

# Reflections on Christian Magic

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Cambose, Astrid. 2023. "Reflections on Christian Magic". *Martor* 28: 138-146.  
[DOI: 10.57225/martor.2023.28.09]

## ABSTRACT

This article tackles the much-disputed borderline between religion and magic, focusing on a sensitive subject that is still under debate: the Christian magic. The Christian doctrine states its irreconcilable opposition to magic, but in a practical perspective the line of separation between the two is quite blurred. The paper argues that many Christian priests and most of the Christian believers can be seen as practitioners of magic, like shamans, clairvoyants, or witches in more marginal cults. These practitioners form a very large community with shared practices of confronting evil. They interrelate on the grounds of timeless common magic representations. The paper suggests that in all religions, and despite the possible prescriptions of the religious authorities, the commoners produce and make use of their own version of that specific religion. Scholars call this version a popular, lay, or vernacular religion. The present article explores the cultural and social meaning of these terms. In the case of vernacular Christianity, should the interpretation focus on *Christianity*, or on the too vaguely defined term *vernacular*? And, in the latter case, is it sure that some vernacular features could still be called Christian? The present article proposes an analysis of field data separated from the usual religious frame of interpretation in order to reach a possibly different understanding of how popular religion actually works on a daily basis. Can popular practice transform any given religion into some sort of magic bearing the appearance and using the canonical religious symbols? The paper discusses contemporary examples based on the fieldwork I have conducted in villages with predominantly Orthodox Christian population and in villages with Roman Catholic population in the region of Moldavia, Romania, between 2015 and 2021. The data reflects the following practices: a) Fasting as a magic tool; b) Consecration of different substances and objects in order to sustain magic practices; and c) Special forms of religious service, such as "black liturgy" or "barefoot liturgy," "cutting morsels," priests' curses, and priests' help with believers' oath-making. All these rituals have a religious appearance and at the same time they illustrate magic at work.

## KEYWORDS

Magic; Orthodox/Eastern Christianity; fasting; black liturgy; cutting morsels; religious oaths.



## Introduction

Magic is the basic cell circulating throughout all the largely practiced religions and religious denominations. Magic is included in all popular beliefs, and in Russia it is sometimes referred to as the Old Belief.<sup>1</sup> It has been said that religion is a functional system, rather than a mere doctrinal corpus. Without any (overt or hidden) magic

embedded in it, no religious ideology would be capable to reach the average man. Regardless of the name or specificity of the religion and despite of whatever ban the religious authorities may pose on the popular practices, people use popular practices to produce and make intense use of their own versions of a religion. Researchers called such version a popular, lay, or vernacular religion. A necessary disclaimer at this point: this article is not an introduction that opens the topic and outlines its major

arguments, but rather reports and analyses field research looking for deeper information. Therefore, the article addresses readers with a fair amount of knowledge of the subject matter.

I examine vernacular Christianity first. This is a conceptual compound, but it is unclear whether the cultural interpretation of the phenomena studied should fall on *Christianity* or on the too vaguely described *vernacular*? In case we focus on the term *vernacular*, when can vernacular features actually be called Christian? Giving such a comprehensive designation as “vernacular religion” to a complex phenomenon seems to solve the matter. But is it really solved? Sometimes we fall too much for terms and disregard the facts. “Going beyond the binary model of paganism and Orthodoxy” (Worobec 1994, 14), the scientific community has generally considered Christianity a syncretic compound of pagan and Christian beliefs and practices. But the compound would imply synergetic action of the two. Is this really the case? Jean Delumeau (2010) stated that the European masses were never fully converted to Christianity.<sup>2</sup> An analysis of field data separated from the usual religious frame of interpretation may reach a surprising understanding of how popular religion works on a daily basis. In practice, the vernacular aspect may sometimes overcome the religious one to a degree to which it may no longer be considered Christian. Popular practice can transform religion into a sort of magic bearing the appearance and using the symbols of the canonical organisation.

Speaking about condemnable versus assimilated and institutionalised magic, Valerie Flint (1991) describes ancient Christian magician-priests who used to conduct “sanctified magical activities,” made prophecies, and identified thieves by divination. Early Christian magic as described in the New Testament has been thoroughly studied by Robert Conner (2014), who analysed practices such as curses, exorcisms, magical healings, and invoking ghosts and angels for protection. Marvin W. Meyer (1990) published a collection of ancient Coptic texts documenting rituals, healings, incantations, spells of protection, and curses

used in early Christianity. Gnosticism has generally been assimilated to a form of early Christian magic (Meyer 1990). David Collins (2015) stressed the idea that in Antiquity the Greeks and Romans educated in their official cults could only view Christian practices as magic ones, and reciprocally, the ancient Christian writers deemed demonic practices as magic and accused Greeks and Romans of sorcery. Witchcraft has been reconsidered during the 1950s in England. Today witchcraft is, as Willem de Blécourt and Owen Davies have suggestively put it, “a modern DIY religion” (de Blécourt and Davies 2020).

Many Christian practices have an overt or covert magic resort. Magic is the shortcut that our mind spontaneously produces to make sense of whatever seems mysterious, challenging, frightening, difficult to control, or uneasy to live with. Psychologically, it is considered as the mightiest form of empowering the individual. A whole body of literature argues that among Christian believers, only true mystics and most of the experts in theology escape the natural tendency to translate dogma into magic knowledge and practice. This prompts to ask ourselves how much Orthodoxy is really at work within the Orthodox world. A full set of context-sensitive interpretations would be necessary to answer this question. In Malinowski’s terms, are people trying to (magically) manipulate, or rather to (religiously) supplicate the spiritual forces they summon? This distinction can be made, for example, within the Christian Church and the century-old trade based on its acceptance of miracle narratives about holy water, holy oil, myrrh, pieces of saints’ clothing, and sacred dirt from the graves of holy men, as well as pilgrimages, visionary dreams reported by pilgrims who fell asleep inside churches, and pilgrims’ healings. The claim to consider these items miraculous is not entirely sustainable, because, as the paper argues, the beneficiaries are directly responsible for the results they get by making use of these elements, while self-induced, semi-controlled phenomena are no longer miracles, and an unbiased look would admit they come close to magic deeds.





The antagonism between the Christian tenets and the general Christian beliefs and practices is instructive. Simple Christians address both magic and religious instruments to pursue their needs. In Romania, the coexistence of magic and religious elements is easy to spot during fieldwork when informants start to speak about their life stories. In search for help, they would alternatively visit priests, secluded Christian monks, and famous magicians and healers. In such cases, the concept of *other* does not apply. Religion and magic do not function as opposites, but they intertwine in real life situations. We must underline the fact that one and the same beneficiary can use these apparently opposite means to achieve his or her goal. Many of those who deeply trust in Christian agents do also trust the spiritual power of any other agent of the supernatural. Supernatural world has fewer fences than it has passages and crossroads. In a situation of crisis, if the Christian believers we refer to can get in touch with a famous monk, they would visit him first. Then, they would go alternatively to their local priest and to other priests from the neighbouring towns and villages. If, on the road they hear of some famous witch or healer, they follow that track, too. What does this prove? In my opinion, the situation reflects the need for efficacy and the lack of interest to differentiate between sources of power. The equal treatment people tend to give to whoever can effectively help them during hard times derives from psychology. Many people do so. They define themselves Christians (usually Orthodox or Catholic). They are ordinary believers. When in need, anyone may seek for occult help, even if in theory they would not approve such practices.



## Methodology

My hypothesis is that many Christian clergymen and most of the Christian believers occasionally fall into the category of “other practitioners” of magic, aside from professionals such

as shamans, clairvoyants, or witches. We can include them in the broad category of practitioners of magic inasmuch as they interact on the grounds of timeless common magic representations. Some contemporary examples based on field observation I have conducted in Romania, in Moldavian Orthodox and Catholic villages between 2015 and 2021 may support this explanatory approach: a) fasting as a magic tool; b) consecration of different substances and objects (salt, eggs, flour, medals, crosses, icons) in order to sustain magic practices; and c) some special forms of religious service (“black liturgy” or “barefoot liturgy,” “cutting morsels,” priests’ curses, and priests’ help with believers’ oath-making). I will refer here mainly, though not exclusively, to the magic Christian practices aimed at producing beneficial effects.



## Fasting

Both Orthodox and Catholic Christians strongly believe in the power conferred by fasting. Fasting permits the access to a non-profane state. It is believed that the person who observes a period of strict fasting will have his/her wish granted. There are many traditional ways to fast in Romanian culture. The church recommends a kind of intermittent fasting, observed on Wednesdays and Fridays. Many people fast on Wednesdays and Fridays and some fast on Mondays too, for a supplementary spiritual strength. Apart from these weekly fasting days, there are four longer fasting periods during the liturgical year, two of them forty days long. According to their religion, believers eat exclusively lacto-vegetarian or vegetarian food while fasting. A person who has fasted correctly for 40 days in a row either during the official fasting intervals, or at any other time, gains a spiritual state of purity which allows him/her to have the ritual of “cutting morsels” [*scoate pârțicele*]<sup>3</sup> done in his/her name in the church. A deadly efficacy is ascribed to this ritual. For example, one of my informants, a poor woman

whose neighbour had stolen a saw from her backyard, made him return the object secretly only after threatening to appeal to morsels cutting. She did not do it, but her reputation of a very religious woman probably made her neighbour fear she would have supernatural powers if she followed the ritual.

If you have certain problems, God helps you out [after fasting]. For instance, somebody harmed me. That day, I don't eat anything at all, I don't feed the hens, or any animal I have, from that evening till the next evening. I do not eat anything, nor do my children, nor any living thing by my house, all for the person who wronged me. But the old priest said it's a sin to do so. (...) "I am going to that church for morsels cutting" said I, "but I was not really going, just speakin." Like scaring the wolf with the skin of the sheep, you know... Said I: "Nay, two more days to go till forty, and I shall see the one who did it leaving in a coffin!" ... He brought my saw back, he put it in the same place. (Eugenia Chiriac, Țibănești, Iași, recordings A.C., 2015; translation by the author)<sup>4</sup>

Éva Pócs discovered that this type of fasting for punishing a wrongdoer is currently practiced in a few Transylvanian villages.

The fast "vowed for evil" functions the same way as cursing. It can only make someone sick if he or she "deserved it," if he or she had "done something bad earlier." If it is directed towards an innocent person, it will eventually harm the fasting person's family instead. (Pócs 2020, 179)

Black fasting is considered another mighty tool. Black fasting varies from one to three days during which the believer does not eat and sometimes does not even drink water.

If you fast and make a wish, or you want to succeed in something, don't eat anything for three days, don't even drink water. Like so! You don't even drink water! I have fasted on Friday all day long, on Saturday all day, and

on Sunday. [I've] been fasting for these three days. Even when I came home from the church [on Sunday afternoon] I didn't drink any drop; not even then. Only in the evening, after sunset, I had a little bit of water. Do you have any idea how my throat was sizzling? As a pan sizzles on fire without water! But God fulfilled me! (Alixăndrina Irimescu, Țibănești, Iași, recordings A.C., 2015)<sup>5</sup>

Another practice is called "Christ's fasting" (RO: *postul lui Hristos*) and requires black fasting for one day for seven consecutive weeks (Monday in the first week, Tuesday in the second week, and so on), so that at the end of this practice the believer would have lived one symbolic week without consuming any food at all. Numerous other fasting days are kept throughout the year for health, for protection of the household, or for good harvests. Fasting as a magical tool intended to reach specific everyday results, rather than as a mystic *imitatio Christi*, is very much at work to this day in Romanian traditional lifestyle.



### Consecration of various objects

Consecration of different substances and objects, such as, salt, eggs, flour, medals, crosses, and icons to sustain magic practices is common in many Christian denominations. This kind of consecration is an extension of the ritual consecration of the holy bread and wine within the Eucharist ritual. Orthodox Christians tend to consecrate a lot of ordinary objects, including their houses and cars. The priest blesses these objects as he would do in the case of a new church. The prayer books mention various prayers to bless churches, houses, cars, crosses, and icons in consecrated religious rituals. My anthropological interpretation is that blessing objects represents a social behaviour which suggests a sort of contagious magic, given the use of holy water and basil for splashing the consecrated object. I documented consecration



in villages with a predominantly Orthodox Christian population and in villages with a predominantly Roman Catholic population. My focus is on the ordinary household stuff (food and small objects) consecrated to be later used in magical rituals, usually by the lady of the house.

Bibliomancy seems to be used as well in the process of shaping the future according to the believer's wishes.

Oil or sugar is taken to the priest, who confers a blessing upon it. By this means it becomes a kind of sacrament, which helps when the family uses it to cook food for the sick person. The opening of the Bible "for luck or for health" and the priest's prescription of magical fasting 'for good purposes' also appear in this context. (...) The most characteristic feature of *religious witchcraft* in Csík is the integration into the system of the holy person's ordeal and rites conferring blessing and curse. Here *the system of popular witchcraft has been integrated into an actual religious system run by priests.* (Pócs 2020, 182; my italics, A.C.)

In a village I conducted research in 2020,<sup>6</sup> a fervent believer, and mother of a Franciscan priest, told me she had been using consecrated medals, salt, flour, or eggs for decades to make her husband quit drinking.

Once I asked him, I said "Choose, it's either the family – by that time, I already had three or four children and I was pregnant with the next one – either the family, or the bottle!" And what do you think he answered? "The firewater!" I can't forget him saying it. He chose the spirits! (...) I would also go to Roman and have salt, flour, and medals consecrated for him – I would undo the seam of his trousers and sew little medals with the Holy Virgin into it. I'd do that for him to quit drinking. If he took food at work, I would add consecrated salt... and the boiled eggs were consecrated too... It was not him to be blamed, it was the liquor! (X3, recordings A.C., 2020)<sup>7</sup>

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## Taking an oath

To help believers get rid of heavy drinking, smoking, stealing, gambling, committing adultery, cursing, or other major trespasses, some Orthodox priests in the northern part of Romania (Suceava, Botoşani, and Maramureş Counties) conduct a particular religious service that I described in detail elsewhere (Cambose 2021). The priest accepts the sinners' confessions and asks them to willingly swear on the Bible that they will abstain from falling into temptation for a given period, for instance from Lent to Christmas, for a number of years, or even for their whole life. The believer who takes the oath is called *sworn in* [*jurat*]. In order to be freed from the oath, they must go back to the same priest and ask him to undo the oath. However, some priests do not accept to untie a *sworn in*. A broken oath leads to grievous effects for the sinner, and even to his death, as some research participants confirmed. The death of the sinner soon after breaking his or her oath is considered a divine punishment in Vama (Suceava County). In an interview in 2020, a woman told me the case of a *jurat* who broke his oath and even passed by the priest's house and shouted: "Don't give a shit, father, about my swearing!" [*Un cîcat, părinti, di vorba me!*]. The woman who told me this story heard this because she lived just across the street from the priest's house. A few hours later, the *jurat* assaulted a woman. The woman pushed him back. The *jurat* stumbled, fell to the ground, injured his head, and died on the spot. For the research participant, the oath-breaking was the obvious cause of death.

Abundant information about oath-taking to give up vicious habits can be found in online media. A priest from the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church in Câmpulung Moldovenesc told me that about fifteen in every one hundred parish members *swear in*. He argues that in Bucovina region *swearing in* is an ordinary practice, as the church has to help those who ask for redemption and priests cannot refuse to ask



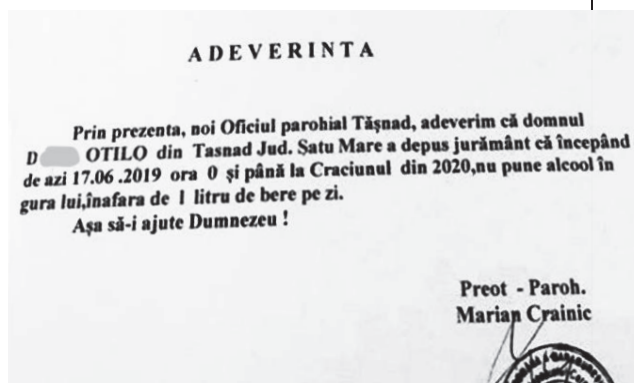
God witness the salvation of a soul. The priest explained that male workers often ask to take the oath to quit drinking alcohol or to drink with moderation. For example, people in the village consider that half a litter of wine, or two bottles of beer, or 100 ml of strong alcohol per day is moderate drinking. The beneficiaries of the ritual receive written certificates from the priest who accepts to swear them in.<sup>8</sup> Commenting on the certificate in the photograph below, one of the beneficiaries of the ritual pointed out that many employers would not hire workers who do not possess the *sworn in* certificate.<sup>9</sup>

In September 2020, I interviewed two retired priests from Câmpulung Moldovenesc who famously practice the swearing on the Bible ritual. Though they are aware<sup>10</sup> that the “practice” is not a canonical Christian one, they feel reassured that many of the “ill” persons got rid of their “illness” after swearing in. “I have cured many people in this way,” concluded one<sup>11</sup> of the two priests.

If someone secretly committed a very bad deed, such as a grave injustice or a serious abuse, the victim who knows the truth but cannot prove it may order a black liturgy, also known as barefoot liturgy (the priest wears his simplest attire, the black one, and no shoes during the service). Éva Pócs (2020) documented this ritual in some Hungarian villages from the Ciuc region and considers it, “a special form of witchcraft that is practised, to my knowledge, only amongst Hungarians living in Transylvania” (174); “The Mass has, according to the narratives, a distinctly black Mass-like variant, which is held at night and considered particularly evil in its effect – it causes death” (179).

Reportedly, only the Orthodox Christian priests conduct such masses, and the researcher underlined “the clearly more populist attitude of Orthodox priests: their greater readiness to cater to the concrete, daily magical needs of the people, to employ magical methods based on face-to-face relationships.” (Pócs 2020, 187)

Black liturgy existed at least in the past century in Transylvania, as the cited Hungarian researcher proved, and it still exists in Moldavia, at least in the Roman Catholic villages on



The Sworn in Certificate. Image published on: <https://playtech.ro/stiri/juramantul-betivului-dintre-un-barbat-si-un-preot-din-satu-mare-nu-pune-alcool-in-gura-lui-in-afara-de-un-litru-de-bere-pe-zi-46848> (accessed on 12 December 2022).

Siret River valley, where I have documented it in 2020-2021. All the research participants confirmed that it is the Roman Catholic priest who conducts black masses, while the Orthodox Christian equivalent is the *cutting morsels* ritual. A 91-year-old Roman Catholic woman used a story to explain what a black liturgy is. When the former landowners regained legal possession of their lands that had been confiscated by the communist regime, some had hard times with their neighbours who did not accept the restitution of land. People who resisted the restitution of agricultural land were those who had been working it during communist times. A priest in Rotunda village (Neamț County) had such an experience. A man (a former communist) who had previously taken the priest's land refused to recognise him as the new legal landowner and used his political authority to ask the transfer of the priest to another parish in a remote village, away from the disputed piece of land. The priest then conducted a barefoot liturgy. The subject of the black liturgy fell ill, lost his speech, and passed away soon. The abusive man, who had retained a property that was not rightfully his, was the godson of the old lady, which gives authenticity to the story.

RL: What did the priest do? He prayed, he fasted, and he made a barefoot liturgy. At night the communist, my godson, fell ill, and in a short time lost speech. They took him to





the hospital in Iași and there he died.

AC: What is a barefoot liturgy like?

RL: He prays, he fasts, he gets barefoot. Like Christ on the cross. He fasts without any food or water. Black fasting! This is the black liturgy. The priest is dressed in black. (RL, recordings A.C., 2020)<sup>12</sup>

In another villager, a young woman who was involved in the activities of the local church, offered details regarding the black liturgy, and insisted this practice is no longer in use. Her words are supported by an older neighbour.

Black Mass existed before, but now it is no longer used. The priest wore a black attire over the white one (this garment is called “the white”). The white was worn over the reverend attire. The last attire may have different colours, representing the feast or the liturgical period. Thus, during the liturgical year the priest wears green; when a martyr is celebrated, he wears red; at Easter, he wears white. There was the black attire, too, in the past. Well, as soon as the priest got out of the holy shrine in black everybody knew he performed a black liturgy. (...) People got very scared. But I have not seen one myself, I have only heard about such masses. It was a regular liturgy, except for the black attire. (IF, recordings A.C., 2020)<sup>13</sup>

Black liturgy was similar to the Orthodox cutting morsels. (...) We know from our elders that it is a big sin to ask for one, it falls on the wrongdoer, but it also falls on yourself and on your family too, 'cause you are not allowed to kill people. You are not allowed! God gives us life and only He may take it. So, we shouldn't play with such things. (EA, recordings A.C., 2020)<sup>14</sup>



## Conclusion

The starting point of my analysis is my own ethnographic fieldwork conducted between 2015 and 2021 in the region of Moldavia, Romania. The research was fuelled by pieces and bits of information that continued to flow as soon as I started to ask local people about their life stories, including dealing with life struggles and crises. Otherwise, people used to assert their “customs” were purely Christian. Desperate situations are said to call for desperate means. In many cases, desperate situations reveal one's deepest beliefs. I separated the data coming from peoples' existential crises from data concerning their ordinary life. Specifically, I noticed a gap between their overt religious education and their beliefs at work when trying to solve problems. It can be said that a “light” behaviour, polished and conscious to a high degree, gives in and is replaced by a “hard” behaviour when a harmful situation occurs. Magic seems to emerge as the rescue attitude in the latter case. Severe fasting, consecration of different substances and objects for secret use, “black liturgy” or “barefoot liturgy,” “cutting morsels,” priests' curses, and priests' help with oath-taking are practices and rituals that, in my opinion, make magic use of Christian religious props.

Several conclusions may be drawn from the examples presented in this article. Magic, healing, and divination practices make priests and monks act like “Christian magicians.” As the dichotomy magic–religion becomes more and more obsolete (as a clear-cut distinction), new integrative explanations of the human behaviour emerge. Ethnographic research in Romania offers multiple occasions to spot the magic-religious complex at work.



## NOTES

1. See, for instance, Crummey (1993) and Worobec (2007). The faith in miraculous healings could not be suppressed by the Russian Orthodox Church's sceptical examination. On the contrary, "the scrutiny of popular practices with regard to miracles had the unintended and undesirable consequence by the early nineteenth century of turning the faithful away from the Orthodox Church and into the hands of Old Believers and sectarians. In response, the Holy Synod relaxed its skepticism towards miracles" (Worobec 2007, 23).

2. "The deep Christianization of the masses occurred much more slowly than the establishment of politico-religious power in past Christian eras and *ultimately was never completed*" (Delumeau 2010, 443, 444; italics by A.C.).

3. The small morsels (RO: *miride*, *părțicele*) representing the living and the dead are cut by the priest from the sixth and the seventh pieces of holy bread, during the Orthodox liturgy, after the bigger morsels representing the Virgin Mary and the ranks of the celestial hierarchy are cut. All the morsels are put on the holy disks, surrounding the Lamb (sacramental bread). Sometimes, ordinary believers make special offerings to the church and act as side "commentators" of the ritual. See Archimandrite Mihail Daniliuc, *De ce nu este bine să luăm „părțicele” acasă?* [Why it is not right to take "morsels" home?], available from <https://doxologia.ro/de-ce-nu-este-bine-sa-luam-particele-acasa>, accessed on 5 May 2023].

4. "Dac-ai anumiti necazuri, Dumnezeu ti scapă di țeli. Di egzemplu, șineva nî-o făcut ȝn rău; ieu în zîua șeța nu dau mîncari niși la păsări, niși la rîca, cum îi sara și pîn-al doilea sarî. Și nu mînînc niși ieu, niși copkiiî nîi din casî, nîmînea, pentru persoana respectivî cari nî-o făcut rău. Da' pîrintili șel bătrîn o zîs cî-i mari pacat. [...] 'Mă duc sî scot părțîșeli la bisărica cutari!' Da' nu scotem - da' zîșem. Am pîțit ca șela: 'Spării lupu cu k'elea oiî... Zîc: 'Iaca, mai am vo douî zîli, s-împinești patruzăși di zîli, ăl vād ieu pi-șela cî pleacî cu kișoarili-nainti!' ...L-o adus, l-o pus tot în locu șela" (Eugenia Chiriac, Țibănești, Iași, interviewed by A.C., 2015).

5. "Și dacî postești, vrei sî-ț pui șevă, sî reușăști, nu mînînși trii zîli nimic, niși apî nu bei. Așa. Niși apî sî nu bei! Am țnut viniria tătî zîua, sîmbîta tătî zîua și duminica tătî zîua. Trii zîli, - aiesti, o fost postu. Cînd am vinit di la bisărică, niși c-am băut, niși atunși. Sara, cîn o-asfințit soarili, am băut un pic di apî. Știț cu sfrîie gîtu? Cum sfrîi cratița pi foc cî n-ari apî! [...] Da' Dumnezău m-o-mplinit!" (Alexandrina Irimescu, Țibănești, Iași, interviewed by A.C., 2015).

6. My informant asked for anonymity. I anonymised both her name and the name of her village because she is well-known in the village and she fears her family and fellow villagers would otherwise identify her. Identifying her would affect her social status.

7. "I-am pus odatî o-trebarî, zîc: 'Aleği-ț, or familia - c-avem trii-patru copkii, mi sî parî cî țeram gravidî și cu șellantu -, or familia, or băutura!' Și șî crediț cî nî-o răspons? 'Rakiu!' Nu pot sî-l uit. Rakiu l-o alies! [...] Mă dușem și la Roman, îi sfințam sarî, fainî, medalii - fi punem medăluț la pantaloni, în batî, discusăm oleacî - cu Maica Domnului. Îi punem, ca să sî-ntoarć. Dacî lua mîncari di-acasi, fi sfințam și-l punem în mîncari sarî... și ouli li sfințam... Nu țera țel vinovat, țera băutura!" (X3, interviewed by A.C., 2020).

8. <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-arhiva-1213603-betivii-dezlegare-dumnezeu.htm>, accessed on 12 December 2021.

9. "De ce nu vorbiti despre faptul ca patronii cer aceasta adeverinta (care-i pe gratis) pentru ai angaja [pe] niste oameni!?!? Daca nu ii duci aceasta adeverinta, nu te angajeaza. Despre faptul

patronilor de ce nu vorbiti???? Oare face bine? Nu e o discriminare cumva?" ["Why do you not talk about the employees that ask this (free) certificate to hire people!?!? If you do not give them this certifice, they would not hire you. Why do you not talk about these employees???? Is this right!?!? Isn't it discriminating?"] (<https://playtech.ro/stiri/juramantul-betivului-dintre-un-barbat-si-un-preot-din-satu-mare-nu-pune-alcool-in-gura-lui-in-afara-de-un-litru-de-bere-pe-zi-46848>, comment posted on 29 September 2019; original orthography).

10. "In the religious observance, we do not have such thing as oath-taking. In our theological or liturgical books we do not have a prayer for drunkards or a prayer for the smokers" [RO: "În rînduiala Bisericii nu avem așa ceva. În cărțile de teologie, sau de slujbă, nu avem rugăciunea bețivului sau a fumatului"] (pr. Nicolae Moroșan, Vama, Suceava County, interviewed by A.C., 2 September 2020).

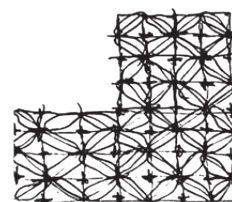
"First of all, oath taking is something uncanonical. (...) It is even written there, in the Scripture, 'Do not swear either on the sky or on the earth'. (...) Some people considered the oath a bond they took upon themselves - 'I swear I won't drink alcohol any longer.'" [RO: "În primul rînd, jurămîntul este ceva necanonic. (...) Și chiar zice acolo, la Evanghelie, 'Nu vă jurăți nici pe cer, nici pe pămînt.' (...) Unii au luat jurămîntul ca pe un legămînt asumat - 'îmi asum așa, un legămînt, că n-am să mai beau.'"] (pr. Nicolae Cojocar, Câmpulung Moldovenesc, Suceava County, interviewed by A.C., 3 September 2020).

11. Pr. Nicolae Moroșan, Vama, Suceava County, interviewed by A.C., 2 September 2020.

12. "RL: Și-o făcut pîrintili? S-o rugat, o postit, o făcut leturghîi disculfi. Noaptea, l-o pîlit [pe comunist] o boală, s-o-mbolnăvit finu, n-o durat mult, i-o luat glasu. L-o dus la Iaș, acol-o murit. [A.C.: Cum este liturghia disculță?] Sî roagî, postești, sî discalți. Ca cum o fost Isus pi cruși. Postești, nu be apî, niși mîncari. Post negru! Asta-i slujba neagrî;-i îmbrăcat în negru." (RL, interviewed by A.C., 2020).

13. "IF: Era înainte slujbă neagră, dar acum s-o scos, nu mai esti. Pisti „alba" (chiar „alba" sî numești) sî punea un veșmînt negru. Alba s-îmbracă pisti reverendă. Ultimiu veșmînt esti di diferiti culori cari reprezintă sărbătoarea sau perioada: pisti an, preotu s-îmbracă în verdi; dacă sărbătorim un martir, în roșu; la Paști, în alb. Înainti, în schimb, era și haina neagră. Ei, di cînd ieșea preotu în negru la altar sî știa cî facî o slujbă neagră. (...) Sî speria lumea cînd vedea. Dar eu n-am prins așa ceva, am auzit. Era slujba normală, doar cî s-îmbrăca în negru." (IF, interviewed by A.C., September 2020).

14. "EA1: Liturghija neagrî-i cum iera la ortodocș 'părțîșelî.' (...) Noi din bătrîni știm cî-i un păcat marî, chicî și pi ăla, dar chicî și pi tini și pi familia ta, cî n-ai voi sî omori omu. N-ai voi, viața-i datî di Dumnezeu și tot El ț-o ie. Deși nu ni jucăm cu astea." (EA1, interviewed by A.C., September 2020).





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