system, being the holder of an information system, will cause the cancellation of abstract theorizing in understanding”⁸.

Traditional collectives had a ritual attitude, which became a ceremonial one, towards their home and household. According to the traditional Romanian mentality, there were three categories of the humanized space: good, bad and safe places. Here are some ritual prescriptions or beliefs that speak of special care to prevent the actions of the evil spirits. It is known that house places must be protected from contact with impurities of any kind, be chosen with great care, otherwise harmony and well-being would be endangered.

For those who live together, a good place, a form of spatial organization is the household. This enclosed space is designed to provide safety to the people it shelters. In this sense, B. Goetz considers that living is a personal way of occupying space and a common agreement between inhabitant and dwelling⁹. The house is a microcosm placed in the Centre of the World, as Mircea Eliade pointed out, the one who analysed the perceptions of the primitive peoples who repeated, through creating the house, that of the divinity from the cosmogonic moment¹⁰. The house is the identity element in which the family community leads its daily existence.

⁶ Gaston Bachelard, *Poetica spațiului*, translation by Irina Bădescu, Pitești, Paralela Press, 2003, p. 40.

⁷ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Verso, London, 1995, p. 103.

⁸ Delia Suiogan, *op. cit.*, p. 32–33.

⁹ B. Goetz, *Théorie des maisons. L'habitation, la surprise*, Lagrasse: Collection “Art et architecture” Verdier, 2011, p. 3.

¹⁰ Mircea Eliade, *Sacral și profanul*, translation by Brândușa Prelipceanu, Bucharest, Humanitas Press, 1995, p. 7.

The traditional man perceived the house as a state. By entering the house, man became part of the cosmic order¹¹. A permanent residence of the family, the house occupies a central place within the peasant household. The nucleus of the family life, the home is the place where the customs and rituals of the calendar and those of the life cycle are preserved. In the centre, the house is crossed by an *axis mundi*, which connects Heaven and Earth.

As known from ethnological research, the outdoor space of the community is accessible, mainly, to men, and, the domestic space, to women. The woman is involved in everything that regards the domestic life, in all the work bounded by the household and the house. Furthermore, the woman is the main actor in the habits of family and calendar life, the community thus obeying norms and rules that are ultimately models of action. The rites or the ritual manifestations with symbolic charge, expressing beliefs, myths, etc., aimed at the fate of the family members, animals and household, are performed only by women, at precisely determined times and places. The customs are forms of participation in the cultural life of the community, their main function being the gradual transmission of accumulated experience. They are composed of ritual-ceremonial acts inserted at important moments of the cycle of life and work, their purpose being the gradual transmission of accumulated experience. In the traditional mentality, customs, with ritual practices and beliefs related to them, delimit and divide time over the year.

Further on, there is to be discussed the involvement of the women in the customs that unfold during the year, in Oltenia, meant to promote the physical integrity of the individual which, together with the spiritual integrity, is the guarantee of prosperity in all compartments of life.

As our field research and older documentary sources reveal, January 6, whose importance is recommended by its rich activity, is dominated by divinatory, apotropaic practices and stimulating plant fertility. This day especially activates the feminine, often involved in ceremonial complexes of the calendar customs. In Vâlcea, it was customary for women to bring red basil, a hazelnut not yet bloomed flowers, and pork lard to church, which they gave as a cure against pustule¹².

As known, January 6 is dedicated to the baptism received by Jesus, the Son of God, from the Preacher and Baptist John, in the water of the Jordan. The feast is also called *Epiphany* or *Theophany*, meaning *the Appearance of the Lord*, because, on this date, the Savior appeared for the first time in the world, at the age of 30, being confessed as the Messiah, both by the voice of John, and by that of the Father in heaven¹³. Thus, Jesus prepares to proclaim the gospel of salvation on earth and comes to save our souls.

¹¹ Delia Suiogan, *op. cit.* p. 105.

¹² Inf. Eugenia Ban, 74 years old, locality of Ruda, Vâlcea County, 2021.

¹³ Ene Braniște, *Liturgica generală*, second edition, Bucharest, Bible and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church Press, 1993, p. 163.

The Eve of the Epiphany is a favourable time for enchantments and other magical practices: girls, preoccupied with looking into the future, put basil under their pillows, taken from the priest to dream of their chosen one; the ashes from the stove and the garbage from the house are collected in a pot and kept until spring, when they are sprinkled over the vegetable layers in the garden for the richness of fruit and the protection from pests. In Oltenia, the traditions and customs related to Epiphany are still alive, which proves that certain forms of folk traditions have been maintained, consistent with the events related by the Holy Scripture.

Basil¹⁴ it is also used in a health chant in Dragotești, Dolj County. In the morning, with water brought from the well into an earthen pot, people sprinkle water around, using holy basil, and make the sign of the cross saying: “Unclean diseases,/ Filthy diseases/ Go into the wilderness!/ Do not come to me,/ Do not stick/ To my head,/ To my body,/ To my soul./ / Go to a distant place/ In the lifeless wilderness,/ In the wilderness of fire,/ In the wilderness of ice!/ You cross yourself, then you say: To the Mother of God I prayed, the Mother of God she listened to me/ The sicknesses she gathered,/ Far away she threw them,/The diseases were healed/ And I reminded/ Beautiful and healthy/Clean and enlightened/ Like strained gold/ Like Virgin Mary, who helped me”¹⁵.

In a text of an enchantment, coming from the Vâlcea area, it is related how the enchanter searches for those who caused the suffering of the sick: “If it is sickness from God,/ To remember (so-and-so):/ Let the sickness be taken away from them,/ Let them be given the cure. / From the Mother of Christ if it is,/ To remember (so-and-so):/ Let sickness be taken away from them,/ Let them be given a cure,/ If it be sickness from the holy wrong days,/ Let them be remembered mercifully:/ Let sickness be taken away from them,/ Let them be given a cure./ If it be from the heaven above,/ Let them be remembered:/ Let them pass gentle as sheep/ And sweet as bees;/ If it be from the sister,/ If it be from the sister-in-law,/ If it be from the stranger,/ If it be from the neighbor,/ She gave it with the five-fingered hand,/ I turn against her ten folded”¹⁶.

Chanting is a verbal magical rite, most of the time, accompanied by related practices, which aims to heal, and is interpreted under certain conditions and in compliance with certain rules. In the investigated space, the magical performer is called, in folk parlance, *an enchanter*, *a sage old-lady* or *an enchanting old-lady*. The folkloric norm acts during the conduct of the ritual: the person who enchants is an elderly woman, considered “bearer of tradition, with full powers over the evil”; the enchanter knows the cause of the disease and its purpose; the enchantment has a cure if learned by oneself, not taught to; the gift to enchant is passed down from generation to generation; in order to protect themselves from disease, “they too can

¹⁴ Loredana-Maria Ilin-Grozoiu, *Simbolistica busuiocului în obiceiurile vieții omului și în cele calendaristice*, in “Memoria Ethnologica”, year XVI, no. 62-63/2017, Baia Mare, pp. 28–39.

¹⁵ Inf. Doina Marsanu, 70 years old, locality of Dragotești, Dolj County, 2021.

¹⁶ Inf. Elena Vintilă, 80 years old, locality of Bocșa, Vâlcea County, 2020.

get sick, the disease is transmitted in their body if they do not defend themselves”, the enchanters take certain protective measures; the right time to charm away is determined by the belief in good or the bad hours; the space chosen for the unfolding of the chant is different, depending on the type of disease; assigning symbolic valences to the used objects and utensils.

The beginning of March concentrates, in the first nine days, a series of beliefs, ritual practices and magical techniques, called to protect the habitat from evil forces, especially aggressive during this period, when they hold increased powers. The nine days, popularly called “babe”-old ladies, exhibit protective and oracular virtues. Mothers, on March 1, tied to their children's necks two twisted cotton threads, one red and one white. When hawthorn bloomed, they used to sit on its flowers, in the belief that they would be healthy all year round¹⁷. Consisting of a white and red braided cord, often accompanied by a metal penny, later replaced by various talismans, the Mărțișor is worn, on the hand or neck, by children and young people, and is meant to promote the wearer's health. Mărțișor is placed as an offering on a flowering tree, a ritual gesture that highlights the solidarity between human and vegetable.

March 9 is marked by magical practices, meant to protect individuals, homes, crops, animals. In the researched area, with the sunrise, fires are lit in vineyards, orchards, gardens, to protect them from pests, thus being aimed at purifying the space, starting fruiting cycles under good auspices, ensuring abundance, etc. Those under a spell, had their spells charmed away with: immortelles, picked up from the field, milfoil, field thyme, holy water taken from three married couples, wheat bran, garlic, wormwood, flowers taken from the church¹⁸.

The woman is the one who collects some medicinal plants, according to a precise calendar, the days and times of day being observed exactly according to tradition¹⁹. The specific days are near the spring and autumn equinoxes, and the summer solstice, when the vegetation cycle reaches its threshold of maximum potentiality. These astronomical phenomena are indispensable for drawing up the calendar. At the same time, the popular calendar also specifies the places favourable for harvesting. Women who harvest healing plants had to be clean in body and soul, to speak certain words and magic formulas at harvest, to have a certain outfit, etc.

The days when medicinal plants were collected were grouped around holidays that determine collective living in sacred time. M. Pop spoke about the role of the holiday, that of restoring a permanent connection between all temporal and spatial levels: “Time is uninterrupted and, in order to understand it, people cut it into slices and created the Year; on the slices, there is a cleft: this cleft is the holiday”²⁰.

¹⁷ Inf. Violeta Popescu, 63 years old, locality of Apele Vii, Dolj County, 2020.

¹⁸ Inf. Constanța Tulbea, 65 years old, locality of Greci, Olt County, 2021.

¹⁹ For further details, see Loredana-Maria Ilin-Grozoiu, *Ceremonialul culegerii plantelor de leac. Privire specială asupra Olteniei*, in “Memoria Etnologică”, no. 80-81/2021, Baia Mare, p. 42–53.

²⁰ M. Pop, *Folclor românesc*, vol. I, Bucharest, Grai și Suflet Press, 1998, p. 259.

The man of all times, possessed by the desire to understand and integrate into the harmony and order of nature, unravelled its mysteries, which gradually led to their use²¹. Harvesting plants from nature and capitalizing on them gave the people of the primitive culture and, later, of popular cultures the opportunity to become aware of the healing qualities of flora and the chance offered to the sufferer to realize a new potential for healing and improving health at all levels.

The calendar of harvesting medicinal plants, formed in the context of archaic cultures was part of the popular calendar, an instrument for measuring time, also created based on the repetition of the vegetal cycle of nature. Amazed by the cosmic rhythmicity, by the annual regeneration of the vital energies of nature, but also by the way in which his own existence was in cadence with the cosmic rhythm, archaic man built and developed his own ways of adequacy and connection to the availability of manifestation of environmental phenomena.

One practice that promotes the feminine, in the Easter temporal area, is the harvesting of elecampane roots, also called elfdock. Plant, with multiple capitalizations, attached to important moments of the calendar cycle, it is collected according to an ancient ritual on *Vinerea Sântoaderului*, by tradition, the First Friday of Lent. This week, entirely dedicated to the equine cult of Sântoader, in Romania, concentrates a series of rituals with purifying, apotropaic and ethnoiatric valences. The sequences that compose this ritual can be easily taken from an account from Mehedinți County: “During the week of Sântoader, Friday to Saturday, clean old women, with their hair loose, pull out of the ground the roots of elfdock, and hold a lit candle in their hands. In the old days, they were naked. On the way, they don't talk to each other, they just make signs. Let no voices be heard. After they pull them out, they fill the hole with dough they knead, salt, and say: *Neața, iarbă mare! / Eu îți dau aluat și sare, / Tu dă-mi cozi pe spinare* (approx. Good morning, elfdock/ I give you dough and salt/ You give me locks of thick hair). Then, they cover the place carefully, so that the elfdock does not perish which would bring sickness and trouble all year round. The women wash their hair with elfdock brew, before dawn, if not, the horses of Sântoader would come and tangle the hair in their heads. Everyone in the family can wash in this way”²². The anger of Sântoader's Horses can be counteracted in a certain temporal context, by reactivating the virtues of some plants, enshrined in the magic code. The propitious moment for collecting this plant is the night of Sântoader, the ritual being strengthened by the power of the word. A peak ritual moment, washing the hair, aims at the state of purification “while articulating the ascension in a new, very special segment of time, the liminal character being highlighted also by the rite of passing of girls, after washing, under a blackberry bush”²³.

²¹ See Loredana-Maria Ilin-Grozoiu, *Forme de administrare a medicației în medicina populară* in “Memoria Ethnologică”, no. 84–85/2022, Baia Mare, pp. 48–61.

²² Informer Hermina Sârbu, 73 years old, Izimșa, Mehedinți County, 2020.

²³ Marcela Bratiloveanu Popilian, *Obiceiuri de primăvară din Oltenia. Calendarul orthodox și practica populară*, Piatra Neamț, “Constantin Matasă” Press, 2001, p. 109.

Another piece of information that reveals a similar scenario captures the contribution of the vegetal to the physical fulfilment: “Before sunrise, on Saturday of Sântoader, the girls, dressed up in new clothes, remove the elecampane root from the ground, which they use to wash their hair in the morning, and say: *Toadere, Toadere/Dă cosița părului/Ca pe coada calului* (approx.: Toadere, Toadere/May my hair locks be/As thick as the horse’s). They pay the elecampane, and leave salt and corn in the place where they took it from. To be good for medicine, the elecampane must be picked from clean places, where the singing of roosters has not been heard. Upon return, the girls must not be seen. The lads who follow them meet with empty pitchers and wish them to remain hairless, like the pitchers in their hands. During the week of Sântoader, when washing, women put a piece of elfdock root in the washing trough, so as not to harm Sântoader’s horses”²⁴. Salt, a well-known element, also found in other customs over the year, as well as in those related to the crucial moments of human life, is involved in the regeneration of the hair, and in health promotion. At Risipiți, Dolj County, some of the elfdock that was used for washing, a lock of hair and salt were buried in a clean, safe place, in the belief that the girl would be healthy all year round and that her hair would grow long and silky²⁵.

At Lunca, Gorj County, the woman, naked, holds a lit candle in her hand, and instead of the elecampane roots, she puts salt and dough saying: “*Bună dimineața iarbă mare!/Eu te dăruiesc pe tine/ Cu pâine și sare, Și tu mă dăruiești pe mine,/ Cu două cozi pe spinare*” (approx.: Good morning elfdock/I give you bread and salt,/You give me two nice braids)²⁶.

Other moments of the calendar cycle also highlight the woman's involvement in customs that unfold over the year, primarily related to a good health of the individual. Thus, on Sânziene (the Midsummer), a day that marks the summer solstice and a holiday that highlights a solar symbolism, *the hellebores (bojoțel, cucurig, spân, spânz – winter rose, Christmas rose)* is collected. The plant, with a wide range of attributes, is harvested ritually, observing certain rules. An account from Chilii, Olt County is edifying in this regard: “At dawn, the Tuesday of the Pentecost week, the woman, naked in the old day, pulls hellebores out of the ground. She can go on Thursday, but to be good for cure, it is better on Tuesday. On the way back, there is no talking,”²⁷. The therapeutic valences of plants are activated by appealing to ritual silence and nudity. According to the collective thinking, the hellebore collected during these days of the Pentecost Week acquires healing qualities and magical virtues. The hellebore is incorporated into ointment bases and unguents, and is indicated against rheumatism, arthrosis, dermatitis, eczema, frostbite and neuralgia: “If you have rheumatism, the hellebore ointment is

²⁴ Inf. Eugenia Ban, 74 years old, locality of Ruda, Vâlcea County, 2021.

²⁵ Inf. Rodica Mocanu, 62 years old, locality of Risipiți, Dolj County, 2020.

²⁶ Inf. Viorica Sârbu, 82 years old, locality of Lunca, Gorj County, 2020.

²⁷ Inf. Gheorghita Cochintu, 55 years old, Chilii, Olt County, 2020.

good. Now we can buy it from Plafar, but, in the old days we made it at home. I smear myself with it every day. This is how I know the recipe: heat on the fire, in a bowl, 200g fresh and unsalted pork lard. When the lard sizzles, put a handful of hellebore plant. The mixture is let on low heat, to boil for a few minutes. Leave it until the next day, heat it again, strain it through cheesecloth, put a tablespoon of honey and 50 g of crumbled beeswax. Store cool in jars. You can put on a gauze after smearing and leave until the next day. Now, instead of lard, they put Vaseline”²⁸.

On Sânzienne as well, women collect the healing plant called Drăgaică (Sânziană-Lady’s bedstraw) within a certain ritual: “On Sânzienne, until sunrise, naked women, with their hair undone, collect the good healing weed for those with colds and yellowness. While picking, unmarried girls wash themselves with the dew from the flowers and utter: *Apucai pe potecă necălcată/ Pe rouă nescuturată/ Dragoste adunând/ Pe mine aruncând* (approx.: *I walked onto an unbeaten path/Stepped onto the untainted dew/Picked-up the love/ Adorned myself with it*). From the elders I know that whoever gets sick now has no cure”²⁹.

The Day of Sânzienne, whose importance is recommended by its rich activity, activates especially the female group. Now *the nepeta (catnip)* is collected, according to an ancient ritual: “At midnight, old, clean women wash themselves and pick the plant that is good for period pains. Before, the woman who picked the plant stripped naked”³⁰.

In the category of ritual practices aimed at the health of the individual, there is also the custom of collecting *the comfrey (tătăneală, iarba lui Tatină, titineață, iarba voinicului-English names include: boneset, knitbone, consound, slippery-root)* during *the Pentecost Week*. An account from Corlate, Dolj County reveals its therapeutic valences: “On the Tuesday of *the Pentecost Week*, the woman would identify and mark the place where the comfrey was. By sunrise, on Friday, the woman would make 15 genuflexions and say: *Doamnă, Iarba lui Tatin, Nu te iau pe stricat, Ci te iau pe tomnit, Să strângi carne la carne, Os la os, Să le faci cum au fost!* (approx.: *Lady Knitbone, I’m not calling you by your wrong name, I’m paying you for your services, Put the meat together, Put the bones together, Make everything pristine again!*) Boiled and mixed with barley flour, accompanied by a chant, it treats the fracture³¹. Comfrey, along with other plants, endowed with a number of values, appears directly involved in magical techniques designed to promote the health of the individual and counteract the actions of the evil, the Iele (the Wicked Fairies), particularly active during the Pentecost Week. Resigned that their forces are defeated by plants, the Iele admit: “*Dacă n-ar fi lăsat Dumnezeu/ Leuștean și odolean/Avrămeasă și tătăneasă/ Ar fi lumea toată a noastră*”

²⁸ Inf. Ioana Neață, 68 years old, locality of Frățila, Dolj County, 2021.

²⁹ Inf. Eugenia Raicea, 84 years old, locality of Drănic, Dolj County, 2020.

³⁰ Inf. Viorica Sârbu, 82 years old, locality of Lunca, Gorj County, 2020.

³¹ Inf. Elena Ionescu, 70 years old, locality of Corlate, Dolj County, 2020.

(approx.: “If God almighty would not have left on earth/ The lovage and the valerian/The Jalap and the comfrey/ We would have the world under our control”)³².

Another strictly observed ritual inscribed in the post-Easter temporality, more precisely on the Wednesday of the fourth week after Easter, which illustrates the presence and the more active involvement of women is the one that follows the gathering of *the bastard balm*: “When they return home, they put on the fence a stalk for each person of the family. The next day, if the stalks are all still green, the family will be healthy. If any is faded, the one of the family to whom it was destined will die”³³. The adult female group, built most of the time on the principles of kinship or neighborhood, includes the category of elderly women, involved in other ceremonial practices connected to the festive time.

Moreover, the women, on the day of “Pobrejenii”, “Obrejenii” over which the Christian holiday of August 6, “the Transfiguration” overlaps, collect *hazelnuts* that are used as a cure for diseases, they are collected on the day of “Pobrejenii”, or “Obrejenii” over which overlaps the Christian holiday of August 6, “the Transfiguration”: “For the cure, women strip naked in the forest, they pray to the hazelnut tree and God, and pick peanuts silently, they don't talk to each other. Over the year, they use them for stomach pain and against colds”³⁴. The hazelnuts reveal therapeutic valences, especially at *Probejenie*, a holiday that marks, in the traditional calendar, the border between summer and autumn. Other medicinal plants are also harvested now: lovage, garlic, jalap.

As noticed, in the researched area, as well as in the entire Romanian cultural space, the observance of the holidays occupies a place of honour in the family life of each believer. Thus, the tradition continues, adding new meanings and current forms of manifestation, immediately adapted. The respect shown to the practice of feasts reveals the organic connection between folk customs and rites, the Apostolic faith, and the events of Sacred Scripture.

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³² Inf. Elena Gusatu, 74 years old, locality of Cezieni, Olt County, 2021.

³³ Inf. Gabriela Florescu, locality of Crasna, Gorj County, 2021.

³⁴ Inf. Elena Toma, 87 years old, locality of Silea, Vâlcea County, 2020.

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INFORMERS

- Informer Ban Eugenia, 74 years old, locality of Ruda, Vâlcea County, 2021.
- Informer Marsanu Doina, 70 years old, locality of Dragotești, Dolj County, 2021.
- Informer Vintilă Elena, 80 years old, locality of Boeșa, Vâlcea County, 2020.
- Informer Popescu Violeta, 63 years old, locality of Apele Vii, Dolj County, 2020.
- Informer Tulbea Constanța, 65 years old, locality of Greci, Olt County, 2021.
- Informer Hermina Sârbu, 73 years old, Izimșa, Mehedinți County, 2020.
- Informer Eugenia Ban, 74 years old, locality of Ruda, Vâlcea County, 2021.
- Informer Rodica Mocanu, 62 years old, locality of Risipiți, Dolj County, 2020.
- Informer Viorica Sârbu, 82 years old, locality of Lunca, Gorj County, 2020.
- Informer Gheorghîța Cochințu, 55 years old, Chilii, Olt County, 2020.
- Informer Ioana Neață, 68 years old, locality of Frățila, Dolj County, 2021.
- Informer Eugenia Raicea, 84 years old, locality of Drânic, Dolj County, 2020.
- Informer Viorica Sârbu, 82 years old, locality of Lunca, Gorj County, 2020.
- Informer Elena Ionescu, 70 years old, locality of Corlate, Dolj County, 2020.
- Informer Elena Gusatu, 74 years old, locality of Cezieni, Olt County, 2021.
- Informer Gabriela Florescu, locality of Crasna, Gorj County, 2021.
- Informer Elena Toma, 87 years old, locality of Silea, Vâlcea County, 2020.