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Authors	Șincan, Anca
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University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

52.
Bishop Evloghie and His Prayer Beads

Anca Maria Șincan

Ever since the death and subsequent exhumation of the remains of Old Calendarist Romanian Orthodox Bishop Evloghie Oța (see entries 3 and 10) by the Romanian secret police, members of his Church have been searching for his remains. In February 1979 the Old Calendarist Orthodox Bishop Evloghie Oța died and was buried in a grave under the altar of his clandestine church on Televiziunii Street. In 1983 the secret police in a sweep-up operation meant to destroy the underground Old Calendarist community, arrested the monks and tore down the church and the monastic complex. In the process they also exhumed the body of the bishop that was buried underneath the altar of the church. The believers and monks were forbidden to return to the site.

After several stories from the bishop's file were uploaded on the Hidden Galleries Digital Archive, the community contacted the project. From this point on, I was able to gather several descriptions of Bishop Evloghie Oța's interment in his clandestine monastery from surviving witnesses. My interviewees described him as sitting on the bishop's throne, dressed in episcopal vestments, holding the Holy Scripture and the prayer beads. As I continued my ethnographic research with Old Calendarist online communities and two monasteries in Bucharest and Sibiu, photographs matching this description started to come to light. I first came across the photograph featured here on a Facebook group called *Imagini de Arhivă ale Bisericii Ortodoxe de Stil Vechi* (Archival images of the Old Calendarist Orthodox Church) where it had been posted by Sebastian Hriscu, who had tagged the image with the description, "picture found in my grandmother's archive." Discussions with Sebastian revealed that this picture of the bishop before he was interred by his monastic brothers inside the underground church in Televiziunii Street in February 1979 had circulated widely in Old Calendarist communities throughout the country after the bishop's death. The picture was not included in Oța's secret police file. Nevertheless, it fitted perfectly the description that comes through from the file documents and from the reports of secret police informants. I later acquired two other scanned copies of the same image from the monks at the Monastery *Adormirea Maicii Domnului* (Dormition of the Mother of God) in Bucharest, where Bishop Evloghie Oța was initially buried.

Today, the whereabouts of the body of the bishop remains unknown. However, in the photograph of Bishop Evloghie Oța we can see that he is holding a string of prayer beads, called *metanii*. These beads found their way into the possession of Bishop Flavian Bârgăoanu, who lives in what is now a thriving Old Calendarist Orthodox monastery in Televiziunii Street. In an interview from April 2019, he explained how the beads had been buried with Bishop Evloghie Oța and were then lost when the bishop was exhumed and his body and everything he was buried with were taken away by the secret police. A few months after the fall of the communist regime in Romania in December 1989, when he and several monastic brothers returned to Televiziunii Street, he received an unexpected visit from a man who had helped the secret police dig up of the body of Bishop Evloghie Oța. He brought with him the prayer beads and told Bishop Flavian that they had been on the body and he had taken them away and that so many bad things had happened to him subsequently that he now wished to return them to the monastery.





Sources

Bishop Flavian loaned Evloghie Oța's religious beads for the project's exhibition *Hidden Galleries: Clandestine Religion in the Secret Police Archives* at the Museum of Art in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, where they were displayed next to the picture of the body of the bishop before his internment. © Hidden Galleries project. Photo by Roland Vaczi.

The description of the burial of Bishop Evloghie Oța and the details of his interment can be found in the case file from National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității-CNSAS), I161963, vol. 1.

Digital Archive entry

http://hiddengalleries.eu/digitalarchive/s/en/item/402