

LIMINALITY STAGES IN POST-COMMUNIST SOCIETIES: MEDIA AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN ROMANIA

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Anthropologists have always considered the ritual as a social institution capable of bringing about cohesion and equilibrium: indeed its repetitive and predictable structure is opposing the chaos and unpredictability from the real world ("Ritual is a reducer of real or imagined disorder" - G. Balandier, 1988, p. 33; "Ceremony is a declaration against indeterminacy. Through form and formality it celebrates man-made meaning, the culturally determined, the regulated, the named and the explained" SF Moore, B. Myerhoff, 1977; etc). If we accepted the idea that the ritual was used by the societies to control the disorder, then by an inversion we could say that where disorder exists, the ritual or at least the ritual manifestations show up. By extension, we can say that the periods of an intense change (crisis, revolutions, transitions) necessarily imply a ritual dimension and that the application of a ritual paradigm can offer a theoretical model for understanding the uncommon phenomena which characterize such moments.

Here we want to refer to the processual symbolic analysis, detailed by Victor Turner and his successors. The basic ideas of this theoretical body are the following:

- a) In all societies (traditional and modern) rituals are functioning as cultural mechanisms that control the social change. That's why "ritual is by definition associated with social transition" (V. Turner, 1977: 77)
- b) Rituals are enacted by basic symbolic units, which show the "root paradigms" of a culture. In this respect "ritual is a transformative performance, revealing major classifications, categories and contradictions of cultural processes". (idem)
- c) Being "between and betwixt" two social stages, rituals create a state of *liminality* - "a legitimized situation of freedom from cultural constraints and social classifications" (V. Turner, 1968, vol X: 581). Liminality, as opposed to normal social structure ("*societas*") introduce a period of "*communitas*", which means "an unstructured or rudimentary structured and relatively undifferentiated community (V. Turner, 1969: 96).