

Ritualistic Values of Romanian Kitchen Tools¹

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Abstract

The Romanian heritage is very rich in traditions, rituals and superstitions associated with kitchen utensils and tools, as well as with the preparation of various foods and dishes, most of them unknown to a large segment of the population nowadays. The process of preparing a certain dish is a ritual in itself, with clearly established rules and steps. The aim of our paper is to reveal the ritualistic values of some Romanian kitchen tools and utensils as a statement of the vast national intangible heritage. Our broader aim is to promote, at an international level, aspects of Romanian cultural life from the visible and invisible Romanian cultural heritage.

The research methodology combines methods of cultural and ethnographic studies: literature review and field survey.

Key words: *cultural heritage, kitchen, cultural practices, kitchen tools, food preparation*

I. Tools as cultural and ritualistic objects

The space of a home is the result of the significations attributed to the physical place of the respective house. Besides other signs which contribute to creating the signification of a Romanian house, such as the number of rooms and their functions (Boghian 2016), the presence and types of objects provide a rich gamut of meanings associated with the rooms in which they are located, as well as their use. In this paper, we shall approach traditional kitchen tools and utensils from Romanian homes as cultural objects, products of their

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age, and their ritualistic values as signs of Romanian national identity.

Cultural objects are created through gestuality programs (Greimas 1975: 99); in other words, cultural objects are the effect of the purpose of man's actions. Thus, kitchen tools and utensils are the result of man's practices of preparing, cooking and eating food. Cultural objects may function either as the subject's adjuvant (instrument) or as the subject's substitute (e.g. a seal), which enables us to establish the cultural dimensions of a society, defined through as many isotopies of certain practical or mythical (food, clothing, etc.) skills (*savoir-faire*) (Greimas 1975: 100). The original version of the actor-network theory – inspired by a post-structuralist version of semiotics – proposes that objects are “an effect of stable arrays or networks of relations” and that “objects hold together so long as those relations also hold together and do not change their shape” (Law 2002: 91).

Throughout history, the objects used in rituals and sacred ceremonies have had both utilitarian and symbolic meanings. The objects used in ritualistic ceremonies may be objects designed and created particularly for the purpose (e.g. statues of deities, painted images) or ordinary objects and tools that man uses to perform everyday ordinary tasks related to his living. Objects used in households on a regular basis for practical tasks have changed their function on special days in order to serve sacred purposes, namely:

- to establish and maintain communication between the sacred/transcendent/supernatural realm and the profane;
- to urge the divine to act or respond in a certain way, usually in the form of help, power, protection or forgiveness for the participants of the ceremonies or persons concerned².

The relevant features of an object used in ritualistic ceremonies are its shape (e.g. a pitcher with a narrow mouth, or a pot with a wide mouth), size, the material from which it is made (wood, stone, precious or ordinary metals; e.g. gold is associated with prosperity, clay is associated with divinity), the technique of fabrication and its decorations (motifs, colours).

² <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ceremonial-object> , accessed on 15 August 2017.

In the following section of our paper, we shall present the ritualistic values of several kitchen tools and instruments from the Romanian space of the kitchen.

Drinking and eating are social activities that define the nature of an occasion, hence food and drinks play certain roles in celebratory and transitional rituals:

[r]itualistic lifestyle transitions are marked by ceremonial (either celebratory or commemorative) meals and range from major life-cycle transitions (e.g. birth, coming-of-age, marriage and death) to life-changing events (graduation, job promotion, house-warming, retirement) [...] they are actually rites of passage in which each stage bears deep significance and marks the transition from one stage of life to another. (Morărașu & Drugă 2015: 107-8)

Implicitly, the tools and utensils related to eating and drinking acquire ritualistic values and meanings. The field research conducted by the eCultfood project team in various localities from the county of Bacău materializes in video recordings of informers preparing Romanian traditional dishes and describing the preparation process, as well as the tools used; informers may also provide information on the origin of the food and tools, special practices and beliefs associated with certain dishes and tools.

II. Ritualistic values of Romanian kitchen tools

II.1. The protective and help-providing cauldron

The cauldron [Rom. *ceaun*, *ceaon*, from Turkish *ca(h)un*, also Ukrainian *ca(v)un* (Savin 2012 b: 106)] was in the 19th century – and still is – the most popular tool in every Romanian peasant's house. According to one of the eCultfood project informers from Somoșca, Bacău county, "food is cooked more easily and faster in a cauldron"³; it is made of iron and used to make polenta, boil potatoes, cook milk and pumpkins and, if cracked or leaking, to make popcorn (Photo no. 1). If the crack is not a large one, the cauldron is fixed with an iron

³ Somoșca video recording by eCultfood team, 25th of February, 2017.

circle and used as usual. Every cauldron has an iron handle, which makes it easy to hold and manipulate. Cauldrons are bought from the fair and then added a handle by the blacksmith. Before the first use, the newly bought cauldron is burnt in an oven and washed clean to purify it. The size of the cauldron depends on the number of the family members: the more numerous they are, the bigger the cauldron. The cauldron is kept under the bench, in a safe place, turned upside down so that cats or dogs may not besmirch it. If, by accident, this happens, the cauldron is burnt in an oven, thoroughly rubbed and sanctified by a priest, with holy water. The cauldron should not be lent to anyone, for this may result in evil skin ulcers (Lupescu 2000: 34). Black soot from the bottom of the cauldron was used to make boots look black and neat; it was even used by young people to paint their eyebrows and moustaches, as well as to make ink. It was believed that when the bottom of the cauldron was on fire, the weather would turn bad (Idem, p. 35).



Photo 1. A cauldron (Rom. *ceaun*) with polenta (Rom. *mamaliga*) and roller (Rom. *melesteu*)⁴

The small cauldron (Rom. *ceaunaș*) is sometimes white-enamelled, being used to make polenta for one or two people. It is also carried by field workers, shepherds and carriers to cook polenta wherever they

⁴ Photo taken by the eCultfood project team from a Romanian countryside household, the village of Asău, the county of Bacău, Romania, in 2017.

may sit down to rest: they eat cheese and polenta, and then thank God for their meal.

The large cauldron that may hold up to two, three or even eight wooden buckets⁵ of water may be found only at large households: this is used to boil clothes with lye to make them clean, or cook polenta for seasonal workers on large estates, or boil the whey (Rom. *zer*) to make green cheese (Rom. *urdă*). The predominantly rural organization and occupations (agricultural activities such as crop production and animal breeding) of the Romanians impacted not only on their eating habits (Morărașu & Drugă 2015: 101), but also on their cooking tools and utensils.

According to Romanian popular beliefs, on the night of St. Andrews (November 30th), ghouls (Rom. *strigoi*) would come out to haunt upon the earth: ghouls are dead men's and women's souls who, on this night, become incarnate and come out of their tombs. Ghouls are also believed to be living men and women who have tails; on this night, they come out of their lodges and walk around unawares. On this night, housewives rub garlic against window frames and doors, as well as all the possible entrances to the house (e.g. the chimney); also, everybody in the house should eat garlic and rub one's forehead, chest, back and joints with garlic, to keep ghouls away; it was believed that ghouls could enter houses and cast a bone's disease upon the inhabitant. It was also believed that, on this night, ghouls would steal tools from yards and use them to fight against each other at crossroads, as well as try to enter the house through any recipient they may find. To prevent them from entering the house, the housewife would turn all the dishes upside down. However, according to a belief from Covurlui County, on this terrible night, the daring could challenge the ghouls to their own benefit: for this, the person would have to take a cauldron with water to a crossroads and set a fire there, under it, to bring the water to boiling temperature; when the water boils, the courageous man should throw a black cat into the cauldron; the black cat would become the

⁵ Two of the most relevant meanings of the Romanian word *cofă* are: wooden bucket of various sizes with one bottom and one handle, used to carry and keep water, milk, small forest berries such as blueberries or wild strawberries; measure unit for liquids, 1 *cofa* = 1,33 liters, <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/cofa>, accessed on 17 August 2017.

devil incarnate and then, one by one, all the devils would gather around it and beg the man to put the fire out; the man should keep silent until Satan himself would come; at that point, the man could ask anything from Satan, for the latter would be forced to accept anything (Pamfile 1914: 128-132).

The cauldron is an essential utensil on another occasion, too:

[o]n the 21st of November each year, Romanian Orthodox people celebrate the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple/Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple, also called The Presentation. The Romanian terms used to designate this day – *Ovidenii*, *Vodivenie*, *Ovedenie* – come from the Slavic word *Vovedenie*, meaning “presentation or introduction”, which has achieved a connection with the verb “to see” (due to the Romanian word *vedenie*, meaning apparition). One of the things that is celebrated on the day of Ovidenii is the preview of the good will of God (Boghian 2016: 27).

For the day of Ovidenii and also for St. Andrew’s Day, housewives would prepare a special dish made of fermented corn and wheat or rye flour and water (Rom. *covașă*) (Pamfile 1914: 145-6)⁶. At the end of the cooking process, if the resulting *covașă* was too thin, it would be transferred into a large cauldron and boiled again until thick enough; during the boiling process, the *covașă* would have to be continuously stirred as the cauldron’s bottom is known to get very hot and burn the mixture, giving it a smoky taste. This mixture was offered to neighbours to ensure protection against ghouls, ghosts and evil spirits, and also to ensure that cows would yield good amounts of creamy milk.

The practices described above reveal an image of the cauldron as an adjuvant of man in his fight against all types of evil and his struggle for a better life (e.g. the possibility that cows may yield more milk as a result of offering food made in a cauldron).

There are also other Romanian beliefs and superstitions related to cauldrons: in Tecuci, it is believed that whoever keeps his cauldron

⁶ See Boghian, I. (2016: 28) for the description of the process of preparing the Romanian dish *covașă*.

outside, will have difficulties in overwintering his cattle; in Ialomița, rain is expected when the soot from the cauldron's bottom is seen burning; in Banat, while at her parents-in-law's house, the young bride should look at the bottom of the cauldron if she wants to give birth to children with black eyes (Antonescu 2016: 144). In Galați, one should not eat polenta directly out of the cauldron for he will attract poverty; one should not eat the polenta crust from the cauldron because it is believed that he who does that would turn dry like the crust itself; however, polenta crust is good for children (Tecuci); in Suceava, it is believed that eating the polenta crust from the cauldron attracts trouble (*Idem*, p. 410). Before being released in the yard, newly hatched chicks are put in a cauldron and covered with a cloth, so that they may end by the knife and not eaten by haws (*Idem*, p. 562). In Bacau, it is believed that a snake's bite may be cured with the ash resulted from burning the snake in a cauldron (*Idem*, p. 647).

Based on field research, the eCultfood project team has found that ritualistic practices and beliefs related to various kitchen tools still exist but are falling out of use: generally, older people living in the countryside know of and respect such practices and beliefs. For example, at Rățeni, there still persists the belief that the crust left on the bottom of the cauldron after pouring the polenta out on a plate or wooden cutting board is good for stomachaches; the polenta crust may be easily detached only if the polenta has been cooked in a cauldron.⁷ Unlike the inhabitants of Tecuci area (Galați) who consider that eating polenta crust might lead to a degeneration of bodily condition (the only exception being for children), the ones of Rățeni (Bacău) think that eating polenta crust from the cauldron is good for the body, with no exceptions.

II.2. The empowering, healing and evil-detering knife

The knife [Rom. *cuțit*, from Latin *acutitus* (Savin 2012 b: 104)] is used to cut everything; it is bought ready-made or made from steel by a gypsy/blacksmith. There is no house without a knife. In the 19th century, many villagers would carry knives either in the sheath on their belt or girdle, or attached by a chain to the belt/girdle, or inside a tote bag worn at the hip especially by mountaineers from Suceava County; the keepers of cattle herds would carry knives with special

⁷ Rățeni video recording by eCultfood team, 30th of December, 2016.

blades to let blood from sick cows; the field research of the eCultfood project team has shown that it is still common for keepers of cattle herds and shepherds in Bacău county to carry a knife for various uses, including the carving of decorations on wooden sticks /canes or letting blood from sick animals (Asău, Buda, Rățeni, Roșiori, Mălosu).

It was advised that whoever carries a knife should be careful; one should not threaten anybody else with the knife, for the angel would run away from that person; the knife was used to cast spells, as a result/proof the cranes in the sky would stop flying; the tip of the knife would be dipped in untasted water to remove pangs; it was believed that wizards would drive a knife through the pivot of a cart and this would yield milk like from a cow's udder, while an abandoned knife was good for many cures (Lupescu 2000: 38).

There are knives of various sizes and uses: a long knife for killing and disjointing pigs is called *șâș* in Romanian; a blade often cut out from a scythe, with the handle wrapped in cloth and used for shaving by shepherds and peasants who had no razor is called *custură*; a small knife with handle made of wood is called *ceacăie* in Fălciu and Tutova; an arched knife called *cosor* (cutlass/ vine knife/ pruning knife) was used by vineyard workers and also to cut greenery and meat; the chopper (Rom. *satâr*), with a blade as wide as a palm and a wooden handle, was used to cut meat and was owned only by the well-off – those who did not own a chopper, would use an axe for the same purpose; women would whet their kitchen knives by grinding them on the cauldron's mouth, on the bottom of a pot, on the front stone of the hearth or on the fire tongs etc. so nobody knew her secret; a wooden knife was used to cut polenta or baked/boiled tomatoes for salad.

Unlike the spoon, the knife, a feeding utensil by definition, “functions most of the times in the popular imaginary as symbolism that derives from its value of object for cutting, weapon of defense, but also tool that causes death” (Savin 2012 a: 112). Its characteristic of feeding tool empowers the owner with authority, as shown by the Romanian phraseological structures: *a avea și pâinea și cuțitul* [literally translated as “to have (both) the knife and the bread”, *a avea/ a ține/ a fi cu pâinea și cuțitul în mână* (to have/to hold the bread and the knife in one's hand), *a pune mâna pe pâine ai pe cuțit* (to lay one's hand on

the bread and knife), all of these meaning “to have all the power, to own all the means, to dispose of something or someone according to one’s own desire” (*Idem*, p. 113).

The knife was used in many spells, its role being influenced by the type of knife: stolen, found, sacred etc. For example, the sacred knife is worn by grooms on their wedding day. In healing rituals, a sacred knife, sanctified by nine priests, is moved in a circle above the painful spot and then dug in a warm bread; after that, the knife is dug behind the door, or outside in the ground and left there for half an hour or three days; if the knife is rusty when taken out, it means that there is no cure for the sick person (Gorovei 1990: 144).

The knife was, along with other tools, part of a healing ritual for children. In Moldavia, when children were sick (with symptoms including not having all their teeth grown, getting their bellies swollen and achy), one had to proceed as follows: take a new clay pot (Rom. *ulcică*), pour untasted water in it, put nine white pebbles in the water (if possible, little pebbles called cat’s salt) some corn flour; everything was set to boil on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, three times a day (before sunrise, before noon and before sunset); there were also nine new spoons, nine new spindles, a needle and a knife; after the water had boiled, everything was overthrown in a bowl that was placed on the baby’s abdomen or held suspended so as not to burn the child; then the tip of one of the spoons was dipped in the water, and then the spoon was held towards the left, with its bowl upwards; the second spoon was then soaked and held above the first, until the drops of water fell into the first spoon; in the meantime, a spell was cast; the actions were repeated with all the spoons, the spell being uttered each time; then one would blow over the bowl in the shape of a cross and spit downwards; finally, the water from the first spoon was taken as it had collected the water from the other eight spoons and the nine spindles and the knife and was poured it into the child’s mouth; it was believed that the little one was really sick if the clay pot that was placed upside down inside the bowl sucked in all the water, there being left only the small pebbles and corn flour porridge. (Marian 1995: 252-254, apud. Antonescu 2016: 21). In this practice, the knife is part of a symbolic series of elements that, when used together, gain magical power: water – stone – corn flour – fire – spoon – spindle – needle – knife (Antonescu 2016: 22).

In Banat and Transylvania, one of the most important celebrations of shepherds is called, in Romanian, "Alesul" and is held between April, 21-23. It actually ends on April 23rd, on St. George Day. "Alesul" may be paraphrased as "Selection of sheep based on the amount of milk each sheep yields". During these three days, shepherds' huts are built next to sheep yards, the first selection of lambs is undertaken and the first milking is made. On April 21, 2-5 sheep owners agree to put their sheep in a common herd for the summer; also, on this day, shepherds are employed and paid to watch for the sheep until October 26, Saint Demetrius Day. On the afternoon of the same day, women prepare, on the back of a chair or on a clean wooden board, the grease or lard for the sheep, which they give to the shepherds, wrapped in a cloth, so that the latter may have it before sunset, when it is believed that witches try to take the milk from ungreased sheep; this is also the moment when all evil spirits that may hurt the sheep are set free. Grease is made from several products gathered during the previous year: lard from a black pig, sacrificed on December 20 but guarded overnight until the crow of the cocks, as this is the best lard; the lard is taken from the vicinity of the pig's heart, it is not melted, it is salted and kept bound in the form of a crucible, with the edges inside, and then it is smoked in the hearth's chimney; the lard is mixed with various dried and crushed plants (garlic, lovage, absinth, nettle, willow leaves) that were picked on the 25th day between Easter and the Pentecost. The sheep are anointed to have more milk and be healthy, the plants in that mixture being considered as having the power to keep the evils away from the sheep and the herd. The women also decorate the buckets for the milk with the same herbs and, on St. George Day, they carry water in those buckets to shepherds, before the morning milking: the shepherds wash their hands before they start milking the sheep, and then throw the remaining water over the sheep, as a purification and protection ritual. After this, the oldest shepherd anoints the poles from the sheep fold gate and another one digs a knife into the earth from the gate saying: "Like this knife here, so shall the milk stay with the sheep, taken by nobody!" The ritual continues with anointing the udder of each sheep after milking it, and then the shepherds' meal. When all the sheep have been milked, the bailiff makes the sign of the cross, takes a bread ring and dips it into the milk, or dips the tip of the knife into the milk, and then digs the knife, in three different

places, into the bread ring of the woman whose sheep had been milked in the respective vessel; three thirds of the bread ring will be cut, left to fall into the milk and then taken out by the women and kept throughout the year and fed, as crumbles, to the sheep, together with salt, to keep away witches and wild animals. After the milking, the lambs are released to suckle: at this point, the bailiff throws the knife in front of them, saying: "Let these lambs be healthy as iron and perish only by will and knife!" Sometimes, this ritual (the milking, the shepherds' meal and the throwing of the knife in front of the lambs) is repeated the next day (Marian 1995, II: p. 276-282).

The eCultfood informers from Roșiori, Bacău have provided the project team with some information about practices and beliefs related to knives: in the past, approximately 20-30 years ago, young lads would dance, on Sunday's parties, holding a knife by the blade with their mouths; sometimes, there was also a woman who would dance like this, to show her power, courage and bravery; also, when heavy rains continued for days without end, knives would be stuck into the ground, to stop the rains; knives are never sanctified by priests, as they are primarily regarded as weapons.⁸

II.3. Spoons as protectors, benefactors and predictors

Spoons [Rom. *lingură*, from Latin *lingula* (Savin 2012 b: 105)] were made by spoon makers and monks out of willow, poplar, linden, maple, plum or yew wood. In the past, wooden spoons were used on a daily basis; today, wooden spoons may be found, most often, as house decorations; if used practically, as a kitchen tool, the wooden spoon is no longer used to eat food, but in the process of preparing it (e.g. to toss, mix ingredients, to stir the mixture in a pot while it is boiling etc.). The utility of wooden spoons in cooking food has been confirmed by many eCultfood informers from Bacău county, for example those from Roșiori, Buda, Mălosu etc. The best and most beautiful spoons are those made of yew, plum or maple wood. The spoon handles may have various shapes and carved decorations. Spoons are offered on various days preceding several religious holidays (Rom. *Moși*) when commemorating the dead so as to ensure one would not lack these tools in the afterlife; abandoned spoons would be hung by the necks of young foals to protect them against

⁸ Roșiori video recording by eCultfood team, 6th of October, 2017.

disease and to ensure that they grow well (Lupescu 2000: 42). Offering spoons with the purpose of commemorating the dead is still a current practice, especially in rural areas: the eCultfood informer from Buda has confirmed the fact that spoons – preferably made of wood – together with clay pots and mugs, filled with water / wine and cabbage meat rolls, accompanied by a burning candle, are offered on various days preceding certain religious holidays; also, sets of spoons are offered to newly wedded couples, in order to provide them with all the utensils needed in a household.⁹ There are also spoons made of tin, brass, silver and gold; those made of gold and silver are known to peasants only from stories and fairy tales, for only kings and queens eat with them.

The ladle (Rom. *linguroi*, *polonic*, *ciobârlac*, or *lioșcă* in Tecuci) is a large spoon able to hold a quarter or half a liter; it is made of wood, tin, lead etc. They are often found at sheep yards where they are used to pour whey and green cheese in cups; the ladle is also used to serve borsch (Rom. *bors*)¹⁰ at commemoration feasts. Small spoons are made of wood, lead, gold, silver, bronze and even bone; those made of bone are decorated with carved motifs, like those made of wood; these are used to eat soft boiled eggs in their shell, honey etc.

In Romanian phraseology, the spoon symbolizes the very act of eating: being unable to use it implies, in fact, the impossibility of eating, a failure that may be symbolic of any type of loss: *a-i atârna/ lega/ pune/ spânzura cuiva lingura/ lingurile de gât* (literally, to hang/ tie the spoon/ spoons round somebody's neck) means "not to give food to the one that is late for dinner, or to lose what has been about to be got"; *a-și pune lingura/ lingurile de/ în brâu* (literally, to hang one's spoon/ spoon to one's waist), means "to finish eating" (Savin 2012a: 113). Thus, this tool is indispensable for the act: *cine vre să mănânce, aibe lingură* (who wants to eat must have a spoon), meaning "when one starts doing something one should have all the things needed close by" (*Idem*, 113). The power of the spoon may be revealed by its metonymic function when its attributes suggest the absence/ presence of content/ food: *lingura goală rupe gura* (literally, the empty spoon hurts the mouth), meaning "having nothing to eat"; *lingura*

⁹ Buda video recording by eCultfood team, 14th of January, 2017.

¹⁰ See Boghian, I. (2016: 29-30) for meanings and relevance of *borsch* in Romanian cuisine.

mare strică gura dar drege fața (the large spoon hurts the mouth, but mends the face), meaning “a lot of food” (Idem).

The rituals and superstitions involving the use of spoons are numerous. We shall further present only some examples. In Suceava, on the eve of Christmas (December 24th), the unmarried girl in a family gathers all the table spoons, comes out with them in the yard, shakes them in her hands to make noise and pays attention to the direction wherefrom the dogs in the village would start to bark as it is the same direction from which her suitors would come (Antonescu 2016: 131).

In Mureș, Mărginimea Sibiului and Țara Oltului, on the first Easter day, the spoon used to mix the red color for egg painting is placed at the belt of the hayward before leading the cattle to graze in the fields; the respective man should climb a tree and thus he would be able to see the she-ghouls coming to take the milk of the cows, and he would even notice, on the bull of the herd, the greatest of the ghouls; sensing a strange presence, the ghouls would come and try to convince the man to climb down from that tree and tell nobody else what he has seen; but, the man should not listen to them, instead he should be able to catch them and do whatever he likes with them (Marian 1994, II: 185).

In Țara Zarandului, in order to be together for the rest of their lives, the bride and groom are greeted with a bowl of soup, from which they have to eat with the same spoon (Dascălu 1994: 23). In Alba and Mărginimea Sibiului, the bride and groom eat honey with two wooden spoons, carved from a single piece of wood, which makes them tied together with a wood chains; given that this is an object which requires great craftsmanship, its carving is only possible in areas where woodworking has reached outstanding artistic levels. In Ialomița, on the evening of New Year's Eve, unmarried girls place spoons full of water on a tray, and the next day the dry spoon indicates that its owner would have no luck in love the coming year.

In Moldavia, on New Year's Eve, December 31st, in addition to other beliefs, superstitions and rituals meant to foresee a man's fate for the coming year, one glass of water for each person living in the household is placed under the icons; the next day, the water in each glass is measured and the person whose glass has more water is said to have a lucky, good year ahead, whereas the person whose glass has less water is said to have bad fortune; in Bukovina and Walachia,

instead of glasses, there are spoons filled with water and placed on a tray: the interpretation is similar to the one for the glasses; moreover, if a spoon happens to overturn during the night, it is believed that the person to whom the spoon belongs will die the coming year (Marian, 1994: 6-9).

III. Conclusions

Romanian kitchen tools are connected to various rituals, celebrations, superstitions and beliefs, be they pagan or Christian. The presentation of the ritualistic values of Romanian kitchen tools provides a whole array of images related to the essential moments in human existence: birth, coming of age, marriage and death. The main ritualistic functions of the kitchen tools used in the practices mentioned above are those of adjuvant, protector, benefactor and predictor.

Studying the ritualistic values of some Romanian kitchen tools raises awareness of the richness and diversity of the Romanian cultural heritage and contributes to understanding national identity in a unique, authentic way. The close relation between man and his tools revealed by studying the role of cauldrons, knives and spoons in Romanian rituals, celebrations, superstitions and beliefs is impressive and further highlights the spiritual richness of traditional families and households.

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- (2016): "The Space of the Romanian kitchen. Cultural practices and Signification", in *Cultural Perspectives. Journal for Literary and British Cultural Studies in Romania*, no. 21, Bacău: Alma Mater, pp. 9-33.
- (2016): "The Discourse of the supernatural in Victorian novels" (Ioana Boghian), in *Interstudia*, no. 19, Bacău: Alma Mater, pp. 55-65.

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