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UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Visual Media and the Reconfiguration of Divinity in Moldovan Radical Religion*

Abstract

This paper explores the power of the visual to contest and subvert dominant religious beliefs and doctrines. Through an exploration of Inochentism, and its later off-shoot Archangelism, 'home-grown' religious movements in twentieth and twenty first century Moldova, I trace the power of visual media, when combined with folk narratives, prophesy and visionary literature, to contest state and church authority, embody the sacred and transform belief. The two movements discussed, driven underground by nationalist and communist regimes in Romania and Soviet Moldavia, deployed visual media in the form of vernacular icons, photographs and photomontages, as powerful tools for critique and as a means of mobilizing belief during periods of intense persecution by the state. Based on a series of interviews with members of these movements between 2011 and 2014, on secret police archival sources and on Soviet propaganda publications, I examine how, under the pressure of state atheist ideology and political oppression, relations between divine and human, this world and the next, and the material and immaterial were re-imagined, re-presented and embodied by Moldovan village people.

Keywords: Inochentism, Archangelism, Russian Orthodoxy, icons, photomontage, Moldova, Romania

Short Biography:

James A. Kapaló is Lecturer in the Study of Religions at University College Cork, Ireland and co-director of the *Marginalised and Endangered Worldviews Study Centre* (MEWSC). His main research interests include ethno-religious minorities and minority religions in Eastern Europe, Orthodox Christianity in the contemporary world and folk healing and charming practices. He is the author of *Text, Context and Performance: Gagauz Folk Religion in Discourse and Practice* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) and *Inochentism and Russian Orthodoxy: Narratives of Resistance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

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1. Introduction

In twentieth century Moldova, religious movements arose that were led by men and women considered the physical embodiment or incarnation of divine, angelic and saintly persons. The corporeal 'living' manifestations of Christ, the Holy Spirit, Mary, the Archangel Michael, the Prophet Elijah and John the Baptist walking the Moldovan countryside represented 'embodied' acts of resistance to the totalitarian political regimes and hegemonic religious institutions of the time that sought total control of the religious field and of spiritual life. Visual media, in the form of vernacular icons, photographs and photomontages, played a central role in contesting dominant religious beliefs and doctrines and reimagining and reconfiguring divine-human relations.

The homes of members of the movements discussed in this chapter are often full of icons, and in this they resemble the homes of their devout Orthodox Christians neighbours. Inochentist icons, however, differ in significant ways; they challenge canonical norms and radically re-imagine the relationship between divinity and humanity. For Orthodox believers, icons and the special 'icon corner' (found in the eastern or south-eastern corner of the kitchen or living room) play an important role as aids to and the site of rituals, prayers and personal devotions. During the long decades of persecution and oppression at the hands of the state that the 'illegal sects' discussed in this article suffered, which was often encouraged and supported by the Orthodox Church, groups employed new media and visual techniques to represent their changed relationship with divine and heavenly agents. In so doing they transformed their visual and material 'lifeworld', radically altering their religious worldview. In this chapter, I highlight how the vernacular imagination put images to work in creating new forms of embodied divinity (Morgan 2005, 40-46).

The movements discussed here are often grouped together under the term 'Inochentism' as they look back to the life and teaching of the Orthodox monk Inochentie of Balta as a defining moment heralding in the End of Days (see Kapaló 2019). Inochentie began life as Ioan Levizor, a boy from a poor peasant family from the village of Cosăuţi in the western Russian province of Bessarabia, today's Republic of Moldova, which during Soviet times constituted the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR). He led a religious revival that was initially centred on the cult and relicts of a local holy man

called Feodosie Levitzki (Teodosie Levițchi in Romanian), creating what one early commentator referred to as a 'Moldavian Lourdes' at the monastery in Balta, a small provincial town today located Ukraine (Clark 1927, 108). Increasingly, however, the pilgrims focused on the apocalyptic preaching and charismatic healing ministry of Inochentie himself. Much controversy surrounded the few short years of Inochentie's revival between May 1909 when, according to Inochentite tradition he was promoted to the priesthood to preside over the reburial of Levitzki's remains, and his death on the 30th December 1917 at the subteranean utopian community Gradina *raiului*, the Garden of Paradise, that his followers had founded during his years in exile. Soon after Inochentie's death, in the face of sanctions from the Church and persecution at the hands of the Bolsheviks, various groups of his original followers formed distinct underground networks and communities all over Bessarabia and in parts of Ukraine, numbering in the several thousands. These groups kept alive key aspects of Inochentie's teachings on the impending Last Judgment, sin and demonology, and important practices that distinguished them from their Orthodox neighbours, such as extreme fasting, celibacy and pacifism. These communities transmitted the key narratives of the miraculous deeds, prophecies, persecution and ultimate heavenly ascension of Inochentie through texts, songs and images.

The persecution of Inochentists reached its apogee in 1940s Romania (which then included the territory of today's Republic of Moldova) when, as part of a general cleansing of undesirables from wartime Romania, two thousand Inochentists were scheduled for deportation, alongside Jews and Roma, to concentration camps on the territory of Romanian occupied Transnistria.[1] In the Soviet Union, from the 1920s through to the 1970s, there were intermittent campaigns waged against Inochentism that resulted in deportations, trials and imprisonments of many followers.

'Inochentism' and 'Inochentist' are problematic terms. Inochentie never preached something called 'Inochentism' in the same sense that Jesus never preached 'Christianity' in first century Palestine. Inochentie was a charismatic Orthodox monk who attracted a large following of peasants and, with the resources he gathered from this devout following he was able to establish a utopian community organised along monastic lines. He pushed the boundaries of Orthodox Christianity, was difficult to control by the authorities and exceeded his mandate according to his superiors. Very early on in the movement, however, commentators began to refer to his followers as *sectanți* (sectants), *inochentiști* or

inochenteni (inochentists) and the movement as Inochentism (see Kapaló 2019, 11-12). Over the past century the various currents and networks that look back to Inochentie hold differing views about the use of the term 'Inochentist'; some regard this a perjorative term as they consider themselves *the* true Orthodox whilst others prefer the term *inochentari*, or Inochentarian, as this expression was said to have been handed down in the community since the time of Inochentie. Some later groups were given their own names derived from the titles of their leaders, followers of the Archangel Michael became *arhangeliști*, Archangelists, and followers of the John the Father became *tătuniști*, 'those of the Father'. One of the principal characteristics of Inochentite tradition is the practice of outward discursive dissimulation, a result of their persecution at the hands of the authorities and representatives of the Orthodox Church. Followers of Inochentie portray their movement as a revival of 'pure Orthodoxy,' they stress the monastic origins of the movement, practice celibacy and follow strict fasting rules similar to those of Orthodox monasteries. However, the "hidden transcript," to borrow James Scott's term (Scott 1990), of the Inochentite tradition critiques the official Church and challenges Orthodox theology and cosmology, using powerful religious and political symbols and narratives. These "hidden transcripts" are revealed through the hagiography of Inochentie and through the iconographic tradition that illustrates the *vita* narrative whilst also presenting Inochentie in various heavenly offices.

This chapter is based on three distinct sets of sources. Since 2006, I have met with members of various Inochentist groups, many of whom have invited me into their homes. For almost a century these groups have formed extremely secretive clandestine networks. Although overt surveillance and oppression by the state ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of communism in Romania, these groups continue to face societal prejudice, largely based on propaganda published during Soviet times that continues to be used against them by the Orthodox Church. Access to these groups is very difficult as they remain extremely suspicious of outsiders. My conversations with Inochentists have focused on aspects of belief and practice as well as their life narratives and experiences of state repression. Access to the homes of contemporary Inochentists has also been critical in understanding the centrality of religious material and visual culture for these groups.

A second major set of sources for this paper are the secret police archives in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. Inochentists were banned from practicing their beliefs during certain periods in

Greater Romania (1919-1941, 1942-1944) as well as under communism in both Soviet Moldavia and communist Romania and were placed under strict surveillance and were subject to arrest and imprisonment; this is all recorded in the secret police archives as well as in the archives of other civil authorities and the law courts. The opening of the secret police archives, which began in the 1990s following the end of communism, initially took place as part of a broad movement for transitional justice aimed at overcoming the legacy of repressive regimes and working towards justice and reconciliation in society (Verdery 2014). This included using the archives to vet individuals to prove they had not been informers or collaborators with the regime, a process referred to as 'lustration', and also giving citizens the opportunity to view their individual files as 'information compensation'. These moves were highly problematic and led to political manipulation and blackmail. The failure of policies and practices of transitional justice revealed that the archives contained fabricated crimes, false testimonies, made up conversations, and silences about excessive punishments and torture. This in turn has provoked intense debates about the 'truth-value' of the contents of the archives (Verdery 2014). However, alongside the interrogation reports, informers' statements and arrest warrants, the kind of documents that thus far have been the focus of research in the archives, the files pertaining to the religious groups discussed here, also contain a wide range of visual and devotional materials, in the form of mass produced photo-icons, photomontages and pamphlets as well as hand written hymns, prayers and letters, confiscated by the authoritarian regimes of the time. My research makes use of this material, which in many cases has been preserved nowhere else. The Romanian archives hold materials from both the *Securitate*, the Romanian national security agency from the communist era, and the *Siguranţa*, the state security service of the interwar and wartime periods up to 1944. In the Republic of Moldova, I had access to *Siguranţa* files from when the territory of Moldova was within Greater Romania, and records of military courts as well as limited access to some KGB files from Soviet Moldavia.

My third set of sources comprise print media, state anti-sect propaganda publications, and Church missionary and heresiological materials. These are in many ways as problematic in terms of their 'truth value' as the secret police archives. It will come as no surprise that these sources contain numerous errors, intentional slurs, gross exaggerations and fabrications supported with false evidence. Nevertheless, they sometimes record examples of visual materials. The state-controlled media in Soviet

Moldavia, for example, recognised the centrality of the material dimension of Inochentist worldview and published examples of this material. The images presented in these publications are an important supplement to the collections in the archives and the materials I was able to photograph in Inochentist homes. The Orthodox Church missionary manuals also contain valuable information pertaining to Inochentist material culture and in a couple of instances the Orthodox Church published examples of non-canonical Inochentist icons (see for example Nica 1943). Inochentism is also the subject of a rare, and hence little read, but invaluable monograph-length study published in 1926 by a Church historian and theologian, Nicolae Popovschi, who discusses the origins and impact of the movement in a remarkably even-handed way for the period (Popovschi 1926).

Following an account of the origins of Inochentism, in this chapter I explore the relationship between Inochentist ideas of holy and divine personhood and their representation in icons, photographs and photomontages, beginning with Inochentie himself and them going on to explore one of the related 'successor' movements, Archangelism, which has proved the most enduring and active of the many branches.

Inochentie's Revival

Understanding Inochentie's revival is complicated by the fact that it took place in a border region that was both ethnically mixed and contested between Russia and Romania.[2] This has led some to view the movement in primarily ethnic or national terms (see Clay 1998; Bâtcă 1999). Inochentie was an ethnic Moldovan, a Romanian speaker from Bessarabia, and his followers were also largely drawn from his ethnic kin. The Russian Orthodox Church to which they belonged had for a number of decades been engaged in a process of slavicization of the liturgy and Russification of Church life (Nistor 1991, 233-234; Păcurariu 1993; Dima 1994, 182-184). In this context, Inochentie's spirited preaching in the local Romanian dialect and his later disregard for Church authority been read as ethnically motivated or inspired. This is, however, far from the full picture.

Concern over the activities of Inochentie were first raised by bishop Dimitrie of Kherson, who in 1910 reported to the Holy Synod that the hieromonk Inochentie had a "harmful influence" over the

pilgrims visiting the monastery in Balta (Popovschi 1926, 23). On the basis of this report the Holy Synod, in October of that year, instructed Serafim, the Bishop of Podolia, to remove Inochentie from the monastery and keep him under supervision while conducting a thorough investigation into the claims made against Inochentie (Popovschi 1926, 23). Meanwhile, the Church in Bessarabia, headed by Bishop Serafim (Chichagov) of Chişinău, who was outspoken in his anti-Moldovan sentiments (Clay 1998, 257-59), also instigated its own investigation that reported to the Holy Synod on November 5th 1910 and advised that Inochentie be immediately removed to one of the monastery-prisons in the Russian far north (Popovschi 1926, 24).[3]

Inochentie, however, was not without powerful supporters. Bishop Serafim of Podolia, on whose territory Inochentie and the Balta pilgrims were located and under whose custody the Holy Synod had placed Inochentie, delayed fulfilling the Holy Synod's instructions to investigate Inochentie's activities and in his own report on the Balta phenomenon refuted the Bishop of Bessarabia's (Serafim Chigachov) accusations, claiming on the contrary that "he [Inochentie] is godly, modest, selfless and quite ordinary, he is a monk who ethusiastically serves his neighbor and is not able to deceive or to tell untruths" (Popovschi 1926, 25). He also intervened with the Holy Synod requesting that Inochentie be placed in a monastery in the diocese of Podolia where he could be placed under a skillful spiritual father for guidance, rather than be sent into exile in the Russian north (Popovschi 1926, 25).

The various reports on Inochentie's activities highlight the influence that Inochentie had over the simple Moldovan peasants and suggest that he was using this to exploit them for personal financial gain (*Atărnarea Arhiepiscopului Serafim* 1913). It is likely that behind these claims there lay some envy on the part of the bishops of Bassarabia and Kherson, who stood to lose financially from the continued exodus of pilgrims to the neighbouring diocese of Podolia. Indeed, Serafim (Chigachov) publically blamed the "spiritual leaders" of the diocese of Podolia for allowing the monastery at Balta to amass considerable wealth from the Moldovan peasants (*Atărnarea Arhiepiscopului Serafim* 1913, 2). Another report, this time by the Directorate of the Chief Medical Inspector commissioned by the Bishop of Kherson and the govenor of the province, reported on 28th January 1911 describing an "epidemic of nervous illness amongst the Moldovan pilgrims" (Popovschi 1926, 26). The findings of this report, which were later published in the Russian journal *Sovremennaya psikhiatriya*, describe how the pilgrims

"trembled uncontrollably, jerked their limbs, groaned, hiccuped, beat themselves, fell to the floor, and spoke ecstatically" (Clay 1998, 255) which the psychiatrist Yakovenko pathologised as the combined result of "The abuse of liquor and poor food, spiritual darkness and low level of intellectual and moral development, taken together, produce a weakening of the organism, an exaggerated irritability of the nervous system, and such instability that when powerful new exciting factors operate, there arises a nervous disease..." (Clark 1927, 109).

Despite the campaign of the two neighbouring bishops, the Holy Synod, in decision no. 2567 of 22nd March-26th April 1911, found Inochentie not guilty of crimes that would warrant his removal to the far north and instead entrusted him to the Bishop of Podolia instructing that he be removed from Balta and placed in another monastery sufficiently far away. The official reports, taken together, portray the whole movement as simply the product of a gullible, illiterate and psychogically vulnerable peasantry that had fallen prey to a charlatan monk who aimed to exploit them for personal gain. However, the substance of Inochentie's message, according to the reports gathered from pilgrims, and certainly by 1913 when the campaign of repression of the movement was fully underway, had become increasingly apocalyptic and it is this eschatological aspect of Inochentie's message that began to define the identity of Inochentie and transform the worldview of his followers.

Inochentie as Elijah and Enoch

The exile of Inochentie, which was finally ordered on February 1912 when the Holy Synod of Russia commanded his removal to the monastery of Murom (Murmansk), a prison monastery for opponents of the Russian church and state in Olonets district in the Russian far north (Popovschi 1926, 31), precipitated a mass exodus of many hundreds of followers to be close to their spiritual father. Inochentie remained there for almost a year surrounded by some of his closest followers, including his brother Simion Levizor, his sister Domnica Ursu and his mother Csenia Levizor (Popovschi 1926, 42). Eventually, however, when it came to light that Inochentie was subject to a very lenient regime at the monastery and following a fall out with the spiritual father of the monastery, Miercurie, Inochentie absconded on the 5th February 1913 together with at least 500 pilgrims, managing to avoid capture for 11 days in the harsh Russian winter. He was re-arrested on the 16th Februray while making his way to

the town of Cargopol and soon after this, the Ministry of Justice served notice that Inochentie should be imprisoned until trial. A judgement was reached on 6th June 1913 at the Court of Appeal in St. Petersburg, sentencing him to six months in the prison of Petrozavodsk (Popovschi 1926, 38-43). Thereafter, despite repenting and signing a confession on the 30th June 1913 (*Atărnarea* 1913), and because of his continued preaching, he spent the following four years in various prisons, including the infamous Solovetky monastery, known for the severity of torture and punishment practiced there (Popovschi 1926, 49). Meanwhile, the Orthodox Church instigated a mission to the Balta region to combat the ideas of Inochentie and to convince the people to return to their previous lives.

Under these conditions of persecution by the Church and the state, Inochentie's followers back home in Bessarabia, Podolia and Kherson, began to sell all their worldly possessions, take up celibacy and construct, or rather dig, an underground monastic complex 'New Jerusalem' next to which they founded a community, which was known as *Grădină raiului* (the Garden of Paradise) and *Raiul pământului* (Heaven on Earth) to await the end of days (see figure 1). *Raiu* (paradise), as it was commonly referred to, was founded on the site of a miraculous well near the village of Lipețcoe (Popovschi 1926, 229) in Ananiev district, just over the provincial border inside Kherson province, about 30 kilometers from Balta. Followers of Inochentie told visitors to the site that "this is the only well in which water will remain at the Second Coming" (Popovschi 1926, 232).

Except for a number of letters attributed to Inochentie[4] that he sent from the various prisons in which he was confined between 1911 and 1917 Inochentie left behind no writings. The only contemporary sources of his ideas and beliefs are his confession, referred to above and published by Bishop Serafim of Bessarabia, which was no doubt extracted under duress, and a missionary manual prepared by the diocese of Bessarbia to assist priests sent to combat the emerging movement (Chirica 1916 [1913]). From these sources plus some contemporary accounts of pilgrims and followers of Inochentie, Nicolai Popovschi, made the first attempt to understand the Inochentists' worldview. Even in the years immediately following the emergence of the movement, however, he complained that the beliefs and ideas of Inochentists are difficult to piece together and that reliable sources are sparse and often contradictory. He affirmed with some certainty, however, that "The fundamental idea of Inochentie's thinking was that the time of the antichrist has arrived, the end time has come, when on

any day or at any hour we must be ready for the end of the world and the terrible judgement" (Popovschi 1926, 65). This intense expectation was strengthened by the outbreak of war in 1914. Whereas initially followers of Inochentie spoke of him as a teacher and a holy man endowed with special gifts of healing and prophecy (Popovschi 1926, 142), as the persecution of Inochentie and his followers intensified and their apocalytic expectations reached new levels, Inochentie was said to embody important characters in the scriptural and vernacular narratives of the End of Days, most notably the prohets Elijah and Enoch, the person of the 'Spirit of Truth' revealed in the Gospel of John and the Holy Spirit, the thrid person of the Trinity.

One of the most important sources of the Inochentite religious imaginary derives from Romanian popular apocrypha and folk cosmology, which in turn had been inherited from charismatic Judaism, the current that runs through Judaism parallel to the priestly Torah and Temple based forms of worship (Vermes 2013, 1-3). This tradition is revealed in both biblical and post-biblical literature, and expanded on in later Christian apocrypha. Of the wonder-working 'Men of God' of charismatic Judaism who heal, produce rain and multiply food, Elijah and Enoch, stand out as they were carried up bodily into heaven without dying. Their unique status as 'undying' prophets explains their association in the Romanian tradition with the passage in Revelation in which 'two witnesses', described as prophets, will prophesy for 1,260 days before being killed by the Beast from the Abyss and, after three days, rise up on a cloud to Heaven (Revelation 11: 3-12). In Romanian apocryphal literature, Elijah and Enoch will herald in the end times by unveiling Satan's attempt to destroy the world and battling with him until they are killed (Gaster [no date], 162).

The fact that by at least 1913, Inochentists associated this episode with the appearance of Inochentie is attested in Inochentie's confession (*Atărnarea* 1913, p. ix) and the missionary manual (Chirica 1916 [1913], p. 8-10, 19-20). Popovschi, in his collection of contemporary accounts, quotes one follower as saying "The prophet Elijah did not die on Earth as usually happens like any other holy man, but was taken up to heaven alive. Inochentie is the prophet Elijah, who was killed and will be raised up like Jesus Christ..." (Popovschi 1926, 144). Even during Inochentie's lifetime he began to be portrayed in icons and photographs as a variety of saintly or holy personalities, including the prophet Elijah. Inochentie's identity as Elijah and/or Enoch was just one of a wide variety of views amongst

Inochentie's followers as to his status or person (Popovschi 1926, 145). More outrageous still from the perspective of the Orthodox Church, was the belief that Inochentie was the embodiment on Earth of the Holy Spirit or of *Duhul adevărului*, the Spirit of Truth, revealed in the Gospel of John, or that they were both somehow combined in the figure of Inochentie.

Innochentie as the Holy Spirit

Popovschi gives several examples collected by missionary priests dating back to 1912 of Inochentist preachers claiming that Inochentie in some way or other embodies or manifests the Holy Spirit. He asserts that "The harder Inochentie was pursued by the authorities the more his followers amplified their opinions on his personality. Ideas such as Inochentie is the Holy Spirit first arose when he was sent to Murom", when he was sent into exile (Popovschi 1926, 143). Beliefs, however, remained diverse "some amongst the Inochentists, in 1913, believed that Inochetie is the Holy Spirit embodied, the third Person of the Holy Trinity, others named him the Spirit of the Truth, drawing a distinction between the Holy Spirit [*Duhul Sfînt*] and the Spirit of the Truth [*Duhul adevărului*]" (Popovschi 1926, 144). The missionary manual dedicates particular attention to this very problem, refuting the Inochentist claim that Inochentie is the Spirit of the Truth. Pointing to three passages from the Gospel of John (John 14: 26, 15: 26 and 16: 13), which all speak about the 'Spirit of the Truth' who will follow after Jesus, the manual highlights the errors of Inochentist scriptural interpretation:

> The Holy Spirit, they say, will come to Earth appearing in human form, he will teach you all the truth and will prophesy the future, and what we saw at *părinţelu* [the father, referring to Inochentie], and I have heard from him about future. This profound error of the Inochentists is drawn, as is shown, from an incorrect interpretation by Inochentists of scripture (Chirica & Skvoznikov 1916 [1913], 3).

Numerous variations of the belief in Inochentie's relationship to the Holy Spirit existed at the time, and these currents continue to exist today. It is, however, very difficult to ascertain whether any of these

ideas were actually taught by Inochentie himself. As the pressure on Inochentie's followers mounted, Popovschi realised, they became less willing to openly discuss their beliefs:

> And here you have to keep in mind that Inochentists reluctantly confided Innocent's teaching. From this fact, some researchers conclude that Inochentie suggested to his followers, that they should not confide and say much in front of the parish priests (Popovschi 1926, 63-64).

As the Church authorities progressively silenced Inochentists through their missionary campaigns, it was noticed that an iconographic tradition was emerging which represented visually the ideas that the Church was condemning as heretical.

> In keeping with these ideas, Inochentists used icons with the image of Inochentie. So, in 1913, in some villages in Bessarabia, an "extraordinary envoy" of Inochentie, whose identity remains unknown, showed a photograph to the Moldovans in which are pictured God the Father, God the Son, and in the place of the Holy Spirit, the monk Inochentie with an image of a dove at his breast (Popovschi 1926, 151).

Figure 1. Photograph of a mass produced lithograph icon with Inochentie enthroned in heaven next to Christ with a dove at his breast symbolising the Holy Spirit taken in the home of an Inochentist in Lipețcoe, Ukraine. Source © James A. Kapaló, 2012.

Such images (see Figure 1) were widespread and exist in multiple variants in the homes of Inochentists today. Archimandrite Antim Nica, who was sent as a Romanian Orthodox missionary to the area around Balta when it was occupied by Romania during the Second World War,[5] observed that, "the image of Inochentie, in painted or photograph form, can be seen in Transnistria in many Moldovan families, placed between icons in the East corner of the house" (Nica 1942, 41) and adding later that "More clearly than in their pious writings, the beliefs of Inochentists are reflected in their iconography" (Nica 1942, 47).

When Inochentie was finally released from exile in the spring of 1917 following an appeal to the Holy Synod on the part of his followers and aided by the events of the February Revolution, he returned to *Raiu*, arriving in June of that year where, according to his hagiography, he began once again to preach the Gospel of Christ, do great miracles and heal the sick. He died soon after on December 30th 1917 (Popovschi 1926, 54). He was buried on New Year's Day 1918 in a catacomb next to a small chapel in the underground complex that had been especially prepared to receive his remains. Many pilgrims continued to visit the site until *Grădină raiului* was destroyed by the Bolsheviks in September 1920. The hagiography *The Life and Deeds of Father Inochentie of Balta 1909-1917*, penned by Inochentie's followers between 1913 and 1924, tells how many of Inochentie's close followers and family were killed and how several others were imprisoned in Odessa. One final miraculous episode is recounted in his *Life and Deeds*; on 2nd October 1920 the Bolsheviks are said to have removed Inochentie's remains from his tomb only to find his body, after almost three years, entirely intact as if he were alive and giving off an unearthly aroma of spices. When the commissar of the Bolshevik troops tried to rip the priestly cross from around Inochentie's throat he rose up from his coffin. The commissar fled in panic. Inochentie's body was taken that evening to the hospital in Ananiev, a local town, and when the doctor was about to cut into Inochentie with his scalpel Inochentie began to breath and his face was "pink, pink like a rose…" In panic, the soldiers resealed the coffin and shut the room placing two men on guard whilst they telephoned Odessa to call a senior doctor. In the middle of the night, after being knocked out senseless by a loud sound of lightning, the soldiers came round to witness a cloud that rested above the hospital in which a great light shone. From the light came a great pillar of fire from the ground up to the sky. The body of Inochentie rose out of the coffin and into the pillar of fire and was raised up to Heaven in great glory (*În scurt viața* 1924, 46).

By the time of Inochentie's death, a rich iconographic tradition had emerged that contravened canonical norms by portraying Inochentie as a divine person seated in heaven next to Christ and variously described as the Holy Spirit embodied, the Spirit of the Truth and even one of God's two Sons (Nica 1943, 48). At the same time, followers of Inochentie had learned to be wary of what they said with regard to Inochentie's preaching and his identity. As the mass pilgrimages were halted by the Church and Inchentie himself was silenced, visual representations of Inochentie became increasingly

important as a means of transmitting the message of a changed reality in which the third person of the Trinity was walking the Earth and heralding in the End of Days.

A New Lifeworld

Following the death, and resurrection, of Inochentie, his followers were scattered and divided between two states. Those from Podolia and Kherson provinces became citizens of the new Soviet Union whilst the majority of his Moldovan followers were now on the territory of Greater Romania. Divided between two hostile states and having witnessed the destruction of *Raiu*, the sacred centre of the movement, by the Bolsheviks, followers of Inochentie found themselves in a radically new context.

Despite the strongly ethnic Moldovan and Romanian-speaking character of the movement, which had led some early commentators to consider it a kind of 'grass roots' ethnic mobilization against Russian rule, Inochentism also came to be considered dangerous by the Romanian State. In Greater Romania, as it was known in its enlarged post-Trianon form, the Romanian Orthodox Church played a central role in the national project of creating a unitary state from the diverse territories that Romania had acquired. Alongside efforts to disempower and disperse the large national minorities in the new territories, including more than two million Hungarians in Transylvania and large numbers of Jews and Russian speakers who dominated the urban centres of Bessarabia (see Livezeanu 1995, 90), the new state also wished to stamp out any sign of religious dissent. By 1925 Romania, had effectively outlawed proselytism and banned Inochentism alongside most of the other new and 'foreign' religious groups and movements (Dobrincu 2007, 586-587). By the mid-1930s, the repression of Inochentists had become more and more severe and brutal, including at least one fatal incident involving the shooting by gendarmes of Inochentist "rebels" (ANIC-MJDJ, 69/1932).

In the neighboring regions of the Soviet Union, "Just as the Romanians were attempting to integrate the Bessarabians into Greater Romania, the Soviets worked to pull them in the opposite direction" (King 2000, 51). One aspect of this was to create a new Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) just over the river Dniester, which marked the border between the two states, in districts with a significant Romanian speaking minority. This new political entity included the

town of Balta as its capital, the initial Inochentist pilgrimage site, as well as Lipețcoe, the site of the *Raiu* utopian community which had recently been destroyed by the Bolsheviks. In place of the Inochentist community, the Soviet Authorities created a collective farm named "From Darkness to Light" (Dembo 1930, King 2000, 51) in an attempt to prevent it functioning as a religious centre for the local community. During the early years of Soviet power policies towards religion were not as overtly oppressive as they would become later and were directed at separating Church and state. The Separation Decree of 1918 seemed to level the religious field by granting equal legal recognition for citizens to profess any faith or none (Wanner 2007, 36) and this was followed by moves to reduce the economic power of the Orthodox Church and its control over education. These moves fed the belief on the part of the Romanian Authorities that the Soviet Union was somehow empowering sectarians, such as the Inochentists. By 1923, however, the Communist Party of Ukraine had noticed that controlling sectarians was significantly more difficult than the Orthodox Church and following the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1924 antireligious policy changed in favour of propaganda as its main tool to counter religious belief of all shades (Wanner 2007, 39). The newspaper Bezbozhnik, or Godless, which was publish from 1922 to 1941 by the League of Militant Atheists, published numerous anti-sect articles including regular reference to Inochentism (see for example Dembo 1930). After 1929, a "threefold secularization process" was in place aimed at eliminating the role of religion in social, moral and political life. This included dismantling the Orthodox Church and its authority, removing religion from the public sphere and the propagation of an alternative Marxist materialist ideology (Wanner 2007, 52).

In addition to persecution at the hands of the state authorities on both territories, Inochentists were the subject of severe condemnation preached from the altar (Popovschi 1926, 154). Inochentie had been a member of the clergy and represented the monastic tradition of Orthodoxy and during his ministry he had attracted a large following of sympathetic monks in monasteries in the region. His followers, at least initially, were not anti-clerical, they recognized the clergy's authority and remained members of the Orthodox Church. In the decades that followed his death, however, many Inochentists developed a marked ambivalence towards the Church and suspicion towards the clergy, and fiercely criticized their failings. In this context, the practices associated with Inochentism moved to domestic and clandestine spaces, in both the Soviet Union, where all religion was oppressed and pushed from the

public sphere, and in Greater Romania, where the state was intent on creating a homogenous nation state based on the majority Romanian Orthodox identity. Generally speaking, in the Orthodox regions of the Soviet Union the home setting therefore took on additional significance with the icons and icon corners remaining an important sacred space (Kononenko 2006, 48). In Romania, where Inochentist communities began to construct for themselves alternative religious spaces, secret 'hideouts' dug under their homes and gardens, also transformed the material conditions of religious practice.

Vera Shevzov defines the Orthodox liturgy as the basis of the community's "lifeworld", highlighting its distinct role in bringing "ecclesial narratives and the Church's visual culture" together in transformative ways (2007, 62). The narrative performance of liturgy transforms the viewer's relationship to the icons presented during the ritual drama, giving them new meaning and power. Inochentism emerged out of this Orthodox lifeworld but overtime re-moulded it significantly in response to the changing social and political context. The uses and meaning of icons, and visual material culture more broadly, changed for Inochentists as they created new visual tools to animate a new central narrative, the life, passion, death and resurrection of Inochentie. Through the production of narrative icons of Inochentie's life, that became widespread and were reproduced in multiple variants and forms, as postcards, wall hangings and illustrated books (see Figure 2), these changes became integral to a re-imagined and re-embodied cosmological order no longer focused on the liturgy performed in and by the Orthodox Church but now defined by the subterranean hideouts excavated under homes and the new mission to spread the narrative of Inochentie and his teachings on the impending End of Days.

Figure 2. Photograph of large narrative icon of the life of Inochentie taken in the home of an Inochentist in Lipețcoe, Ukraine. © James A. Kapaló, 2012.

The production of icons and hagiographies is of course a traditional means within Orthodoxy of establishing the 'saintly status' of spiritual or political figures. As Per-Ame Bodin suggests, there are established rules for the production of such a "canonical identity" for "holy" or "saintly" figures. The interplay between this process and the historical and political reality they represent can give us important insights into "the shaping of sacred discourse and its confrontation with the discourses of history and politics" (Bodin 2009, 88). One means by which events and characters from the present or

recent past in the cultural memory are 'institutionalised', is through their 'typologisation' in relation to the figures and events from the Bible and sacred history. In this move "[h]istory is levelled or annihilated, and temporality itself is abolished. History merges with the eternal" (Bodin 2009, 89).

In the case of the Inochentist movement, the history of persecution at the hands of the Russian Church and Tsarist authorities became central to a vernacular theology of "redemptive suffering" (Clay 1998, 261) and the core narrative was utilized by indexing analogous events in the biblical narrative. Thus Moses and the Exodus narrative are mirrored in Inochentie's 'exodus' from Russian captivity; Jesus' feeding of the five thousand is mirrored in Inochentie's feeding of three thousand during their epic escape from captivity in Solovetsky (see Figure 2); Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilot by Inochentie's trial before the Holy Synod and the Tsar Nicholas; Jesus' 'passion' by the torments Inochentie suffered during imprisonment and finally, Jesus' resurrection is mirrored by Inochentie's own bodily ascension to Heaven (see Figure 2). In the narrative iconographic tradition, Inochentie's life is presented in terms of a whole range of parallels from the biblical narrative.

As part of the effective communication of their message, Inochentists employed the new media of photomontage and mass produced photo-postcard images and texts. These were carried from village to village across the Bessarabian countryside, easily concealed about their person. There are reports of them being sold on markets from suitcases. Hidden under officially sanctioned religious icons and booklets, they were sold to knowing customers 'on-request' for the price of 10 lei (ANIC-IGJ, 154/1941, 22). The Holy Synod took very seriously the danger posed by the subversive and heretical images and texts being produced by all religious dissenters, not only Inochentists, and passed a ruling in 1936, to be enforced by the Ministry of Internal Affairs through the Gendarmerie, requiring all religious icons, crosses and religious publications to be approved by the Church (ANIC-IGJ, 22/1941, 82). Arrests were frequently made based on the possession of illegal icons and Inochentists were, by the 1940s, routinely sent to the military courts (ANIC-IGJ 22/1941, 43) where they received anything between a small fine to 6 months in a labour camp. Moise Olteanu and Ion Nasulea from the village of Roșu, in Cahul county were each sentenced to six months in a labour camp on 18th February 1943 by

the 3rd Army Military Court for possession of Inochentist icons, on the basis of which they were accused of conducting Inochentist propaganda (ANRM-TMC3A 738-2-164, 50).

Figure 3. A printed double-sided postcard with Inochentie in captivity on one side and the discourse on the Good Shepherd on the reverse. This postcard was confiscated from followers of Inochentie arrested in the village of Cuibușor close to the site of the Garden of Paradise in 1942 (ANIC-IGJ 120/1942, 25). Source: © National Historical Archives of Romania.

The new images now being produced by Inochentists became socially embedded in a different way to traditional icons and the 'social apparatus' through which they were created and deployed (Morgan 2005, 32) had also radically changed. Through a new juxtaposition of narrative and image the Inochentist 'brothers and sisters', as they referred to one another, produced new ways of seeing by employing visual techniques and means of production. Inochentists were overwhelmingly rural and of peasant background, as were the majority of recent converts to Adventism and to the Jehovah Witnesses, and as well as sharing an intense apocalyptic sensibility with these groups, Inochentists may well have learned new means of presenting their ideas from their co-villagers and co-inmates of the Romanian prisons and labour camps of the time.

Figure 3 illustrates one way that text and image were configured in a relationship designed to establish a parallel between Inochentie's sacrifice and that of Jesus Christ. Here an image of Inochentie under arrest, surrounded by Tsarist militia, is juxtaposed with extracts from the New Testament on the reverse, opening with an abridged and slightly altered version of Jesus' discourse on the Good Shepherd from John 10: 14-16:

> "Here is the good shepherd, the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep, he recognises his sheep and his sheep recognise His voice and follow Him. But the one who is not the shepherd when he sees the wolf leaves the sheep and flees because they do not belong to him and he does not care for the sheep and the wolf comes and scatters and attacks them."

In this way, scripture is used to support the association between Inochentie and Jesus. In the section of the text that follows, this is taken one step further with the torments suffered by Inochentie being equated to Christ's suffering. "Here is the good shepherd whose life was given and is not given back. By his spiritual brothers, chased, cursed, shot [with a gun], insulted, given poison to drink, with hands

tied behind his back, put in prison because he revealed the truth, not heeding what the Apostle says: Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and the murderer will not enter the Kingdom of God (1 John 3: 15).

From the numerous records in the archives of the police, gendarmerie and the secret police in Romania it is evident that the new materials, both visual and textual, produced by the movement were important vehicles for spreading the message of Inochentie and were part of a decentring of religious monopolies through the suggestion and materialization of alternative modes of divine and worldly reality.

"And the Archangel Michael looked just like me"

In the final section of this chapter, I explore the juxtaposition of sacred image and sacred place in one of the successor movements that grew out of the Inochentist milieu. Archangelism emerged as a distinct current in the 1920s and went on to constitute the most widespread and, from the perspective of the authorities, the most troubling branch of Inochentism. The founders were young peasant boys, Alexandru, Grigore and Ion Culeac, from the village of Todireşti in the north of Bessarabia, as Moldova was then known. They were initially followers of Inochentie who later became visionaries and leaders in their own right. Alexandru's visionary career began in 1920, when he claimed he was just 19 years old (police records show him to have been 10 years older!). His vision was published in a 36-page booklet in 1924 under the title *A Vision that appeared in the year 1920* (*O vedenie* 1924). Grigore, his younger brother by one year, also had visions that were published under the title *The visions of Grigore Culeac and his sufferings for the confession of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ* (*Vedeniile lui Grogore Culeac* [undated]). Alexandru, Ion and Grigore drew on the capital associated with their forerunners, Inochentie and Feodosie, whom they claim prophesied their coming. Alexandru's vision opens with a preamble that sets the stage for appearance of the Archangel Michael on Earth.

> …, the sound of the trumpet of the last Judgement. So is it said that the Archangel Michael will come to wage war with the Antichrist, and this he has done now and this is the witness of the 2 (the two prophets). Thus it was told 10 years ago by Father

> Inochentie and Saint Feodosie, and so is it now happening in Bessarabia. It is said that the Holy Trinity in three persons, 2 (two) of them were the father and the son and the 3 (third) the Spirit of the Holy Archangel Michael.

And to ensure there was no doubt who the Archangel Michael on Earth is, he adds, "And these two great and powerful prophets, Father Inochentie and Saint Feodosie, prophesied and said that there will come in Bessarabia young and old, great and small. They said there will come a youngster of 17 years after him [after Inochentie]" (*O vedenie* 1924, 6). Grigore too, after introducing his own visions as "heavenly [visions] of the second coming of Jesus Christ on Earth in the flesh" refers to his forerunners, imploring Christians to have faith in Inochentie as Elijah and Feodosie as Enoch, the two great and powerful prophets who "prophesied and found the path to judgement" (*Vedeniile lui Grigore Culeac*).

Taking on various divine or saintly identities, the brothers initiated parallel networks and, according to later Soviet reports, they divided up the territory of Bessarabia between them with Alexandru claiming the region between Chișinău and Bălți (Karpunina and Sibiriakov 1959, 27). Alexandru's followers became known as Archangelists, and Ion's, who was revered as John the Baptist, as *Tătuniștii*, or followers of the Father. The closing passage of Alexandru's vision of 1920 establishes three principle persons of the new movement, himself as Archangel Michael coterminous with the Holy Spirit, his brother Ion as John the Baptist and his wife as the Mother of God, "The whole mystery of all the beloved of the Lord of Hosts and our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit Archangel Michael. The Consubstantial Trinity undivided which is working today on Earth in the flesh, and John the Baptist and the Mother of God." The evolution of the related but distinct groups the Culeacs founded is difficult to piece together but following the death of Ion in 1945, the Archangelists and Tătunists appear to have merged into one network under Alexandru and Ion's wife Ecaterina Stechi (Shvedov 1959, 3).

Figure 4. Photomontage icon of Alexandru Culeac, the 'Archangel Michael', from the frontispiece of the 1924 edition of 'A Vision that appeared in the year 1920' (ANRM-TMC3A 738-1-6846, 19). © National Archives of the Republic of Moldova.

Already in the 1924, Alexandru had grasped the power of the image, and of photomontage in particular, to convey his message of divine election and embodiment. In the image that appears in the

frontispiece to his *Vision that appeared in the year 1920*, (see Figure 4) he is pictured as the Archangel Michael endowed with symbolic attributes, including a dove at his heart to indicate the composite character of *sfântului Duh arhangelul Mihail*, The Holy Spirit Archangel Michael (*O vedenie* 1924, 26). The importance to the Archangelist movement of representations of the Archangel Michael is also evident from Soviet media sources. Media reports and propaganda publications often drew attention to the significance of the production and distribution of religious images for the success of the Archangelist sect, whilst also ridiculing the crudity of their production. In 1959, readers of the newspaper *Sovetskaya Kultura*, Soviet Culture, are shown how Archangelists produced their crude icons "On a picture torn from a Church book is pasted a photograph of Alexander Culeac, thus we obtain the 'Archangel Michael'" (Shvedov 1959, 3). By the time this image was published in 1959, Alexandru Culeac had twice been arrested and sentenced. The first time in 1945 when he was sentenced by a Special Session of the NKVD (as the Soviet state security police was called at the time) to five years exile in Kazakhstan from where he managed to escape and return to Moldavia (ASISRM-KGB 022997, vol. 2, 209-10). He was arrested again on 27th September 1947 together with nine members of his community and was charged with "anti-Soviet agitation, encourageing the people not to enter the *kolkhoz*, not to pay taxes and not to serve in the Soviet Army" (ASISRM-KGB 022997, vol. 1, 7). On the 23rd January 1948, he was sentenced by the Supreme Court of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic to 10 years imprisonment (ASISRM-KGB 022997, vol. 2, 209-10). He was released in 1958 as part of a general amnesty and was allowed to return to return home (Ţopa and Sibiriac 1958, 2). In an account he gave of his career following his release, which was published in a manual for teachers of Atheism under the title 'Repentance of a Sinner' and which in all probability was given under duress, he explains how the production of the icon that "looked just like me" at the beginning of his career was instrumental in the promotion of his divine status and the success of the movement.

> I decided then to make an icon with my image. I commissioned it from a painter who painted the *Day of Judgement* and the *Ascension of the Archangel Michael*, as well as my ascension to heaven. The Icon was a success. And the Archangel Michael looked just like me. I declared this icon to be holy. And it started here. People threw themselves

> down on their knees in front of the Icon. They kissed it and prayed to it to heal them from illness. I don't know if the icon cured anyone but in exchange we received a handsome income. They brought us cereals, money, carpets and cattle. (Karpunina and Sibiriakov 1959)

Despite having been forced to publicly confess and renounce his status as the Archangel Michael to his followers by the Soviet authorities, Archangelism and the veneration of the Culeac brothers continued secretly until today. From the 1920s until the end of the Soviet system in Moldova in 1991, Archangelists maintained a secret network of safe-houses and subterranean chapels. The movement attracted many young people who took on the role of wandering apostles or 'saints', spending their lives in hiding, living underground and travelling between villages at night so as not to be detected by the authorities. The subterranean hide-outs became the new sacred spaces of Archangelist belief and were modelled on the Garden of Paradise, the first Inochentist underground utopian project. Crime scene photographs taken by the KGB record the spaces and material world of the underground that was hidden from public view and revealed only occasionally for dramatic effect in the Soviet press and propaganda materials. Having moved away radically from the old reality of the Orthodox liturgical lifeworld, Archangelists awaited the End of Days sheltered from the outside world in a new material reality of their own creation, peopled by their brothers and sisters and shepherded by a God on Earth: "Today God wants to take revenge on us for being unbelievers. He came to Earth for a second time to gather his children and to separate believers from atheists. Atheists will go into the fire..." (ASISRM-KGB 020193, 191).

In the post-Soviet era, Archangelist imagery has moved above ground and images of the Archangel Michael can be seen openly on display in homes (see Figure 5). The accusations made against the movement, which included ritual murder of babies, suicide pacts, sabotage of state farms and sexual promiscuity, were either invented or exaggerated by the Soviet propaganda machine. Recently declassified case files contain details of the "rehabilitation" and cancelation of convictions against Archangelists by the Special Plenary of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Moldova in the years following the end of Soviet power. However, in contemporary Moldova Inochentists and Archangelists

continue to be condemned by the Orthodox priesthood and are the subject of societal prejuduce and stigma based on the Soviet-era image of them created in the press. The practice of outward dissimulation continues to be characteristic of Archangelist discourse.

> The only difference is we don't go to Church, at home we have the same songs, the same Gospels, we have all the same things, we just don't go to Church, there is nothing that could be called a 'new religion', we are just more strict, like in the monasteries, like in the olden times (Archangelist woman, Southern Moldova, 13th August 2011).

The message of the return to Earth of the Holy Spirit embodied as Inochentie or of the Archangel Michael returning to battle Satan in the final conflict before the End of Days is today projected visually in ways that still are not spoken openly. Inochentist images are the principal tool through which the relationship between earthly and heavenly reality are represented and reconfigured.

Figure 5. Photo of an icon corner in an Archangelist home with a photo-icon Archangel Michael (aka Alexandru Culeac) on the right hand side. Photograph © James A. Kapaló, 2011.

Concluding remarks

The Inochentist movement presented a problem to successive states and regimes. During the Tsarist period, the movement was considered a danger because of its location on a disputed ethnic borderland and its power to undermine the Russian Church hierarchy's ability to control the spiritual life of Moldovans. Later, the Romanian state considered Inochentism an impediment to the full incorporation of Bessarabia into a unitary nation state free of religious and ethnic diversity. Inochentism was also as a threat to the 'body' of the ethnic nation because of believers refusal to marry, reproduce, or take up arms against the enemies of the state. For the Soviet Union, in the general struggle against religion the so-called sectarian groups proved the most difficult to control as they had more fluid forms of organisation and could function with only limited material resources. Because of the frequent changes of border and state jurisdiction, many Inochentist communities experienced persecution at the hands of both the Romanian and the Soviet authorities (with the earlier generations of Inochentists also having

lived through Tsarist repression). Inochentism came to represent a double-resistance against both the 'worldly' Orthodox Church and against whichever state or political system they found themselves in.

The idea that Christ or other divine or saintly persons have returned to Earth and walk amongst us in a new guise was not an Inochentist innovation. Amongst radical and mystical Russian sects, starting with the Christ Faith in the 17th century, the bodily reincarnation of successive Christs and of the Holy Spirit, in both male and female in form, was at the heart of their radical beliefs (Zhuk 2004, 15). The belief in human incarnations of divine persons is condemned in Russian Orthodoxy as the heresy of *chelovekoobozhanie*, 'worshiping man' (Engelstein 1999, 51) and Inochentism came to be associated with this current of Russian mysticism (Leu Botoșăneanu 1929, 51). What is distinctive about Inochentism, however, is the central role that visual representations came to play in generating and embodying divinity and transforming beliefs at a time when the Orthodox Church and state authorities were silencing Inochentie and his followers. Inochentists continue to practice outward discursive dissimulation in contrast to their use of powerful visual imagery and symbolism that challenges both the Orthodox Church and the state. For this reason, visual sources are essential for understanding how Inochentists have re-imagined the cosmological order.

Inochentist images do important work in changing the way that divinity is perceived and the way that reality is viewed. The new ordering of society, the result of the changed political and social context of persecution, generated new spaces for domestic or 'subterranean' ritual, alternative material 'lifeworlds' in which new creative practices and new visual and textual communities could take shape. Mass production techniques allowed these new images to be disseminated quickly and cheaply making the new images accessible as 'evidence' of the divine nature of Inochentie and his successors. The production of photo-icons and photomontage techniques allowed Inochentists to transgress canonical rules for the production of holiness and sainthood. The images they produced broke with the Orthodox icon tradition by representing the *living* with divine attributes. Often aided by photographic techniques, the material visual representations of embodied divinity *accompanied* the human lives of those who were embodying divinity. Inochentist iconography, therefore, despite its Orthodox roots and visual style, represents a distinct new ordering of the 'being, reality and value' of the cosmos (Miles cited in Shevsov 2007, 61).

Notes

1. Marshall Antonescu, Romania's wartime dictator, ordered the deportation and internment of circa 2000 Inochentists in Transnistria in August 1942 (Achim 2013, 542-544). The archival record in Romania and Moldova, however, is incomplete and it has not been possible to substantiate whether this order was actually carried through (see Kapaló 2019, 205-201).
2. Balta, the original pilgrimage site around which Inochentie's career evolved, and "Gradină Raiului", the Garden of Paradise, the subteranean monastic cummunity founded by Inochentie's followers, were located in the Russian province of Podolia close to the provinces of Bessarabia (roughly corresponding to today's Republic of Moldova) and Kherson.
3. In Imperial Russia, Orthodox Clergy were often sentenced to serve public penance in monasteries for breaches of church law or for disobeying their superiors. Secular courts too could incarcerate individuals in monasteries for causing social disturbances or in order to control individuals with mental disorders. The penal system was characterised by "blurred boundaries between sin and crime" (Demoskoff 2014, 44) and legitamate authority of Church and state. Solovetsky monastery was one of two monasteries, however, that was used to hold prisoners of greater political importance and was notorious for the harsh conditions and treatment meted out to prisoners supplying the model for the Soviet Gulag system (Applebaum 2004).
4. The author's copy of The letters of Father Inochentie sent from the island of Solovetsky and from other prisons to his followers at the Garden of Paradise [Scrisorile Părintelui Inochentie trimise din ostrovul Soloveţki şi de prin alte inchisori următorilor Săi dela Grădina Raiului (1911-1917)] is word-processed and edited version sourced from a contemporary follower of Inochentie who claims they were passed down in manuscript form to the present.
5. During World War 2, the region between the river Dniester and the river Bug was administered by Romania as the Transnistria Governorate. This multiethnic region included the whole territory of the former Soviet Moldavian ASSR, which existed from 1924 to 1940, with Balta, the site of Inochentie's original monastery, and Lipețcoe, the location of the Garden of Paradise both within its borders.

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