

# Music, Ritual and Community among Romania's Orthodox Pilgrimages

MIREL BĂNICĂ\*

*More than 20 years after the fall of the Communist regime, we are witnessing the unprecedented development of religious pilgrimage in Romania, a country where, according to the latest census, 84% of the population self-identifies as Orthodox Christian. Apart from the pilgrimages to well-known destinations (Jerusalem, Rome, etc.) organized by the Romanian Patriarchy's Pilgrimage Bureau, a separate category is the improvised, hybrid pilgrimages, both religious and touristic, organized by individuals using hired minibuses. This paper offers an ethnographic description of a pilgrimage. The focus is on the relationship between music, ritual, the sacred space of the pilgrimage and the public space. Music is used as a barrier and immaterial border to the ritual space, while in its interior it is better suited for the emotional control and the proper management of pilgrims. The analysis of pilgrimages points to new forms of blending of music and ritual, outside established institutional frameworks, as well as to changing notions of pilgrimage, movement, religious practice and piety.*

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Pilgrimages all over the world are full of music and sounds. Romania's orthodox pilgrimages are no exception to the rule. Pilgrims sing while queuing. One chants *pricesne* at Prislop, Suceava or Nicula. Religious music CD sellers advertise their albums by having public auditions with the aid of improvised audio systems. Beggars too sing from time to time. They tell the suffering and the pain or they murmur subtly some sort of para-religious chants, as to provoke public charity. The Church and its servants do most of the singing and this "official" liturgical music is spreading from tens of speakers hanged above the waiting line and in the general pilgrimage perimeter. Why did I find it important to study the role music plays in a pilgrimage? For various reasons, which I'll try to organize by order of importance. From the point of view of the pilgrimage anthropology, the sound cannot be disregarded because it's an integral part of the orthodox "affective" experience, generating emotion and meaning among pilgrims. Music is an essential part

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\* Mirel Bănică, Researcher, Institute for the History of Religions, The Romanian Academy, Bucharest. Address: Calea 13 Septembrie nr.13, Casa Academiei, Institutul Istoria Religiilor, Bucuresti, sector 5; e-mail: mirel7@yahoo.com