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AICI TEXTUL STUDIULUI

THE MAGICAL AND RELIGIOUS SEMNIFICATIONS OF THE GRAFFITI AND
PARA-GRAFFITI IN THE CHRISTIAN EUROPE*

Arcadie M. BODALE



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The most important specialists in the field consider as graffiti any drawing or unofficial description made by the hand upon an architectural surface or any other with the main function of being different from all other usual writing or drawing support¹.

Secondly, the word graffiti stands for any mark, text, and/or drawing made by a known or unknown artist upon a support over which he has no property right making this act itself, illegal. From the Antiquity until our days, the graffiti have been made on the caves' walls or on the quarries, but also on the bulwark, walls or columns of the secular² and Christian buildings and on tree trunks³.

Usually, the discussions about old graffiti takes place in debates about the religious architecture⁴. Therefore, given the fact that most of these signs and messages characteristic to popular culture have a profound spiritual charge, our goal becomes the study of the magical – religious meanings of the graffiti and the para-graffiti in the Christian Europe. They are very important for the historians, archeologists, theologians, ethnologists, anthropologists, sociologists and demographers focused on knowing and understanding this historical unknown phenomenon.

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¹ William P. McLean, *Graffiti*, în *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, corpus 10 *Furtwängler-Guerre de Cent Ans*, Paris, Encyclopaedia Universalis France S.A., 1990, p. 624; Laurent Maindon, *Mémoires d'un mur. Les graffitis du mur de Berlin*, Nantes, Ouest Éditions, 1990, p. 34; Luoc Bucherie, *Graffiti des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècle à Esnandes*, in „Publications de la Société d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Aunis”, no. 10, Extrait de la „Revue de la Saintonge et de l'Aunis”, tom. VI (1980), La Rochelle, 1980, p. 1

² William P. McLean, *op. cit.*, p. 624; Luoc Bucherie, *Les graffitis de la Tour de la Lanterne à la Rochelle. Essai d'inventaire*, préface de Michel MOLLAT du JOURDIN, in „Publications de la Société d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Aunis”, no. 5, La Rochelle, 1978, p. 3-51. Further on: Luoc Bucherie, *Les graffitis de la Tour de la Lanterne*.

³ Laurent Maindon, *Mémoires d'un mur. Les graffitis du mur de Berlin*, Nantes, Ouest Éditions, 1990, p. 34.

⁴ Max Pons, *Écritures des Pierres. Les Graffiti de la grosse Tour Château de Bonaguil*, (transcriptions et illustrations de leur), La Barbacane, Château de Bonaguil, 47500 Fumei, 1979, p. 55.

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It is known that the first graffiti were some simple drawings. Even from the beginning of the Humanity, the figuration of images on the caves' walls, on trees or rocks and later on bulwarks had a sacred meanings, being often associated with magical rituals.

That is the reason why researchers have given these cave paintings an important magical-religious connotation. However, the sacred meaning of some of these artistic manifestations has been kept even after writing appeared, being obvious from Antiquity⁵ until today⁶.

In the Christian world, the most speeded graffiti with sacred meaning are the religious symbols, invocations and strong prayers. The first pilgrims have shown their love for God through scratching churches' walls⁷. This habit has been taken over by other people who have entered the sanctuary as form of divine adoration⁸ or to be named by the followers who read their texts⁹.

Worth mentioned is that the symbols and written texts from the churches' walls took over a part of the sanctity of the old pre-Christian drawings¹⁰.

⁵ In the Roman Antiquity, a village was delimited by landmarks, meant to separate the proprieties (Jean-Pierre Dugène, *Ossau pastoral. Toute une histoire, bornage des montagnes, abris et cabanes de bergers, les pierres gravées*, Pau, Cairn Editions, 2002, p. 43). On their top, these landmarks have a human head put on a pyramidal stone; without hands and legs, it could not change his place and it guaranteed the integrity of the land (Larousse, *histoire, Dictionnaire de la mythologie grecque et romaine*, Joël Schmidt, p. 292, apud Dugène, p. 43). Protected by a god, the landmark had a magic function, too. So, "during Rome time, before putting a new landmark, a ship was sacrificed and its blood flowed into the hole prepared for the landmark" (Elian J. Finbert, *La vie pastorale, brebis et bergers*, „Les cahiers ruraux”, René Juillard à Séquana, Paris, 1942, p. 92, apud Dugène, p. 43).

⁶ Untill today, some witches continued scratching the surfaces painted with saints and devils, scratching, especially the eyes, the mouth and the genital organs, in order to obtain material for their magic rituals.

⁷ Emmanuele Testa, *Cafarnao IV. I Graffiti della Casa di S. Pietro*, Pubblicazioni dello Studium Biblicum Franciscanum n. 19, Jerusalem, Franciscan Printing Press, 1972, p. 9.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 9 și p. 184.

⁹ С.А. Высоцкий □, *Средневековые надписи Софии Киевской □ (По материалам граффити XI-XVII вв)*, *passim*.

¹⁰ On the left side of Morogues church, where was the cemetery, we can see a rosette accompanied by a rising sun, different rites of friction of weapons and arms and a mule shoe that was put to the main gate of the church, all "seem to remind us of some deformationse or remnants of the solar cults" (Claudine Ruet, Jean-Paul Ruet, *Genouilly ... et autres églises gravées du Cher. Inventaire des graffiti visibles sur les murs des Eglises et Chapelles du département, suivi de quelques réflexions sur certains des thèmes rencontrés*, Les Thématiques du G.R.H.A. [Groupe de recherches d'histoire et d'archéologie], Editeur G.R.H.A., Saint Florent sur Cher, 1986, p. 3-4).

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The best known and richest religious symbol drawn of the churches' walls are the crosses¹¹. These marks are seen everywhere in the Christian world from the Antiquity until now a days, being made through scratches and, partially or totally, out of dots and holes¹². They are very different, if we talk about the ones discovered in the Wholly Country, in the Orthodox Orient or Catholic Occident. Generally, the crosses symbolize the Crucifixion, Jesus, the Savior, the Word, the second person from the Trinity¹³. These crosses can also have a votive meaning, but for other authors these crosses represent the only way of expression for the believers, in a period in which the literacy was weak¹⁴. It is to be known that the believers' prayers were materialized through crosses marked on the walls of the churches beside which was written the name of the person who has called for the divine help.

Therefore, it has been seen that many of the mural graffiti, especially the ones on the churches' walls, were the result of health and happiness requests. These requests were addressed to God, an angel, a saint on hope of healing, protection of the family members, of the house, of the common heritage, of the working tool etc.¹⁵.

Graffiti have some others meanings, too, illustrating the Ordeal, Jesus Christ Crucifying, popular scenes of the Pains and the Ordeal's instruments¹⁶, the pigeon, as the symbol of the

¹¹ Jean-Pierre Auffret, Marie-Claude Auffret, *Les graffiti de l'église Saint-Médard à Saint-Mards-en-Othe (Aube)*, în *Actes des «Premières Rencontres Graffiti anciennes» à Loches en Touraine*, Ghâlons en Champagne, Imprimerie Paquez, ASPAG, 2002, p. 7.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

¹⁵ Michel Leblond, *Graffiti muraux: animaux et Croyance Populaire*, in vol. *«Troisième Rencontres Graffiti anciens» à Dieppe en Haut-Normandie*, Abbeville, Imprimerie Leclerc, ASPAG, 2005, p. 5.

¹⁶ Luoc Bucherie, *Les graffiti des tours Saint-Nicolas et de la Chaîne à la Rochelle*, „Publications de la Société d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Aunis”, no. 18, La Rochelle, 1987, p. 2. Further on: Luoc Bucherie, *Les graffiti des tours Saint-Nicolas*.

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Wholly Ghost¹⁷, images of the Wholly Mary¹⁸, scenes of the After Judgment¹⁹, and monograms of Jesus Christ (IHS for «*Jesus Hominum Salvator*») or of the Wholly Mary (AM for «*Ave Maria*»)²⁰. Even seldom, the drawings with the Saint Heart [Sacre-Coeur] or The Pure Heart of the Mary Virgin were not missing²¹. The last two are also met in Bukovina, on the South wall of the Arbore Church, being scratched by one of the Roman-Catholic German local community, in the XIXth Century. All these graffiti highlight the desire in hope and salvation of the christians.

¹⁷ Jean-Pierre Auffret, Marie-Claude Auffret, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁸ L<uoc> Bucherie, *Les graffitis de la maison Henri II*, „Publications de la Société d’Archéologie et d’Histoire de l’Aunis”, no. 2, La Rochelle, 1977, p. 3. Further on: *Les graffitis de la maison Henri II*; Luoc Bucherie, *Les graffitis de la Tour de la Lanterne*, p. 38; Luoc Bucherie, *Les graffiti des tours Saint-Nicolas*, p. 6; Jean-Pierre Auffret, Marie-Claude Auffret, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁹ Hervé Poidevin, *Autour de la pesée des âmes. Une vision de la descente aux Enfers à Loches (Indre-et-Loire)*, în *Actes des «Premières Rencontres Graffiti anciennes» à Loches en Touraine*, Ghâlons en Champagne, Imprimerie Paquez, ASPAG, 2002, p. 55-64.

²⁰ L<uoc> Bucherie, *Les graffitis de la maison Henri II*, 1977, p. 3; Luoc Bucherie, *Les graffitis de la Tour de la Lanterne*, p. 38; Luoc Bucherie, *Les graffiti des tours Saint-Nicolas*, p. 6; Jean-Pierre Auffret, Marie-Claude Auffret, *op. cit.*, p. 7; Michel Leblond, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

²¹ Blogul lui Bogdan, *Simboluri*, publicat miercuri, 3 martie 2010, accesibil la adresa: <http://vestigatio.blogspot.com/2010/03/simboluri.html>, 01.IV.2012.

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In the same category of religious symbols are also registered the stairs²², the grill²³, the ship²⁴ or the anchor drawings²⁵. The stairs seem to mean the rising of the good people in Heaven²⁶ and the grills have been interpreted as invocation scenes of Saint Laurent to heal the burns²⁷.

After, the ships graffiti from the churches' walls had an *ex-voto* function²⁸, being a rewarding gesture towards God for the help given in a long and dangerous trip or it was drawn in order to obtain the divine favor during the future trip on sea. In exchange, the anchor is surely the symbol of the coming back in the harbor from a profitable trip²⁹.

In the Romanian Middle Ages the ones who wrote notes on books and on churches' walls, had a common motivation: to be named by the person who would read their messages. That is well known by the specialists in the case of books³⁰ but not in the one of graffiti drawn on the North of Moldavia churches' and monasteries' walls.

The desire to be mentioned of those who wrote on the walls of those places of worship from Romania is proven by the numerous prayers for memorial scratched on the walls together with their baptism name like: "Pomeani gospodi dușe raba ..." ("Have mercy on the soul of Your

²² Hervé Poidevin, *Autour de la pesée des âmes. Une vision de la descente aux Enfers à Loches (Indre-et-Loire)*, în *Actes des «Premières Rencontres Graffiti anciennes» à Loches en Touraine*, Ghâlons en Champagne, Imprimerie Paquez, ASPAG, 2002, p. 55-64.

²³ Michel Leblond, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

²⁴ David Arduini-Chiara Grassi, *Graffiti di navi medievali sulle Chiese di Pisa e di Lucca*, Ospedaletto (Pisa), Felici Editore, 2002, p. 7.

²⁵ David Arduini-Chiara Grassi, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

²⁶ In the Orthodox iconography, there are a lot of Eden Stairs scenes.

²⁷ Michel Leblond, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

²⁸ Luoc Bucherie, *Les graffitis de la Tour de la Lanterne*, p. 4; David Arduini-Chiara Grassi, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²⁹ David Arduini-Chiara Grassi, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

³⁰ So, a note from the 24th of November 1810, existed on a *Minei of October*, printed at Râmnic, in 1776 and found in Onesti village, said that "being written this page on verso, I decided to write on the other side, in order not to be forgot and the successors to mention my name and, so, the God will allowed them pass into the Eden Empire, amin" <u. A.B.>". (I. Caproșu, și, E. Chiaburu, *Însemnări de pe manuscrise și cărți vechi din Țara Moldovei*, Un corpus editat de ~, Iași, Casa Editorială Demiurg, vol. III (1796-1828), 2008, p. 274).

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slave ...”). Drawing clerk and laymen on the walls seems to have its beginning in the hieromonks habit of making fresco on the altar and diaconicon walls with the names of the persons to be mentioned during the liturgy, being the places where they were encountered the most. In conclusion, the written graffiti of the monasteries and churches in Moldavia seems to have begun with the habit of mentioning the donors and merciful benefactors of the church. So, in the altar of Orthodox churches must be found the diptych for the ones who built the church, of the donors and benefactors of the church and, in the case of a monastery, the diptych of the monarchs who lived there. That is why, at the beginning, in the monasteries altars were found the wooden diptyches³¹. Because of the fact that the diptych existed in the monasteries were very long and the priests received many unsettled, too, they, during the liturgy, had no time to mention the whole lists of names, composed by founders, merciful people, benefactors of the monasteries, rulers of Moldavia, hierarchs of the church and monks). For this reason, the priest or the deacon, who helped the main priest at the mass ceremony, mentioned (during in the religious service, too) at the diaconicon, all the Christians who had not been remembered at the altar³². Later on, in the chrim churches from Moldavia and Wallachia has appeared the practice of the big founder to put on the altar, a inscription with the diptych of his family. It is the example of the villages like: Măgura (ex Bela)³³, Gura Bărbulețului³⁴ or Căpșuna³⁵. Also, in the right side of the altar, in the diaconicon of the church of Bălenii-Români, Dambovita county, it is written:” G.M. Tattaresco. 1857”³⁶. In time, together with this official diptych, started to appear a series of parallel writings made directly on

³¹ At Sucevita monastery, there are a wooden diptych, in Cyrillic, since 1772, to honour the old founders, a modern copy of the monks diptych of the monastery, since 1857 and a current one for the nuns who live there now.

³² Information provided by father dean Ieremia Vasile of Suceava.

³³ Mihai Oproiu, *Inscripții și însemnări din județul Dâmbovița*, vol. II, Târgoviște, Editura Transversal, 2003, p. 34, nr. 52 and p. 34-35, nr. 53).

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 28, nr. 29 and p. 28, nr. 30).

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 70, nr. 220.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 21, nr. 5.

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the altar's walls with another names from the usual diptychs. Beside the names of the founders, donors, princes, bishops and monks of those churches, the new lists had the names of the ex priests together with their families and the names of the village people who paid for being mentioned by the priests during the Wholly Service. It is also true that many names scratched on the walls of the Sucevita Monastery are those of the church members such as the hieromonk Isaia, the painter, and Anania, the deacon. It is meaningful in this case the writing on the Sucevita Monastery altar, where it is written: "prlstavli sl Hariton 27 fevr<uarie> 1814³⁷", which shows the death date of a monk and the memorial that was going to be made in his honor because this note was put in the altar. On the other hand, in this church were also written many baptism names of the lays. We have as proof the reimagining's of the names of Nicholas and Matthew. However, there are a lot of laymen names on the diaconicon mixed up with the ones of the big members of the church. Surely those names have been written there in order to be mentioned by the priests at the Wholly Service in that church. This solution that they found must not surprise us, because the prayer for the dead were difficult to do in the big monasteries because of the limited writing and reading skills capacity of those times. It is also possible that the gift of the ones named on the altar's walls not to be very valuable and it is why they were not introduced in the official diptych. The diptych was paid for a period of time and when that period finished, the name of that small donor was forgotten or just erased. However, that only happened in the case of rivalry.

As a consequence, the lists with names scratched in the altar and in the diaconicon represent the notes of the members of the church, in order to mention their names, the ones of their ancestors and of the laymen donors in the unofficial diptych of the church. The pilgrims and the guests coming to pray or just passing through the churches and knowing how to read and write

³⁷ „Hariton died, the 27th February 1814”.





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have started to scratch their names on other walls of the church as well. Following the height from which they were written, we can judge that those inscriptions have been made by monks or priests who stood on their feet, on the chairs or more seldom on their knees. The marks made by standing up mean only a passing by, while the ones made standing on the chairs or on their knees, can tell us that were made during the praying process and also can tell us that the persons coming to those churches were mostly monks and chrim priests³⁸.

These markings are proof of desperate essays for people who did not have enough money to pay for being written in the official diptych and had a chance at Salvation. Not mentioning a Orthodox in a church during his lifetime means that he has been forgotten by his family and close ones and not mentioning his name after death means that he has no chance at Salvation. This loss is frightening for every Orthodox for he will be erased from the Book of Life which can mean losing his soul and being doomed forever. This is proven first of all by the fact that some of the baptism names are written aside the payers on the wall. This kind of naming prayers were written in Slavonic: («Pomeani Gospodi dușe raba ...»³⁹ [“Poméni G<ospo>di d<u>și raba Isopi¹⁴⁰”; “+ Pomeneti raba B<o>ji4 ^aevana, ... Ion i Gen<adie>, ..., Costantină. Popa Tena(e)si wt Pomi<rla ?>, B<ă> l<l>t<o> =zr̀kg mai⁴¹] (Sucevița monastery-*in the south part, left pole-north*) or “Pomiéni G<o>s<po>di raba Svoego”⁴² (Sucevița monastery-*crypt*), in Russian [“Помяня Г(оспп)ди раба своего Иоана”⁴³ (Sucevița monastery-*crypt*)], also in Romanian with Cyrillic characters: “God, have mercy of Your slave Petrachi” (Pătrăuți). These writings were made on the churches walls during the prayers, but unlike the official diptychs, the pilgrims or church members

³⁸ So, these names belong to the monks or to the priests.

³⁹ “God, have mercy on the soul of <Your> slave ...”-n. A.B.

⁴⁰ “God, have mercy on the soul of Your slave Isop”-n. A.B.

⁴¹ “God, have mercy on the soul of Your slaves Ștefan, Ion and Ghenadie, ..., Constantin. Popa Tanasie from Pomârla, in year 7193 <1685> May”-n. A.B.

⁴² “God, have mercy on the soul of Your slave ...”-n. A.B.

⁴³ “God, have mercy on the soul of Your slave Ioan”-n. A.B.

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would write their own names without the consent of the priest and without giving gifts to the church. The fact that they would write their own names is proven by the unfinished lines “God, have mercy of Your slave”. There were cases in which the pilgrims were surprised by one of the churches members and had to abandon the sentence and leave it incomplete.

This is how the writing of more names on the churches’ walls became a sort of unofficial diptych. They were usually made for one person and rarely included more members like list of monks, priests or laymen with their families. Even if they were written the same way and had the same purpose those lists of names must be differentiated from the official church diptychs and so we cannot give them the same name⁴⁴. Therefore, unlike the official diptychs the writings on the churches walls were not scratched in a chronological order, they were made by simple people and not by church members and the graffiti authors did not have the priests or church members authorization to make those writings nor made gifts to the church to get permission. Then, the authors of these graffiti were not founders, donors or monks. The fact that these graffiti were made by simple people is also proven by the fact that the church members would have been mentioned anyway in the altar and a parallel writing would have been illogical. Moreover, these writing were simple and without any religious meaning for being read during the Wholly Service. As a consequence, it is improbable that the church members would read these graffiti since they wanted to stop that practice even if it was a prayer or a memorial. That being said, it is believed that the prayers written on the walls were left for the other pilgrims and guests to come and pray in that church. This must not come as a surprise, because in Moldavia, most of the old names⁴⁵ written on fresco of the monasteries’ walls, have a monarchical specific or belong to the chrism priests. So, the prayers were going to be made by priests even if they did not live in that sanctuary.

⁴⁴Their purpose was the mentioning of the people written there.

⁴⁵The age of these names is indicate by the fact that they are written in Slavonic or Cyrillic.

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More, the realization of these writings is proven also by the fact that the pilgrims would state the place where they came from: “Iermonah Őewfană kehovikă Egÿpet...i=așlcz”⁴⁶ (Sucevița-South part, Left South Pole); “+ Gligorie Priest from Câmpulung, year 7156” (Sucevita-South part, Left North Pole) or “I hieromonk John from Sucevița” (Pătrăuți). Also in the monks monasteries (Sucevița) one can find writings of the nuns⁴⁷.

Another proof that these graffiti were made by pilgrim’s guests or their families is that we can find them in the churches along the most circulated roads by these persons⁴⁸ and are seldom in the other isolated monasteries, although the church members number was similar in the two cases. In conclusion if the people who lived there would have written their own names, the writings number would have been similar in the two types of churches in Moldavia.

Finally, the study of contemporary graffiti has proved that these kinds of writings betray the feeling of not belonging to that place, because the person who scratches recognizes incontinently being a traveler, his message telling us that he has passed by⁴⁹. The only difference between the old and contemporary graffiti is given by the motivation of their action. In the Middle Age, man took more time for the soul salvation and so most of these graffiti were written for the memory those persons and only few of them were made in order to register an important event in history. However, now a day, this kind of messages contain only the names of their authors and were scratched for the main reason of not being forgotten or neglected⁵⁰.

It is obvious that the graffiti have a Christian specific. Being made by devout wholly men, they are solid proof of the propound belief in Almighty God, in Jesus- the Helper and Universal

⁴⁶ “I, Theofan the hieromonk, man from Egipt ... 1727”.

⁴⁷ Then, together with the names of some monks like Ilarion, Isopi etc., we find some nuns’ names written in Cyrillic, like „Nun Magdalena” or „Nun Evgenia”, who, certenely, were pilgrims or relatives of the monks from Sucevita.

⁴⁸ They are very numerous on the walls of the monasteries from Bukovina and extremely rare on Dobrovăț monastery, laid on a isolate place.

⁴⁹ Laurent Maindon, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁵⁰ Baudrillard in *Amérique*, Grasset, p. 46, apud Laurent Maindon, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

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Savoir⁵¹, of the Trinity, Wholly Mary or the Angels. Even if they are only simple invocations, burning prayers, white symbols or just technical words written by the pilgrims before returning to their houses, they represent the testimony of their belief and hope that only the Divinity can save them⁵².

Besides the practice of scratching a magic-religious upon churches' wall has always been determined by the sacred character of the churches' walls⁵³. It is believed that the authors of these scratches were entering a wholly relation with God⁵⁴. Therefore, it was not considered a sin although in contradiction with the Christians ideas⁵⁵.

At the same time, together with the religious Christian classical symbols (that mark the Wholly Trinity, Virgin Mary, of the Saints and the Angels adoration), we can observe that there are other graffiti with spiritual meaning and pre Christian roots.

On the paintings of the walls of Bukovina monasteries, we can see scratched a lot of fir trees. This is the sacred tree of the Romanians, expressing, through its greenness, the undying dream of the human being: immortality⁵⁶. Given the fact that the trees drawings are associated with the memory prayers we are tempted to believe that it is the death tree. So, the field research all over Moldavia, confirms that the fir trees were used only in the funerals of unmarried men being an *alter ego* of the couple of the one missing⁵⁷. Actually, the death tree was the synonym with the spear or flag and represented the afterlife husband or wife of the young unmarried, this symbol

⁵¹ Emmanuele Testa, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 9.

⁵³ Jean-Mary Couderc, *Les para-graffiti sur les murs des églises*, în vol. «Troisième Recontres Graffiti anciens» à Dieppe en Haut-Normandie, Abbeville, Imprimerie Leclerc, ASPAG, 2005, p. 99.

⁵⁴ Claudine Ruet, Jean-Paul Ruet, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ Ion Ghinoiu, *Panteonul românesc. Dicționar*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2001, p. 26, *sub voce* brad.

⁵⁷ Ion H. Ciubotaru, *Marea trecere. Repere etnologice în ceremonialul funebru din Moldova*, București, Editura „Grai și Suflet-Cultură Națională”, 1999, p. 127-128; Ion Ghinoiu, *op. cit.*, p. 27, *sub voce* brad la înmormântare.

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being met in all the Romanian regions⁵⁸. For example, some lance and tree of life graffiti are found in the cell Fundul Peșterii, located about 1.5 km. north-west of the village Nucu⁵⁹, this cell belongs to the group of little churches and cave cells from Nucu and Aluniș, Buzău county⁶⁰. In conclusion, the drawing of the fir tree along with the memorial prayers scratched on the churches walls from Bukovina can only mean that these prayers were made especially for the ones who died before marrying.

In the same category are registered the magical graffiti, even if some of them have been “baptized” in the people minds. These significations are specific especially to drawing and paragraffiti, even if the subjects may include Christian iconography or not. For example, scratching of the scene where Saint Longin sticks his lance in Jesus crucified body has the purpose of healing the horses bleeding⁶¹. And still, the most important in meaning are the animal drawings (stag, cock, dog, goose, pheasant, horse, donkey, fish, cow, snake, dragon)⁶² or objects, (such as horseshoes⁶³ or hooks⁶⁴) with certain unchristian origins. In fact, even after the imposing of the Christianity, the magic was often stronger than the Christian religious ceremony, which went to its acceptance and to the Christianization of certain magical practices. For example, in the old times, there was a French popular practice which consisted in the scratching of one or more graffiti after the priest

⁵⁸ Ion Ghinoiu, *op. cit.*, p. 27, *sub voce* brad la înmormântare.

⁵⁹ Anatol Măcriș, *Scrieri. Călătorii, istorie, evocări*, București, Editura Agerpress Typo, 2002, p. 33-34.

⁶⁰ These churches and cells were investigated by Alexandru Odobescu (*Note de călătorie*, București, 1981, p. 159); Bazil Iorgulescu (*Dicționarul geografic, statistic, economic și istoric al județului Buzău*, București, 1892); Pavel Chiaia (*Un complex necunoscut de sihăstrie din munții Buzăului din vremea lui Neagoe Basarab*, în SCIA, seria Artă plastică, tom. XX, 1973 și *Date noi despre bisericuțele rupestre din munții Băzăului*, în “Glasul Bisericii”, XXXIII (1974), nr. 5-6; *De la Negru vodă la Neagoe Basarab*, București, 1976, p. 246).

⁶¹ Michel Leblond, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 6-9.


⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

⁶⁴ Jean-Mary Couderc, Béatrice Ledet, *Les graffiti de serpes*, în *Actes des «Premières Rencontres Graffiti ancines» à Loches en Touraine*, Ghâlons en Champagne, Imprimerie Paquez, ASPAG, 2002, p. 35.

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prayed for the healing of an ill person to assure the success of the healing process⁶⁵. The magic beliefs are so deep in the hearts and minds of the people, that they did not disappear for thousands of years, they still exist today. It was observed that every year over 450 000 magic books are sold in the Francophony world⁶⁶.

Therefore, it must not be surprising the fact that, in the Medieval France, inside houses and churches, underneath slabs and tiles were printed animal footprints with the purpose of obtaining that symbolic protection which every animal could insure in the popular believes⁶⁷.

This is why in all civilizations and religions, the stag had a special role, his image being the symbol of the nature's renaissance⁶⁸. After, it was believed that with the help of the stag's horns, it could chase away the snake, the sin symbol, and his flesh could break the fever⁶⁹.

Instead, the cock reminded the Christians of Jesus and would announce every morning the dawn of a new day for faith and so its song was considered as a calling of the Christians for the Morning Prayer⁷⁰. Then, in Christian iconography, the rooster is one of the "symbols of the Passion"⁷¹, recalling his triple denial of Peter. Also, in the Occident, it was believed that the cock had the power of chasing away nightmares and the eating of its testicles by women had the gift of making birth easier and for men the same thing had an erotic meaning. And in the Romanian side it was believed that the first singing of the cock chased away the evil spirits that dominated the night. Nevertheless, some graffiti from the Occident represent also images of hanged roosters which

⁶⁵ Michel Leblond, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

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made researches assume that this animal was either useless for some of their hopes, either it was used to cast a spell upon somebody else⁷².

Afterwards, because of the dog's role of faithful guardian of man and household, this animal's images become the symbol of house protection and marriage fidelity⁷³. However the goose was the symbol of betrayal⁷⁴.

In the west popular culture, the pheasant is considerate as being harmful, so this is way there are few images of this animal. Even so, the author of such graffiti wrote the reversed initials of the word pheasant, which seems to indicate the fact that through this action he wanted to chase away a spell⁷⁵.

The horse has multiple meanings this is why there are contradictions from certain points of view in the popular believes⁷⁶, the horse symbolizing the day and the night, the light and the dark. During the night the horse was always seen as a destructive winner. Also, when the graffiti representing horses were drowned by the villagers, they symbolized there wish of getting protection through the horse; when the horse was drowned by workers or travelers it was the testimony of wealthy times⁷⁷.

The donkey is the symbol of running to Egypt, of the swing and sometimes of the miller and the cow is the sign of wealth, sensual pleasure or power⁷⁸. The fish is seldom represented in the Western graffiti, even though it was one of Jesus symbols (ICHTUS in Greek)-the fish served as image for the persecuted Christians. In closer times, this type of drawing was highlighted only

⁷² *Ibidem*.

⁷³ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*; Ion Mușlea, Ovidiu Bârlea, *Tipologia folclorului. Din răspunsurile la chestionarele lui B.P. Hasdeu*, București, Editura Minerva, 1970, p. 280.

⁷⁷ Michel Leblond, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

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in the places close to rivers and it is very possible that a fisherman could hope for some “miracle fish”⁷⁹. Likewise, other rare graffiti are represented by snake and dragon, both symbolizing the evil⁸⁰.

Of all these animals, in the churches of the Bukovina monasteries, we can find only graffiti represented stags and horses. There are a lot of horses, being drawn in altars and in other parts of the churches. Their motivation is pretty hard to explain. In the Romanian mythology the stags⁸¹, symbol of virility, and the horse⁸² were psycho pomp animals, which carried on their backs the souls of the dead, on the mythical route to the Other World⁸³. We believe that this attribute contributed to the scratching of a stags above the graves on the North wall from the church on Rădăuți and the drawings of horses at the anaphora and diaconicon of the churches from Arbore, Pătrăuți and Părhăuți.

At the same time, it is very possible that some horse and stags graffiti scratched on the walls of the monasteries from Bukovina to have no magic meaning what so ever, because, given the height at which they were drawn, we are tempted to believe that they were made by children. It is possible that they were so impressed by these animals and decided to draw them.

In the Western Europe, the drawing of a horseshoe was the side of protection, excepting the case in which the owner wanted through its scratching to protect his horse or ducky of limping⁸⁴.

Finally, the hooks drawn by the workers from the walls of Touraine churches from the XVIIth century until the year 1850, have been interpreted as “demands of divine protection for

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 8-9.

⁸¹ Ion Ghinoiu, *op. cit.*, p. 44-45, *sub voce cerb*.

⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 34, *sub voce cal*.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 24, *sub voce bou*, p. 36 *sub voce cartea morților*.

⁸⁴ Michel Leblond, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

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vineyard growers and their workers”⁸⁵, these demands having a non-Christian roots and magical origins⁸⁶. These symbols have been connected to Saint Vincent celebration well know in Touraine in the past, being considerate trough this symbols the Saint was asked “to protect the vineyard against a bad weather and diseases and also a basing for the vineyard growers activity because they worked for the wine production, for the church mass and, therefore, for the church itself”⁸⁷. Still, we believe that the religious motivation does not answer to a simple question (that the authors of this article have not even asked): why the hooks’ graffiti are found (it is true, in a smaller measure) on civil construction (mansions’ walls or casteless)⁸⁸. At the same time, we cannot stop remembering that religious motivations have been many times attributed to the drawings of “Sacred Places” (chapels, temples, caves and baldachins) and to which psychoanalysts give only an erotic meaning⁸⁹..

Also, not all the graffiti with a magical-religious meaning are on the churches walls. This is how, an important category of these kinds of drawings can be found on every bell board and seldom on the church bells that belong to the Orthodox sanctuaries. Even though the practice of writing on churches bell boards is not often used, the people believe that someone who is evil can be stopped by being written on churches bell boards. That is way, when the priests knock on the bell boards they sing a religious hymn when it was the church dedication.⁹⁰ Every beat with a hammer made over a name written on a bell board, it is seen as a God punishment to that person. This “wholly beat” accompanied with the prayers of a priest, has the gift of attracting the

⁸⁵ Jean-Mary Couderc, Béatrice Ledet, *op. cit.*, 2002, p. 35.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 39-40.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

⁸⁹ Bucherie, Luoc, *Les graffiti des tours Saint-Nicolas*, p. 6.

⁹⁰ For example, the church dedication of Slatina Monastery is The Transfiguration and at the bell board is sung the religious hymn of the Transfiguration.

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punishment upon the bad person, who was written on the bell boards, so that he could not hurt anyone else and take care of their own troubles. The introduction of graffiti in the magical practice is meant to attract God's punishment upon the evil people because the ones who write them are too weak, socially and physically, to do justice with their own two hands⁹¹. Being a form of curse, their authors could not be held responsible nor by the one who was written on the bell board, nor by the community. On the contrary, if the curse had consequences, then the villagers would be convinced that the one hurt was indeed wronged and the one who did him wrong had received his punishment, which could be used as example by everybody in the community.

And so the writing on the bell board would attract a negative outcome having another purpose, different from the prayers written on the walls and the diptychs for the anaphora and diaconicon, and the reason for which someone would like to see his name written in graffiti on a church's wall was also different. It is surprising because the bell board and the bells had the role of the amulet for evil protection. The habit of scratching names on the walls or bells of the churches was in relation with the author's desire to get help for him or his family, the Divinity's help or salvation. Meaningful in this sense, is the fact that churches or bells builders would re write their names on the churches' wall or on the bell every time they would build another church or bell or they would renovate one of them, so that God can hear and fulfill their requests for health, help and salvation⁹². This is why, inside one of the bells from the Slatina Monastery, above the clapper, it was written "Gedeon V.I."

⁹¹ The information is given by the nun Vichentia, born Poleucă, from Slatina Monastery (January 2012).

⁹² The religious semnifications of the inscriptions and the notes on the belles, is proved by the written text on Buga bell from Putna monastery: " This bell called Buga of Putna Monastery, was made by its founder Stephen the Great, but in the year 1760, broke down, so, the metropolitan bishop Jacob helped by the monastery, repaired it. Then, in 1793, the bell broke down again, being fixed in 1818, thanks to the implication of the Superior Filaret Vendeveschi, helped by the boyars Ilie Ilschii, Dimitrachi Constan and Vasile Vasilco. God, take care of their prayers! <u. A.B.>

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Writing someone's name on the bell board is a new practice which came to life after the literacy of the villages and cities and the school renewal during the time of Alexandru Ioan Cuza (1864). However, we cannot exclude the fact that writing on the bell board existed before, but it was only made by the ones who knew how to read and write. Unfortunately, with every beat in the bell board, the names scratched would disappear and not many churches kept in good shape the bell boards; it is why we do not have many proofs of our last statement. It is also possible that this habit of writing on the bell boards to come from an ancient practice, in which it was made only a little whole instead of the full name of the person who harmed others and at the same time that person's name was being pronounced by the one who made the curse⁹³. This means that we have an example in which graffiti have replaced the para-graffiti and the phenomenon of the spreading of writing and reading skills spread the older magical practice, too. It is certain that in the old times, the bell board was a very important instrument for witchcraft, being used as magic, that spell through which a woman would bring disease upon someone against whom she had a grouch or who was her enemy⁹⁴. And still not all the graffiti have a magical meaning because some of the names have the date and place marked, that showing that they were by tourists willing to leave a trace of their passing by.

Finally, the most important meanings is given to the para-graffiti, "these traces left on the churches walls that do not contain drawings nor written texts"⁹⁵. There are only striations from sharpen objects, scratching marks, "the devil's scratches" or trenches, wholes for extracting a

Auzi Doamne glasul lor <s.A.B.> (Claudiu Paradais, *Comori ale spiritualității românești la Putna*, Iași, Editura Mitropoliei Moldovei și Sucevei, 1988, p. 621).

⁹³ The bell board of Slatina Monastery is full of little holes, which seemed to be made because of beating the nails into it.

⁹⁴ „Șezătoarea”, I, p. 157 and the next ones, apud Aurel I. Candrea, *Folclorul medical român comparat. Privire generală. Medicina magică*, Iași, Editura Polirom, 1999, p. 200-201.

⁹⁵ Jean-Mary Couderc, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

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small part of a whole, soft perforations and horseshoes and nails stuck in the walls. The functions of these graffiti are in relation with the useful, magical or religious practices, all of them being determined by the sacredness of the churches walls⁹⁶.

The ribs made by sharper objects were found on stone, sandstone or siliceous brick monuments being the result of a time when white weapons and tools had to be sharpened all the time. The weapons belonged to the army billeted near the churches and the tools were the monasteries' workers possession. That is why, we can find a lot of scratches upon the calk monuments with no magical or religious meaning, their only symbolism being the sharpener role⁹⁷. Afterwards, we can see many signs and ribs on the sandstone monuments, but also angles of blunt tops or flattened tops which cannot be a good way of sharpening the tools and weapons⁹⁸. Moreover, it was clear that any worker or soldier had their special sharpening stone in their shop or kichen, without being forced to cross the whole village in order to sharpen their tools using rocks that were not even good for that purpose⁹⁹. As a conclusion, all these elements prove to us that people searched the Divine protection even for their tools and weapons by touching their tops on the churches' walls¹⁰⁰. Taking into account the big number of ribs, it is clear that this tradition was spread among the people in the villages all around¹⁰¹. This is something normal since we have to do with a popular way – very cheap- of blessing their white weapons, after the example of the noble people, who added rests from a saint to the handle of the sword or had ceremonies to bless the weapons¹⁰². This kind of ribs are rare in Bukovina, being met only in the west side of the

⁹⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁹⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 100.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 99; Claudine Ruet, Jean-Paul Ruet, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Mary Couderc, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, p. 100.

¹⁰² *Ibidem.*

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Arbore Church, where there are numerous of them., because it is the only church that served as ruler church until the 16th century. Therefore, it is normal that the owners of the village and/or their servants have sharpened the weapons with the help of the sandstones of the church. The other sanctuaries in Bukovina were either monasteries or village churches and because of it, the villagers and the monks were no part of the army, so, that habit was not specific and no traces were found on the walls of those churches.

A similar meaning as for the ribs seems to be given also to the scrapes; it is why Claudine and Jean-Pierre Rue have noticed that there were a lot of scraped surfaces, made by continuous and willingly erasing¹⁰³. Camille Humeau believes that these traces have been made after a religious service, come from scratching the tools and weapons on the churches' walls, in order to attract the blessing of the sky upon their work¹⁰⁴ and protecting the owners of the weapon when going to a fight or crusade¹⁰⁵. On the walls of all the churches and monasteries in Bukovina, we see that the scrapes are numerous. Usually, they were made over the names written on the altar and diaconicon, over the names existed in the prayer for dead, written on the walls through repeated scratches with the only purpose of erasing the names of those people. Unconsciously, these marks highlight the relations between monks, between monks and pilgrims or between pilgrims. So, the enemies names were erased by those who could not stand the fact being always named in the memorial services.

“The devil’s scratches” and the narrow grooves are connected to magical beliefs or superstitions being made on the graves or statues of the saints, but also on the walls to extract the

¹⁰³ Claudine Rue, Jean-Pierre Rue, *Genouilly et autres églises gravées du Cher*, 1986, p. 200, apud Jean-Mary Couderc, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁴ Camille Humeau, *Signes et pierre sacrées*, Bourges, 1971, apud Jean-Mary Couderc, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

¹⁰⁵ Jean-Mary Couderc, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

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mineral material, the dust from a building considered totality sacred¹⁰⁶ with the purpose of healing diseases or against women sterility¹⁰⁷. It is why, Senior's Guillame De Naillac ladies from the West side of the Central France have made a *saint gueurluchon* in the statue of Saint Guignolé or Saint Greluchon, scratching constantly the place of the penis in order to drink the dust with water, despite the repeated cement renovations¹⁰⁸. This practice common from the end of the 19th century until the beginning of the 20th century, has been met in many communities from the Catholic countries of Europe because of the belief that women could be fertilized by the Wholly “*Mana*” through the swallowing of that dust¹⁰⁹. The people believed so much in this superstition that the authorities had to put fences around the statues¹¹⁰.

In other situations, like in the case of brick churches from the Baltic Germany, the narrative sources remind us that the walls were scratched in the Middle Age, in times of hunger so that the people can drink the mineral dust that came out of those brick walls, being believed that the mineral could cure the pain given by hunger¹¹¹.

The hollows of the sacred walls are isolated or grouped and they are categorized in large hollows, which are not related to a wall painting and in scrapes and extraction holes with a specific form¹¹². The first category of scrapes was used in order to swallow the mineral material as cure for malaria, diseases and sterility¹¹³. The second category of scrapes is seldom and they are made by the digging of the church base of some crosses graffiti or semi-circular, conical or rectangular with

¹⁰⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 100-101.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 101.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹¹ Werner Brast, *Die Schalensteine, ab wann, weshalb und wie*, Mitteilungsblatt für Vorund Frühgeschichte 33, 1-76, 1982, apud Jean-Mary Couderc, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

¹¹² Jean-Mary Couderc, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 101-102.

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rounded top cavities¹¹⁴. Some of these grooves represent the mouth, nose, and eyes of the human figures graffiti, few of them having a cylindrical cap over their heads like the one of an Orthodox nun¹¹⁵. On the other hand, there is another category of holes, the ones in shape of a rhomb, a symbol for the female sex, which were believed curing infertility through the drinking of the mineral material in it. The habit of making these grooves is very old because, before the appearance of the stone churches, the same type of hollows were made on megaliths, on sacred stones or on certain rocks¹¹⁶.

This practice of extracting the dust from the churches wall is met in Romania also, from Hațeg¹¹⁷ until Bukovina. This is why on the religious scenes, we can observe the traces of the successive mineral extraction from the sacred building. The favorite scenes from which is extracted the material are the images of Sinaxar Saints or Garden of Heaven, but also the sinners and devils from the After Judgment scene. The material was only extracted from the face area of the Saint (eyes and mouth) but, in the case of the sinners or devils, the extractions were mixed, from the face (eyes and mouth) and from the genital organs area, too. Sometimes, the extraction was so deep that it seemed to be like a punishment for those doomed forever, because many parts of the frescoes containing to the devils faces were completely destroyed.

As a particular case, we can remember the Sucevița Monastery case when some hollows were made from the eyes of the abbot who lived during the making of the painting of the monastery. That is why, the witches, having a lot of education, unknowing the difference between the painted characters on the walls and being in a hurry of stealing the material for their potions and not to be caught by the priests or monks, scratched the eyes and the mouth of this old abbot of

¹¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 102.

¹¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 101-102.

¹¹⁷ Cornel Ivanciuc, *Țara sfinților fără ochi*, în „Formula AS”, Anul 2009, nr. 851, accesibil pe adresa: <http://www.formula-as.ro/2009/851/spiritualitate-39/tara-sfintilor-fara-ochi-10633>, 29 martie 2012.

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that monastery. In fact, most of these para-graffiti are made by the scratching of the saints' eyes, belonging of the saints painted in lonely places, where the monks could not see them.

Of course, at a quick analysis, because of the depth and the proportions of these desecrations acts, the blame was set on the Turks¹¹⁸ or the Protestants¹¹⁹. In the Catholic Occident, during the prolonged droughts, there were vandalism acts against the statues and monuments from the churches from France and Italy; the saints' and angels' statues were thrown in the water, exiled, hanged, their hands were tied with chains, their faces were turned against the wall and the golden wings and purple robes were replaced with carton wings and rags¹²⁰.

In Romania, this kind of violent acts against the saints does not exist. However, in the Romanian territory, we can find desecration acts of the religious scene on the churches' walls – through scratching the mineral material from the eyes, the mouth, the genital organs of the saints, priests, lays and devils. It is surprising the fact that these extractions for witchcraft have been kept until today¹²¹ even if, in the Hașdeu's questionnaire, it was said that it disappeared¹²².

The biggest part of the witchcrafts by dust extraction were made upon men to “blind” them, not to see what their unfaithful wives were doing or it was used against women, with the same purpose¹²³.

¹¹⁸ Gh. Ghibănescu, *Biserica Sf. Andrei (predică ținută în ziua de 30 noiembrie 1932). Din ciclul de prediciistorico-bisericești ținute la bisericile din Iași*, nr. 2, Iași, Tipografia «Presa Bună», 1934, p. 7.

¹¹⁹ Cornel Ivanciuc, *op. cit.*, în „Formula AS”, Anul 2009, nr. 851, accesibil pe adresa: <http://www.formula-as.ro/2009/851/spiritualitate-39/tara-sfintilor-fara-ochi-10633>, 29 martie 2012.

¹²⁰ Aurel I. Candrea, *op. cit.*, p. 156-157.

¹²¹ The nun Tatiana from Sucevita Monastery told us, in 2011, that she found a women from the village, known by the whole community as a witch, scratching the eyes of one painted saint, in order to obtain a powder good for her magic rituals.

¹²² So, it was mentioned that the habit of obtaining powder, by scratching, from the eyes of the painted saints was very old, but „it was forgotten today.” (Ion Mușlea, Ovidiu Bârlea, *op. cit.*, p. 495).

¹²³ *Ibidem*, p. 494-495.

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Seldom, the powder from the saints' eyes was used in witchcraft, for marriage: for the old, unmarried girls to marry young unmarried men¹²⁴. Also, the dust from the eyes¹²⁵ and the mouth of saints was used in witchcrafts about the "assembly of the enemies"¹²⁶ (in this case, the material had the gift of making someone not to see the bad things that his opponent committed). There are witchcrafts for bringing the disease in the house and the body of someone considered enemy¹²⁷) or witchcrafts meant to tie a man to a woman¹²⁸ or to her house forever, without having eyes for anybody else¹²⁹, to bring damage and sorrow to the enemy, "for men to leave their wives when they do not live in good relations", "to blind the enemies", for the positive outcome of the judgments or for the judges to close their eyes and set free a guilty man, for taking the cow's milk or for "the hen to have a lot of chickens and for them to live"¹³⁰. It is also possible that the dust was stolen by thieves in order to get the witches to do magic for the judges not to see the bad deeds that they are committing.

After being burned the dust or earth from the walls was poured into the drink or food of the concerned person or it was prepared in magical spells, with an rotten egg by a woman during one week¹³¹. Sometimes, they could also add pieces of a church's bell¹³². Regardless of the

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 495.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁷ <f.a.>, *Vrăjile*, în www.zonex.ro, accesibil la adresa http://www.zonex.ro/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=59&Itemid=80&Itemid=1, 06.IV.2012.

¹²⁸ Ion Mușlea, Ovidiu Bârlea, *op. cit.*, p. 495.

¹²⁹ <f.a.>, *Vrăjile*, în www.zonex.ro, accesibil la adresa http://www.zonex.ro/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=59&Itemid=80&Itemid=1, 06.IV.2012.

¹³⁰ Ion Mușlea, Ovidiu Bârlea, *op. cit.*, p. 495.

¹³¹ *Ibidem*.

¹³² *Ibidem*.

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composition, the witches would pronounce spells: “The way the saints do not hear nor see, the same way the man will not see nor hear”¹³³.

At the same time, it was believed that the eyes of the saints gave the spells God’s power, assuring the good result of it¹³⁴. The charming of a person with dust from the saints’ eyes had a triple effect: upon the victim, upon the person who casted the spell and upon the beneficiary. This is how these spells made men (the main victims of spells) “to be like saints” and “all human beings should be like saints in front of an old lady” and the woman for which the spell was casted, to be loved “like the saints are adored by everybody”¹³⁵. All these elements are eloquent for understanding that the phenomenon of taking out the saints’ eyes was known in all the Romanian space.

At the same time, the witches took out the eyes of the saints from the churches’ walls, crosses or from the icon from the house when it was not possible to do that in the churches¹³⁶.

Another reason for extracting this dust was for its therapeutically role. This is why the blind would go to churches, get a little bit of dust from the saints’ eyes in order to receive the shining light of the saints eyes and so that he could be cured of blindness¹³⁷. Also, the dust was used for curing other eye disease like conjunctivitis¹³⁸ and cataracts and for the “bathing of devilish children in order to make them not to cry anymore”¹³⁹.

¹³³ *Ibidem.*

¹³⁴ *Ibidem.*

¹³⁵ *Ibidem.*

¹³⁶ *Ibidem* 495.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem.*

¹³⁸ Aurel I. Candrea, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

¹³⁹ Ion Mușlea, Ovidiu Bârlea, *op. cit.*, p. 495.

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Hașdeu's questionnaires highlight the fact that, sometimes, it is the devils eyes scratched out either from hatred or to cast spells¹⁴⁰. So, in order to make a spell stronger, the old women would add to theirs spell dust from saints' eyes, and dust of the eyes, mouth and genital organs of the devils painted on the churches' walls¹⁴¹. Taking out the devils eyes in also connected to a fate spell during which the old women invoke the Devil by saying: "Eye, Eye Devil, from my mouth I teach you, but in my sight I do not want to see you <u.AB>!"¹⁴². The fate spell was made by women to other rivals women so that they should die and, then, the one who cursed, take their place and their men¹⁴³. It is not out of question that the dust from the Devil's genital organs to be poured into the drink or food of a man to make him more virile.

Given the many attacks that destroyed the faces of the devils from the After Judgment Scene from the painted walls of the churches and monasteries of Bukovina, it was obvious that most of them were punishing acts for the demons that tempt and take the souls of people into the Endless Fire. We find surprising the fact that among those mutilated, we can find the devils from the upper side of the walls where someone could only reach with the help of a stair or a ladder. Surely, these mutilations were not only made by Christians, but also by the witches. This is the message of another fate song, in which the witches explain why they punished the devils: "Devil,

¹⁴⁰ *Ibidem.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 471.

¹⁴² George Cosbuc, *Superstițiunile păgubitoare ale poporului nostru. Descântecul și leacurile băbești, duhurile necurate, vraji și farmece, sărbători fără rost*, București, Institutul de arte grafice „Carol Göbl”, 1909, p. 64; Elena Sevastos, *Nunta la români. Studiu istorico-etnografic comparativ*, București, Edițiunea Academiei Române, 1889, p. 19.

¹⁴³ <f.a.>, *Credințe religioase la români*, în „Contemporanul. Revistă științifică și literară”, 04, nr. 14, 1885, p. 535.

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if you don't listen to me/you'll be in a big trouble¹⁴⁴/I will get your woman, and with the mill spindle/ I shall sting her and/I shall take out her eyes <s.n.AB>/And you'll be in trouble again"¹⁴⁵.

Another para-graffiti category filled with magical-religious meanings is the one of soft perforations and hollows. Christian and Marie-Laure Montenat who copied the drawings made with the help of soft perforations in shape of beads, have seen them as the symbol of the prayers dead or of the *neuvaines* and the *dizaines* prayers¹⁴⁶. The last one are explained as the result of a "way of artistic expression", but we should also consider the possibility of being a symbol of the prayers, the hole meaning the finger who passed away from one bead to another¹⁴⁷. At the same time, the square made of nine holes shared out in three lines each with three holes is a pre-Christian sign¹⁴⁸.

Finally, the last para-graffiti category is given by the numerous horseshoes and nails slied into the churches' walls. The horseshoes are often met and "they are generally face the opening downwards and seldom with the opening upwards. (cf. La Villers-Vicomte, Oise)"¹⁴⁹. Sticking the horseshoe upon the wall was a sign of asking the Divinity to help a person¹⁵⁰. Given the fact that these horseshoes are found more on the churches' walls with the name of Saint Martin, who was a great traveler and also a great healer¹⁵¹, the doctor Fournée¹⁵² and Léon

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¹⁴⁵ Tache Papahagi, *Din folklorul romanic si cel latin. Studiu comparat*, București, Tip<ografia> „România Nouă”, 1923, p. 158.

¹⁴⁶ Christian Montenat, Marie-Laure Guiho-Montenat, *Prières des murs. Graffiti anciens XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles aux murs extérieurs des églises. Picardie, Normandie, Ile-de-France*, 2003, Beauvais, GEMOB, p. 203, apud Jean-Mary Couderc, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

¹⁴⁷ Jean-Mary Couderc, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 103.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 103-104.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 104.

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

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Coutil¹⁵³ gave these graffiti the meaning of *ex-voto* for horse healing or as a night thanks because he had an easy trip. However, the horseshoes from the churches of Saint Eloi, the blacksmith's protector, could form the famous "Eloi's bouquet" expressing a prayer or a desire. That is way, in the church from Goleville, people put a horseshoe on the door to help heal fever. Also, sticking a horseshoes upon a farm's door, that family was kept out of storms and when it was put on a churches' door, peoples were asking for salvation, protection or blessings¹⁵⁴.

Instead, the nails pushed in the churches' walls, were called "the piety nails", the sign of the prayers, that were meant to stop the evil. A few churches from Essone or Eure have been specially chosen for the nail sticking because their rocks were softer. On the other hand, under the porch of Perriers-la-Campagne Church, where the silex rows have no nails, excepting the plaster, we can see some old nails (named "forgés"), a ribbon or a fragment of bed linen belonging to an ill person (incapable of walking). So, we may observe that the nails were disposed in straight line or in cross exactly prepared for soft perforation. In Tourainne, we can notice little roots or trunks' fragments in which people would stick the nails and say a prayer after they made a little donation¹⁵⁵.

In conclusion, the graffiti made on the churches' walls are not only the expression of the "anonymous voices of pilgrims, church singers, nobles, monks, military people who just wanted to leave a trace of their passing by"¹⁵⁶. They had an important magical-religious meaning inherited by the Christian Europe from the pagan civilization. Regardless that they are Christian symbols,

¹⁵² Fournée, dr. J., *Le culte populaire des saints en Normandie. Etude générale*, Soc. paris. D'Histoire et d'Archéologie normandes, 1973 <fără pg-nAB>, apud Jean-Mary Couderc, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹⁵³ Coutil, Léon, *Marques de pèlerins sur les églises de l'Eure*, Bull.Soc. Libre de l'Eure, 1917, p. 224-225, apud Jean-Mary Couderc, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹⁵⁴ Jean-Mary Couderc, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁶ Miguel Ibáñez Rodríguez, Teodoro Lejarrága Nieto, *Los grafitos del Monasterio de San Millán de Suso*, Gobierno de La Rioja, 1998, p. 9.

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memorial prayers or pagan signs made on the wall of a church, they are filled with magic or religious demands and desires; they are addressed to a sacred wall either to share its sanctity or obtain the result, either because the wall is the big instrument of the congregation where everybody can express themselves. All these graffiti and para-graffiti have been determined the sacred character of the churches' walls on which they were written. Having at hand all these signs (writing, drawing, scratching, sandstone dust extractions for potions, small perforations and grooves, horseshoes and nails stickled into the churches' walls) their authors would establish a direct relation with the divinity and so the scratching of the churches walls was not seen as a sin even if it came in contrast with the ideas of Christians.

In conclusion, the magical-religious meaning of the para-graffiti made to the churches' walls continues today as well in the Christian Europe, proving the survival of the popular believes in a post- modern world.

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