

**Key words:** aquatic rite, Epiphany, apotropaic, christian formula, animism

## **Aquatic Rite Elements in the Evolution of a Christian Formula**

### **Summary**

In Romanian traditional space, calendar rites are based on a constant reference to the two belief systems: the Christian and the pagan one. We present in this paper a powerful ritual practice at Epiphany and we analyze both elements justifying theological habit belonging to Christian community life and those features emerged and developed in traditional society. Our analysis is based on the name of the processions made by the priest in villagers' homes in order to proclaim the Christian feast of the Baptism of Jesus, namely *Chiraleisa*. Greek liturgical formula *Kyrie eleison* generated in Romanian language the term *Chiraleisa*, occurred primarily in northern Romanian rural world. In these regions, celebrating *Chiraleisa* is synonymous to the priest walking *with the cross* or *with the Jordan* appears to be a type of singing Christian carols, that copies and duplicates laic carols. In the oldest attested variants in Romanian ethnographic literature, the role of the priest announced by children who cries *Chiraleisa*, seems to have variants that indicate a function for removing demons, through the sound of bells and movements of encircling the domestic space. Indicating a link with ancient animist water rites, there are investigated the meanings of liturgical term as procession to invoke the rain and as a name of a water demon. Our analysis is supported by examples from other European languages in which the Greek liturgical formula was taken and adapted in the folk ritual context.