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DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY

**LITURGICAL CHANT AND THE PROTO-STRUCTURE OF
THE ROMANIAN ETHOS.**

SOCIOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This summary synthesizes the principal conclusions of the research on the role of liturgical chant as a proto-structure of the Romanian ethos, highlighting both theoretical and methodological foundations and potential practical implications in the contemporary context of secularization and value pluralism.

This study is situated at the intersection of sociology, Orthodox theology, and cultural anthropology, aiming to analyze in depth the Orthodox liturgical chant as both an expression and a vector of the Romanian ethos. In a contemporary intellectual context that often separates science from faith, the thesis offers an integrative vision of the religious phenomenon, overcoming traditional epistemological divides. It seeks to recover the symbolic, affective, and ontological dimensions of social life, arguing that the religious is not a relic of the past but a vibrant and functional nucleus in constructing meaning and social cohesion. Church singing is approached not merely as an aesthetic element or part of the intangible cultural heritage, but as an active and constitutive force of communal life, capable of shaping collective meanings, articulating social structures, and regenerating communities.

The starting observation of this research is that, throughout Romanian history, Orthodox religious practice—particularly liturgical chant—functioned as a primary agent of socialization and value transmission, in an era lacking formal educational and social institutions. Consequently, the study explores the idea that the Orthodox liturgical tradition played an essential role in forming the Romanian collective consciousness and crystallizing a shared cultural identity. The topic's relevance is underlined by the need to reconnect with indigenous spiritual resources in a society marked by identity crises, value fragmentation, and secularizing tendencies. In this framework, reevaluating liturgical chant as a factor of social cohesion and as a formative element of cultural identity can become pertinent both for the sociology of religion and for contemporary cultural studies.

The thesis aligns with recent research directions that rediscover religion's role as a vector of social cohesion and a fundamental component of collective identities, especially in multicultural or post-secular contexts. Through the proposed transdisciplinary approach, the research contributes to dialogue between sociology and theology, suggesting that a more comprehensive understanding of social phenomena involves recovering the symbolic-religious

perspective. Thus, Orthodoxy is seen not only as an object of study but also as an epistemological partner, offering an integral anthropology in which the human person is understood as created for communion and transcendence, and communal life is closely linked to the sacred. This integrated perspective provides a new theoretical framework for investigating the Romanian ethos, surpassing strictly secular approaches and highlighting the interdependence between spiritual life and social structure.

The fundamental hypothesis advanced in this work asserts that the prototypical form of Orthodox liturgical chant—as configured in the early Christian centuries and transmitted throughout history—contributed significantly to shaping a Romanian collective ethos with deep identity resonances. In other words, it is posited that early musical-liturgical rituals functioned as a mechanism for social cohesion and incipient axiological education, laying the foundations for a shared fund of values, moral attitudes, and behavioral models that defined the spirituality and culture of the Romanian people. Accordingly, liturgical chant would have acted as an identity proto-structure—an original and fundamental layer—of the Romanian collective consciousness, reflecting in its content and practices the community’s defining views on good, the sacred, order, and belonging.

To test this hypothesis, the research was guided by several key questions: What concrete role did liturgical chant play in the historical process of forming the Romanian ethos? Can it be regarded as a prototypical form of collective moral-spiritual education? To what extent does the liturgical text act as a mechanism for intergenerational transmission of traditional social values and norms? How is the liturgical message internalized in collective behaviors and representations concerning solidarity, responsibility, and communion? Is it justified conceptually to depict liturgical chant as a component of a Romanian identity proto-structure? These are just some of the questions the research sought to answer.

Hypothesis verification was carried out through a comprehensive sociological and historical-hermeneutic analysis of Orthodox liturgical chant in the Romanian space. Throughout the thesis, the historical evolution of church singing from Christianity’s origins to the formative period of the Romanian people was examined, highlighting continuities and the ways liturgical practice was assimilated into local culture. Additionally, theological contents and ethical values transmitted through the texts and rituals of chants (for example, ideals such as humility, self-sacrificial love, redemptive suffering, eschatological hope, and others) were analyzed to observe

if and how these sedimented in the collective mindset and community customs. The hypothesis was also confronted with contemporary sociological realities by examining the present relevance of liturgical chant in local communities (urban and rural) and its social functions in a society marked by secularization.

The research findings largely confirm the hypothesis: historically, Orthodox liturgical chant structurally contributed to shaping the Romanian ethos. It functioned as a communal bond and as a vehicle for transmitting fundamental values, helping to forge collective identity. Qualitative analyses revealed numerous correlations between liturgical practices and attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors characterizing traditional Romanian culture. For instance, it was found that the community's consistent participation in chanted services consolidated social solidarity and the sense of belonging, while the chant messages symbolically "regulated" behaviors in line with Christian ethics (encouraging compassion, modesty, mutual assistance, etc.). At the same time, the formative importance of liturgical chant, though diminished in the modern context, remains evident where the liturgical tradition is still alive, validating the premise that this religious phenomenon continues to function as an identity-forming and normative factor in social life.

To achieve the general aim—analyzing the role of Orthodox liturgical chant in configuring the Romanian ethos as an expression of a spiritual and cultural collective consciousness—several specific objectives were formulated. These objectives were designed to break down the general aspiration into focused and operational aspects, facilitating systematic investigation of the topic:

- Identifying defining features of ancient Christian ritual in the context of the Romanian people's formation: This aimed to highlight essential elements of early Christian liturgical practices (structure, language, functions) and how they were embraced and adapted by local communities in the early history of Romanians, contributing to proto-Romanian identity cohesion.

- Investigating the communal and formative-educational dimension of Christian practices on collective mentalities in the Romanian space: This objective targeted understanding how collective participation in religious life shaped, over centuries, collective mentality, norms of coexistence, and social cohesion in the traditional Romanian environment.

- Analyzing moral values and attitudes conveyed and sedimented through liturgical chant: This research focused on identifying and interpreting primary axiological messages transmitted by church chants (such as humility, solidarity, self-sacrificial love, hope, redemptive sacrifice, etc.) and assessing the extent to which these were internalized by the community, becoming moral references of the Romanian ethos.

- Exploring the intertwining of religious elements with popular culture in Romanian spiritual manifestations: This aimed to capture how the Orthodox liturgical tradition interacted synergistically with forms of popular cultural expression (from carols and religious folklore to annual customs and life-cycle rituals in the village), generating a cultural-spiritual symbiosis specific to the Romanian space.

- Highlighting the relationship between Orthodox liturgical practice and the development of a national ethos as an expression of social and spiritual cohesion: This objective integrates conclusions from the others, attempting to explain how communal religious participation mediated by chant contributed to solidifying a unitary national identity based on common values and the sense of belonging to a moral and spiritual community.

Throughout the research, all these objectives were addressed and, to a large extent, achieved. Identifying defining features of ancient Christian ritual materialized in presenting the origins and evolution of liturgical chant (Chapter 3 of the thesis provided a historical overview from early Church singing and Jewish influences to Byzantine and local developments, emphasizing persistent elements). It was shown, for instance, that the structure of services and manner of intonation retained a pedagogical and cohesive function within the community over time. The communal dimension of religious practices was deeply analyzed: the study demonstrated that liturgical service in traditional Romanian communities was a genuine factor of social unification, with participation in church singing creating solidarity and the feeling of ecclesial communion.

The objective concerning moral values conveyed through chant was also achieved by qualitatively analyzing hymn and prayer content in various services (Vespers, Matins, Divine Liturgy, Marriage ritual, Funeral service, etc.). It was noted that these liturgical practices transmit a coherent set of values which, once internalized by believers, shaped the collective habitus—meaning shared affective and moral dispositions at the community level.

The study explored connections between the sacred and the profane in Romanian cultural life: it was observed that elements of Orthodox spirituality (the imaginary linked to the sacredness of space and time, symbolism of the Paschal light, the “mioritic realm” concept, etc.) are closely interwoven with folklore and popular traditions. Thus, the research suggests that traditional Romanian cultural identity may be tightly linked to communal religious experience, although this relationship remains open to nuances.

The general objective—highlighting a correlation between liturgical practice and the Romanian ethos—is largely supported by the conclusion that the Romanian ethos was shaped, to a significant extent, under the influence of Orthodoxy and liturgical chant, seen as possible factors of identity cohesion.

In summary, all proposed objectives were fulfilled insofar as they led to a clear understanding of how Orthodox liturgical chant participated in the genesis and perpetuation of the Romanian ethos. Each partial objective offered insight into a facet of the problem, and combining these perspectives underpinned the thesis’s overall findings.

Given the profoundly symbolic, historical, and identity-related nature of the subject, the research adopted a qualitative, interpretive methodology situated within the comprehensive sociological paradigm (Weberian) and the tradition of the Bucharest Sociological School (Dimitrie Gusti). A quantitative or strictly empirical approach was avoided, since the goal was not to statistically measure phenomena but to deeply understand the social and cultural significances of liturgical chant. Therefore, the methodological choice was justified by the need to penetrate the realm of meanings and values, where quantitative methods would have been inadequate.

Concretely, the research employed a historical-hermeneutic and sociological interpretive approach. In Chapter 1, the opportunity for reconfiguring the sociology of the sacred by integrating the liturgical dimension as a formative element of the Romanian ethos was highlighted. Overcoming the modern dichotomy between rationality and revelation, it was argued that religion—especially Orthodoxy—remains a relevant actor in structuring collective meaning and social solidarity. Church singing, as a form of collective memory and symbolic cohesion, offers sociology fertile ground for exploring new forms of community in a post-secular context.

Chapter 2 extensively presents the methodological instruments and concepts used: historical analysis of documents and sources on liturgical practices to reconstruct the evolution and continuity of church singing in the Romanian space; hermeneutic (interpretive) approaches to decipher the theological and symbolic meanings of liturgical texts and rituals, treating them as expressions of collective mentality and community values; application of religious sociology perspectives, drawing on classical theoretical frameworks such as Weber's ideal-type model and Gusti's law of sociological parallelism to create a holistic analysis framework; incorporation of cultural anthropology elements (e.g., Mauss's concept of total social fact applied to liturgical chant to highlight its multidimensional character—religious, social, cultural, aesthetic) and semiotic theory (e.g., Peirce's triadic model) to interpret ritual as a system of meanings. Liturgical chant in the Romanian Orthodox context is understood as an expression of an ethnospiritual space in Ilie Bădescu's sense.

Within this approach, liturgical chant is viewed as a “total social fact” in Mauss's sense, involving simultaneously religious, cultural, affective, and communal dimensions. In line with Ilie Bădescu's noocratic vision, it is also seen as a form of “governance by spirit”—a spiritual ordering principle that shapes collective ethos and supports social cohesion from within, beyond formal institutional mechanisms. This dual conceptual rooting underscores the formative and symbolic function of liturgical chant in the Orthodox Romanian space.

The adopted methodology is characterized by interdisciplinarity and complementarity: sociological methods were complemented by theological perspectives. An innovative aspect is that Orthodox theology is treated not merely as an analysis object but as a source of understanding—i.e., theological categories (such as the sacred, communion, notion of person) provided conceptual tools for interpreting sociological data. This synergy between social sciences and theology was considered essential for capturing the complexity of the Romanian ethos: a dual sociological and theological interpretive key was necessary to decipher how spirituality is inscribed in society's deep structure.

The choice of methodology thus rests on the subject's specifics: liturgical chant is a phenomenon at the border between visible and invisible, social and spiritual. Studying it adequately required a comprehensive method capable of interpreting (not just describing) cultural, religious, and symbolic meanings involved. The qualitative comprehensive approach ensures that results, while not quantitatively generalizable, offer valuable insights into subtle

mechanisms by which religion shapes social life. This methodology aligns with the axiological paradigm—treating sociology as a cultural science that not only explains phenomena but also understands them in relation to their intrinsic values and meanings. In conclusion, the adopted method was appropriate for the research purpose, allowing a nuanced and rigorous exploration of the subject.

In Chapter 3, starting from proto-Christian origins, the transition to early Church organization is explored, the influence of the Church Fathers in crystallizing hymnographic forms and consolidating the sonic ritual with Christianity's legalization and institutionalization. We reach the Byzantine golden age, when the chant repertoire became complex and a model for symbolic transmission. The history of chant was pursued as a social process in which sonic practices shaped communities' identity. Thus, sacred chant is not merely the acoustic expression of prayer but an active process of instituting the sacred and identity, transforming profane time and space into transfigured reality and articulating the link between community, history, and God.

In Chapter 4, through an interdisciplinary approach (anthropology, theology, and sociology), the manner in which religious hymn and Orthodox rituals convert abstract concepts into sensory and affective experiences is examined, anchoring values in the believer's habitus through repetition and communal participation. Through key services (Vespers, Matins, Divine Liturgy, Marriage, Funeral, etc.), a multisensory pedagogy is constructed that facilitates moral and emotional self-regulation, generates "collective effervescence," and models a social pattern of giving. Thus emerges a "theandric community" where inner transformation fuels external cohesion and resilience in the face of modern challenges. Liturgical practices become socio-theological infrastructure transmitting values, strengthening common identity, and offering a robust framework for solidarity and authentic communion.

In Chapter 5, liturgical chant is examined as a social practice and vector of collective identity in the context of the Romanian ethos, mobilizing key concepts from sociology of religion and ritual. The section highlights the constitutive (co-substantial) relationship between musical ritual and collective consciousness, demonstrating how chant sanctifies space by re-signifying the natural environment (the "mioritic realm" as cosmic liturgy) and reconfigures time through qualitatively defined festal cycles in relation to ultimate meaning. Through participatory and interpretive analysis of perceptions regarding sacred space, sacramental time,

and life-cycle thresholds (birth, marriage, death), the chapter proves the proto-structural function of liturgical chant in reproducing symbolic capital, consolidating social solidarity, and cultural resilience in the face of secularization and modernization processes. Overall, conclusions underscore the importance of musical liturgical practices in maintaining communal cohesion and perpetuating norms and values defining the Romanian ethos.

The present research brings a series of original and personal contributions to the sociology of religion and cultural studies, both theoretically and methodologically:

Integration of theology into the sociology of religion: One contribution consists in proposing an integrative perspective in which Orthodox theology and sociology intertwine in a unified research approach. The study transcended classical sociology's descriptive framework, assuming theology not only as an object of analysis but as an epistemic partner. This proposed reconfiguration of the sociology of the sacred restores the sacred's central place in explaining social life. The approach thus suggests a model of scientific dialogue in which secular and spiritual perspectives complement each other in understanding humanity and community.

Extending Gusti's model with a theological dimension: The thesis leverages the heritage of the Bucharest Sociological School (Dimitrie Gusti's paradigm), bringing a personal contribution by introducing the theological dimension into the integrative model of social life. Gusti approached society in its totality (economic, political, cultural, spiritual); this research placed special emphasis on the religious phenomenon (liturgical chant) and argued that, in the Romanian case, the spiritual factor is not peripheral but constitutive. Thus, it revitalized the Gustian paradigm, highlighting its explanatory potential when correlated with Orthodox theological perspectives. In this sense, it makes a humble contribution to rediscovering and valuing an indigenous scientific tradition, demonstrating its relevance and fertility for contemporary research.

Conceptualizing the liturgical ethos as foundational to Romanian identity: An original contribution of this research is defining and arguing the idea that the Romanian ethos is based on a liturgical prototype structure. The thesis proposes the concept of ethos proto-structure—understanding by this the ensemble of attitudes, moral dispositions, and collective sensibilities formed under the direct influence of ancient liturgical practices. To date, the idea that the Romanian ethos has a liturgical prototypical structure does not appear to have been explicitly formulated in specialized literature. Developing this concept provides, at least hypothetically, a

possible theoretical framework for reinterpreting Romanian cultural identity, bringing its profound spiritual dimension to the forefront. However, further validation of this hypothesis through interdisciplinary comparison and extended critical analysis remains necessary.

Normative dimension and contemporary applications of the research: By explicitly affirming that the Orthodox tradition (including liturgical music) offers a profound alternative to modern society's atomization and crisis of meaning, the research gains prescriptive valences. This constitutes an unprecedented contribution: the study does not limit itself to analyzing what is but dares to outline, on solid theoretical grounds, what could be—namely how the studied spiritual values and practices can be revalorized to address contemporary challenges (cultural uprootedness, exacerbated individualism, intergenerational ruptures, etc.). Thus, the research engages in a current dialogue on social regeneration, offering a conceptual framework that can inspire cultural and educational policies aimed at reconnecting with perennial values.

Clarifying and nuancing applicability limits: As part of its contributions, the study honestly highlights the limitations of the scientific endeavor. For example, it discusses the inherent subjectivity of any interpretive analysis (given a phenomenon as emotionally and spiritually charged as liturgical chant) and the difficulty of capturing the full richness of authentic religious experience through sociological tools. It is important to emphasize that this work does not aim for a strictly musicological analysis but focuses on the social-identitary and axiological dimension of the phenomenon studied, considering how liturgical structure can influence the formation and expression of cultural ethos. By delimiting these aspects clearly, the thesis contributes to circumscribing the validity field of its conclusions, avoiding undue generalizations.

Overall, the personal contributions of the research are found in enriching the theoretical framework (through new concepts and associations), the integrative methodology adopted, and the fresh perspective on the relationship between religion and social life in Romania. The thesis also opens new research directions, suggesting that the initiated endeavor—reconciling sociological knowledge with theological wisdom—can be extended to other socio-cultural phenomena for a more comprehensive understanding of the human condition.

The novelty of the theme lies firstly in the unprecedented perspective on a subject at the border between domains. Although there is research on church music or the role of religion in society, the approach of Orthodox liturgical chant as a proto-structure of the Romanian ethos

represents an innovative direction. The study brings into discussion a little-explored aspect: the long-term influence of liturgical practices on a social culture's configuration. In specialized literature, religious aspects of Romanian identity have often been treated fragmentarily (for example, religious folklore separate from church ritual, or national ethos discussed without reference to the liturgical dimension). This work proposes a synthesis of these perspectives, highlighting an underexplored identity vein—the liturgical ethos.

The novelty also lies in the research's transdisciplinary character. Explicitly combining sociology with liturgical theology and cultural anthropology in a single analytical approach is relatively rare. The endeavor demonstrates the fertility of this type of epistemic collaboration, offering an example of how to overcome traditional dichotomies between sciences and theology. By bringing Durkheim, Weber, and Gusti into dialogue with theological thinkers and invoking concepts such as Ilie Bădescu's ethnospiritual space, noocracy, or the Orthodox theology's integral vision of the person, the thesis highlights the rich interpretive potential resulting from this convergence. This treatment mode is innovative and provides a model for future studies in the sociology of religious manifestations.

The relevance of the work from the sociology of religion perspective remains to be further explored, but its approach offers an interesting starting point for analyzing connections between liturgy and ethos. In the context of late modernity, I was concerned with essential questions: Does religion still have an active role in contemporary communities' cohesion? How do ancient ritual practices contribute to maintaining identity in the era of globalization and secularization? The thesis results suggest that, at least in Romania's case, Orthodox religious heritage remains a significant identity and communal factor, which offers a counter-argument to theories predicting the irreversible decline of religion's influence. Thus, the work can be situated within a current trend in sociology of religions that reevaluates the role of religious traditions in contemporary societies and investigates subtle ways the sacred continues shaping the profane.

For cultural and national identity studies, the proposed theme is timely. The thesis provides a new perspective on Romanian identity formation, arguing that defining elements of collective mentality—such as relationship with space and time, attitude toward suffering and destiny, the value of community and hospitality—are profoundly influenced by symbolic structures cultivated by the Church through liturgy and sacred chant.

Thus, the idea emerges that identity is not only a historical or political construct but also a ritual and symbolic one, rooted in religious practices. This finding invites reconsideration of intangible cultural heritage, suggesting that liturgical music should be valued not only as sacred art but also as a treasury of collective memory and an active factor of identity resilience. In the context of globalization and increasing cultural homogenization tendencies, awareness of these deep roots gains major practical relevance. It can contribute to developing educational strategies to transmit traditional values to younger generations and anchor them in authentic identity references.

Subsequently, the analysis acquires a social dimension, given recent transformations in the welfare state model have generated an increasing need for involvement by non-state actors. Residual state models, characterized by limited public intervention and support granted only after family and market resources are exhausted, imply an externalization of social responsibilities. Here, the Church—and especially the Romanian Orthodox Church—is called upon to play an active role in supporting those in difficulty, as noted by sociologist Sorin Căe.

This Church involvement in the social domain is not limited to material interventions but has an essential spiritual and communal dimension. In post-communist Romania, where social assistance institutions initially developed unevenly and slowly, the Church often supplemented institutional gaps, mobilizing human and symbolic resources through parishes. Thus, believers' active participation in parish life becomes not merely a religious practice but also a mechanism for strengthening communal cohesion. Mutual support within these communities is based on a system of values and axiological references transmitted through ritual and sacred music.

In this light, one of the essential conclusions emerges: the Romanian ethos has a profoundly liturgical foundation. Romanian collective identity was historically constituted under Orthodoxy's sign, and the specific ethos of this identity is expressed in forms of religious experience and ritual communion. Thus, we can speak of a liturgical ethos in which sacred practices not only reflect but also shape how Romanians perceive suffering, destiny, sacred time, communal space, and interpersonal relationships.

This complex and interdisciplinary perspective, which combines the symbolic, cultural, and social dimensions of religion, not only adds to understanding national identity but also offers practical directions for its consolidation in the contemporary age. In a society in permanent

transition where identity references are often contested or relativized, recovering and valuing the liturgical dimension of the Romanian ethos can play a key role in reconfiguring collective memory and cultivating a solid, resilient, and assumed identity.

The research acknowledges that, although it offers an integrative perspective on the role of liturgical chant in forming the Romanian ethos, it relies predominantly on historical sources and hermeneutic interpretations, implying inherent subjectivity and limiting the capacity to generalize findings to highly diverse contemporary variations. Moreover, the accelerated secularization and value pluralism processes in modern society call into question the intensity with which liturgical practices can influence collective identity today, and local diversity and nuances of authentic spiritual experience may escape sociological analysis that does not include updated empirical field data. The choice not to delve into technical musicological aspects focuses the approach on social-axiological functions but overlooks concrete ways sonic dimensions shape community experience. Overall, this tension between the traditional perspective and the fragmented realities of the present indicates the ongoing need for mixed, empirical, and comparative studies to verify how the formative power of liturgical chant adapts and manifests effectively in different communities amid social changes.

The doctoral thesis “Liturgical Chant and the Proto-Structure of the Romanian Ethos. Sociology of Spiritual Manifestations” demonstrates that understanding a people’s ethos cannot omit the spiritual dimension that shaped it. Orthodox liturgical chant was and remains a fundamental element of Romanian social culture, a silent yet powerful force that connected people to each other and to the divine, generating both identity and cohesion. Rediscovering and reevaluating this force represents both a scientific contribution to the sociology of religion and a potential opening for Romanian society today in search of its own meaning.

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