

WHAT TO SAY WHILE USING DUST FROM THE SAINTS' EYES? - A ROMANIAN CASE

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Hidden rituals are a category of religious practices, whose disclosure is not easy to be made by an outsider ethnologist. In this frame, a relatively less studied ensemble of gestures, which nowadays are almost perished, but whose traces are preserved in the Christian churches' frescos from Orthodox space is represented by the act of voluntarily scratching the eyes of the saints painted on the wall. The paper systematizes the few references concerning this ritual entirety and also inquires about the relations established between the official dogma and the religious practices as actuated in the very case of the icon and the saint's figure, in the 19th century Romanian milieu.

Keywords: church's walls, theology of icons, saints'body, magic, love songs, popular religious praxis.

The walls, the objects and the paintings of a church are related to each other and to a set of gestures, rituals, beliefs, stories, as well, all of them being expressions of the religious view of those who create, receive and use the sanctuaries – founders, builders, monks, clergymen, lay believers, pilgrims, tourists, charmers, etc. Its space (inside or outside the area delimited by walls, but in connection with the very body of the church), consecrated to liturgical rituals and prayers, also support a complex of individual gestures that, canonically speaking, sometime are placed on the border between permission and interdiction or even could slide towards the second side. Covering a large thematic field, from moving churches, to writing names on the walls or to the gesture of touching the wall with the forehead, the topics are challenging. This article is focused on a relatively less studied ensemble of gestures, which nowadays are almost perished, but whose traces are preserved in some Christian churches' frescos: the voluntarily scratching of the saints eyes or body, and the use of the collected mortar in charming rituals. We'll approach concrete cases from the Romanian Orthodox milieus, as attested in the 19th century.

The first goal here is to systematize the few references to this ritual, which I shall analyse from the perspective of the dynamic relations established between the official dogma and the religious practices as actuated in the very

case of the icon and the saint's figure. This relation gets different hypostases in different historical times.

For the Eastern Orthodox Church, scriptures and images are two ways in which the faith is carried and expressed. After the 9th century iconodule's victory (inside the Easter Christianity), icons became part of liturgical tradition, "so they cannot be used merely as an aide or be shunted aside" (Dillenberger 2004: 60). St. John of Damascus regarded icons as "books for illiterates and silent heralds of the honor of the saints, teaching those who see with a soundless voice and sanctifying the sight" (St. John of Damascus 2003: 46). The fact that they *sanctify* the sight expresses the Byzantine view according to which icons are not simple illustrations of scriptures or material support for catechetical purposes (function shared with the Western Christian Confessions), but living liturgical objects, hence central to the worship experience. "The visual and the verbal are two fundamental realities, neither of which can be elevated over the other. That view of the visual makes the eastern Orthodox development unique" (Dillenberger 2004: 61).

In the very case of icons, St. John of Damascus turned the difference-identity contradictory couple into a coincidence and the general relation between figure and the figured person was postulated as a relation between prototype and variant (the image). "Because of the difference, we do not worship the image, but because of the image, we adore the reality expressed through it. Because of the identity, we know we have to do with God's presence through a mediating reality. The image and God's reality are conjoined, but they are not identical" (Dillenberger 2004: 59). As St. Basil already pointed, through image, we glorify God's presence. "Frontal and partially stylized figures suggest the mysterious presence of the prototype. Questions of faith are central to the making of icons in a way that is not characteristic of the West" (Dillenberger 2004: 62). Nor the 8th- 9th century iconoclasts neither the ulterior Reform iconoclastic aversion against icons and saints do not accept such distinctions and for them idolatry and image are identical.

Consequently, the figures painted in a sanctuary represent vivid presences involved in the rituals officiated there and, in the mean time, enter in relation with the faithful people who interactively take part to these rituals (see Boscani Leoni 2006).

Icons are expressions of the sacredness embodiment. So, why should somebody destroy or damage them voluntary? Does, in these certain situations, still work the subtle distinction between image and its unseen prototype, or, on the contrary, it was dissolved and image enters in a synecdochic relation with the prototype? Which might be the relation between the official dogma, on the one hand, and the folk practices, on the other hand? Do vernacular developments

of canonic praxis necessarily express a deflection from the dogmatic tradition, as well?

In the study *Les images abîmées: entre iconoclasm, pratiques religieuses et rituels 'magique'*, Simona Boscani Leoni identified three categories of reasons that could drive somebody to voluntary damage the sacred paintings. Her researches referred to a limited area in the Alps, whose inhabitants belong to Protestant confession. “En ces territoires, nous pouvons indiquer au moins trois typologies distinctes d’images abîmées. La première concerne l’image endommagée et dissimulée pour des motivations religieuses (lors de la Réforme, mais aussi lors d’interventions de censure totale décidées par les autorités ecclésiastiques catholiques)” (Boscani Leoni 2006:2). In Romanian territories, iconoclastic successive movements, of what the Protestant Reformation (then the Counter-Reformation time) wave, with its aversion to the relics and to the intercessions of the saints, concretely cut the sacred painted figures, or covered them under an overlay of chalk.

Non-Christians attacks, especially the Turks’ and Tartars’ scimitars also hurt the painted saints (eyes, mouths, legs, arms, faces). From the Orthodox part, all these actions are seen as profanation.

“La deuxième a trait à la manipulation de l’image par égratignure ou écriture sur la couche picturale. (...). Le troisième type d’image abîmée est l’image repeinte ou réadaptée” (Boscani Leoni 2006:2). This sort of damage may also occur under the restaurateurs’ brush (who usually brings to light the first painted lay).

Even if all three situations are attested in Romania, the practices I will discuss are not included in the above classification, namely the popular ritual of taking out pieces of binder from the icons painted on the churches’ walls.



Figure 1: The porch wall of Polovragi Monastery church, North Oltenia. Photo made by Șerban Bonciocat in 2013

THE SAINTS'EYES

Among the answers to B.P. Hasdeu's *Mythologic* and *Juridic* questionnaires, launched in 1878 and 1884 all around (actual) Romania, there are 56 mentioning the *eyes of the saints painted on the churches*, meaning "the dust taken from their eyes, soil taken out from the wall, part of the wall peeled off for the eyes painted on it and used under the name of *eyes*" (Muşlea, Bîrlea 2010: 468). These questionnaires were sent by post mail and most of the answers were given by priests and primary school teachers; few answers came from Transylvania and North Moldavia and the most from South Romania.

56 attestations do not represent a high amount of information and I must say that they cover only one page in a volume of almost 600 pages. This situation might reflect the unpopular character of the practice, but, just as well, it may be due to the fact that the respondents might have suppressed information that they did not considered adequate to be forwarded. "In the majority of cases, the saint's eyes are taken away for making charms (Ro. *farmece*)" (Muşlea, Bîrlea 2010: 468).

Apart from the answers to the Hasdeu questionnaire, I found extremely few references to this practice.

1. Surpatele Monastery (Vâlcea County, Oltenia, Wallachia) was founded by the princiar family in 18th century. At the end of the 19th century, the edifice passed through a period when it was deserted and the church mouldered. At the beginning of the 20th century it was restored and the monastic life was recommence. In 1933 priest Constantin Dănescu published a monography dedicated to it. On that occasion he learned "from local people" that during the period when it was abandoned "the gypsies living around, its former slaves, have stolen the briks from its decaying walls and even took out the saints' eyes from the church's porch in order to use them in their charms and incantations" (Dănescu 1933: 88).

On the base of this attestation, in 2015 I conducted fieldwork at the monastery and in the village from it vicinity, but didn't get any answer to the question "why are the saints' eyes and faces damaged", nor to the expression *saints' eyes* or *dust from their eyes*.

2. In a fieldwork prospection conducted in the same South Carpathic area, I visited the St. Stephen skete belonging to Hurez great monastery (Vâlcea county) and, having under the eyes the damaged images of some saints' painted on the walls, in the church, I had a short conversation with one of the (three) nuns living there. She imputed the situation to the Turks, who violated the sacred paintings, the eyes, the face and other parts of some saints' bodies.



Figure 2: The exterior wall of Surpatele Monastery church, North Oltenia. Photo taken by Șerban Bonciocat

There is an intriguing coincidence between the two cases: both (the monastery and the skete) have been deserted from the end of the 19th century (exactly the period of the ritual's attestations in Hasdeu questionnaires) until the beginning of the 20th century. Even if we can not generalize, it's for sure that the lack of the edifice surveillance favoured gestures which should have been performed secretly before (and after), since they probably were forbidden otherwise. In the mean time, the special status assigned to the ruins of a church - a liminal space characterized through a sort of ambiguous sacredness (neither an active church, nor a common place) – probably encouraged the practice of rituals which are, at their turn, ambiguous and with a borderline character.

Secondly, in both cases, the damaging gestures are ascribed to *Others*: pagan Turkeys or Gypsy wizards. But, on the base of these two specifications, we cannot speculate on the general ethnic or religious appurtenance of those who practiced the ritual (the questionnaires contain no mention about this; the respondents are Romanians); possible to have an example of the stranger's demonization process.

3. The walls explorations give us some additional information. We identified, in the field, few other churches (they are more, for sure) in Oltenia, whose frescos have been voluntarily damaged: Horezu (Vâlcea; the village parish church), Izverna (Mehedinți; the village parish church), Gura Motrului (Mehedinți; monastery church, whose original fresco, made between 1702-1704, was covered by

a lay of grout and repainted in 1852. Hence, the damages we noticed come from an ensuing period in the same 19th century), Crainici (Mehedinți; the village parish church), Brosteni (Mehedinți; the village parish church), Curțișoara (Gorj; the village parish church). Except St. Stephen skete, all other mentioned churches have the damaged figures painted on the exterior walls of the porch, a space which is accesible even when the church is closed (and there are no spectators for a presumed illicite gesture). But the explanation of accesibility is not enough, because the paintings on the lateral exterior walls are intact: so, the reason of this location might be represented by the porch itself. At St. Stephen sket the damaged images are in the interior of the church and all the destroyed faces are located by the windows or on the pillows that separate the nave by the narthex: together with the porch, they all are passage spaces between inside and outside, between different religious qualifications.

Unfortunatanelly, neither the answers to the above quoted questionnaires, nor the few written attestations, nor our own fieldwork (probably it was conducted too late or it last too short for convincing people to speak about the *saints' eyes*) contain details regarding the very ritual of collecting and stowing the dust taken from the church's walls: who - genre, age, ethnical and confessional appartenance (for example, we suppose the collector was a layman/laywomen, but, anyhow, did he/she need the help of the priest or of other person *inside*?); why; when - which moment of the day/night? which day of the week? during the Holly Liturgy (for this last question we can presume that, in case of ruins, there isn't any mass officiated inside); the very gestures - scratching, clawing, washing, effacing, carving - and the associated tools; the restriction and incumbencies the collector had/has to observe; possible verbal formulae breathed while the person acted over the wall and its icons.

I am tempted to consider that we deal with a forbidden ritual, with his own rules, secreted both from the clergy, the monastic and the lay community. This hypothesis is sustained by the existence of a substituting ritual: "There might be removen not only the saint's eyes from the churches' wall - the overwhelming majority of cases -, but also from the painted crosses or from the icon inside the house, especially when it is not possible to take them Sfrom the church" (Mușlea, Bîrlea 2010: 469). I am also tempted to consider that this ritual isn't practiced anymore.

4. An oblique method for collecting data about a perished ritual, insufficient described while it was alive, might consist in putting it into a adjoined contexts represented by other practices and verbal formulae that indirectly or directly make references to it. In this regard, I will take folk texts which, methaphorically or concretly, use a repertoire of images and verbs that send us to a reality that resonates with the *saints'eyes* rituals. I'll deal with words, but not with

the specific verbal charms which (possible, but unattested) join the gesture of taking and using the dust extracted from the holly painted, but with texts that are involved in other charming rituals or even in texts belonging to different genres (lyric).

Therefore, we'll deal with three categories of sources:

- a. Small ethnographic descriptions of the rituals, as given in the Hasdeu questionnaire's answers (the final part of the 19th century); other ethnographic mentions have been made after a 50 years gap (the third decade of the 20th century) or even later (our fieldwork conducted in 2015-2016).
- b. The very frescos. Sometime we have the chance to observe successive layers of paintings, hence to draw hypothesis concerning the period when the damage has been made.
- c. Oral structures recorded in the same areas with those of the practice we deal with. Because the answers to Hasdeu's questionnaire belong to the 19th century, and because the other few references to the practice send to churches that have been deserted in the same 19th century, we'll look for texts recorded in the temporal period framed by the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century.

Coming back to the Hasdeu questionnaires, let's systematize what we know (not only what we lack) in order to discover the multilayered meaning assigned to the couple of painted image in relation with the figured sacred entity (the prototype, the saint), when dogma meets the popular practices.

From the very beginning, there is to specify that the goal which generally stayed behind the gestures involved in the rituals we speak about was not to hurt or to damage the saint's corporal identity and integrity, but to achieve a provision of holiness, a ritual ingredient. The *prototype*, namely the very saint, *contaminates* the image (the icon, the fresco) and its support (the mortar) with numinous power. In this regard, the dust or the small piece of mortar represents extensions of the saint's person, which will be ritually re-contextualized. This is not the unique situation when "pieces" involved in liturgical rituals are dislocated and re-placed in the *outside* context of the popular practices of religiosity: holly water, holly bread, holly basil, drops of Eucharistic wine, chrism, slivers from the altar cross – all of them are used as parts of what may be considered *secondary* rituals, whose efficiency is intensified by the original, *primary* context.

"The saints' eyes amplify, accomplish the charms' power"; "confer them divine power"; "assure their success" (Muşlea, Birlea 2010:469). The use of this special dust as amulets, as attested in 13th century France (Bartholey, Dit-

tmarm and Jolivet, 2006:2), is not mentioned in our questionnaire, even if such handling looks very plausible.

Dependent on the manner in which the relation between image and prototype is valorized, on the one hand, and on the ritual finality and purpose, on the other hand, I classified the answers in the following groups:

1) Charms that, through distorting the reality, *covered* or took away from the within sight facts that the ritual's beneficiary wants to remain hidden:

a. Adulterous wives or husbands: "The most charms aim the husbands, for blinding them (figuratively speaking), hoodwinking them, as they won't be able to see what their unloyal wives do", or aim the women with a similar purpose (there is a single atestation for this second situation) (Ostrovul Mare, Hunedoara county, South Transylvania; Muşlea, Bîrlea, 2010: 468);

b. Spinters or ugly maidens ordered such charms in order to marry with "young men", that consequently became unable to *see* the real face of their further spouses;

c. In a different domain, but with a similar function, the saints' eyes were used for "binding the witnesses mouths and for closing the lawyers' eyes, in order to escape a certain sinner from being punished" (Muşlea, Bîrlea, 2010: 469) (we notice the process of overlapping parts of the painted body with their correspondent of the human body; in the mean time, we also notice that not only the eye, but the mouth is a source for the magic ingredient, as well).

In the above charm, saints do not work as religious divine intercessors. More than this, through magic like conjures, they are forced to act against the religious and lay moral prescriptions, which they usually have to guard. The verbal formula - "As the saints don't see and hear anything, as my husband won't see and hear anything" – can be decoded in two contradictory manners: a) the expression refers to the painted person, the saint, who, through the icon damage, becomes himself blind, hence can not see the reality and, consequently, can not exert his natural functions. If the relation between representation (icon) and prototype (the saint) is understood as they are sharing a common nature, then the formula doesn't express a magic act (based on *similia similibus* structure), but a re-contextualisation of the canonic principle of the difference and identity simultaneity, as asserted by St. John of Damascus; b) the expression refers only to the image, understood as a common object deserted by any sacred (or alive)

presence, which, as any object, is blind and deaf. In both interpretations, the dogma about icons is not broken.

2) Therapeutical practices: “in order to recover their sight, the sufferings went by themselves to the church and, taking some dust from the saint’s eyes, from the light of the saints’ eyes, they strewed it into their own eyes (Muşlea, Birlea 2010: 469). The painted image seems to be imbued with the divine curative power or, according to a different interpretation, it seems that the holly essence of the prototype is extended over its representation. Both situations comply with the dogmatic principle and the popular practice is not a (contact) magic act, but a development of the canonic ideas.

Here is an interesting charm against eye affections and pains, which I don’t know if it was delivered in connection with the therapeutical use of the dust taken from the saints’ eyes, but whose lexical repertoire and ritual objects send us to the conjugate gestures of taking something evil out from an eye and putting something good in turn:

De isbitură: Copită copităriță,/Cal negru din picior te lepădă/Pe Cutare peste ochi îl isbiși,/Și leacul că i-l găsi:/Cu fulg negru te rătăci,/Cu busuioc te limpezi,/Cu fir roșu turburarea o scosei,/Junghiurile, cuțitele, usturimele/ Din vederea Cutăruia le scosei...., se descântă în apă cu busuioc și cu fir de mătură. Cu apa se stropește la ochi. Dela Baba Stana Reșică.

For eye pain: You, hoof! / Black horse threw you out from its leg. / You hit That over his / her eyes, / But I found the remedy: / With black barb I raked you, / With basil I cleaned you, / With red strand I took out the eye’s cloudy, / I took out the pangs, the knives, the stings / from That’s sight”. The charmer use holly basil, water and a besom strand; the patient’s eyes will be dabbled with this water.

The charm comes from an old woman from Drăgănești, Teleorman County, South Romania (Tocilescu 1900: 434).

3) The third category of saints’ eyes rituals belongs to “for beauty” erotic magic. Actually, not the beauty by itself is desired, but its seductive power, the power of catching others’ sights, which, wherefore, remain under the power and the control of the charm’s beneficiary (the enchanted victims can only keep their eyes glued on her/him).

The contradictory nature of these charms consists in the fact that they encompass the Christian concept of the saint’s beauty – as a reflection of the supreme, invariable, impalpable never evil, beauty of God – on the one hand and, and, on the other hand, the (not only Christian) beliefs and ideas about

the fascinating nature of art (even of the beauty of art), a charming force (with good or evil consequences) that connect the eyes that look at with the eyes that are watched: being captive, the victim's eyes become a channel for invading his/her person. Beliefs in the *evil eye* are not far from this mechanism, even if they articulate it backward. Therefore, the saints are the ones who bewitch, through their beauty. "The woman will be adored as the saints are worshiped by everyone" (Muşlea, Bîrlea 2010: 469).

We can seize here a tendency to assign saints with power by their own, not as God's intercessors: such deviation may encourage the charmer to attract saints into magic games.

At its turn, Romanian erotic lyrics contain metaphorical samples that refer to the same mechanisms of substituting the holly painted entity with the charm beneficiary who, thanks to this position, can exert a fascinating force:

Foaie verde boabă coarnă/Ioană, Ioană, dică Ioană,/Naiba te scoase-n poiană,/Frumoasă ca o icoană?/Pupu-ți ochii și-o sprânceană/Și-alunița de sub geană.

Green leaf, grain of rose berry/ Joanna, Joanna, dear Joanna/Which evil spirit has sent you to the clearing,/ Beautiful like an icon?/ Let me kiss your eyes and one eyebrow/And the beauty spot under your eyelas. (Târpezița, Dolj County, Oltenia region, South Romania) (Ispas, Truță 1985: 273, 58).

Furthermore, there are love songs that make references to situations in which the religious object, the icon, works as a support for magic practices: e.g.

Nu găsec o vrăjitoare/Să-mi descânte la icoane

Shall I find a sorceress/To disenchant me at the icons (Suceava, North Moldavia region, North-East Romania) (Ispas, Truță 1985: 118). Other songs contain allusion to love charms in which the lover becomes the possessed victim of the beloved's *charmant* sight and to eyes damage, as well. Again, the verbal expressions send us to the practice we deal with:

Frunză verde și-o lalea/Costică, inima mea,/De te-aș prinde undeva,/ Numai ochii ți i-aș lua.

Green leaf and a tulip/ Costica, my dear heart/If I caught you somewhere/ I would only take out your eyes (Dioști, Romanai, South Romania) (Tocilescu 1900: 229);

Puica neichii cu doniță/Mânca-ți-aș gurița friptă;/ Ochișorii să ți-i beau,/ După drumuri nu mai stau!

My little beloved birdy with the tub / I would eat your little broiled mouth / I would drink your eyes (Bistrița, Vâlcea county, Oltenia region, South Romania) (Tocilescu 1900: 278).

May we warily suppose that these songs (the examples are more) indirectly refers to the use of saints' eyes in erotic, *eye-to-eye* charms?

4) Having a similar effect with the one produced by charms from the previous category (victims are out of their self control and decision), but for different purposes and, in the meantime, with different valorizations of the painted figure qualities, the forth category is represented by the formula:

“toate ființele să stea înaintea babelor ca niște sfinți”.

Let all people stand still as a saint in front the old ladies charmers (Mușlea, Bîrlea 2010: 469).

At a first glance, we identify here a *similia similibus* mechanism, whose term for comparison is the very immobility of any painted figure. But, at a deeper decoding level, the (un-expressed or dissembled) meanings and finalities of such a ritual consists in hijacking the saints who, from God's intercessors and subalterns become obedient servants of the magic specialist. The image's immobility is extended over the prototype, the very saint, who, consequently, is constrained to remain still: in other words, at the charmer's disposal. We have here a magic and dangerous valorization of the difference and identity dialectics, as it defines the relation between the image and the imaged reality, in the case of the icon (as mediating channel): again, the dogmatic principle is (more or less consciously) followed (!), but the developed ritual practices aren't canonic anymore!

5) Confronted with the still “reasonable” previous situations, the next category represents a real turning point: “The eyes of some saints are removed, because they say that there are few with horns” (Buzău County, East Romania) (Mușlea, Bîrlea 2010:470). The allusion is obvious and the saints' involvement into devil's part is detailed by the below answer (which also deliver some details regarding the ritual gestures, objects and procedures): “the dust removed from the fresco is mixed in the man's drink or dish together with an egg that was brood by a woman for an entire week” (Olt County, Oltenia region, South Romania) (Mușlea, Bîrlea 2010:470). We recognize here sequences and ingredients that also occur in narratives describing certain techniques, which, at their turn, are characterized by secrecy: the under arm incubation of an egg procures to the

women who practice this ritual a devilish helper, a sort of goblin, a servant who also has erotic attribution.

In the same demonic magic frames, the next answers are connected with the third category of our classification. “The dust taken from the saints’ eyes is used for stealing the cow’s milk” (Argeş County) (Muşlea, Bîrlea 2010:470) or “it is used for bad purposes, for lose animal pregnancy” (Muşlea, Bîrlea 2010:470): it seems that saint’s caught glance got the dangerous status of any evil eye.

5.1) Appart from the damage inflicted on the *saints’eyes* or on parts of their body, the following situations of catching the negative sacred are isomorphic with the practices we spoke about above: a) “Sometime they also remove the devils’eyes painted on the churches’walls, either ’of hatred’ (Orlat, Sibiu County) (Muşlea, Bîrlea 2010: 470), or for using them in witcheries” (Dolj County) (Muşlea, Bîrlea 2010: 470); b) If Death is painted there, they carve out its eyes or cut its legs, saying that it took a child”(idem). The actions are both of revenge and evil expulsion. But these are not icons!

The dogmatic principle of the relation between image and imaged doesn’t work as an identity-difference simultaneity, and the image becomes a simple double of the figured entity.



Figure 3: The porch wall, Măldăreşti parish church, North Oltenia. Photo taken by Şerban Bonciocat

6) Back to the registre of the benefic power, the last category is opposed to the former one¹ and is represented by situations in which the *saints'eyes* are used in order to neutralize the evil eyes effects or those induces by demonic attacks. The expected results have therapeutical nature – “the *dust* is mixed in the water where the possessed children are washed”, or, in opposition with the animals' lack of fruition (the *stolen milk* from the 5th category) provoked by evil magic, the results consists in getting vitality and fertility – “it is mixed in hen's food for hatching many chicken” (Prut, Moldavia, North Romania) (Muşlea, Bîrlea 2010:470).

CONCLUSION

The classyfication we made above, led us to some observations:

1. The interest was to make a step forward into the understanding of the manner through which the Christian Orthodox theology of icons – the relation between prototype and representation - and the doctrine according to which the miraculous power of both icons and saints comes only from God are taken on, internalized, interpreted, modified and put in practiced by some people from the 19th century Romania, in the very case of a practice generically named the *saints'eyes*.

2. Even if we have only few attestations (and small descriptions) of the practice(s), their diversity is remarkable. There is also to be noted the coherence of an heterogenous corpus of documents referring to the saints status changing in concordance with the very nature – magic or religious – of the frames in which the sacred ingredient (the piece of mortar dislocated from the church's wall) is re-contextualised.

3. More or less unexpectable, we marked out situations when uncanonical (even prohibited) practices are yet articulated in compliance with the dogmatic theology of icons and saints: the uncanonical praxis does not necessarily means *against* dogma.

4. Anyhow, as we can see in the images below, not only the saints, but also other figures, probably the church's founders were the victima of damage.

5. Last, but not least, we discussed cases that show the palimpsest attribute of the church's walls, in which traces of both liturgical and forbidden rituals that was formerly performed there, remain visibly preserved in the fresco's and mortar's texture.



Figure 4: The porch of Curțișoara parich church, North Oltenia. Photo taken by Șerban Bonciocat



Figure 5: The same porch of Curțișoara parich church, North Oltenia. Photo taken by Șerban Bonciocat

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