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Hidden Galleries, Silenced Communities: Homegrown Religious Communities and the Secret Police in 20th Century Romania

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University College Cork

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Declaration

This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism and intellectual property.



Iuliana Nagy (Cindrea)

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Abbreviations

ACNSAS	Arhivele Consiliului Național Pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (The Archives of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives), Bucharest, Romania.
ANIC	Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, Bucharest, Romania.
ANR	Arhivele Naționale ale României, Bucharest, Romania.
ANRM	Arhivele Naționale ale Republicii Moldova.
BFBS	British and Foreign Bible Society.
CNSAS	Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives), Bucharest, Romania.
DGJ	Direcția Generală a Jandarmeriei, Archival Fond, ANR.
DGP	Direcția Generală de Poliție, Archival Fond, ANR.
FD	Fond Documentar, Archival Fond, CNSAS.
FP	Fond Penal, Archival Fond, CNSAS.
GPU	Gosudarstvennoye Politicheskoye Upravlenie (The State Political Directorate).
IGJ	Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, Archival Fond, ANR.
IRJ	Inspectoratul Regional al Jandarmeriei, Archival Fond, ANR.
IRP	Inspectoratul Regional de Poliție, Archival Fond, ANR.
LSPCJ	London Society for the Propagation of Christianity among the Jews.
MCA	Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, Archival Fond, ANR.
NKVD	Naródnyy Komissariát Vnútrennikh Del (The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs).
STASI	Ministerium für Staatsicherheit (Ministry for State Security).

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Thesis abstract

This thesis explores the methods used by the Romanian secret police against two homegrown Romanian religious communities, the Old Calendarists and the Tudorists, and the manner in which they survived persecution by engaging in conscious acts of resistance. The creation of alternative narratives by these religious communities, narratives in which they critiqued and contradicted the established order, as well as the production of various objects and materials, such as icons, photographs, handwritten prayer or songbooks, letters and postcards ensured that they became a target for the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in Romania, which continuously tried to confiscate and destroy these materials. Meant to incriminate, these materials now testify of the wrongdoings of the regime, be it fascist or communist, and constitute a valuable resource to understand the intrusive character of these regimes. They also illustrate the creative ways in which these religious communities responded to authoritarian rule and managed to survive persecution, thus ensuring their survival and continuity as religious communities.

Exploring important notions and concepts, such as archive, material religion, memory, sect, and secret police, this thesis advances a new approach to the archives of the secret police, focusing on its material religious contents rather than approaching it as a deposit of textual evidence. In order to realise this perspectival shift on the holdings of the secret police archives, archival research was combined with fieldwork and interviews with the members of the Old Calendarist and the Tudorist communities in order to gain a more holistic understanding of the significance of the materials that they produced, the context in which they were made, as well as to capture their responses to re-encountering with the visual and literary materials that their communities had created and that are now stored in the secret police archives. My archival work on Tudorists and the Old Calendarists, which forms the empirical basis for this thesis, demonstrates that with regards to the study of religions the archives of the former Romanian secret police have not been used to their full potential. The measures employed by the secret police involved the confiscation of objects and materials, such as brochures, diaries, icons, letters, postcards, songbooks from these religious minorities, as well as the production of images, photo-collages and bricolages of those considered enemies of the state. These items carry the potential to reveal much more about the communities than a written document could ever do. By

looking at the experiences of the Old Calendarists and the Tudorists from a different perspective, the thesis will show how constraints and struggles can sometimes be an impulse for boundless creativity.

The principal aims of the thesis are: firstly, to draw closer attention to these homegrown religious communities on which little research has been conducted. Secondly, I am to demonstrate the potential of the Romanian secret police archives to generate different types of stories about the repression of religion. By prioritising the archive's material content, the thesis will focus less on the written file, the result of the work of agents and informers on which much of the work of researchers has focused in the quest for uncovering historical truths, instead foregrounding both the visual and material patrimony of these groups and the voices of those who have not yet been heard. This inevitably opens up the discussion about how Romanian history is written, who is included, who is left out, and why. Moreover, the thesis focuses on the gender relations that existed within the Old Calendarist community during the interwar period, highlighting the crucial role that women played in times of crisis by spreading and preserving the Old Calendarist ideas. Last but not least, the thesis analyses the complex relationship between history, memory and experience and brings forward the important role of story-telling and collective memory in the shaping and maintaining of a group identity for descendent communities.

The research for this thesis, entitled 'Hidden Galleries, Silenced Communities: Homegrown Religious Communities and the Secret Police in 20th Century Romania' was conducted as part of the ERC research project, entitled 'Hidden Galleries – Creative Agency and Religious Minorities: 'hidden galleries' in the secret police archives in 20th Century Central and Eastern Europe' (project no. 677355).

Introduction

This thesis focuses on two homegrown Romanian religious communities, the Old Calendarists and the Tudorists, and on their creative responses to the repressive policies employed by authoritarian[1] and totalitarian[2] regimes. These responses sometimes found expression in the form of visual and literary materials, such as icons, photographs, handwritten prayer or songbooks, letters and postcards. These objects and materials that they produced not only challenged the rules of the state but also fuelled their intentions, offered them a reason to continue, and perhaps, in the end, helped ensuring their survival as distinct religious communities. Creative materials were often confiscated by the secret police, and a vast collection of them are still to be

[1] First introduced by Theodore Adorno, a German Marxist theorist, and Else Frenkel-Brunswick, a German-Austrian psychoanalyst, and referring to a construct created in order to understand 'individual differences associated with intolerance, prejudice, and support of fascist ideology,' the concept of authoritarianism has been criticized almost since its inception (Kemmelmeier 2015, 262). The main criticism of 'The Authoritarian Personality,' the publication in which Adorno and Frenkel-Brunswick reported the results of their theory, was that the concept was not scientifically, but rather ideologically motivated, as it focused mainly on the political right and excluded authoritarianism on the left (Kemmelmeier 2015, 262). The concept, however, has been studied from different perspectives, including from that of behavioral genetics which was meant to clarify the nature of authoritarian dispositions, and continues to be studied as significant challenges remain in fully understanding the construct (Kemmelmeier 2015,265).

[2] Generally defined as a system in which control over the population is closer to 'total' compared to other political systems (Holmes 2015, 448), the concept of 'totalitarianism' can be traced back to approximately 1925, when Mussolini started to use it in order to define the Italian fascist regime (Holmes 2015, 450). In the late 1960s, however, conflicting opinions in regards to the definitions and applications of the term started to emerge. Many political scientists and historians believed that it would be misleading and too much of a generalization to use the same term to describe regimes that were too diverse in order to be grouped together under one concept (Holmes 2015, 451). For example, using the same term 'totalitarian' to describe the USSR under both Stalin and Khrushchev was seen as inappropriate, especially since the latter condemned his predecessor's crimes against the Soviet population (Holmes 2015, 450-451). As pointed out by Emilio Gentile, 'the major objections to the validity of totalitarian theories stem from the doubt of the legitimacy of adopting a single theoretical model to define such profoundly different historical experiences, favoring similarities, and analogies in action procedures, mentality, behavior, and organization and in political power' (Gentile 2015, 374). There has been a revival of this debate after the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1991; nowadays the concept is seen more as a 'method of political domination in order to achieve a specific goal, than as a goal per se to be achieved, by stressing the differences as well as the affinities among the totalitarian regimes' (Gentile 2015, 374). An attempt to look at the concept in a new light was made by Sheila Fitzpatrick and Michael Geyer in their 2009 book entitled 'Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared.' By comparing Nazism and Stalinism, an endeavor that has been previously undertaken by other scholars, as well, they try to show that the two regimes can be defined on more equal terms. The dispute on the understandings of the term have been brought to light in 2017 against the background of the publication of Anne Applebaum's book 'Red Famine' when the scholar responded to a review of her latest work written by Sheila Fitzpatrick. As Fitzpatrick's conclusions differed those reached by Applebaum, the old dispute between the 'revisionist model,' which Fitzpatrick endorses, and the 'totalitarian model' has been revived. However, given the rapid proliferation of information in the digital age, this debate transcended historiography and it reached the political sphere, and even individuals outside academia (Anna Lukina, https://quillette.com/2017/09/02/applebaum-vs-fitzpatrick-history-political/, accessed 12 January 2022).

discovered in what have now become the archives of the former secret police that since 1999 have become available through Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives), abbreviated as CNSAS.

The aims of the thesis are to analyse the methods used by the secret police against religious minorities in Romania, as well as the manner in which the latter managed to survive persecution by engaging in conscious acts of resistance and creating alternative narratives in which they critiqued and contradicted the established order. In addition, this thesis also presents a new approach to looking at the archives, a perspectival shift on the uses and value of the secret police archives, focusing less on the written file, and more on the voices of those who have not been heard. This inevitably opens up the discussion about how Romanian history is written, who has been included, who has been left out, and why. Moreover, the paper analyses the complex relationship between history, memory and experience and brings forward the important role of story-telling and collective memory in the shaping and preserving of a group identity for descendent communities.

There are some methodological problems and conceptual questions involved in the historical research of these groups that will be approached in this thesis. Firstly, the research focuses on the concept of archive, the meaning of which is being reconsidered and re-contextualised within the frame of the Hidden Galleries research project, moving beyond the personal file and away from questions of truth and justice (see Kapaló and Povedák 2021, Introduction). In Romania, ever since access to the archives of the former secret police has been granted in the early 2000, the main focus was put on the written, personal file of the victims of totalitarian regimes. By focusing on the material contents of the archives, the thesis will highlight the potential of the Romanian secret police archives to generate different types of stories apart from those written in a personal file by an informer or an agent. Secondly, the thesis explores the repressive methods and attitudes of the secret police in Romania against religion, in general, and against religious minorities, in particular. These methods varied in severity and complexity depending on the context and the period of time when they were applied, as well as on who applied them. Amongst the methods applied by both

the Siguranța[3] and the Securitate[4] that directly affected religious communities I mention: confiscations and destructions of religious objects and places of worship, anti-religious operations and propaganda, arrests, monastic incarcerations, or even detention in labour camps or deportations of members of banned religious groups. During communism, monasteries were closed down and there was a period of mass repression when members and important leaders of various religious communities and official churches, including Orthodox, Catholic and Greek-Catholic, were deported or imprisoned, some even died whilst in detention. This intervention was followed by an era of mass surveillance when the secret police adopted more subtle methods of controlling the religious communities, such as blackmailing, denouncing, discrediting, and sometimes producing their own visual representations of the communities they were keeping under surveillance (Kapaló and Vagramenko 2020, 8-9). The severity of the methods varied, but the secret police specifically targeted those religious communities that engaged in activities that were considered dangerous for the safety of the state, such as refusing to participate in social and political life, rejecting the military draft, or refusing to cease their proselytizing activities (Kapaló and Povedák 2022, 13).

The aforementioned issues will be approached through the concept of materiality, especially through the insights of scholars associated with the so-called 'material turn in the study of religions' (Strijdom 2014, 1). The power of creative agencies and art works to materialise the sacred has been explored by scholars of religion, anthropologists, art historians and, more recently, even by historians. David Morgan, Birgit Meyer, Sally Promey, S. Brent Plate, whom have even launched a journal entitled 'Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief' in 2005, Sonia Hazard, Sonja Luehrmann and, of course, the scholars from different academic fields involved in the 'Hidden Galleries Project,' such as Ágnes Hesz, James Kapaló, Dumitru Lisnic, Gabriela Nicolescu, Kinga Povedák, Anca Șincan, and Tatiana Vagramenko have contributed to the advancement of knowledge in this area of expertise. The present thesis constitutes one of the first studies to apply this methodology to the Romanian historical setting and, as part of the 'Hidden Galleries

[3] The political police of the interwar period. The official name of the organisation was 'Direcțiunea Poliției de Siguranță' (The Directorate of Security Police).
[4] The political police of the communist era. The official name of the Securitate was 'Direcția Generală a Securității Poporului' (The General Directorate of the People's Security).

Project,' it does this through three important phases incorporating a physical, as well as an online dimension. The first phase of the research consisted in conducting archival research in both the National Archives of Romania, as well as in The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, the former secret police archives. During this process I attempted to locate in the secret police files the visual and literary materials produced by the Old Calendarists and the Tudorists, in the form of photographs, icons, songbooks, letters, postcards, and so on, as well as to reconstruct their stories, who produced them, when and, if possible, how they ended up in the archives. This was extremely useful for the online dimension of the project, which was set up in tandem with the first and the second phases of the research, namely the Hidden Galleries webpage that was intended to be a digital archive with sample materials held in various secret police archival repositories.[5] The online dimension proved to be extremely helpful during the second phase of my research, specifically the ethnographic research because, as I will show in the final chapters of the thesis, it facilitated my connection with members of the Old Calendarist community who found out about the Hidden Galleries Project and, indirectly, about my research on their community by accidentally coming across the webpage. During the second phase of my study I had to retrieve from the archives examples of these religious materials, make copies of them, and take them back to the two communities that once produced them, thus facilitating their re-encounter with the objects that were once confiscated from them by the secret police. Finally, the third phase of my research involved my participation in the creation of an exhibition of these creative works. The exhibition was organized in November 2019 at the Museum of Art in Cluj Napoca and it was attended by many of the research participants from the Old Calendarist community. My work illustrates how all of these steps, starting with the archival research and ending with the exhibition, were essential aspects of my research and subsequent conclusions.

Closely connected to the archive[6] is the concept of memory. Cultural studies scholars have defined memory as a 'store house of things, meanings and images […] giving the impression that one can appeal to memory in order to recover the past' (Cross and Peck 2010, 127). The relationship of memory to history has been extensively debated in recent years, especially in the former communist countries

[5] See https://hiddengalleries.eu/

[6]Archives have sometimes been seen as 'society's collective memory'(Foote, 1990, 379.)

where the 'official history,' written by the totalitarian regimes, was filled with lies and manipulations of reality. Therefore, as highlighted by Eva Hoffman, in the Soviet Union and the former communist countries memory was considered to be the only guarantee of a truthful history (Hoffman 2000, 2) and the only available 'weapon' that could be used to condemn communism in Romania. However, as the Romanian scholar Cristian Tileagă highlights, for a long period of time, historians have had a 'narrow archival understanding of memory and insufficient elaboration of alternative forms and conceptions of memory' (Tileagă 2017, 2), meaning that there is a general acceptance of the fact that the collective memory of communism is inscribed in written documents that are made available to the public by institutions such as archives (Tileagă 2017, 6). However, as Jens Brockmeier points out, the archival memory fails to understand that human beings can both 'remember and forget' and they are 'embedded in material, cultural, and historical contexts of action and interaction' (Brockmeier 2010, 9). Maurice Halbwachs claims that there is a clear distinction between historical memory and the collective memory of a group (Halbwachs 1980, 78). Firstly, the historical memory shapes the past through the work of historians; for this reason, when a given period ceases to interest the historian, its memories are no longer recorded. Secondly, history gives the impression that everything is transformed from one historical period to another (Halbwachs 1980, 80). Collective memory, on the other hand, continues to record the past as memories of previous generations are transferred to the subsequent ones, and the same 'plot' is carried from one period to another (Halbwachs 1980, 80). The concept of memory is explored and employed throughout the thesis but especially in the chapters that include the ethnographic research component. These chapters capture and describe the reactions of members of the Old Calendarist and Tudorist communities to their re-encounter with the visual and literary materials that they or their communities once created and that are now stored in the secret police archives. These materials have the potential to bring to life long forgotten memories, to heal these communities, complete their stories and they give them the opportunity to reflect on their collective memory and identity.

The 'search for the truth about the past' in the former secret police archives that dominated the post-communist years proved, as Cristina Vățulescu states, an 'enduring belief in the authority of their holdings' (Vățulescu 2010, 13). In recent years, however, numerous scholars have drawn attention to the fact that not only are

the archival materials the product of regimes whose methods were immoral and illegal (Kapaló and Povedák 2022, 25), but they also had an erroneous understanding of how history should develop. As the first chapter of the thesis shows, apart from falsifying history in order to fit its purposes, the communist regime, through its most important tool, the secret police, sought to destroy religion by destroying its symbolic forms of expression – images of God and saints, prayer books, photographs of sacred beings and heaven, and even churches and houses of prayer. As Halbwachs states 'the altars of the ancient gods must be overturned, and their temples destroyed, if remembrances of a more primitive worship are to be obliterated from the memory of men' (Halbwachs 1980, 136). The religious objects had to be extracted from their original environment and re-inscribed into a different location, namely the archives, where their power was no longer available; by doing this, the regime thought that it could erase the memory of religion from the mind of the people. This, however, did not happen. Many of these objects are still in the archives, carrying the memory of their authors and the potential to bring to light new questions and contested issues from the past.

The introduction to this thesis was written in the spring of 2020, during unusual times, when the coronavirus outbreak had forced the entire world into self-isolation, in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, and churches had been closed to worshippers all over the world. Large numbers of befogged believers celebrated the Easter Holiday in their apartments as witnesses of unprecedented times, with church services streamed online and prayer going digital. For the believers from the former communist countries, however, these measures carried other meanings as they brought back memories of past hardships and restrictions imposed on them by communist authorities in the past. The authorities in Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria and Russia put pressure on churches and congregations to suspend their divine services as the number of coronavirus infections continued to grow. At first, many priests and devout believers resisted the closure of their churches, a gesture meant to symbolise an expression of religious freedom. While approximately 11 million people all around the world watched Pope Francis on March 27 delivering an address and the 'Ubi et Orbi' blessing in a deserted St. Peter's Square (Roth et al. 2020, The Guardian), some church leaders in Russia were openly opposing the state's closure instructions, organizing themselves into a so called COVID-dissidents movement (Pertsev 2020,

Meduza). Others invoked past persecution, suggesting that the Church had suffered worse during the communist regime, a fact that would undoubtedly ensure its survival during these times: 'That's nothing new for us. We have suffered worse persecution in the 20th century, when at least 100,000 clergymen were killed. Killed, shot, put in gulags. We got through that' declared Father Superior Vladimir Vigilyansky of Church of St. Tatiana from Moscow (Sherwin 2020, Deutsche Welle). A similar interpretation of the present events was given by a Bulgarian Orthodox believer: 'I remember communist times and how mounted policemen used to surround the church to intimidate worshipers' (Krasimirov et al. 2020, New York Times).

Faced with the coronavirus pandemic, some churches have come to terms with the situation and developed strategies designed to ensure their continuity. Various media projects, YouTube channels, and websites have been created for that matter and many even see it as a new opportunity for churches to reach out and become more relevant for new people (Sherwin 2020, Deutsche Welle). One of the differences between the totalitarian past and the uncertain present is that today there are no secret police attempting to confiscate or destroy these creative endeavours, no fear of having to hide them, and no constraints in distributing them. There is, however, the disturbing reappearance of surveillance and the use of the informers to tell on their neighbours whom they perceive to be flouting the regulations, while terms such as clandestine, illegal meetings, or disobedience re-emerge in various stories that fill the newspaper pages of believers breaking public health rules.

It is during these times, when the present seems uncertain, that the past is invoked and becomes even more relevant, particularly for those who have, directly or indirectly, experienced trauma and persecution. Faced with constraints and various struggles, they managed to survive and outlive the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes that threatened their existence. Nowadays, their stories become powerful testimonies of endurance. When religious communities were confronted with questions and conundrums, when elements of their tradition were contested and their existence endangered, they proved to have a creative potential and resources upon which to draw. It comes as no surprise, then, that many believers from the former communist countries are nowadays referring to past struggles when trying to cope with the current restrictions; for them, it is the decisive proof that the churches and religious communities that they belong to have been tested before and they have survived.

The two homegrown religious communities that constitute the main subject of this thesis are the Old Calendarists and the Tudorists. These communities emerged in the first half of the 1920s against the background of numerous attempts made by an influential group of Orthodox leaders to revive the Romanian Orthodox Church. If the Old Calendarist community remained in the Orthodox realm and claims to this day that it is, in fact, the true Orthodox Church, the Tudorist community embraced a rather Protestant belief. However, both of these communities reflect the political, cultural, social and, most importantly, spiritual crisis that Romania was faced with at the beginning of the twentieth century, more specifically after the First World War.

The Old Calendarists, also called 'stilists'[7] in some sources – a reference to them being followers of the 'old style' calendar – are members of the Orthodox Church, mainly from the Eastern provinces of Moldavia and Bessarabia, who refused to accept the reform of the religious calendar introduced by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1924. The solar aspect of the Revised Julian Calendar was adopted by a number of Orthodox Churches at this time including Constantinople and Greece (similar Old Calendarist movements arose within the jurisdictions of these Churches too). The movement became very popular in rural communities and their leaders were mostly Orthodox priests and monks who continued to adhere to the pre-reform calendar and were defrocked for this reason. The Old Calendarist Church and communities of believers were the target of severe persecution at the hands of the state during the interwar period, often encouraged by members of the Orthodox clergy, as well as during communism.

Old Calendarist leaders and communities were continuously harassed and pursued by the secret police and the Gendarmerie culminating in violent clashes, especially between 1934 and 1936, which led to the death and arrest of many believers; these incidents were most of the time described by the authorities as 'rebellions'. After a short period of time when the Old Calendarist Orthodox Church was legally recognized by the Romanian state in 1945 under the title The Traditionalist Christian

[7] During my ethnographic research I was made aware of the fact that the contemporary community rejects the term 'stilist' with reference to their community because the term implies that they are the ones that had changed the calendar style when, in reality, they claim that they remained faithful to the right calendar style. As one Old Calendarist believer told me during an interview I conducted on June 1st 2019: 'We should not be called stilists because we did not change the style. They switched to the new style, so they should be called stilists.' For this reason, I attempt to avoid it as much as possible in my thesis and other written works.

Denomination (Cultul Creștin Tradiționalist) the new communist framework for religious life introduced in 1948 no longer recognized the Church. By 1952 the Old Calendarist community had divided into two major factions: the Traditionalist Christian Denomination, led by Ion Movileanu, which had its headquarters in Putna county and the Religious Associations of Eastern Traditionalist Christians, that in 1948 changed its name to Eastern Orthodox Christian Denomination from Târgu Neamț, led by Gheorghe Iacobaș and having Glicherie Tănase as its spiritual leader. The persecution of the Old Calendarist Orthodox Church and its members continued during the communist period. Several Romanian Orthodox Church priests and monks joined the Old Calendarist Orthodox Church, including bishop Galaction Cordun, whose authority to consecrate bishops enabled the church to create its own hierarchy. The leadership of the Church, its clergy, and lay members of the community were harassed, repeatedly imprisoned and placed under constant secret police surveillance. However, the Old Calendarist Church managed to maintain a continuous and functioning, though clandestine, religious life.

The Tudorists are a religious group that appeared in the early 1920s in Romania and formed around the figure of Dumitru Cornilescu (1891-1975) and Tudor (Teodor) Popescu (1887- 1963), both of whom were Orthodox priest that were defrocked by the official Church because they were accused of the fact that they have embraced a Protestant belief. The initial name of the community was the Scriptural Christians, or 'Christians According to the Scriptures,' but they soon became known as the Tudorists, after the founder of the movement. The Tudorists experienced trouble with the police throughout the entire interwar period due to the fact that they were neither prohibited nor legally recognized. They had to require permission from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to establish their meeting houses, while their authorizations to meet could be revoked without any warning. In 1939 the Tudorists were advised to merge with the legally recognized Evangelical Christians, as the state considered that they shared doctrinal similarities. Their union was a formal one, however, as the Tudorists continued to have a distinct identity inside this larger group. The Tudorists rejected icons and many aspects of Orthodox tradition and for this reason they were seen as a threat to both the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Romanian state, which in the interwar and wartime periods sought to build a unitary nation state through the promotion of the Orthodox faith and its association with the ethnic Romanian majority. Dumitru Cornilescu, an important member of the Tudorist community and

one of Tudor Popescu's closest friends, translated the Bible and published it in 1921, and revised it in 1924. This translation of the Bible is still largely used by various Neo-protestant communities in Romania, even though it was the subject of much scrutiny at the time, especially after the controversies at Saint Stephen's Church in Bucharest, colloquially referred to as the Stork's Nest, where the two priests used to serve. During the interwar period the Tudorist community had a vast collection of books, pamphlets and brochures, the majority of which were written by Dumitru Cornilescu and Teodor Popescu, that they relied on in order to spread their belief. During communism, however, hey had to find creative ways in order to distribute their materials because owning books that had a religious content could put believers and their communities in danger. It was during this time that they also became more involved in the smuggling of religious materials into the country. Nowadays the community is generally known as a second branch of the Evangelical Christians.

The present study, which builds upon the work of numerous scholars from various disciplines, attempts to open up new avenues for these two religious communities to learn about their past, as well as to fill several gaps in current literature. To begin with, the majority of studies on religious communities in Romania have mostly focused, for a long period of time, on the political persecution of high profile religious leaders, on the suffering and persecution of particular individuals or religious groups, on the relationship between church and state,[8] or on the hostile relation between religious minorities – such as the neo-Protestant communities – the Romanian Orthodox Church and the state.[9] Building upon the works of James Kapaló[10] and Emily Baran[11] – who in their studies present the religious communities they are researching not necessarily as victims of the regimes that they had to live under, but as communities that were not devoid of agency and, in the face of state repression, employed creative strategies in order to survive – the present thesis focuses on the agency and creative potential of the Old Calendarists and the Tudorists. Although

[8] George Enache, 'Biserică – societate – națiune – stat în România interbelică: I. Explorări în orizontul liberal' in *Revista teologică 2,* 2010.
[9] Dorin Dobrincu and Dănuț Mănăstireanu (Editors), *Omul evanghelic. O explorare a comunităților protestante românești*, București: Polirom, 2018.
[10] James Kapaló, *Inochentism and Orthodox Christianity. Religious Dissent in the Russian and Romanian Borderlands*, London and New York: Routledge, 2019.
[11] Emily Baran, *Dissent on the Margins. How Soviet Jehovah's Witnesses Defied Communism and Lived to Preach About It*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

persecuted by the authoritarian regimes, they proved to be active and engaged communities that fought to ensure their survival.

Moreover, unlike previous works that prioritize the textual evidence stored in the secret police archives,[12] the present study proves that religion and religious communities can be approached through the material dimension of the secret police archives, thus suggesting a new manner of looking at the archives and their content. In this regard, the thesis complements and draws upon the works of Cristina Vățulescu[13] and James Kapaló,[14] both of whom propose a perspectival shift on the archives, that of approaching their material dimension, which calls into question the 'textual truth' that has been the research focus of many scholars in the past. This thesis constitutes the first attempt to apply this bottom-up approach to the Old Calendarist and the Tudorist communities in Romania. Roland Clark's recent book[15] is one of the few sources that analyses both of these homegrown religious communities, along with other religious groups that appeared on the religious scene during the interwar period. Drawing on numerous archival documents, contemporary periodicals, and secondary sources, the work also focuses on the material elements, such as sermons, newspapers, pamphlets, brochures, and magazines that the Orthodox and Repenter churches produced and left behind, as they most fully reflect the doctrinal differences between them. The closest in terms of methodology to the present study is the work of Anca Șincan,[16] whose research on bishop Evloghie Oța and close and constant interaction

[12] Florian Bichir, *Statutul juridico-canonic al Bisericii Ortodoxe de stil vechi din România*, PhD Dissertation, University 'Ovidius' Constanța, Orthodox Theology Faculty, Constanța, 2012; Florian Bichir, *Dosarul 'Mitropolitul Galaction Cordun' - un aventurier în reverndă, un agent secret sau o victimă a comunismului*, Editura Agnos, 2012; Radu Petre Mureșan, *Stilismul în România (1924-2011)*, Sibiu: Agnos, 2012; Andreea Petruescu, 'Mișcarea stilistă în Basarabia, 1935-1936. Cauze și soluții. Perspective locale' in *Caietele CNSAS*, Anul IX, nr. 1-2 (17-18)/2016, București: Editura CNSAS, pp. 61-78, 2017;

[13] Cristina Vățulescu, *Police Aesthetics. Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010.

[14] James Kapaló, 'The Appearance of Saints: Photographic Evidence and Religious Minorities in the Secret Police Archives in Eastern Europe' in *Material Religion*, Volume 15, Issue 1, 2019, pp. 82-109; James Kapaló and Tatiana Vagramenko, 'Introduction: archives and faith communities' in James Kapaló and Tatiana Vagramenko (Eds), *Hidden Galleries. Material Religion in the Secret Police Archives in Central and Eastern Europe*, Zürich: LIT, 2020, pp. 8-11.

[15] Roland Clark, *Sectarianism and Renewal in 1920s Romania: The Limits of Orthodoxy and Nation-Building*, Bloomsbury UK, 2021.

[16] Anca Șincan, 'În clandestinitate: minorități religioase nerecunoscute de lege în arhivele Securității' in *Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane "Gheorghe Șincai"*, 22, 2019, pp. 218-231; Anca Șincan, 'The Typewriter' in James Kapaló and Tatiana Vagramenko (Eds), *Hidden Galleries. Material Religion in the Secret Police Archives in Central and Eastern Europe*, Zürich: LIT, 2020, pp. 44-45; Anca Șincan, 'Bishop Evloghie Oța and his Prayer Beads' in James Kapaló and Tatiana Vagramenko (Eds), *Hidden Galleries. Material Religion in the Secret Police Archives in Central and Eastern Europe*, Zürich: LIT, 2020, pp. 98-99.

with old calendarist believers is of great importance for the members of the contemporary Old Calendarist Orthodox Church.

Employing Eric Ketelaar's perspective,[17] which states that the archives unintentionally become 'acts of commemoration' and 'spaces of memory' due to their preservation of various materials that can become valuable for certain individuals or groups, the present study highlights the fact that the secret police archives have a twofold power: they are evidence of the wrongdoing of the regime, but they also contain materials that can undo the wrong and even bring vindication. This is also a stance supported by Laura Engelstein[18] who brings forward the concept of 'archives of eternity'. The concept emphasizes the paradoxical potential of the secret police archives to ensure the survival of a community, namely the Skoptsy, that the secret police was once responsible to destroy by confiscating its materials and arresting its members. By also applying this approach, the present study challenges the notion that the content of the secret police archives is exclusively dangerous or misleading and proves that its material dimension can help heal communities, complete, or even rediscover their histories.

This aspect is mostly explored in the chapters that include the ethnographic research component. Thus, chapter six, for example, which describes the history of a songbook produced by the Tudorist community in the 1920s, highlights the fact that by focusing on the materials created by the community – an aspect that has been largely ignored by scholars, the majority of whom focus on Tudor Popescu's personality, and Dumitru Cornilescu's translation of the Bible[19] – one can understand

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[17] Eric Ketelaar, 'Archives as Spaces of Memory' in *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Volume 29, Issue 1, 2008, pp. 9-27.

[18] Laura Engelstein, *Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom: A Russian Folktale*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1999.

[19] Emanuel Conțac, 'Influenţa versiunii Segond asupra versiunii Cornilescu 1921' in Eugen Munteanu (Editor), *Receptarea Sfintei Scripturi. Între filologie, hermeneutică şi traductologie*, Iaşi: EUAIC, 2011, pp. 122-145; Emanuel Conțac, *Cornilescu: Din culisele publicării celei mai citite traduceri a Sfintei Scripturi*, Cluj-Napoca: Logos, 2014; Emanuel Conțac, 'O perspectivă istorică asupra traducerilor Bibliei circulate în spațiul evanghelic românesc' in Dorin Dobrincu and Dănuț Mănăstireanu (Coord.), *Omul evanghelic. O explorare a comunităților protestante românești*, București: Polirom, 2018, pp. 359-385; Corneliu Constantineanu, 'The Romanian Lord's Army: A Case Study in Eastern Orthodox Church Renewal' in Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović and Radmila Radić (Editors), Orthodox Christian Renewal Movements in Eastern Europe, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 231-261.

how the Tudorists built and strengthened their religious identity by challenging the official Orthodoxy of the time.

The present thesis also deals with the issue of gender and gender relations within the Old Calendarist community. However, unlike other works that integrate questions of gender into their research, such as the study of Cristina Sircuța,[20] but rarely deal with women religious in Romania, the present thesis approaches the issue of religious women as well as of their involvement within their communities in times of crisis and persecution. Moreover, it brings forward the voices of those who have not yet been heard, meaning the Old Calendarist women, by once again focusing on the material dimension of the archives: on the postcards that they have written from detention, on the photos that they have carefully taken, and on the prayer and songbooks that they have once written and cherished.

Finally, the thesis builds on the works of Bill Brown[21] and Severin Fowles[22] and on their focus on the present and the absent things, respectively, showing that in the case of religious communities in Romania, that have been repressed by the authoritarian and the communist regime, absence also had agency. These regimes equated the confiscation or destruction of religious objects, which created an absence, with the dissolution of the religious groups they wanted to destroy. However, the present study shows how they unknowingly empowered religious communities in general with even more determination and creative potential to endure the persecution.

Last but not least, the present thesis blends multiple disciplinary approaches and aims to become a relevant study for scholars attempting an interdisciplinary approach. Addressing notions and issues that are of interest for the fields of history, study of religions, anthropology, ethnography, and even transitional justice, this study highlights the potential of the secret police archives to become valuable resources for scholars across multiple disciplines. It also draws attention to the fact that crossing disciplinary boundaries can both raise new questions and generate new knowledge and innovation.

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[20] Cristina Sircuța, *Viața femeilor în România interbelică*, București: Editura Oscar Print, 2016.
[21] Bill Brown, 'Thing theory' in *Critical Inquiry Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2001, pp. 1–22.
[22] Severin Fowles, 'People without things' in Mikkel Bille et al. (Editors), *An Anthropology of Absence: Materializations of Transcendence and Loss*, New York: Springer Science + Business Media, LLC, 2010, pp. 23-45.

The present thesis is structured in seven chapters, as follows:

Chapter 1

The first chapter delves into the methodological framework of the thesis, stating and defining the concepts of archive, archival turn and material religion. After the fall of communism, Romania dealt with many issues; one of the most concerning by far was that of the secret police archives. Having access to the documents produced by the former authoritarian and totalitarian regimes was seen as politically necessary as well as being a healing process, and the archive was invested with a power that it still holds today (Poenaru 2013, 40). The power of the archive refers to its potential to change people's lives, to reveal who led a decent life during communism, and who compromised themselves, who was a 'criminal,' and who was not. For this reason, when it comes to conducting research in the archives of the former Romanian secret police, the majority of scholars are interested in issues of justice and truth. This first chapter will describe how studying the creative materials produced by the two religious minorities under discussion – the Old Calendarists and the Tudorists, respectively – that were confiscated by the secret police, can offer a new lens through which to view the Romanian archives and its contents.

Chapter 2

The second chapter describes the historical background in which the Old Calendarists and the Tudorists emerged, along with the attitudes of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the state towards religious minorities at the time of their appearance. These groups were seen as a threat to the image and authority of the Orthodox Church, as both groups formed around priestly figures that, at one point, rejected the teachings of the Orthodox Church and separated from it. This chapter will also approach the legal framework concerning religious issues, and the policies adopted by the state against religious minorities, in general, and against the above-mentioned groups, in particular. The notion of 'sect' and its understandings in the Romanian intellectual and theological contexts will be described and analysed, in order to observe how its meanings changed during the 20th century, based on what regime was governing the country. The chapter draws on archival documents, articles published in the interwar press as well as during communism, laws and judicial acts, papers, articles of general interest and volumes of documents.

Chapter 3

The third chapter explores the role of women and young girls in Old Calendarist communities in Romania as revealed through images and materials located in the archives. Old Calendarist communities, named after 'the old style calendar,' rejected the 1924 Church reform in which the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church decided to adopt the Revised Julian Calendar and went on to organize their own rules of worship and devotion. Due to the fact that they did not have proper churches or places to live, the leaders of the group, and sometimes the members too, would find shelter in caves or woods. The community developed into a spiritual mass movement that soon became the target of the Gendarmerie and the secret police. Women played an important role within these communities in terms of membership but also in relation to the spread and preservation of Old Calendarist ideas and beliefs. Explored through the prism of the former secret police archival documents, these women, be they nuns, devoted members, or young girls motivated and unsettled by visions, were deemed dangerous and were accused of luring people into the Old Calendarist groups. Seen as naïve and prone to falling under the spell of religious fanatics, women were the protectors and the deliverers of tradition. In contrast to the extremely negative representations of these women that we find in contemporary Orthodox Church publications, police reports and popular press articles, the letters and postcards that they wrote from detention to their parents, brothers and sisters, that have been preserved in state security archives, offer us an insight into the private life, personality and motivation of these women. This chapter contributes to our understanding of the agency of women in traditional religious contexts in twentieth century Romanian and Orthodox Eastern Europe more broadly. It also presents important new sources relating to the neglected history of the practice of incarceration in Orthodox monasteries in the region.

Chapter 4

The fourth chapter introduces the Tudorist community, a group that emerged in the 1920s Romania around the figures of Tudor/Teodor Popescu and Dumitru Cornilescu, two former Orthodox priests. Until recently, however, the group has not been the object of much research, especially due to its isolated character. This chapter tells the history of the beginning of the Tudorist community through one of its first creations that I located in a file in the secret police archives – the 'Cântări creștinești' (Christian

Songs) songbook, which contained 47 songs and remained the standard song collection for some years until the late 1930s. According to the biography of Dumitru Cornilescu who collected, translated, and even composed some of these songs, they were first learnt by heart by the members of the community and only later was he able to collect them together and to publish the songbook. The chapter explores the story of a particular copy of the songbook which might have been purchased by an informer of Teodor Popescu while attending one of his conferences in 1927 and was later attached to Popescu's personal file. Shown to a member of the community during an interview in 2018, almost ninety years after it was confiscated, the songbook and its history brought to light numerous memories and set in motion a chain of events that led to a personal journey of searching and finding oneself in the secret police archives.

Chapter 5

The fifth chapter explores the figure of Glicherie Tănase, a former Orthodox monk who, defrocked by the official Orthodox Church for rejecting the calendar reform, became the most important leader of the Old Calendarist group. I will focus on a specific mugshot of monk Glicherie Tănase located in a secret police file, which was taken in 1936 when he was arrested after the first confrontations between the Old Calendarists and the state authorities in Neamț county. When he was arrested again in 1952, Onofrei V. Onofrei, described as one of the youngest members of the community, obtained the mugshot from a Militiaman who was working in Neamț county, and managed to make copies of it at a photo studio in the same county. Even though this is a police photograph, it was distributed amongst the members of the Old Calendarist community as a devotional object. Onofrei made 45 copies of the mugshot in an attempt to encourage the community to remember their imprisoned spiritual leader. He went on to distribute 25 of these images to the monks of Slătioara Monastery, the largest Old Calendarist monastery, and to other Old Calendarist members. The image of their imprisoned leader was meant to remind them of the sufferings the community had endured and to inspire a communal sense of continuity. The chapter highlights the creative strategies of the Old Calendarist community that even though it had never produced images of its religious leaders during the interwar or the communist period, it made use of a photograph produced by the secret police by converting it into a postcard, which in turn became, I argue, an icon-style image, not necessarily because of its status, but because of the person it displayed.

Chapter 6

The sixth chapter presents an important aspect of my fieldwork and ethnographic research focusing on the personal encounter of a Tudorist believer, B.N., with his surveillance file, as well as his experience with the secret police archives. By describing the manner in which members of the contemporary community view the secret police archives, this chapter addresses the issue of memory, silence and oblivion. It also focuses on the meaning of confiscated objects and materials for the Tudorist believer that came into contact with them after almost fifty years. In the present case the confiscated materials are a small handwritten songbook and some personal letters. This story constitutes a sensitive part of my research, especially due to the memories and experiences that these materials brought to light. The chapter centres around the believer's personal songbook, which he wrote, cared for, and treasured, only for it to be confiscated during a luggage inspection in 1975 whilst he was doing his military service. As he was the first person to point to the significance of the first songbook produced by the Tudorist community (see chapter 4), this chapter is unique as all the elements of my research converge in one place: the archive, the secret police file, the community, memory and a story that ties everything together.

Chapter 7

Chapter seven, the last chapter of the thesis, deals with the story of Cucova and the destruction of the Old Calendarist church in there. The chapter focuses on a series of photographs that were taken in 1935 in the village of Cucova, in the county of Putna (nowadays Bacău), as evidence of the rebellions and problems caused by the Old Calendarists in the region, photographs that were displayed during the first Hidden Galleries Exhibition in Cluj Napoca, in November 2019. The context in which these photographs were taken is a very important one, especially for the history of the Old Calendarist Church. The incidents that took place in Cucova in 1935 are described as a massacre in various narratives of the Old Calendarists, while the archival documents portray the event in a different light, making the Old Calendarists appear as rebels and troublemakers. In 1936, one year after this event, police reports state that the Old Calendarist movement was no longer active in the region. This, of course, was not true. Even though the wooden church in Cucova was destroyed after the confrontation, an Old Calendarist monastery was later rebuilt on the approximately same place, where it still stands today. Many years after the event, during my archival research,

these photographs came to light. Even though they were initially meant to incriminate, they now testify of the wrongdoings of interwar authorities, and constitute a valuable resource in order to prove their intrusive and destructive character. Approaching important concepts such as photo elicitation, and collective memory, this chapter focuses on the shifting status of these images, which nowadays gained new and different meanings. These photographs complete and confirm the memory of the Old Calendarist community and testify to the victims having been there, they become central to the act of mourning and the subsequent recovery of the images and communal memory.

Chapter One: Policing Religion in Romania: Institutions, Archives and Materiality

Introduction

After the fall of the communist regime in December 1989, Romania dealt with many issues, but one of the most concerning by far was posed by the secret police archives. Having access to the documents produced by the former authoritarian and totalitarian regimes was seen as politically necessary as it was able to engender a healing process, especially for those individuals that were directly affected by the repressive measures imposed by the former regimes. The archives and their holdings had a special status among other archival sources even before access to their content was allowed (Poenaru 2013, 102). The reasons were obvious – it was believed that they contained the truth about what happened during communism and, most importantly, why it happened. As the present chapter will illustrate, the opening of the archives affected many friendships and even family relations. This has been the case in all former communist countries where access to the holdings of the secret police archives was granted.

When it comes to conducting research in the archives of the former Romanian secret police, the majority of scholars are interested in issues such as justice and truth. This first chapter will describe how studying the creative materials produced by the religious communities, materials that were confiscated from them by the secret police, can offer a new lens through which to view the Romanian archives and its contents. Moreover, the chapter delves into the methodological framework of the thesis, stating and defining the concepts of police, secret police, archive, archival turn, materiality and material religion as well as the manner in which the latter is reflected in the holdings of the secret police archives. It will also discuss the forms of organization that led up to the institution of the police and its development throughout Europe, as well as its inception in Romania.

Understanding the manner in which the institution of police and the methods of policing, in general, have developed throughout time, as well as the relations between policing and the policed is of extreme importance for the purposes of the thesis and the argument presented therein. Measures such as interrogations, supervision, control over an invisible network of agents, and even the punishment of

disobedient individuals that were adopted by various leaders and forms of organization leading up to the institution of the police ever since the fifteenth century, though already cruel, have turned in the hands of the secret police into instruments of terror and violent persecution. The secret police and its repressive methods and operations became the main apparatus of political control and played a crucial role in the anti-religious operations launched during the 20th century in Romania.

Policing and The Concept of 'Secret Police'

The concept of policing is defined as the act of ensuring and preserving law and order by a police force, or of controlling the means and manners in which something is done. Though the act of policing and the police, as an institution, has generally been linked to the notion of public order maintenance, it has also involved the surveillance and direct targeting of certain individuals; in this regard, approaching the concept of police means understanding the relations between policing and the policed and how they developed in time, as well as how individuals responded to being policed.

At times, policing involved the surveillance of political and religious dissidents, labor activists, criminals, and political enemies, thus gaining the character of a political police. Although it is mostly considered that political policing is a symbol of the twentieth century, it seems that forms of organizations similar to the secret services had been unofficially institutionalized ever since the sixteenth century, if not earlier. The Inquisition, with its interrogation methods, along with the so-called Suprema, the Council of the Supreme and General Inquisition, functioned almost like a secret police in the service of the monarchy, controlling an invisible network of agents since as early as 1483 (Mladek 2007, 33). Its methods and procedures in making arrests, conducting trials and interrogations, and carrying out punishments left their trail in the later totalitarian and even democratic constitutional states (Mladek 2007, 33). Secret networks of agents were also in the service of the popes,[23] of various ministers, such as Walsingham, the first minister of Elizabeth I, and cardinals, most

[23] See, for example, the Roman Inquisition, founded in the second half of the 16th century by Pope Paul III as a direct response to the Protestant ideas that started to spread in Italy. The best example of how well The Roman Inquisition was recording its trials is Carlo Ginzburg's book, 'The Cheese and the Worms,' that tells the real story of Domenico Scandella, known as Menocchio, an Italian peasant and miller, who was accused of heresy, interrogated by the inquisitors and, finally, received the death sentence in 1600. The vast documentation on which Ginzburg relied on in order to write the book reveals a well-organized institution whose manners of conducting trials and interrogations, and also of recording them, is impressive. The reader is, thus, able to learn about Menocchio's entire life, starting from his readings, thoughts and fears to his hopes and despairs (see Ginzburg 1992).

popular of whom is Cardinal Richelieu. Considered as one of the best-informed men of his time, Richelieu had generals and even the king under surveillance, whilst he also engaged in strong propagandistic methods in the form of well-trained academics and published books and newspapers, in order to justify the French crown's politics (Mladek 2007, 33–34).

Policing and police surveillance was also an important concern of many scholars during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In most of their writings, authors such as Nicholas de La Mare, a Parisian police officer, or Théodore Turquet de Mayerne, a royal physician and writer, approached the relationship between policing and the policed, highlighting that the main object of the police is the human being, with all his or her traits, with its purpose being to ensure the happiness of the people, while also guaranteeing the growth of the state's power (Enache 2007, 102). In 'Traité de la police' Nicholas de La Mare mentions eleven aspects that the police were responsible for monitoring and guarding over in a state, and these were: religion, morals, health, supplies, public safety, roads and highways, the liberal arts, science, trade, factories, laborers, and the poor (La Mare 1722, 4). According to La Mare, the main task of the police was to ensure the order and happiness in a state (La Mare 1722, 77); in short, life, with all its meanings, was the main object of the police (Foucault and Kritzman 1988, 81).

Michel Foucault explored policing and its shifting understandings and purposes in his writings, especially focusing on notions such as disciplinary and sovereign power. In one of his best-known studies, 'Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of Political Reason,' Foucault states that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the police were seen as a 'governmental technology peculiar to the state' (Foucault and Kritzman 1988, 77), the ensemble of instruments serving to ensure order in a state, and not as an institution, in the modern sense of the term, functioning within the state. He exemplifies this with the utopian project suggested by Théodore Turquet de Mayerne in 'La Monarchie aristodémocratique,' published in 1611, a project which, in Foucault's view, represents one of the first programmes for a police state. De Mayerne proposed the idea of each province having a board entrusted with preserving law and order, overseeing the positive and the negative aspects of life, controlling markets and trading, territory, and space, and even ensuring communication among individuals (de Mayerne 1611, 22–26). In Foucault's view,

such an intervention in people's activities could be qualified as almost totalitarian (Foucault and Kritzman 1988, 79). In the same study he analyses Johann von Justi's text, 'Grundsätze der Polizeywissenschaft,'[24] published in 1756, one year after he was appointed Director of Police in Göttingen, in which von Justi defines the police as the element that 'enables the state to increase its power and exert its strength to the full,' while also ensuring the happiness of its citizens (Foucault and Kritzman 1988, 82).

When it comes to the forms of organization leading up to the institution of the police, Foucault lists several groups that, from the end of the seventeenth century, adopted the task of supervision, control, and even punishment.[25] These groups were not necessarily organized from above, but took upon themselves the task of policing and of ensuring order within a specific territory, thus assuming a similar role to that of the police. First, Foucault mentions communities of religious dissenters, such as the Quakers and the Methodists, and other societies that were more or less attached to them. The policed were the individuals within their own communities, as they were mostly preoccupied with the moral slippages of their members, preventing drunkenness, gambling, adultery and refusal to work (Harcourt et al. 2015, 102). Then, he mentions paramilitary self-defence groups, consisting of notables and the high bourgeoisie who intended to ensure moral order, especially in the case of popular movements. Later on, poor people were employed for such tasks, thus creating the institution of police (Harcourt et al. 2015, 103–104). Later, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the police developed as an integral part of the criminal justice system (Mladek 2007, 3).

The regimes of Napoleon I and Napoleon III are known to have been equipped with a well-organized secret police; under Napoleon I, the task of controlling the masses and of organizing a system of information about their thoughts and feelings belonged to Joseph Fouché who was the Minister of Police, and the richest landowner in France of those days (Bramstedt 2007, 8). Aiming to have connections in all camps, he put together a secret police whose personnel was of very different social origin, such as unfrocked priests, former nobles, unemployed clerks, and adventurers of all kinds (Bramstedt 2007, 14).

[24] Principles of Policing.
[25] These examples that Foucault offers relate to England.

Fouché's methods of policing were exported throughout Europe during Bonaparte's conquests and they ended up being adopted even by Russia, a country that would become France's enemy. The first specialized organs of policing and incarceration in Russia appeared under Ivan the Terrible, in the sixteenth century, whilst the reign of Peter the Great (1682-1725) renewed the interest in information gathering (Hudson Jr. 2012, 7–8). In 1811 Tsar Alexander I created a Ministry of Police based on the French model. Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855) promulgated the first coherent set of reforms meant to create a centralized police system (Hagenloh 2009, 20), and his secret police (Third Section) was reformed under Alexander II who, in 1867, turned the Third Section into a national police that had surveillance purposes (Hudson Jr. 2012, 12). After the 1905 Revolution, the Department of Police was divided into two parts, with one part specialized in information gathering within the revolutionary parties, and the other supervising all groups and social movements (Hudson Jr. 2012, 14). The Russian Civil War of 1918-1921 enhanced militarization in the ranks of the police and allowed for the expansion of the political police into the domain of civil policing (Hagenloh 2009, 19–20).

The establishment of the Soviet regime following the Bolshevik revolution led to the development of a highly organized secret police whose spread and terrifying measures quickly gained an international reputation. Building up on the existing Tsarist model, the Soviet secret police also acted as an instrument of control that was exercised over all aspects of life. The interwar Romanian journal 'Poliția' (The Police) for instance, mentioned the 'terror' that had settled in Russia, along with an espionage and terror apparatus:

> In order to stay in power and impose on a large country such as Russia, a regime that it did not want, the Bolsheviks understood that they needed a vast espionage and terror apparatus that should generate fear on those who willingly opposed the prophetic mission of the Soviets (Chendi 1925, 36).

Secret police officers transformed into 'agents of terror,' they lost their humanity by committing murders not only in order to fulfill orders, but for career advancement, stealing from many individuals and contributing to the destruction of their lives (Vatlin 2016, xvi).

According to Mark Harrison, there are seven unchangeable principles on which the Soviet police state operated throughout its history, principles that can be extrapolated to any totalitarian regime. The first one, 'your enemy is hiding' (Harrison 2016, 28) highlights the need for a secret police, in the first place, whilst the second one, 'start from the usual suspects' (Harrison 2016, 31), relies on the police's ability to check out each person's past, especially of those who have been associated with the enemies of the regime. The third principle, 'study the young' (Harrison 2016, 32) is important, as young people are the main channel through which dissenting values could re-emerge. Echoing of George Orwell's claim that 'every joke is a tiny revolution' (Orwell 1945) the fourth principle, 'stop the laughing' (Harrison 2016, 34) is essential because laughter brings people together or, as Harrison states: 'If I crack a joke and you chuckle, you're telling me something I might not have known before: you think like me – I am not alone' (Harrison 2016, 36). This leads to the fifth principle, 'rebellion spreads like wildfire' (Harrison 2016, 36), and this is why the task of the secret police is to put into practice the sixth principle, to 'stamp out every spark' (Harrison 2016, 38). Finally, the last principle states that 'order is created by appearances' (Harrison 2016, 40) meaning that the entire regime relies on the illusion of loyalty, whilst many people give shelter to hidden thoughts of rebellion and doubt. The aim is to isolate the individuals, to instil in them the idea that they are alone, thus creating the appearance of order and stability. These principles highlight that fact that under a totalitarian ruler, the police were not merely an instrument, but an essential element that through its brutal methods ensured the stability of the regime.

Every dictator needs a secret police that can track down on 'potential enemies,' or 'objective enemies,' a category of individuals whose identities are always changing. Being called a 'state within a state' (Arendt 1994, 552),[26] the police and the secret services derogated their image from the moment they came under the rule of dictatorial and totalitarian regimes; suddenly, they were no longer interested in the happiness and well-being of their people, but rather became torturer and executioner (Arendt 1994, 553) of the orders of the totalitarian ruler. Police discipline, established in the second half of the eighteenth century in most European countries, along with police terror, a

[26] See Yevgenia Albats, *The KGB: State within a State*.

fundamental trait of totalitarianism (Deletant 1995, 1), and the exercise of disciplinary power became the norm.

The Romanian Secret Police. The Siguranța

The Romanian Secret Services were founded at the end of 1859 after the election of Alexandru Ioan Cuza. At this time, Romania was being formed as a nation and its people were gaining a sense of a common national consciousness (Aparaschivei 2013, 135). In those times, the main tasks of the secret police were the same as those pursued by the secret services of other states, namely that of ensuring the protection of the state and its stability against internal and external threats. For that reason, some of the first responsibilities given to the secret police were to keep track of the number of foreigners on the territory of the Principalities, as their recent merger had many opponents (Aparaschivei 2013,150), and to supervise the activities of the neighboring states' armies (Aparaschivei 2013,153). In 1875, with the war of independence on the horizon, the Ministry of Internal Affairs voted for the organization of the Public Safety Police.[27]

Later, in the aftermath of the 1907 peasant revolt, the government established the political police, called 'Siguranța,'[28] which was responsible for gathering information on subversive groups, infiltrating them, and repressing those who were considered dangerous to the safety of the state (Adelman 1984, 137-138). Part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Siguranța's power grew more and more with the growth of the Romanian state, especially during the 1930s and 1940s, under the rule of King Carol II, and during Antonescu's dictatorship. During Carol II's reign, the Siguranța was sometimes used against the king's personal enemies, such as Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the Iron Guard's leader, who was murdered by the police in 1938, together with thirteen of his comrades. The civil war that followed this event only deepened Carol's dependence on the police, thus a special secret police was created in 1940 under the coordination of the Russian émigré Mihail Moruzov, namely the Secret Intelligence Service, that served the king's interests exclusively (Adelman 1984, 139). Together with the Gendarmerie, they became the most feared tools of the Ministry of

[27] Translated as Poliția Siguranței Publice.
[28] In Romanian, the word Siguranța means safety, insurance.

Internal Affairs, keeping a close watch on the most important political figures of the period.

The Gendarmerie as a separate institution was founded in 1893 under the name of 'Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei' (General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie) and was in charge of supervising the rural population of Romania, which represented almost 80% of the total population of Romania at the time, whilst the Siguranța was responsible for the urban areas (Alexe 2014, 10). The main role of the Gendarmerie, as an institution, was to maintain public order and security and to ensure respect of the law (Kapaló 2019, 124). Considered the police agents of the rural areas, the gendarmes were alien elements to the community,[29] disliked by the peasants, towards whom they often manifested a violent behaviour (Iliescu 1925, 66), and by both the extreme right and the extreme left political parties, as their members were often chased, arrested, or interrogated by the Gendarmerie. For this reason, once in charge of the country, the communists imprisoned many of the former police agents and gendarmes, seen as bourgeois instruments of repression of the working class. Moreover, the communist propaganda presented the gendarmes as brutal, incompetent individuals (Alexe 2014, 21).

After the creation of Greater Romania in 1918, the police had to adapt to the changes that appeared in the newly formed state. This proved to be a great challenge, especially due to the fact that there were several differences between the penal codes of the newly incorporated regions and the Principalities, which was still an issue in 1924, six years after the unification (Tacian 1924, 28–30). The police, as an institution, and police agents, in general, had a tainted reputation, mainly due to their brutality, lack of training, sometimes even of education, and the fact that they had become a policy instrument at the hands of political parties (Gheorghiu 1924, 31). The main problem was the fact that less than 10% of the police personnel had been properly trained (Suceanu 1925, 101), and complaints about their incompetence filled the pages of the interwar journals, such as 'Poliția.' Published in Transylvania between 1920 and 1940, the journal asked for better schools for police agents, for better salaries (Ghibu 1925, 2; Gheorghiu 1924, 31), for an enhanced technique of investigation (Chendi 1925, 98), and claimed that the Romanian police had to understand and put

[29] The law did not allow for the Gendarmes to work in their places of birth, nor for their wives to be of origin from the communities that they were in charge of supervising (Alexe 2014, 21).

into practice its rather preventive role, and not its repressive one (Bariţiu 1924, 46). The conclusion drawn from the articles published in the journal is that during the interwar period the police was seen as an institution of 'terror and chicanery' (Chendi 1925, 36) which, due to the mediocrity of its personnel, caused more problems than it solved, especially considering their brutal behaviour towards the population; such behaviour was sometimes shown towards the various religious communities in the country, as well. In a short article that was published in 'Poliţia' in which he was approaching the issue of 'religious liberties' Victor Popp draws attention to the violence manifested by the police agents against certain religious denominations:

> We got used to tolerating a few well-established confessions [...] but we do not tolerate the freedom of conscience of those who do not want to be either Orthodox, or Catholics, or Reformed [...] It is time for the persecution against people who only want the right to a free conscience to cease. And the main institution that is called to defend this right is, of course, the police. The officials and police agents should think about their duty as officers of the law before they raise their hand, they should think about their conscience that they want free, just as anybody else (Popp 1924, 30).

The main target of the Siguranţa during the pre-communist years was the clandestine Communist Party.[30] In Bessarabia, for example, Siguranţa's efforts to unmask the Soviet agents and to prevent the communist propaganda in the region, sometimes manifested through violent behaviour from the part of the gendarmes and police agents, resulted in great dissatisfaction on the part of the local population, which sensed that Bessarabia had been rather occupied by Romania, not united with it (King 2000, 42). These tensions led to conflicts between the state and the population that were sometimes expressed in the form of uprisings, such as the Tatar Bunar rebellion, in September 1924 (Negura 2021, 4). Henry Barbusse, the French writer and member of the French Communist Party, attended the trial that followed the rebellion. On returning to France he wrote a book entitled 'Les Bourreaux' (The Hangmen) in which he openly expressed his anti-Romanian and pro-Soviet position, but also took the chance to critique the Siguranţa as an institution:

[30] Siguranţa was also keeping a close watch on the Jewish minority in Romania, as it was considered the fifth column of the Communist party.

> The Romanian Siguranța has […] ties and agents, ears and hands all over the place. It is a state within the state […] There are 45.000 gendarmes in Romania […] in small groups, they are assigned to campaigns and resort to extortion, abuse, theft and crime in order to impose themselves (Barbusse 1926, 50).

He then goes on to describe the alleged harm and violence that the Siguranța inflicted on individuals by referring to Constantin G. Costa-Foru's brochure, 'The Abuses and the Crimes of the Siguranța,' a paper in which the latter talks about the supposed abuses suffered on the part of the Siguranța by 70 of its victims:

> Wives are being tortured in front of their husbands, and the husbands in front of their wives. There is no method too violent for the police officers, the agents […] to apply in order to cause the most intense physical pain possible […] They strike with iron tubes wrapped in rubber until blood comes out of the ears. They then pour boiling water on the ears. They pull the nails and the teeth […] (Barbusse 1926, 77).

According to Pavel Moraru, these accounts were, by and large, fables and fabrications written by communist sympathizers of the time (Moraru 2016, 29). The measures taken by the Siguranța against the clandestine Communist Party were taken against individual party members, not against a particular social class, whilst the severity of the treatment applied to political enemies did not descend to the inhuman measures that characterized the communist secret police (Deletant 1995, 13-14). However, the very fact of its existence set a historical precedent for its rebirth as an instrument of terror under communist rule (Adelman 1984, 140).

In 1921 the police had a poorly organised surveillance and informative service, thus important steps had to be taken in order for an improved system to be put in place. The agents had to be trained in order to properly investigate a crime scene, they had to learn the jargon of criminals, but they also had to be prepared to infiltrate various groups (Muntean 1921, 6–7). To this end, they sometimes had to work with informers, described as 'weak' people, with an 'elastic conscience' (Georgescu 1925, 39) that they recruited from within the groups they kept under surveillance. Starting from 1923, specialized police journals gave clear instructions to police agents on how to conduct interrogations; these were not to be obtained under high-pressure circumstances, the agents were not allowed to threaten the interrogated individual, nor to change their

declarations, or to suggest their wording (Theodor 1923, 118). Based on archival evidence, however, it seems that police agents would sometimes violate these rules, especially when it came to illiterate people who could not write down their own declarations and pressure was put onto them to sign false statements. Around the same period of time, the police started to work on a better organised all-points bulletin (Poliția 1925, 40), and to make the case for a central archive, headquartered in Bucharest, that would centralize all important documents (Tarangul 1923, 42). The Law for the Organization of the State Archives was adopted in 1925 and, according to its second article, the archives would receive for safekeeping from the civil, military, and church authorities, the following materials: historical documents, documents that were older than 30 years, out of use seals, manuscripts, maps and engravings, Romanian medals, and other objects that were related to the cultural history of the Romanian people (Cârjan 2000, 228).

The Securitate

Officially formed on 28 August 1948 under Soviet influence, the creation of the Securitate was the result of a process that began in March 1945, after the imposition of the Groza government, when both the Siguranța and the Secret Services were brought under Soviet and Communist rule (Oprea 2008, 60). The communist-era Securitate was not the creation of the communist state, but it rather inherited the methods, the logistics, and even some of the personnel of several interwar intelligence services; however, its actions were completely subordinated to the communist party that it was serving (Banu 2007, 483). Florian Banu argues, nonetheless, that what distinguishes the Securitate from Romania's previous informational regimes was its 'boundless ambition, ideologically motivated, to know everything, to control everything, and to repress every anti-communist gesture, idea, or attitude' (Verdery 2014, 21).

When the communist regime came to power, on December 1947, the institutions that were meant to ensure public order were the first ones to be transformed into political tools; the Army, the Secret Services, the Gendarmerie, and the police were cleared of all 'fascist' elements, which were then replaced with people faithful to the regime (Banu 2007, 459). Starting from September 1944, the Gendarmerie was gradually turned into a repressive instrument at the disposal of the Communist Party, whilst the officers and other members of the personnel were intimidated, arrested,

persecuted, and even imprisoned (Banu and Spiridon 2016, 64). Later on, in 1949, the police and the Gendarmerie were centralized within another organ of internal security, the Militia, which had, in its turn, a repressive character (Deletant 1995, 51; Alexe 2014, 22). The collaboration between the Securitate and the Militia, which was mostly in charge of the rural areas, was sometimes rendered difficult due to the lack of communication, or even due to the poor training and education of their personnel (Chivu 1970, 47). The Securitate[31] became, despite its name, the reason for all the fears experienced by the Romanian people, turning into what Marius Oprea calls an 'everyday evil' (Oprea 2002, 14).

Even though the Securitate has gone through various name changes throughout the years, the term secret police came to be widely used even though it was not, in fact, a secret institution.[32] Its existence was never hidden; however, it practiced a 'visible spectacle of secrecy' (Vățulescu 2010, 4–5) necessary in order to camouflage the absence of a secret which, according to Hannah Arendt, is a specific trait of totalitarian regimes. At the core of this 'spectacle[33] of secrecy' were a well-organized informative network, and the secret police files. Newsreel and documentary films would sometimes display the covers of secret police files, they would show agents browsing them, but never got close enough so that the viewer could read its contents. It was enough for them to know that the file was real, the police was at work and it had control over the information.

The informative network had been a priority for the Securitate from its inception. Obsessed with controlling every activity, of knowing every thought, every opposing action, it established a web of informers that in 1948 counted 42.187 individuals (Oprea 2018, 91). The majority of these people were seen as hostile towards the communist regime, and they were forced to accept collaboration by

[31] 'Securitatea,' similar to 'Siguranța,' means safety, a state of comfort, characterized by the lack of disturbance or disorder.

[32] I use the 'secret police'as a catch-all term for various other names, such as agency, organ, service, section (Kapaló and Povedák 2022, 11). According to Cristina Vățulescu, these terms did not reveal the real nature of the activities conducted by the secret police, activities such as 'surveillance, investigation, arrest and detention' (Vățulescu 2010, 3).

[33] The manners in which the Securitate functioned became so well known that it would sometimes operate in plain view and it still managed to reach its purpose. For example, if it wanted to isolate a certain individual, he or she was taken to the Securitate headquarters, kept there for a few hours, and then let go without any harm. This entire spectacle made people suspicious of that specific individual and the result was his or her isolation from the group (Ivănescu 2012, 214). Even though the person did not become an informer, their credibility was compromised.

various means, such as blackmail, torture, or threats. Before being recruited, each individual was carefully supervised by the police, as the informers had to have certain psychological traits that would enable them to carry out the various tasks and meet the challenges that could occur during their work. Thus, an article published in 1969 in 'Securitatea,' a journal that was exclusively addressed to the members of the secret police, stated that a valuable informer had to be attentive, ambitious, to have a good memory, and good judgment (Buleandră 1969, 38–41). Before the target was recruited, the Securitate officer was in charge of creating a so-called 'Personal Knowledge Report,' a document that contained relevant information about the targeted individual, such as: social-demographic data, level of education, their relations and connections within the environment that the Securitate was interested in, psychophysiological traits, and intellectual qualities that are specific to the informative work (Albu 2008, 38-41).[34] Once the targets – willingly or unwillingly – accepted cooperation, they were given a code name and had to sign a confidentiality agreement (Banu 2009, 294). These documents were then added to their personal files, also known as network files, that contained information about every activity undertaken by the informers who, in their turn, were watched over by other Securitate officers (Albu and Chivu 2007, 9). According to Kapaló, some of these informers, especially those who were recruited from within the religious communities and shared the belief system or culture of the individuals they were reporting on, acted as well-trained ethnographers. Not only did they offer information about their targets, but they were also able to write observations about the context in which a certain event took place, or about the material aspects of religion that they understood as insiders and direct participants. Thus, their texts become valuable due to the 'archival traces of religious material worlds and agencies' that they offer (Kapaló 2022, 260–261).

The Secret Police File

A practice that began in the second half of the eighteenth century, namely the writing of files for those who had come to the attention of the police (Foucault 2006, 53), or whom the police simply suspected of something, turned within totalitarian and authoritarian states into an obsession of the regime. Hannah Arendt claims that in the Soviet Union there was a wide-spread belief, most certainly fuelled by the secret police

[34] In order to obtain this piece of information the Securitate agent would sometimes engage in conversations about the target with their neighbors.

itself, that every citizen had a secret police file that registered every small detail about their everyday existence (Arendt 1994, 563). According to Herbert Zilber, in the Socialist bloc people and things were nothing more than mere reflections of their files and they only existed through their files (Fitzpatrick 2005, 14). Every individual was visible and this continuous visibility enabled the quick, even premature intervention of disciplinary power, interventions in the form of punishments, surveillance, pressure, threats, or blackmail. In the eyes of the totalitarian regime, one was not guilty after one had committed a crime, but beforehand, before the act was even possible (Foucault 2006, 55). The disciplinary power became an apparatus that gained an almost panoptic[35] character (Foucault 2006, 55), seeing and controlling everyone and everything, starting from the language to individuals' behavior, including their potential behavior, spreading fear and suspicion. Ordinary people and their families had their lives destroyed for crimes that they might have committed, or that someone else thought that they might contemplate committing in the future (Harrison 2016, 92), they were the 'potential enemies,' and they had to be punished, just in case.

In Romania, the secret police produced numerous files that were placed in multiple fonds, depending on their content. The principal ones were surveillance or informative files of people who were kept under close supervision, followed by documentary files, which dealt with particular issues, such as religion or art, penal files, of people who were sent to trial, and the files of people who, one way or another, collaborated with the Securitate. The files became a means of manipulation, any piece of information within them could be exploited, taken out of context and interpreted in a way that would allow the party to achieve its goal. The file, thus, became an instrument of social control; if one was punished by the regime, the popular belief was that they must have had something 'bad to their file' (Ivănescu 2012, 222). The archive of the Securitate was created at the beginning of the 1950s, and it was organized on the record system, certain type of files corresponding to each record as follows: the operative records brought together documents that were obtained through informative

[35] The term derives from the concept of 'panopticon,' a type of penal institution and system of control designed by the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the 18th century. According to Foucault, the Panopticon and its design illustrates a new and essential characteristic of the disciplinary regime, namely visibility (Finn 2009, 4). The concept allows for all prisoners within an institution to be supervised by a security guard without them being able to see the guard. This creates the illusion of an apparent omnipresence of the inspector, as one never knows when he is watching; 'it is precisely the inspector's apparent omnipresence that sustains perfect discipline in the panopticon, that deters the prisoners themselves from transgressing'(Božovič 1995, 8).

activities; the network stock included the personal files of former agents, but also of people who refused to collaborate with the Securitate; the stock of criminal inquiry contained penitentiary files, penal files, or files of military tribunals; the non-operative stock was, amongst other things, made up of the files of officers; the documentary stock contained materials that were obtained by the processing of the archives taken from the pre-communist intelligence services and had a historical value (Ivănescu 2014, 178–179).

The archive was important for the Securitate as it reflected the work of an entire informative apparatus, its documents were of 'scientific' value and they were to be studied and used in order to take further decisions that would enable the progress of the regime (Bănică and Protopopescu 1985, 41–46). Ironically, the careful manner in which the communist regime recorded its documents facilitates the study of its archives in the present. These biased sources of the past are, instead, filled with distorted versions of reality and, as valuable as they are for scholars today, they require considerable methodological reflection when interpreting them.

A New Manner of Looking at the Archives[36]

In this section I will discuss the process of transitional justice, which started in Romania in the early 1990s, and whose main aim was to work towards reconciliation and justice for the victims of the repressive communist regime (see Stan 2009; Verdery 2014). I will then talk about the concept of archival turn and its influence in humanities and social sciences, and about the particularities of the secret police archives, situating them within the broader debates and theories of the meaning of archives. Finally, I will discuss the concept of materiality and the material turn in the study of religions, pinpointing to the value of the religious materials found in the secret police archives and how focusing on the material dimension of the archives could enhance our present understanding of the religious communities' culture during times of persecution. I will offer several examples in order to highlight the potential of the Romanian secret police archives to generate different types of stories, apart from those written in a personal

[36] Some information included in this subchapter has been published in the form of an article entitled 'Redeeming memory: neo-Protestant churches and the secret police archives in Romania' in Kapaló and Povedak (Editors), 'The Secret Police and the Religious Underground in Communist and Post-Communist Eastern Europe,' Routledge, pp. 316-334, 2022.

file by an agent or an informer, and to raise new questions that will allow the construction of new knowledge about religious communities.

After the fall of communism, Romania had to deal, amongst other issues, with the potentially contentious aspect of the secret police archives. Giving access to the documents produced by the former totalitarian regimes was seen as a necessary and healing process, and the archive was invested with a power that it still holds today (Poenaru 2013, 40). For this reason, when it comes to conducting research in the archives of the former Romanian secret police, the majority of scholars have been interested in issues of justice and historical truth. In this search for truth and justice, the main focus has been placed on the written, personal file of the victims of totalitarian regimes. The process of opening the secret police archives in Eastern Europe began in the 1990s as a pursuit of transitional justice.[37] Used for the first time during the 1970s in order to describe a state's efforts to come to terms with past abuses of human rights (Stan 2013, 1), the concept is defined by the United Nations as 'the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society's attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation'(UN document S/2004/616).

The process of transitional justice was initiated in Romania in the early 1990s (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 65), and the one factor that made possible this redemptive process was access to the archive of the former secret police. As I have previously mentioned, in Romania the custodian of the secret files of the Securitate is Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (The National Council for the Study of Securitate Archives). During the 2000s, the CNSAS was the most important institution that contributed to the shaping of the collective memory and public discourse about sensitive issues such as collaboration with, or opposition against the communist regime (Pintilescu 2014, 103). Immediately after the fall of the communist regime, even before access to its content was allowed, this archive had a special status among other archival sources (Poenaru 2013, 102), for obvious reasons – it was believed to contain the truth about what happened during communism and, most importantly, why it happened. The fact that the products of a failed and immoral

[37] Transitional justice strategies pursued in Romania are lustration (banning former communist decision-makers from post-communist public life), court trials, access to the former secret police archives, the presidential history commission, memorialization, and property restitution (Stan 2006, 383).

system would contain the truth about the past was seen as a paradoxical expectation, with some stating that their interpretation is the task of historians, the only ones capable of distinguishing between authentic and manipulated documents (Stan 2006, 395). Both claims developed into mental constructs that Lavinia Stan characterizes as 'myths' that have shaped the debate on post-communist transitional justice (Stan 2006, 388). In support of the first aspect of this, she draws attention to the fact that the secret police documents are the product of officers that looked at citizens' behaviour and attitudes through their own ideological lens, presenting a highly problematic version of reality (Stan 2006, 406). In connection to the claim that historians are the most appropriate interpreters of secret police files, however, she highlights the fact that reconstruction of the past belongs not only to historians, but to all those who lived during communist times and had their privacy taken away by the secret police. Access to secret police files was seen as a measure that would undoubtedly democratize the process of truth seeking by allowing victims to control it and ordinary citizens to contrast it with their own memories and recollections of the events that happened in the past (Stan 2013, 60).

The excitement over what the archives, be they secret or not, could provide opens up the risk of their fetishization. What scholars such as Antoinette Burton claim is that there is a danger of looking at the archives as repositories of absolute truths (Burton 2005, 19), disregarding the fact that they are not, in fact, neutral. In his 'L'histoire immediate,' Jean–François Soulet draws attention to the fact that scholars fall into the trap of fetishizing that which is secret and hidden, highlighting that not everything that is confidential is of exceptional importance (Soulet cited in Banu 2005, 379). The content of the secret police archives was an obsession for many in Romania, even before the fall of the communist regime in 1989, because they thought that once opened the files would contain answers to their questions about all the years of suffering and persecution. The secret police archives, thus, were seen as a tool that could enable dialogue between victims and perpetrators, or between former political adversaries, as well as a symbolic remembrance of the crimes and injustices of the past. They were also seen as a source of evidence for truth commissions, or trials, as a source of education and academic research, as well as repositories that could help establish counter-narratives (Lühe et al. 2018). As all transitional justice attempts

require documents, it was only natural for scholars to address the written files, at first, in the struggle for accountability.

Apart from written documents, such as surveillance or informer reports, confessions and interrogations, the secret police archives are also depositaries of materials and documents that characterize the religious life, such as icons, photos, personal letters, postcards, diaries, handwritten hymns or prayers, manuscripts, brochures, leaflets, and books that were, by and large, confiscated from individuals and even from entire religious communities. These materials are embedded within the secret police files that were compiled by the secret police agents who, as Kapaló highlights, 'engaged in their own creative practices of visually representing, for the purposes of investigations, criminal cases, and propaganda, those that they were charged with destroying or discrediting' (Kapaló 2019, 87). While scholars are aware of their existence, as these objects are sometimes mentioned in the reports of the secret police, most of the time they are the last to surface. They represent the hidden archive[38] (Ramsey et al. 2010, 79), often uncatalogued, difficult, if not impossible to locate, thus vulnerable, prone to disintegration.[39] Although the placing of these confiscated materials within the secret police archives meant, from the perspective of the communist state, that they became powerless, that once re-inscribed into a different location their power could no longer be accessed, nowadays they have the potential to speak in ways that fabricated, ethically compromised written documents cannot. Though meant for destruction, these materials survived due to the secret police's obsessive need to control everything. As stated by Aleida Assmann, they entered a 'new context' that gave them the chance of a second, prolonged existence (Assmann 2005, 103). As if anticipating the potential of secret police archives for material cultural research, Andrei Bely, Russian poet and novelist, whose diary was confiscated by the GPU,[40] wrote them a letter asking for it to be moved from the box of confiscated

[38] The ERC project that this thesis is a part of refers to these materials as 'hidden galleries,' defined as such due to their dual character, 'simultaneously constituting the stolen cultural patrimony of religious groups as well as their ideological construction as illegal, hidden, dangerous or secret things' (Kapaló 2019, 88).

[39] In an interview in which she described the manners in which unanticipated discoveries shaped her research, Lynée Lewis Gaillet recalls the moment she came across the letters of Scottish rhetorician George Jardine that no one looked at since they had been initially archived, in the 19th century. Gaillet remembers how librarians brought her the letters with 'a sense of reverence,' in a 'crushed-in, cardboard box' (Gaillet 2010, 149) After five years, when she asked for the same letters, they were brought to her 'bound in a large notebook, each one catalogued and secured in a plastic slipcover' (Gaillet 2010, 149-150). Her discovery warned of their importance and called for a better conservation of the letters.

[40] One of the names of the Soviet secret police agencies.

manuscripts where it was kept, into his file, in order for it to be used for 'the study of his literary and ideological character in its full complexities' (Vățulescu 2010, 7). The GPU agreed that his diary belonged in Bely's file, thus, unknowingly ensuring its survival.

In her book about the Skoptsy movement in the Russian Empire, 'Castration and the Heavenly Kingdom: A Russian Folktale,' a community best known for practicing castration of men and the mastectomy of women based on their teachings against sexual lust, Laura Engelstein introduces the reader to the concept of 'archives of eternity.' Emerging in the late 18th century, during the reign of Catherine the Great, and persisting until late into the Soviet era, when they were dispersed, the story of this community is preserved in the State Museum of the History of Religion in St. Petersburg, the former State Museum for the History of Religion and Atheism in Leningrad (Engelstein 1999, XIII). Engelstein ends the preface to her book with the following statement: 'The Skoptsy believed in resurrection. As the secular custodian of their afterlife, I confess at the end that I do too' (Engelstein 1999, XV). Though long gone due to the intense repression against them, the community – paradoxically – still survives in the archives of the very institutions responsible with destroying it; these archives, thus, become, in a way, a means of ensuring their 'eternity,' and Engelstein has 'resurrected' their presence on the historical scene.

The Archival Turn

The subject of archives and their importance has, in recent years, been at the centre of much scholarly discussion. Access to secret police archives in some of the former communist countries coincided with the influence of the so-called 'archival turn'[41] in the social sciences and humanities (Kapaló and Povedák 2022, 25). It advanced the idea that the materiality and imaginary of collections and the kinds of truth claims that lie in the archival documents need to be rethought (Stoler 2006, 269). In the opening passages of his 'Archive Fever,' Jacques Derrida begins his thesis with the analysis of the etymological meaning of the word; arkhe, claims Derrida 'names at once the commencement and the commandment […] there where things commence […] but also there where men and gods command, there where authority, social order are exercised, in this place from which order is given' (Derrida 1995, 1). According to

[41] The archival turn refers to the transition from the archive as a source for research to the archive as the subject of research, the move from archive as source to archive as subject.

Derrida, the archive is similar to the human mind and it defines the place where power originates and where all things begin. One of Derrida's most valuable contributions is the elaboration of the concept of 'archivization.'[42] For him, technology and the process of digitalization of archives was dangerous because it made it much easier for historical records to be removed, thus having an impact on both history and memory (Manoff 2004, 13). The concept of 'archive fever,' which he framed in the work with the same name, refers to the desire of entering the archives, but mainly of possessing them, of having control on the beginning of all things (Steedman 2006, 4). For historian Carolyn Steedman, Derrida's notion of the archives is too broad and metaphorical and she points out that Derrida fails to convey what it actually means to work in the archives (Manoff 2004, 17). What Steedman highlights is that the archive is a real space in which historians spend valuable time engaging with real files and material objects, and not simply a metaphor (Manoff 2004, 18).

Michel Foucault, on the other hand, employs the concept of 'archive' from three perspectives, namely knowledge, power, and subjectivity. Firstly, in 'The Archaeology of Knowledge' he talks about the science of the archive which, in his view, is called archaeology; from this perspective, the archive is a systemic category:

> By this term I do not mean the sum of all the texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents attesting to its own past, or as evidence of a continuing identity; nor do I mean the institutions, which, in a given society, make it possible to record and preserve those discourses that one wishes to remember and keep in circulation […] The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events (Foucault 2002, 145).

Secondly, Foucault analyses the archives as political and administrative tools that store information about populations. In this sense, the archives are 'documents of exclusion' and 'monuments to particular configurations of power' (Burton 2005, 6), knowledge and discipline. Their meaning seems to be connected or equivalent to power;[43] there

[42] The term *archivization*, even though synonymous with the term archiving, is defined as an active process, meaning that the record is changed by the process of being chosen to be archived. Unlike the process of archiving, which is a rather neutral act, the concept of archivization asserts the fact that the significance of the record changes through the archiving process (https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/archivization.html, accessed 12 October 2019).

[43] The archives always belonged to institutions of power such as the state, the church, or the police.

is no power without the archive.[44] For Foucault, the archives do not necessarily tell the truth, but they tell of the truth (Farge 2013, 29); they are 'the law that determines what can be said' (Foucault cited in Assmann 2005, 102). Thirdly, the archive was also Foucault's preferred place of work, and from this perspective he saw it as a space for experience and experiment (Eliassen 2010, 33). He was shaken by the manuscripts he encountered in the archives, which he called poems, and he would talk about the 'anonymous murmuring' of the archives when referring to the unheard, overlooked, marginalized voices of the past that sometimes came to light in the archives and whose destinies left him trembling (Eliassen 2010, 44):

> I admit that these accounts, which have suddenly leapt across two and a half centuries of silence, have resonated with something deep inside me, more than what we ordinarily call literature […] if I have drawn on them it is most likely because of the resonance I feel when I encounter these small lives that have become ashes, revealed in the few sentences that cut them down (Foucault cited in Farge 2013, 32).

In an article called 'The Guilty Pleasure of Working with Archives,' Linda S. Bergmann talks about the pleasure of 'consuming' the content of the archives, the stories and the letters that she was reading, which she admits were not 'written for public consumption' (Bergmann 2010, 222); this pleasure, she highlights, 'outweighed the guilt.' She is not the only one to emphasize the potential of files for generating stories; the secret police files are considered to still be 'pregnant with untold stories; yellowed newspaper clippings, a love letter opened before reaching its destination, the transcript of an overheard conversation, scalloped edged photographs and fragments of literary manuscripts' (Luca 2015, 364). If you had access to a file, you had access to the life of an individual. Consequently, the archive became this privileged place, capable of generating the truth, 'a place of dreams, a place where the historians enter hoping, dreaming to bring to life something which ceased to exist' (Steedman 2001, 69). On the same note, Arlette Farge talks about the 'allure of the archives' and describes how she gently handled the documents sitting 'before her on the reading room table' out of fear that 'a slight tear could become definitive' (Farge 2013, 2).

[44] The situation in Romania, where the former secret police archives have been given so much power that they continue to inculcate moral and symbolic hierarchies even after the fall of the communist regime, in 1989, seems to support this view (Poenaru 2013, 40).

Even when describing the writing on the margins of these documents she manages to create a state of suspense that transposes the reader in front of that reading table, eager to browse through the files that she depicts. What Farge draws attention to, however, is that archives are not a reflection, a collection of pieces of evidence, and that they are sometimes incomplete. For this reason, she believes that historians and scholars, in general, should not work with presuppositions when these absences occur, but simply accept the fact that certain aspects will remain unknown (Farge 2013, 122).

In contrast to this more romanticized image of the archives, Caroline Williams defines archives as 'records that need to be kept for the long term' (Williams 2006, 7). For Williams, what is as important as the archive is the origin and the context in which it was created, the provenance, as well as the relationship and unity of the elements that constitute it in order to preserve their true evidential value. In her work 'Managing Archives,' she provides an example in order to support this statement:

> Joe Soap's admission to Parkfield's Primary School in 1980 is noted in its admission register; the fact of him being caught smoking behind the bike shed in 1985 is noted in the daily log book, and his punishment for doing so in the punishment book. Photographs of him as captain of the school football team for three years show the numerous trophies of which he was so proud. Separation of these records, or viewing any in isolation, might lead to a very partial picture of Joe's progress at school (Williams 2006, 14).

This example, along with her focus on the context, draws us closer to the specific dangers posed by the secret police archives and their potential to mislead. Due to them being the 'oeuvre' of an institution such as the secret police, which were not preoccupied with the preserving of a 'true' version of the past, but rather with constructing a different reality, in which the individuals indexed in the files were presented in a distorted manner, these archives hold a peculiar significance.

Even though the secret police archives carry the potential to reveal true aspects of the past, there are scholars and historians, such as Florian Banu or Florin Poenaru, who warn that they can also generate fear, angst and danger, considering it more of a 'Pandora box' (Banu 2005, 376) because once made public, it opened the possibility for everybody to become a stranger, someone with a different identity, a different past (Poenaru 2013, 189). Approaching the Pakistan government files, Matthew Hull

quotes a Pakistani bureaucrat who described the files as 'time bombs,' because they are 'always ready to talk, if not now while you are in your seat then later' (Hull 2012, 129). Florin Poenaru believes that one significant difference between a regular archive and a secret police archive, such as the Securitate archives, lies in the fact that while standard archives include some voices and ignore others – such as women – that have to fight for recognition afterwards, the people mentioned in the secret police files would much rather not be there (see Verdery 2014, 35-36). In fact, minorities are not ignored in the secret police archives, but they become the obsession of the regime, the elements that have to be eliminated; their voices are present, but in a distorted and decontextualized manner, seen through the lenses of the communist party, thus they become the enemy. As Cristina Vățulescu asserts, the communist state had a changing view of its citizens and often attempted to rewrite them; thus, a file is nothing more than a collage portrait of the individual, meant 'to fit the criminal clichés' of the regime (Vățulescu 2010, 54). For the Romanian writer Stelian Tănase the secret police archives are 'misleading' and require the work of an archaeologist in order to create, from bits and pieces, a version of one's past, but never the true story (Banu 2005, 378).

Katherine Verdery,[45] who spent three years in communist Romania conducting ethnographic research, talks about the 'fictions' of the archives, as she was amazed to see how the Securitate completely changed and reinterpreted the purpose of her research and of her presence in Romania, even giving her a code name.[46] What mostly struck her when reading her own file was the fact that she could find herself and her experiences in the file, similar to a biography, but she did not recognize them, as if her memories were reinterpreted.[47] In this sense, Verdery claims, the secret police file is 'a fiction' (Verdery 2014, 56). Such different perceptions do not imply a relativistic perspective on questions of truth or historical knowledge but highlight the complex issues that have to be carefully contextualized and analysed when talking about the secret police archives. For Verdery the files act as agents, even as accomplices, as they

[45] Katherine Verdery spent more than three years in Romania during the 1970s and 1980s, conducting ethnographical research in Transylvania. Her activity generated more than three thousand pages of informer reports, as she was considered to be an American spy. In 2006 she returned to Romania and asked for a copy of her file; it has since become the basis of the essays included in 'Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police.'

[46] Which was Vera.

[47] As pinpointed by Cristian Tileagă, 'to be a person of the Socialist Republic of Romania meant that […] as an individual you were 'forced' to engage with that structure (and its internal mechanism) in order to make sense of your own memory, biography, and identity' (Tileagă 2011, 202).

can make up people, situations, enemies, spies, or even informers out of people who deny ever having been one (Verdery 2014, 64–66). For this reason, Adrian Marino considered that characterizing an individual based on their secret police file ensured the supreme and definitive victory of the Securitate; it is, thus, an unintentional homage brought to an age of repression (Tudoran 2010, 13).

Timothy Garton Ash, a British historian who was a PhD student in East Berlin during the 1970s, went on a similar journey as Katherine Verdery, that of confronting his personal file produced by the East German police. In his suggestively entitled book, 'The File. A Personal Journey,' he notes, in Orwellian terms, how the Gauck Authority, in charge of the reconstruction of the STASI documents, has become a 'ministry of truth' occupying the former 'ministry of fear' (Ash 1999, 23). Met with high praise on the part of his acquaintances, who considered him 'lucky' and 'privileged' for having a secret police file,[48] Ash talks about the so called 'file envy,' which was a typical reaction following the opening of the secret police archives. Everyone was certain that they had a file until faced with the harsh reality that they were not that important for the German communist state (Ash 1999, 25). Having a file was a reason to boast, while the absence of one was a humiliating experience that Ash describes in a comical fashion:

> After the law came into force, students at the Humboldt University in East Berlin would boast to their girlfriends: 'Of course I've applied to see my file. I dread to think what I'll find there, but I simply have to know.' Luscious Sabine would be really impressed. Then came the dreadful letter from the Authority: so far as we can establish, you have no file. Humiliation. Sabine turned to someone else, who had (Ash 1999, 24-25).

In fact, argues Ash, the experience of reading his own file was unpleasant, comparing it with 'Ferdydurke', the book of the Polish writer Witold Gombrowicz, in which the author travels back in time only to find himself in a reality in which all of his limbs and senses mock each other. There is no reason to be envious of the possessor of a file (Ash 1999, 41-42). His conclusion is also shared by Dorin Tudoran, poet, journalist and Romanian dissident, for whom a personal file is not a post-communist mark of nobility, but a deformed mirror of the past (Tudoran 2010, 13). Just like Katherine

[48] Ash's code name was Romeo.

Verdery, Ash confronted some of his former secret police informers, only to find himself overwhelmed by the guilt of having deprived some of them of the right to forgetfulness. He also finds himself in the footsteps of an informer, concerned with names, places and confessions. He concludes that the files change one's life forever, sometimes poisoning the people that handle them, other time having a cathartic effect (Ash 1999, 194–197).[49]

Ash tells the story of a friend who was approached by an individual during the 1980s who told him that the police had asked him to give information about him, and together they decided what would be reported; Ash argues that if his friend had passed away, the individual would undoubtedly seem guilty for anyone who read his file and was not aware of the background story (Ash 1999, 195–196). This is the main reason why Michel–Rolph Trouillot defines archives as 'not only the sum of its documents, but also the sum of silences – of what was occluded, missed, disregarded, repressed' (Trouillot 1995, 53) and warns historians about the silencing that sometimes occurs when the sources on which history is based are made. Starting from Lord Acton's quote which states that 'the official truth is not actual truth,' Florin Poenaru recalls the experiences of Aurel Tudose, a former political prisoner in the 1950s:

> In a letter sent to a Romanian cultural weekly, Aurel Tudose recalled how after a harsh interrogation, one of his fellow inmates told his interrogator that he will retract everything he had said and signed during his detention once he will be out and will tell the true story instead. To this, the police officer replied laughingly: you, bandit, you don't get it, do you: the history will be written based not on what you'll say, but on our archives (Poenaru 2013, 181).

Katherine Verdery also recounts the story of a man who, whilst reading his own file, started to 'make his own annotations on the original, marking those things that were factually true and crossing out those that were false or incorrect – to the horror of the archivists' (Verdery 2014, 62). Florian Banu, quoting Gavrilă Ogoranu, a former member of an anti-communist resistance group, tells the story of a professor whom, being interrogated by the police, was forced to sign a fabricated declaration. Before

[49] Ash draws attention to the fact that when they were handled badly or exposed in the media, these documents led to extreme gestures, such as numerous suicides. On the other hand, he recounts of an elder who, thinking that his own son-in-law was an informer, was planning to disinherit him; after reading his personal file, however, he concluded that that was not the case and could proceed to write his will (Ash 1999, 197).

signing it, though, he proceeded to correct all the grammar errors for fear that when someone will one day read his file they will think that he wrote the declaration himself, including all the grammar mistakes, which was unacceptable for a professor (Banu 2005, 378). All these short accounts prove, once again, that the idea according to which the secret police archives hold the absolute truth about the past needs to be challenged.

Ever since the legislation made it possible for people to have access to secret police files in Romania in 1999, this has been the subject of debate; the archives became the object of desire in post-communism due to their inaccessibility during the communist era. For some scholars, the secret police archives are the 'precursors of WikiLeaks' (Stan 2011, 326; Poenaru 2013, 103) as they have the potential to generate scandals and give public access to sensitive information. Since 1989, they destroyed lives, friendships and family relationships (Poenaru 2013, 181). [50] Florian Banu talks about a 'file syndrome' that had characterized the Romanian society, meaning that the history of the last 60 years was seen as nothing other than a reflex of the secret police files. He argues for a critical analysis and diversification of sources, as well as for the appeal to memoirs, oral history, and any other sources able to confirm or infirm the information obtained from research done in what he calls the 'quicksands' of documents, which are nothing other than the products of a corrupt and failed regime (Banu 2005, 392). This sensitive issue was also addressed by Sonja Luehrmann, who wonders 'how should one read a document generated in the service of an abandoned project whose underlying assumptions about historical development have turned out to be largely mistaken?' (Luehrmann 2015, 11). Precisely, how can biased sources of the past be made productive and insightful?

The Materiality of the Secret Police Archives

The secret police archives experienced, throughout the years, a number of 'truth crises' that call for new approaches. Despite their vastness, access to previously classified archival documents is no longer expected to deepen and revolutionize our understanding of the regimes of the past. As highlighted by Stephen Kotkin, these understandings emerge from 'researchers' worldviews and agendas,' as well as the

[50] Timothy Garton Ash recounts the story of a lady who was imprisoned for five years in East Germany for trying to escape in the West. When reading her personal file she found out that it was her husband, whom she said good bye before heading for the archives, who had denounced her and the shock made her collapse in the arms of the archivist (Ash 1999, 194).

times in which they live (Kotkin 2002, 36). 'In the late 1990s, was it access to declassified archives or the force of a personality that accounted for the promotion of new directions in the historiography?' (Kotkin 2002, 37, footnote 12) he asks, referring to Sheila Fitzpatrick's a 'from below' viewpoint on history and her adherence to a social history that did not focus on political issues, but rather on aspects of daily life, social and cultural changes in Soviet Russia. His conclusion, thus, is that it is perspective which matters, not the archives (Kotkin 2002, 37), and that perspective could change. Scholars such as Vățulescu and Kapaló suggest that approaching the material and the visual dimension of the archive rather than its written documents represent such a perspectival shift and might have the potential of calling into question the 'textual truth' explored by many scholars in the past (Kapaló 2019, 84). For this reason, in this thesis I explore the creative strategies through which individuals, in this case religious communities, managed to survive the hegemonic regimes whose ideas about how history should develop failed dramatically. I do this by keeping the materiality and visual sources produced by these religious communities at the centre of my analysis. Through their creative production of songbooks, prayer books, photographs, brochures, icons, and other such objects, these groups challenged the suppressive regimes they had to live under. These materials nowadays cast these religious movements and their experiences in a new light, allowing them to be seen less as victims of oppressive regimes, and more as creative agents that managed to survive persecution by engaging in conscious acts of resistance.

As Emily Baran highlights regarding the Jehovah's Witnesses in the Soviet Union, the majority of these religious communities did not see themselves as weak, but rather considered their actions as driven by a higher divine purpose (Baran 2014, 6). One aspect that she insists upon is that they knew what they were doing, and they were deliberately opposing the existing order of things and the communist state. The underground activities of these religious communities, Kapaló and Povedák argue, should not be reduced to an accidental consequence, or a simple construct of the regime, but ought to be seen as a reflection of their agency and worldview (Kapaló and Povedák 2022, 11). They survived and outlived the ruling order and are now able to tell their stories, if not directly, then through their own artistic creations and narratives that have survived in the secret police archives. As Cristina Vățulescu argues, these objects were taken from their initial context and placed into another, the

file. In the file, 'the knife does not kill, but reveals the identity of the killer, the cup does not help quench thirst but provides latent fingerprints' (Vățulescu 2010, 192). Meant to incriminate, these objects are now the evidence of the wrongdoings of the regime, be it fascist or communist, and can constitute a valuable resource in order to prove its intrusive character. They are more like a print that a thief left behind on the place where he or she committed the crime. In the case of the present thesis, a crime against two religious communities that have been overlooked and sometimes even misrepresented by the Romanian historiography, two religious communities whose voices and identities 'fell between the cracks' of historical research.

According to Blaise Pascal, every individual leaves something behind, a so-called material trace that can stand as testimony of a lived life, be it 'a sheaf of letters, a lucky coin or a small fortune' (Fritzsche 2005, 15). This drive to rescue objects that are linked to those that have been persecuted starts with the victims themselves, as well as with their friends and families (Holtschneider 2019, 334). This aspect has been particularly noticeable within the Jewish communities in the aftermath of the Holocaust, when the material traces of the dead became a legacy for the living (Holtschneider 2019, 333). As noticed by Peter Fritzsche, while everyday Germans proceeded to create their own private archives in the 1940s, with the racial passport at their core, in an effort to legitimize their Aryan 'identity,' the German Jews suffered a reversed archiving process. Their private properties, books, photos, and valuable possessions were taken away and destroyed, just as they themselves were ultimately murdered (Fritzsche 2005, 29–30). The aim was the destruction of any evidence of Jewish life in Germany which, in the end, led to the creation of the so-called 'archives of loss,' ingrained in the recognition of loss, an archive of things that are now absent, but that can be reconstructed with the help of memoirs, misplaced photographs, letters and diaries (Fritzsche 2005, 37–38). The interest in these rather material witnesses to the past also brought about the focus on the histories of ordinary people in an effort to 'give voice to the voiceless' (Holtschneider 2019, 350). From Holtschneider's perspective, these documents and objects that come to the historians' attention after having survived the Holocaust and other persecutions are valuable 'traces of those who created them […] the access point to people's lives, even though, in many cases, these lives had a longer history either before or after the genocide' (Holtschneider 2019, 350–351).

The materiality of archives, in general, has also become the focus of Romanian scholars, and one example illustrating this interest was the Image Archive of the Romanian Peasant Museum. Whilst working with the Mihai Pop[51] Fonds,[52] in an effort to incorporate them within the Image Archive, researchers realized that every single artefact uncovered had the potential of becoming the subject of a book. Moreover, when reading Constantin Brăiloiu's[53] correspondence, they noted that 'he turns from a Wikipedia entry into flesh and blood' and 'this was the case with all those other deceased people locked in these files and boxes – for a few minutes, or for a few days, they would become alive in our minds and our souls' (Pop and Iorga 2019, 160).

In the same manner, Astrid Cambose writes about the letters that Monica Lovinescu[54] exchanged with her mother, Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu. The letters were written in French and sometimes encrypted, in order to prevent the attempts of the secret police to break the true content of their conversations. After her mother's death, Lovinescu was unable to touch the letters as they became important subjective memorabilia (Cambose 2019, 93). The main reason for that was because the same letters, after being translated in a distorted manner by some Securitate employees, were used in order to incriminate Ecaterina Bălăcioiu-Lovinescu (Cambose 2019, 93). She was sentenced to eighteen years of hard prison which, in the end, led to her death in detention. Due to this tragic rupture, the letters that they exchanged for years were invested with emotional meanings and, for Monica Lovinescu, they became souvenirs of their relationship.

Materiality and Material Religion

In February 2020 CBS News published a story entitled 'Purse lost in 1957 found behind school locker 62 years later' (O'Kane 2020, CBS News). The short report revolved around a small item, namely a red purse, that was lost by a then student Patricia Rumfola and discovered after more than 60 years by a caretaker who was

[51] Mihai Pop was a Romanian anthropologist and ethnologist.
[52] The fonds contained Pop's correspondence, field notes and personal notebooks, his unpublished doctoral work, telegrams, notes from courses that he taught or attended and many more (Pop and Iorga 2019, 158).
[53] Constantin Brăiloiu was a well known musicologist.
[54] Monica Lovinescu was an important intellectual figure who openly opposed the communist regime in Romania. After 1947 she activated in exile in Paris where she lived with her husband Virgil Ierunca, another important figure of the Romanian exile. She died in Paris in 2008. In her article, Cambose recounts how she went to the 'abandoned' house of the couple in order to recover and bring back to the country their archive that was in danger of being stolen (Cambose 2019, 91).

fixing the loose lining on the locker. Patricia's family was contacted and they allowed the school district to share photos of the contents of the purse because 'they can teach us a lot about her life.' They then went on to present each object and tried to explain how every one of them reflects an aspect of Patricia's life; more than that, each of her five children kept one of the old coins that were found in her purse as a 'token of remembrance of their mom.' The report finished with the idea that even though Rumfola passed away in 2013, her story was, unbeknownst to her, immortalized at the moment she had lost her purse, back in 1957, and that a lot can be learnt about a life lived more than half a century ago through the items contained in the bag. Reports such as these have filled the newsfeed in recent times; they tell stories of long lost and recovered objects, each of them becoming a time capsule that reveals something about the person that made it, or treasured it, one way or another, and about the time when it was lost.

Even though objects encapsulate different kinds of meaning, E. Frances King draws attention to the fact that there ought to be no confusion between popular material culture, i.e. objects that influence people in their everyday life, and the so called high culture, i.e. things that everyone recognizes as of artistic worth (King 2010, xiii). The old coins forgotten in Patricia's lost purse, though of historical value for many individuals, will never carry the same meaning as they do for her five children who kept them as tokens of remembrance of their mother. Objects can be invested with a specific value and their simple presence can affect one's behavior, especially in critical situations, such as imprisonment or during persecution. One such example is offered by King who recalls the story of the Colombian political activist, Ingrid Betancourt who, released after six years in captivity, was holding a rosary in her hands. When asked about its meaning, she told how this handmade rosary helped her cope with the imprisonment and all the ordeals that she had to endure (King 2010, xi).

There are objects that we wear, or even create, in order to help us remember events, individuals, special moments in our lives, or even beliefs that were and sometimes still are valuable to us. Such was the case of Anna Dubova, an Old Believer from Russia who, during her life under the Soviet regime, was forced to conceal her faith. In an interview that she gave in 1994, however, she confessed that even though she did not have any icons, she used to wear a small cross 'on the fastener of her bra,' so that it could be completely hidden. Although Dubova was compelled to keep her

beliefs silent and private, even from her own husband, this cross was a reminder of the fact that she was once a believer and that 'deep down,' she continued to be one (Engel et al. 1998, 41). Irina Kniazeva remembers how on the day of her wedding, in the absence of a church or icons, which the communists burned down, her mother blessed her with an icon that they hid at home. Kniazeva still treasured the icon as it reminded her of her late mother, the belief that they shared and practiced together, as well as of her wedding day (Engel et al. 1998, 127). Similarly, Vera Malakhova kept the icon that her grandmother blessed her with, and even remembered her exhortation to 'never get rid of this icon' (Engel et al. 1998, 183). For both of them, the icons were instances of past events, they recalled time spent with loved members of the family (Radley 1990, 50-51).

The study of religions has always been interested in the material traces of the past and the study of objects and their significance is not a new aspect in the field (Morgan 2010, 55). Archaeologists and art historians have included attention to the materiality of ancient or medieval religions, for whom objects and artifacts were invested with devotional significance due to the porous distinction that they made between spirituality and materiality (Laugerud et al. 2016, 4), since as early as the eighteenth century (Morgan 2010, 55). With the rise of Protestantism, however, the relationship between things and religion has been looked at in an antagonistic manner, as belief was perceived as interiorized and private, excluding the importance of materiality altogether (Houtman and Meyer 2012, 2). In the last two decades, however, the study of religions has taken a 'material turn,' a concept defined by Sonia Hazard as 'the claim of material things and phenomena – objects, practices, spaces, bodies, sensations, affects, and so on – to a place at the center of scholarly inquiry' (Hazard 2013, 58). Unlike the intentions of the nineteenth century materialists of unmasking God and spirits as fictions (Strijdom 2014, 2), the aim of the material turn in the study of religions was, according to Houtman and Meyer, that of understanding how 'practices of religious mediation effect the presence of these entities in the world through […] texts, buildings, pictures, objects, and other material forms […]' and of generating new questions and analyses of how religions can shape the world (Houtman and Meyer 2012, 6).

According to Sonia Hazard, there are three dominant approaches to religious material culture: the symbolic, or interpretative approach, mostly represented by

Clifford Geertz, for whom material things embodied the essence of religion, the emphasis on disciplinary power, linked to the work of anthropologist Talal Asad, who argues that religious things are facilitated at specific moments in history by regulated actions and disciplines, and the phenomenological[55] approach (Hazard 2013, 63). According to Geertz, humans need 'sources of illumination' in order to orient themselves, and every action is guided by symbols; the main role of anthropologists or scholars of religion is to decode these symbols. For example, a crucifix symbolizes the promise of resurrection and eternal life, and not the finality of death (Hazard 2013, 60). Every culture, argues Geertz, is 'a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life' (Asad 1983, 238). Geertz's view of religion was criticized by Talal Asad for being too universal (Asad 1983, 238). He argues that scholars should move away from any definition of religion as the development of religious practices are different from society to society, depending on the historical conditions, which should, instead, become the main focus of researchers' attention. Moreover, as 'discipline' is a central concept for Asad's approach, he claims that Geertz's valorisation of religious beliefs separates religion from power. Religious things and practices are facilitated at specific historical moments by actions that are motivated, or by disciplines, and they are not mere expressions of underlying beliefs (Hazard 2013, 61). Fasting, kneeling, penance, praying, the wearing of a headscarf, particularly by women, these are all, in Asad's view, disciplinary activities imposed on people in the form of conditions meant to ensure them the experiencing of truth. In 'Politics of Piety,' a study largely influenced by Asad's work, Saba Mahmood shows how the wearing of a headscarf, a symbol of modesty, by Egyptian women in the Egyptian mosque movement cultivates in them a state of piety; the headscarf, thus, becomes a disciplinary instrument that not only expresses modesty, but it is the means through which modesty is created (Mahmood 2005, 23).

Defined as 'the study of things as they appear in our lived experiences,' phenomenology presents a third approach to material culture (Hazard 2013, 62). David Morgan asserts 'the study of things assumes they are an important and almost infinitely

[55] Phenomenology is the philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness. Translated as 'the study of phenomena,' phenomenology studies things as they appear in our experience and the ways we experience them (https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/phenomenology, accessed 20 December 2020).

varied means by which human beings feel their way into their words, feel themselves, feel the past, anticipate the future, feel together' (Morgan 2010, 71-72). A representative scholar for the phenomenological study of material religion, Morgan argues that material culture does not rely on things alone, but that it is also important to analyse how they impact our lived experience,[56] the focus being largely anthropocentric: 'Material culture is not just objects, not just architectural foundations or jewelry or paintings […] Their edges fade into the systems of value we rely on to recognize and deploy them […] Things are present or absent according to the purposes and needs that drive our activities […] Things are powerful, compelling, living agents that touch us, scare us, calm us, protect us' (Morgan 2010, 73). According to Hazard, though distinct in their analyses, the three approaches still have something in common, namely the focus that they place on the human being:

> The symbolic approach asks what material signs mean for us; an emphasis on disciplinary power asks how we are constituted by that power; phenomenologists seek to know how things impact our lived experience. The operative terms – us, we, our – remain anthropocentric (Hazard 2013, 63).

In the late 20th century and early 21st century social theory experienced a turn towards things which was interpreted as a critical response to the so called 'textual turn' of the 1970s which, in general, favored discourse (Fowles 2010, 23-24). In his 1986 collective work entitled 'The Social Life of Things,' the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai makes the case that even though people are the ones that invest meaning to things, only by analysing their trajectory through space and time, through what he calls 'methodological fetishism,'[57] can one really see what they accomplish on their own. He, thus, encourages scholars to look at things in the same way that they would look at individuals, as if they have biographies and life stories (Appadurai 1986, 5). Igor Kopytoff advances a so-called biographical approach in which one would ask questions about a thing in the same way as they would ask about people: 'Where does this thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things?' (Kopytoff 1986, 66). He then

[56] Lived experience refers to a representation of the experiences and choices of a given person, and the knowledge that they gain from these experiences and choices (Robin M. Boylorn, 'Lived experience' in Lisa M. Given (Editor), *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, Volume 1 & 2, SAGE Publications, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, 2008, p. 489.)

[57] A position which states that things are self-standing presences in the world, that they should not be reduced to human discourse about them (Fowles 2010, 23–24)

goes on to present the 'biography of a hut' among the Suku of Zaire, a community among whom he worked, presenting its life expectancy and how each age of the hut corresponds to a specific use: from housing a young family, to turning into a guest house, a goat or chicken house until, finally, it disintegrates (Kopytoff 1986, 67). Kopytoff's conclusion is that 'a biography of a painting by Renoir that ends up in an incinerator is as tragic as the biography of a person who ends up murdered' (Kopytoff 1986, 67). An object, thus, draws its meaning from its circulation, use, or local adaptation, from its so called 'social careers' (Meyer et al. 2010, 209), and not only from within itself.

Bill Brown's essay 'Thing theory,' published in 2001, generated a new fascination with materiality across the academy; supporting the idea that things and people 'inform the existence of each other' (Button 2014, 1), Brown's theory, known as 'thing theory,'[58] focuses on human and object interactions in literature and culture and has been used in the study of modernism due to modernist poets' rather materialist preoccupations. The idea that things are of value resulted in a massive interdisciplinary effort to examine things themselves. What Brown argues is that the meaning of an object is dependent on the context in which it is found. In order to support his claim, Brown employs Mark Twain's 'The Prince and the Pauper;' he draws attention to the fact that the same object, namely the king's official seal, was invested with two different meanings depending on the individual who was handling it. For the real prince, the seal was the mark of the true prince, whereas for the pauper, the imposter prince, the seal was just a nutcracker. One can see how the same object was invested with different meanings by different people (Brown 2003, 38). His theory has been criticized by Severin Fowles, who claims that the major fault of Brown's theory is that it relies too much on the idea of presence linked to tangibility, and fails to recognize the idea of absence and how it can also impact on one's life once granted its presence:

> One might say, for instance, that a set of keys jangling about in one's pocket has its own autonomous steely quality that permits it to have an effect upon the

[58] The 'thing theory' relies on Heidegger's contrast between things and objects, stating that an object becomes a thing only when it ceases to serve its common function. In his essay 'Thing Theory,' Brown states the following: 'As they circulate through our lives, we look through objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature, or culture, above all, what they disclose about us), but we only catch a glimpse of things […] A thing, in contrast, can hardly function as a window. We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy […]' (Brown 2001, 4).

> actions of key-users. But consider the keys that have been misplaced and so are present only as an absence. These absent keys also impinge upon us in a strongly sensuous fashion: one registers the absence of keys with distress, gropes about the emptiness in one's pocket and, defeated, is left standing in the cold outside one's apartment. Both the keys and the absence of the keys have material effect on the world (Fowles 2010, 25).

Fowles also offers a suggestive example in order to demonstrate that absences can be shifted from negative to positive in order to become political objects that can be used in the struggle for accountability. According to him, some Argentinian families opposed the attempt of forensic archaeologists to exhume the individuals that were buried in military mass graves, not because they did not want the violence of the 1976 so-called 'dirty war' to be publicly acknowledged, but because it was the absence that fueled these families' motivation to protest, it was the absence that had to be protected in order to avoid a premature closure of the political struggle for accountability (Fowles 2010, 27). For this reason, Fowles argues for a new way of looking at things, with as much emphasis to be placed on the 'absent' things, as it is placed on the 'present' things.

During her ethnographic fieldwork in the autonomous Republic of Marij El in Russia's Volga region, Sonja Luehrmann noticed that most houses in Mari villages had curtained icon corners. The curtain was only lifted during family gatherings, or feast days, and the icons were shielded from view with all the other occasions. However, she noticed that some houses had sacred corners that worked in the same way in the absence of any icon or image (Luehrmann 2011, 154–155). The curtain was lifted with every special occasion, only to reveal an empty corner; in this case, the absence of the icon functioned in the same manner as its presence, mainly because its placement in the corner was what made it powerful:

> The invisible forces that make the corner a powerful place in the house add a dimension to the icon that goes beyond the visual image depicted, but also beyond its material qualities as a picture (Luehrmann 2011, 155)

The former secret police not only wrote things about religious communities, but it also confiscated their creative materials, art creations, diaries, journals, icons, songbooks and other important elements which they highly valued. Objects such as a prayer book,

an icon, or a photograph that belonged to a certain person might generate emotional memories once the person is 'reconnected' with the object which once belonged to him or her. The memories that these materials have the potential to bring to light could be more difficult to pervert or falsify by any system or totalitarian regime; if highly valued, one will always remember the moment when the police entered their house or church and took the object from their hands. Eric Ketelaar highlights the connection between the archives and human rights stating that 'the archives have a twofold power: being evidence of oppression and containing evidence required to gain freedom, evidence of wrongdoing and evidence for undoing the wrong' (Ketelaar 2006, 146). In the case of the secret police archives, due to the misleading character of the files, it is not what it was written that might 'undo the wrong;' these materials and objects, on the other hand, that have been largely confiscated[59] from various religious communities are the evidence of the wrongdoings of the totalitarian regime, be it fascist or communist, and can constitute a valuable resource in order to prove its intrusive character.

Moreover, the creative materials that these religious communities produce become part of what John Tagg calls 'visual currency,' (Edwards and Hart 2005, 5) a sort of a material economy of the sacred, that manages to embody the unseen, in which things are created, displayed, received, narrated, stolen, or confiscated, each time receiving new meanings and understandings, their presence or absence having an impact on people's behaviors. Significantly, religious images, artefacts, art works can also connect generations,[60] or become distinctive for a particular religious group, 'serving as vehicles' (King 2010, 4) for religious identity and personal devotion.

From this point of view, materiality and the material turn in the study of religions can offer a new perspective on the archives and its contents. Moreover, based on Severin Fowles' theory, absence was often a reality which religious communities, such as the Tudorists or Old Calendarists, had to endure; they were deprived of their churches, their Bibles, songbooks, photographs, icons, tapes, cards, and other materials. These actions created an absence which, in turn, I argue later, inspired these

[59] These materials are rarely researched by historians, or scholars, some of whom are not even aware of the fact that they exist in the archive.
[60] For example, a grandson who asks his grandmother to say a prayer for him when faced with a difficult situation, or before an important exam. This creates a sense of security for both the grandson and the grandmother (King 2010, 4).

religious communities' fight for survival. More than that, the secret police equated these 'absences' with the dissolution of the religious groups which it sought to destroy, unknowingly empowering them with even more creative potential and will to endure the repressive strategies targeting them. Nowadays, the secret police archives store many of these 'absences,' be they objects or life stories, that could become presences and continue, complete, or simply end some chapters in the histories of these religious communities.

Conclusion

Religious communities are also creative communities, producing stories, objects, photographs, icons, tapes, cards, and other materials that are circulated and valued by people, some of whom might not even be members of one such community. Even if nowadays these materials can easily be found and procured, under the rule of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes such elements adopted a different status, and even if they were simple objects, they were both an enemy for the state, and a saviour for the faithful. The Romanian secret police, whether the Siguranța of the interwar period and wartime periods, or the Securitate of the communist period, tried to destroy religious minorities. One aspect of these operations was the confiscation of their symbolic and material forms of expression, those religious objects that they produced and created and which, according to the secret police, had to be extracted from their original environment and re-inscribed into a different location where their power could no longer be accessed.

In this chapter I have explored the different meanings of the archives and how they have been looked at by various scholars. For some, such as Jacques Derrida or Michel Foucault, the meaning of the archives is linked to power as they dictate whose voices and versions of history get to be preserved; others, however, interpreted the archives in rather romanticized terms, as repositories of true histories of individuals, waiting to be discovered. The difference between other archives and the secret police archives lies in the fact that the latter contains the names and stories of individuals who would much rather not be there. Fetishized and obsessed over, the secret police archive has proved to be misleading, dangerous, containing fabricated documents that distorted reality and which, sometimes, managed to destroy identities, friendships, and even families. On the other hand, the secret police archives have paradoxically become

the repositories of the creative religious materials that were meant to be destroyed and with them, the religious communities that once produced them.

Chapter Two: State Repression of Religion in 20th Century Romania: The Formation of The Underground and Confiscations of Religious Materials

Introduction

Portraits of twentieth century Romania depict a country struggling with forming its own identity while gradually falling under the control of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, first fascism, and then communism, which led the country into complete obscurity and agony for more than fifty years. After the First World War and the unification of the Romanian state in 1918, there were more and more issues that started to concern the newly formed state. With a growing population whose needs it had to satisfy, and a religious diversity that it had never encountered before, the country was now facing a challenging situation. In the face of extraordinary social, political, cultural, even industrial change, as well as a spiritual revival of the peasantry (Enache 2010, 170), interwar Romania became the ideal environment for religious innovation (Clark 2021, 77) and many religious movements emerged during this period of time. In a country where the Orthodox Church gained its monopoly on the religious scene and where religious discourse mingled with the national and political one, these new movements generated strong tensions within Romanian Orthodoxy and were faced with non-acceptance from the moment they first appeared on the religious scene. They were called sects, 'morally dangerous' (Diac 1994, 3) and accused of trying to destroy the 'great edifice' of the Romanian nation (Biserica noastră şi cultele minoritare. Marea discuţie parlamentară în jurul legii cultelor 1928, 162), and their existence and acceptance were continuously threatened by both the state and the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The present chapter approaches the legal framework concerning religious issues and the policies adopted by the state against religious minorities, in general, measures that also affected the Old Calendarist and the Tudorist communities. The notion of 'sect' and its understandings in the Romanian intellectual and theological contexts will be described and analysed, in order to observe how its meanings changed during the twentieth century in line with political developments. The chapter draws on archival documents, articles published in the interwar press as well as during

communism, laws and judicial acts, papers, articles of general interest and volumes of documents.

Religious Innovation and Sectarianism in 20th Century Romania

In addition to the diverse the neo–Protestant communities,[61] that appeared and spread in all the provinces of Greater Romania[62] during the 19th century,[63] the Romanian religious scene was 'invaded' by groups that emerged from within the Orthodox Church itself, such as the Lord's Army,[64] the Tudorists, and the Old Calendarists (Stilists), which in some regards serve as examples of what James Kapaló calls

[61] The term neo–Protestant refers to the Baptists, the Pentecostals, the Evangelical Christians (Brethren) and the Adventists. These communities usually refer to themselves as Evangelicals; this is also the term that Iemima Ploscariu advocates for in her PhD Thesis, 'A Dappled People: Jewish, Roma, and Romanian Evangelicals Challenging Nationalism in Interwar Romania.' However, in order to avoid confusion, as in nowadays Romania the Lutheran Church is also known as the Evangelical Church, in this thesis I will use the term neo-Protestant to generally refer to these communities, even though the term was not used during the interwar period. At the time, and even nowadays, these groups were known collectively as 'pocăiți' (Repenters), a term that was pejoratively used by the Orthodox Church and by the state, highlighting these groups' focus on personal repentance from sin (Clark 2021, 8). Even though the communities were aware of their doctrinal differences and sometimes made efforts to distance themselves from each other, the police were indifferent to this aspect and labelled all of them as 'sectarians,' a term that implied that they were dangerous, schismatic and heretics.

[62] The name that was used with reference to the Romanian state after its 1918 unification with Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania in order to distinguish it from the Romanian Old Kingdom which only included the two Principalities, Moldova and Wallachia.

[63] The first Baptist communities were established during the 1850s among the Germans in Bucharest (Dobrincu 2018, 43) and then among the Hungarians and Saxons in Transylvania during the 1870s (Dobrincu 2018, 49). Their expansion, just like the spread of all the other neo-Protestant communities, was interpreted by Romanian authorities as a foreign conspiracy meant to divide the Romanian population. The German Baptists in Bucharest, for example, avoided for a long period of time to share their beliefs with the Romanian population on foot of being warned by the police not to do so (Dobrincu 2018, 44). The Seventh-Day Adventists appeared shortly after the first Baptist missionaries, and by 1920 there were well established Adventist communities in Romania. The first Brethren (Evangelical Christian) churches were founded in Bucharest in 1901 by two Swiss missionaries, Francis Berney and Charles Aubert (Clark 2021, 7). In 1909, after the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church's intervention and complaints to the police, the two missionaries were forced to leave Romania (Dobrincu 2018, 66–67); during the interwar period, however, the community developed and churches could be found in Sibiu, Brașov, Ploiești, Teleorman. The Pentecostals spread through Romania during the 1920s; they were persecuted during the interwar period, especially as, unlike the other 'repenters,' their existence was not legally recognized by the state as they were considered a dangerous 'sect,' whose doctrine is contrary to the public policy' (Achim 2013, 501).

[64] The Lord's Army (Oastea Domnului) was a renewal movement formed around 'Lumina Satelor' (The Light of the Villages), a church newspaper established by Nicolae Bălan, the Metropolitan of Transylvania, during the 1920s, and edited by Iosif Trifa, a young Orthodox priest. The newspaper was dedicated to sharing the Gospel in rural areas. Originally conceived as an anti-sectarian and anti-Repenter movement, by the end of the 1930s it drew close to Repenter denominations and had to be supressed by Nicolae Bălan himself (Clark 2021, 5). Starting from 1949, after it was banned by the Communist Party, the movement went underground. Its members, such as Traian Dorz and Nicolae Moldoveanu, were persecuted by the communist regime in Romania, and composed numerous poems and songs that are currently treasured by the Lord's Army community, as well as by the neo–Protestant ones. It continues today as a parachurch movement affiliated with the Romanian Orthodox Church (Clark 2021, 166).

'liminal Orthodoxy' (Kapaló 2019, x).[65] The state and the Orthodox Church considered these movements to be the result of an internal crisis, of a rupture with tradition, and they soon turned into the greatest enemy of Orthodoxy from the Church's perspective. The teachings of these 'sects' were deemed to be heretical and dangerous; for this reason, the term 'sect' was applied to them and soon became a legal tool to designate illegality and heresy and to justify the persecutions that these religious minorities were subjected to. As George Enache states, these communities had to go through a legislative limbo (Enache 2007, 108) for more than sixty years in order to prove themselves not to be a danger for the state and its population. The problem in the interwar Romania was not only that the Orthodox Church used this term in order to refer to other religious confessions, but that the state itself, which was supposed to act as an arbiter in the religious space, became a player and was complicit in the injustices these religious communities experienced, adopting the Church's vocabulary (Dobrincu 2007, 584) and enacting the persecutions and repressions, even encouraging them on occasions.

When it comes to the concept of 'sect,' scholars such as Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, Bryan Wilson, Reinhold Niebuhr, or Milton Yinger have dealt with the sociological and theological meanings of this term, trying to find a distinction between a church and a sect, and what causes the appearance of the latter. In his 'The Social Sources of Denominationalism,' Niebuhr states that the sect phenomenon is prone to appear in low socioeconomic circumstances, and that poor people are more likely to join a sect than wealthier ones (Kruse 1984, 4). In his opinion, a sect has to face much pressure in order to be part of the world, and to survive without its members compromising their beliefs; that is why, Niebuhr suggests, most sects cease to exist after the first generation and, if they manage to survive longer, their standards and principles are more dilute compared to those that they had to begin with (Johnson 1971, 128). For Gustav Mensching, a sect is characterized by the fact that it values isolated elements of the Gospel or church tradition, which have not been developed by the national church, or have been simply rejected by it (Berar 1980, 161). Bryan Wilson highlights the most important characteristics of a sect and of sectarian behavior

[65] According to James Kapaló, 'liminal Orthodoxy' can be used to describe the forms of Orthodoxy that are 'seemingly permanently suspended on the borders, both literally and metaphorically, between Orthodoxy and heresy […] and between critique and dependency on Orthodox Christianity in its institutional form' (Kapaló 2019, x).

as follows: firstly, becoming a member is considered to be a voluntary act; secondly, in order for someone to become a member they have to be familiar with the doctrine of the sect, which is exclusive and often fights against those who reject its moral and doctrinal teachings because its members consider themselves to be illuminated, and reject the values of the secular state, sometimes even isolating themselves from the world (Berar 1980, 178). Irrespective of the meanings that the word receives, the term has been used to define every religious movement that was considered schismatic or heretic in one way or another; that is why Joachim Wach, an American sociologist, draws attention to the fact that the concept of sect has been applied in an abusive manner by the mainstream churches, being used to define any small group that broke away from the bigger church (Berar 1980, 161).

For Milton Yinger, there is a very important difference between a sect and a church, and that difference refers to the relationship that these groups have with the authorities. Consequently, a church is a group that does not reject compromises with the secular power, and adapts to any situation in relation to the state in order to ensure its survival, whereas a 'sects' are less compliant:

> The church as a type is a religious body which recognizes the strength of the secular world, and rather than either deserting the attempt to influence it or losing its position by contradicting the secular powers directly, accepts the main elements in the existing balance of power and thus attempts to remain in a position where it can get a hearing (Yinger 1961, 18–19).

On the other hand, the sect tends to be radical, and prefers isolating itself from society rather than compromising its values in the face of the state:

> […] it tends to be radical, with a small, voluntary membership that lacks continuity; […] The sect stresses individual perfection and asceticism; it is either hostile or indifferent to the state, and opposes the ecclesiastical order (Yinger 1961, 19).

When it comes to the Romanian context, the theological understanding of the term, which defines the sect as a heretical group, overlaps with the sociological one (Dobrincu 2007, 584). During the interwar period, there was a clear distinction made between the right belief of the Orthodox Church and the heretical teachings of the sects. In a speech delivered in Parliament on the occasion of the l928 legislative

changes, D. Turcu, an Orthodox priest, accused the neo–Protestant groups, such as the Adventists and Baptists, of endangering the safety of the state and its newly gained identity (Biserica noastră și cultele minoritare, 79). One year later, in a church magazine called 'Biserica și Școala' (Church and the School), there was an article entitled 'Primejdii ce ne așteaptă' (The Dangers That Await Us) in which the above mentioned groups were accused of trying to destroy the state by infiltrating foreign elements inside the country (Ardeoiu 1929).[66] The Church and state's attitude towards these new religious groups, that they referred to as sects, was justified by the fact that the latter apparently refused to be dependent on the state, they spread pacifist messages in times of conflict and war, refused to undergo military service and did not want to participate in national festivities; for these reasons they were seen as aggressive (Dobrincu 2007, 595).

Two of the most important commentators on sects in the interwar period were Grigore Gh. Comșa, The Bishop of Arad County, who wrote extensively about the problems caused by the sects and their expansion in the country, and Grigorie Leu Botoșăneanu, an Orthodox Bishop who also wrote a book about sects in Romania, describing their characteristics and behaviours so that people would be more informed about the danger that they represented for Romania. In 1930, Grigore Comșa claimed that the main problem with these sects was that they were difficult to identify due to the fact that people knew little about them. This was the reason why they managed to attract so many adherents, especially peasants, to their teachings (Comșa 1930, 1). While he was more concerned with the sects that seemed to have formed due to a Western influence in the country,[67] Botoșăneanu, on the other hand, dedicated many pages in his 'Confesiuni și secte' (Confessions and Sects), written in 1929, to the task of separating these sects into different categories on the basis of their origins. According to Botoșăneanu, there were sects that appeared because of the rational, Protestant influence on the Orthodox Church; these were the Baptists, the Adventists, the Evangelical Christians, or Brethren, and so on. Then, there were groups that broke away from the Orthodox Church, such as the Tudorists, the Inochentists,[68] the 'stilists,'

[66]Due to the fact that the Baptists appeared in Transylvania under the influence of Hungarian communities, there was this idea that the latter follow to destroy the unity of the newly created Romania.
[67] Especially a Hungarian influence.
[68] Inochentism refers to a religious movement that emerged in the border regions between Romania and Russia in the first decade of the twentieth century. The name of the movement comes from the name of its founder, the monk Inochentie of Balta (1875–1917) (see Kapaló 2019; Lisnic 2022).

or Old Calendarists; sects that had a mystical character, such as the Stundists,[69] the Lipovans[70] and, finally, sects that appeared due to a philosophical influence, such as Rudolf Steiner's Theosophy, or the Tolstoyan movement, which was based on the religious and philosophical views of the Russian novelist Lev Tolstoi (Botoșăneanu 1929, 239–242). Botoșăneanu was of the opinion that these sects appeared and were successful amongst the Romanians because of the sufferings that the war had caused in the country, generating confusion and internal struggles. One of the most important aspects that he repeats in his book is that these groups were a threat to the Orthodox character of Romania, the main reason for the existence of the Romanian nation in the first place (Botoșăneanu 1929, 42). By doing this, Botoșăneanu aligned his thoughts to ideas promoted in the era by important Romanian philosophical figures, such as Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu, for whom being an Orthodox was inseparable from and a necessary and integral part of being Romanian, promoting the concept of 'Romanianness' which meant, by and large, defining ethnicity in religious terms (Clark 2021, 98). In one of his books, 'Roza vânturilor' (The Rose of the Winds), Nae Ionescu claims that 'Being Romanian means being an Orthodox' (see Dobrincu 2007, 596). These ideas were also promoted by Dumitru Stăniloae, one of the most prominent Romanian Orthodox theologians of the twentieth century who, together with other interwar authors, made nationalism tempting and encouraged Romanians to think of their nation as an ethnic nation, which they then defined in religious terms (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 45).

During Antonescu's dictatorship (January 1941- August 1944), sects were seen as dangerous due to the fact that it was considered that they affected the purity of the Romanian nation; the 1940s marked the beginning of a process of purification of the country,[71] and it was clear from the beginning that any belief system that could not be associated with being a Romanian was meant to disappear. The most common accusations against these groups during this period of time were that they were

[69] The Stundists appeared in the southwestern region of the Russian Empire (present day Ukraine) in the 19th century. Most of them were peasants that had been heavily influenced by German Baptists, and their name comes from the German term 'Stunde,' which means hour, referring to their practice of studying the Bible for an hour every day.

[70] The Lipovans is the name given to the ethnic Russian Old Believers who live in Romania. They emigrated from Russia in the 18th century as dissenters from the Russian Orthodox Church.

[71] A process that affected the Jewish communities and the Roma communities, both of whom were deported to Transnistria.

conducting propaganda campaigns against the Romanian Orthodox Church and that their actions were contrary to the national interest of the country (Dobrincu 2018, 125).

During the communist era – which officially began after the forced abdication of King Michael, on December 30 1947 and lasted until December 1989 – apart from it being an atheistic system that rejected religion altogether, the so-called sects were considered a danger to the safety of the state as they had connections and relations with the outside, capitalist world (Rangu 1977, 43). Their backwardness and fanaticism (Hladchi-Bucovineanu 1983, 45–46), as well as their alleged obsession with money and power (Hladchi-Bucovineanu, 87), were frequently pointed out as defining elements of their mentality, but also as the main reasons why they represented a threat for the Romanian communist state.

Legal Framework and the Church-State Relationships

After being elected as the first joint ruler of the two principalities that went on to form the Romanian nation state, Wallachia and Moldova, in 1859, Alexandru Ioan Cuza[72] launched a well-defined reform program; the relationship between the church and the state was important for the new leader, as he was planning to subordinate the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church to his own projects (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 18). Due to the fact that vast lands had been donated by previous rulers to the Orthodox monasteries dedicated to Mount Athos, in 1863 Cuza decided to nationalize this land, and to stop the transfer of funds abroad, turning the church into a state institution. The next step was to unify the churches from both Wallachia and Moldavia into one body (Leuștean 2009, 26). Following this event, in 1865 the Orthodox Church declared its independence from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, but the latter only recognized it twenty years later in 1885 (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 19), after Romania had obtained its independence from the Ottoman Empire and was already a kingdom. In 1864, Cuza issued a law in November, called 'Decretul organic pentru reglementarea schimei monahicești' (The Decree Regarding the Regulation of the Monastic Schism) which had the purpose of reducing the number of monks and monasteries; the law made it more difficult for one to become a monk, as the prospective new monks needed approval from the Ministry of Religious Confessions (Leuștean 2009, 26). By issuing this law, Cuza intended to have more control over those who wanted to enter the

[72] Romanian ruler during 1859-1866, when Moldova and Țara Românească (Wallachia), two major provinces of Romania, were united under the rule of a single person, Alexandru Ioan Cuza.

church hierarchy because the Orthodox tradition states that the hierarchy can only be chosen from monastic clergy (Leuștean 2009, 26). On December 1864, Cuza adopted a law through which the Synod was established, but he made it dependent on his approval regarding every decision that it had to make; in 1865, the first Penal Code was issued, and aspects regarding the church and the other religious communities and confessions were given much attention. He managed to bring the Church under his control, proving that it was not impossible for it to become an ally in building the Romanian nation-state. By having control over the clergy members of the Orthodox Church, Cuza was indirectly exercising control over the faithful (Leuștean 2009, 29).

According to the 1859 census, the population of the new state was mostly Orthodox, with small Catholic and Jewish communities. Regarding the relationships between the church and the rulers, it seems that the former would bless the latter in front of the faithful (Leuștean 2009, 25). However, during the reign of King Carol I (1866-1914), the first Romanian king who succeeded Cuza after the latter was forced to abdicate, the Orthodox Church gained a nationalist dimension, and in the following years it became more and more embedded within the political field. The 1866 Constitution recognized the Orthodox Church as the main church in the country: 'The Orthodox religion of the East is the dominant religion of the state. The Romanian Orthodox Church is and shall remain independent from all foreign leaderships but it will retain its doctrinal unity with the Eastern Ecumenical Church' (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 19). However, it paid little attention to all the other religious minorities, and even if article 21 proclaimed that freedom of conscience was absolute and that all religious groups were free to operate in Romania, as long as their actions did not affect the safety of the state, the reality is that most of these communities (Roman Catholics and Muslims, together with the Jews and Protestants) were hardly even tolerated. Moreover, article 82 of the same Constitution stated that the children of the king,[73] the future rulers of the state, had to be brought up in the Orthodox faith (Leuștean 2007, 718).

The 1899 census still showed that the majority of the population was Orthodox; however, due to the fact that the king was Catholic there were many who expressed concerns that the number of people who converted to Roman Catholicism had grown

[73] King Carol I was a Roman Catholic.

over time and were perceiving the Catholic Church as a threat. By the end of the 19th century, the Orthodox Church was going through a financial crisis, with a significant decrease in the number of priests; most of them were poorly educated and lived in rural areas. Due to this situation, in 1893 a law was issued which implied that the state would pay part of the salaries of the priests, thus assuming a managerial role in the affairs of the Church (Leuștean 2009, 35). This law had strong political implications, and this aspect was further highlighted by the 1893 Law of Clergy and Seminaries, which stated that each sermon was supposed to be noted in a special register so that it could be checked later by state inspectors (Leuștean 2007, 718).

This close relationship between the Church and the state continued during the interwar period, characterized as a time of struggling, questionings, and debates. After the First World War and the unification of the Romanian state, there were more and more issues that started to concern the newly formed state. If it had problems before, the country was now facing a more challenging situation, with a growing population whose needs it had to satisfy, and a religious diversity that it had never encountered before. The Constitution of 1923, however, did not provide for a more democratic system in which all religious groups could freely worship; article 22 of the Constitution stated that 'the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic Churches are Romanian Churches. The Romanian Orthodox Church, being the religion of a majority of Romanians, is the dominant church in the Romanian state; the Greek Catholic Church has priority over other denominations' (Dobrincu 2007, 586).

Gradually, the Orthodox Church began incorporating elements of national identity, highlighting the strong connection that existed between divinity and Romanian history (Leuștean 2009, 40). Under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, Orthodoxy was seen as a religious identity, but following the formation of the Romanian state, it became an integral part of national identity as well. The concept that would characterize the relationship between the church and the state in the following years is that of *symphonia*, meaning that both of these institutions had similar responsibilities in guiding the people, and that asked for a harmonious collaboration between the two. These ideas were frequently repeated by Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu in the articles that they published in 'Gândirea,' (The Thinking) a magazine that they founded in 1921. In 1940, in the previously mentioned magazine, Crainic wrote that 'Orthodoxy is a part of the autochthonous spirit […] For

us, the nation and the Church are parts of the same historical identity' (Crainic 1940, 637). Around the same time, Dumitru Stăniloae wrote that 'Orthodoxy is an essential and vital function of Romanianism. Our permanent national ideal can only be conceived in relation to Orthodoxy' (Stăniloae cited in Stan and Turcescu 2007, 45).

In a mostly agrarian country, the Church represented an important attraction for the people, most of them peasants. Thus, its influence on the political scene became more and more obvious; in 1924, The Holy Synod decided to adopt the Julian calendar, ignoring the voices and complaints of the people. By doing this, the Orthodox Church increased its influence, as it had the power to impose its own dates over the dates of all the other confessions (Leuștean 2007, 723). This decision had many other consequences, including the formation of the Old Calendarist Church, a religious group that refused to accept the newly adopted calendar and went on to organize their own community, with their own rules of worship and devotion based on the old, Julian calendar. The community first appeared in Bessarabia and in Neamț County, Moldova. They soon became the target of the secret police in the area and it was not rare for them to have conflicts with the gendarmes, conflicts that sometimes ended in numerous arrests, violence and casualties. The group also drew the attention of the Holy Synod and the religious journalists, who published numerous articles, in newspapers and magazines, describing the heretical and destructive character of the 'sect.' During Antonescu's dictatorship, as well as during communism, the group was deprived of the rights to legally function as a religious confession and its leaders and members were repressed and persecuted in various manners.[74]

The 'Ministerial Decision No. 5734/1925' was the first legal expression of the state's concern regarding religious pluralism in Romania and it tried to solve the situation of the religious communities known as 'sects.' They were split into three categories: 1. allowed (Baptists, Adventists, Unitarians, Lipovans, and Raskolniks); 2. forbidden (those who, through their practices, contravened public order; Nazarenes, Bible Students, Reformed Adventists, Tremblers,[75] Inochentists) and 3. unknown (those who did not have any activity in Romania yet). Officially, proselytism was

[74] During Antonescu's regime they were classified as a forbidden sect, whose activity contravened public order (Achim 2013, 501). During communism, they were labelled as an anarchic movement (Hladchi– Bucovineanu 1983, 25).

[75] Pentecostals were popularly known as 'tremblers,' a name that was meant to mock their spiritual experiences.

forbidden in the country (Dobrincu 2007, 586–587). This decision was well received by the military, especially by the War Office, that expressed its concern regarding the spread of the teachings of these 'religious sects' and offered its support in preserving the 'Orthodox Christian religion' (ANIC–MCA, D 172/1925, 73).[76] In December 1924, the Army Chief of Staff called for a close collaboration between all institutions of the state (Church, school, army, administration) in order to defend the national Church and the state from the subversive behavior of these religious groups (ANIC – MCA, D 172/1925, 223). Moreover, he identified the main causes that led to the success of sectarian propaganda. These included the disastrous moral and material situation after the war, the change of the calendar, and the lack of well-trained missionaries and priests (ANIC – MCA, D 172/1925, 224).

The situation of the Catholic Church was dealt with in 1927 when Romania concluded a Concordat with the Holy See;[77] the clauses of this act included references to the Greek-Catholic Church and the Armenian Church, as well. It was this Concordat, according to Ionuț Biliuță, that affected the relations between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Greek-Catholic Church and led to the right-wing radicalization of the former's clergymen (Biliuță 2018, 191). When it comes to the relationships between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, it seems that the former presented a negative image of the latter in the press, especially during the interwar period. The Catholic Church was seen as papist, and it was considered responsible for the division of Christianity; it was also seen as deceptive, antinational, a persecutor, and heretical, and its proselytism was described as aggressive (Ghișa 2014, 113–116). Because there was a large Catholic minority in both Transylvania and Moldavia, the Catholic influence was often associated with the Hungarian state. In an article from 1930, the Hungarian Catholic Church was accused of encouraging Hungarian irredentism due to the fact that it organised a parade in order to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the death of Saint Emeric. The major worry of the religious journalists was that, during these parades, the Hungarian community would listen to political speeches that promoted irredentist ideas (Biserica și Școala 1930, 3-4). However, there were things that the Orthodox Church admired about the Catholic

[76] The War Office was especially worried about the spread of the pacifist beliefs of some of these religious groups amongst the troops (Kapaló 2019, 119).
[77] The Concordat gave the Catholic Church legal status, recognized the Catholic churches as 'churches' instead of 'religious denominations,' and made Romanian the official Church language (Clark 2021, 96).

Church, and its interest in the training of missionaries was one of them (Ghișa 2014, 116). The Orthodox Church's reticence with regard to Catholicism had more to do with its rejection of the Western civilization and modernity, seen as the root cause of evil, and less to do with the Catholic Church itself (Ghișa 2014, 118).

In 1928 a new general law of religious confessions was adopted, which offered a better status to other churches and religions in the country, meaning that the 'new religions' could be recognized if their confessions of faith were not 'contrary to public order;' this measure was seen by the Orthodox clergy as a threat to its spiritual authority and it warned the politicians that these religious communities were nothing else but 'Trojan horses' planning to destroy the country and its unity (Leuștean 2007, 729). The Ministerial decisions of 1933,[78] 1937,[79] and 1939[80] were issued in order to solve the problem of the religious associations, generally known as sects, which, according to these Decrees, were split into 'forbidden' and 'allowed.'[81] The 'Carol II' Penal Code, adopted in 1936, stated in book II, title V, that whoever prevented the free practice of a religion was committing a crime (Dobrincu 2007, 589). The 'Ministerial decision no. 4.781,' published on 21 April 1937, mentioned the religious associations whose activities were forbidden due to the fact that they contravened public order. Amongst the associations there were the Pentecostals, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Reformed Adventists, the Inochentists and the Stilists (Deciziunea nr. 4.781 din 1937, 3). It stated that the administrative and police agencies were to close down all places of worship of these communities, and to stop any form of religious propaganda, or proselytism, whether this was done verbally, or in the form of writing, by spreading brochures and magazines by colporteurs, usually members of these communities. The police were instructed to confiscate these brochures, and send them to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Deciziunea nr. 4.781 din 1937, 3–4). This measure ensured that many

[78] Monitorul Oficial, partea I, nr. 193, 24 august 1933.
[79] Monitorul Oficial, partea I, nr. 93, 21 aprilie 1937.
[80] Monitorul Oficial, partea I, nr. 161, 15 iulie 1939.
[81] After the 1933 Ministerial decision which, once again, forbade the free practice of their confession, the Pentecostals wrote a 'Protest-Memorandum,' highlighting the persecutions they have been subjected to as a religious community, especially on the part of the rural gendarmes. In response, the Ministry launched an investigation that was meant to determine if there was a religious psychosis that affected the judgment of Pentecostal believers, if they stopped their children from getting vaccinated, or if they had a dangerous attitude towards the state, in general. The investigation lasted more than a year and, even if it showed that this religious group was not a danger for the country, the Ministry failed to deal with the situation and the Pentecostals' rights were not recognised until the end of the Second World War. For this reason, and in order to avoid further persecution, many Pentecostals joined the Baptist community during the interwar period (Dobrincu 2018, 108–109).

of these confiscated materials ended up in the archives, in the case or penal files of the arrested believers, thus ensuring their preservation which, in turn, enables our present understanding of these religious communities' culture during those times (see chapter one).

On 14 February 1938 King Carol II, who ruled between 1930 until his forced abdication in September 1940, established a so-called 'puppet government' led by Miron Cristea, the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, which was soon followed by the establishment of a royal dictatorship, on 20 February (Kapaló 2019, 123). The 1938 Constitution had a more authoritarian character, and it assigned supremacy to the king, the Parliament turning into an auxiliary body. Article 8 of the Constitution stated that 'priests from all religious confessions are forbidden to use their spiritual authority for political propaganda […] Any political association which has a religious basis or pretext is forbidden' (Leuștean 2007, 732). From a political point of view, during this period of time Romania went through a crisis which led it closer to dictatorship, followed by military rule. Between 1938 and 1939, the Metropolitan of Transylvania, Nicolae Bălan, organized a competition of anti-sectarian sermons which was concluded in 1940 with the publishing of a volume. The volume provided the priests with sermons and materials that would help them in their fight against the sects (Biserica și Școala 1940, 91).

During the entire interwar period, all religious associations,[82] also known as sects, were supervised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs with the help of the law enforcement services whose purpose was repressive, such as the Gendarmerie, the General Police, the Siguranța, and the Intelligence Services (Dobrincu 2018, 114). In line with their intention to supress and in order to ensure their constant supervision, the police used secret agents (including members of these religious groups) and occasional informers, recruited especially from amongst the Orthodox clergy and Orthodox believers (Dobrincu 2018, 143).

The 'Ministerial Decision no.5.657/ 10 February 1940' recognized the Baptist community as a religious confession, including all its rights and freedoms (Dobrincu 2007, 589). The Orthodox clergy, however, reacted negatively to this decision and

[82] The interwar Romanian state split religious confessions and denominations into two categories: the so-called historical churches, that had a long tradition in Romania, and enjoyed full legal rights, and the religious associations, which had a lower legal status and included the neo-Protestant communities, and the Orthodox Church splinter groups, such as the Tudorists or the Old Calendarists (Enache 2010, 199).

wrote a memorandum, which was to be signed by all the Orthodox priests in Bucharest and submitted to the king, the government, and the Patriarchy, in which they argued that all religious sects posed a threat to the national unity of the country (Dobrincu 2018, 92). In September 1940, during the National Legionary State, which was a fascist regime that governed Romania between 14 September 1940 and 14 February 1941, all religious associations were forbidden through the 'Ministerial decisions no. 42. 352' and no. 42. 353, respectively. These decisions also mentioned the closing of all churches that belonged to religious associations, and the police were to confiscate the goods of the abolished 'sects' (ANIC – MCA, Direcția Studii, D 1/1939, 21).[83]

In the course of the same year, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture banned the printing and spreading of religious brochures without them being approved by the General Police and the Central Service of Press Censorship in advance (Dobrincu 2018, 123–124). Two years later, the law no. 927/ December 1942 and no. 431/June 1943[84] stated that 'all existing religious associations (sects) are and will remain abolished,' seeking to bring back to the Orthodox Church a large part of the population who had joined these religious minorities during the interwar period. In 1941, the authorities closed down the Baptist Girls School, and the Baptist Seminary in Bucharest was closed in March 1942 (Dobrincu 2018, 99). These measures were part of a vast project that looked for a 'purification' of the nation of all those elements that were not deemed Romanian and did not represent the so-called Romanianness. The Orthodox Church became, under Antonescu's dictatorship, a political tool, controlled by the state in order to gain more control over the population, and over the entire society (Enache 2007, 606). In a Siguranța report from September 1942, religious associations were accused of working for the enemies, namely the communists:

> A fact that confirms to us that these religious heresies are in the service of our enemies is the following: when Bessarabia was occupied by the Bolsheviks, these religious sects, assuming that their role was finished, had ceased their activities of their own volition, even without any measures being taken against them by the Soviet authorities. Once the province was retrieved, these religious

[83] During the summer of 1940 Romania lost a series of territories. It had to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR, the Northern part of Transylvania to Hungary, and the Cadrilater, or the Southern part of Dobrogea, to Bulgaria.
[84] Monitorul Oficial, no. 305, 30 December 1942.

> sects have suddenly begun their activity again (ACNSAS, FD București, D6902, vol.1, 365).

This was an exaggeration, as there is evidence that these religious groups were not allowed to function during the Soviet occupation of Bessarabia. When the territory was recovered by Romania in July 1941, they were poorly organized and had less members than they used to have before the occupation (Dobrincu 2007, 592).

During Antonescu's rule, the repression against the so-called sects was conducted by the police, the Orthodox clergy, and the administrative organs. Some of the measures taken against them were: identifying and surveilling all adherents of the outlawed confessions; a strict surveillance of all members of these groups, as well as of the people they came in contact with; identifying all religious colporteurs and preachers, followed by their arraignment; supervising those members who returned to the Orthodox Church in order to establish if their reconversion was genuine;[85] identifying and surveilling the religious leaders; organizing house searches in order to detect and confiscate the religious 'propaganda materials;' intensifying the propaganda against religious minorities in order to force them to return to Orthodoxy; in all cases where opposition was encountered, the police were allowed to suppress the problematic groups or individuals (Dobrincu 2007, 592).

One of the most sensitive issues concerns Antonescu's intention to deport the majority of these religious minorities to Transnistria, due to the fact that they were seen as a danger and a threat to the country. The news of deportation spread rapidly amongst them, and some of the members of the neo-Protestant communities returned to the Orthodox Church for fear of being sent to prison, or in Transnistria (ACNSAS, D 6902, vol.1, 378; ANIC, IRP, 1116, 36).[86] Even though they are nowadays considered to have been rumours, these measures seem to have affected communities such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Inochentists, and other neo-Protestant groups that

[85] In many cases, the individuals who returned to Orthodoxy would not frequent the Orthodox Church services, thus generating the suspicion that their reconversion was solely motivated by their desire to escape the police surveillance and persecution.

[86] Responsible for the rapid spread of this news were the Orthodox priests (Silveșan 2011, 5), as revealed by a report written by the Police Inspectorate in Constanța, in October 1942: 'I have the honour to report the following: among the Baptists in Grădina, Abrud, Hațeg, Viișoara, Petroșani, and Ștefan cel Mare, all of them in Constanța County, there is a serious concern due to the fact that the Orthodox believers and the local priests try to convince them to return to Orthodoxy, telling them that soon the Government plans to send all sectarians, including the Baptists, to work camps at Bug, together with the Jews. The villagers also spread the rumour that when the Baptists will be deported, the state will confiscate their possessions (ACNSAS, D 6902, vol.1, 378).

were forced to become less visible and to practice their religion far from the eyes of the people.[87] Moreover, the goods of these religious communities were confiscated, as well as their churches (ACNSAS, D 12378, vol. 3, 288–290). The General Secretary of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers decided in November 1943 that the goods belonging to religious associations were to be moved under state ownership (Dobrincu 2018, 127). The process of confiscation of the movable and immovable properties of the religious associations was led in the cities by a commission that consisted of the deputy-mayor, the chief of the Financial Department, and a designated police commissioner; in the rural areas, the commission was made of the mayor, the notary and the chief of the Gendarmerie (Dobrincu 2018, 132). Starting from 1943, the church magazine 'Biserica și Școala' announced, within their 'Information' section, the confiscation of the various prayer houses belonging to minority religious groups, as well as the purpose for which they would be used by the Orthodox Church (Biserica și Școala 1943, 95). Some were converted into schools, town halls, community centres, while others, due to them being in a poor condition, were demolished and the remaining materials were given to the Orthodox parishes in the area (Dobrincu 2018, 133). For example, the church of the Tudorists, located on Carol Davila Street, no. 48 in Bucharest, was converted into a storage room for the military supplies (Azimioară 1988, 98). This led to a difficult situation for the members of the religious minorities who were forced into a so-called 'religious underground,'[88] continuing to meet in attics, cellars, or even woods, despite the harsh measures taken against them by the state.[89] The same church magazine soon started to publish lists of all those people who, for fear of punishment and deportation, returned to Orthodoxy. Persecutions against religious minorities ceased after 23 August 1944, and the period of time between

[87] Another rumour that was spread amongst the Evangelical Christians was that all elder repenters in the country will be shot (Dobrincu 2018, 138). Similar rumours affected the Tudorist community, where some adherents packed up a small bag in case they would be arrested or deported (Azimioară 1988, 100).

[88] The term 'religious underground' has both a metaphorical and a literal meaning, referring to all religious communities that were unregistered, forbidden, legally prohibited, and became the target of the secret police (Kapaló and Povedák 2022, 3). Even though the concept is usually associated with communist repression, it existed before the communist regime's takeover in Central and Eastern Europe, in general, and in Romania, in particular (Kapaló and Povedák 2022, 5). According to Anca Șincan, the term 'underground' carries multiple meanings, one of them being that of hidden or clandestine, the latter being used by the secret police itself with reference to the illegal religious communities; however, for the secret police, clandestine meant not only secret or hidden, but also conspiratorial (Șincan 2019, 221).

[89] During the Second World War, if members of the religious associations were found organizing unauthorized meetings they were arrested, tried without witnesses or evidence, and sent to prison. Some of the arrested believers were also sent to the frontline (Dobrincu 2018, 134).

1944–1947 can be characterized as a time of relative freedom until the communist regime began imposing its restrictive laws.

In 1948, after the communist takeover of power in Romania was complete, the Law on Religious Denominations was adopted; it gave the Ministry of Religious Affairs full control over the religious issues.[90] Even though it gave the appearance of continuing the same legislation from the interwar period – the 1928 Law, respectively – the 'Decree 177' was actually reinterpreting it, by seeing the relationship between the church and state in a new light. If the 1928 Law was concerned with promoting religion as an element of unity and stability, the 1948 Decree was subtly trying to minimize the role of religion, allowing for the intrusion of the state in the religious life (Enache 2013, 109). One of the main differences is that if the 1928 Law was making a clear distinction between the different religious communities and denominations, this was not the case for the 1948 Decree (Enache 2013, 113); in a specific totalitarian manner, the Decree made no distinction between one religion, or the other, sending a clear message – from the communist regime's perspective, all religions were the same.[91] This was highlighted in article 38 which stated that converting from one religion to another, as well as leaving the church altogether, was allowed and could be done freely. On the other hand, the 1928 Law presented a much more complicated process in regard to changing one's religion and affiliation (Enache 2013, 120), due to the fact that these aspects mattered more for the church and the state than it did for the atheist communist regime. In 1948 the regime recognized the status of legal denomination of four religious groups that had hitherto been considered 'sects:' the Baptists, the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Brethren (Evangelical Christians), and the Pentecostals. This measure was meant to appease the West and to present the communist rule as just, patriotic, and legitimate (Ploscariu, Unpublished Manuscript). The other religious communities that have not been granted a legal status were labelled as 'anarchist groups' (Pintilescu 2022, 99).

[90] In 1957, the ministry was downgraded to the level of a department, as an attempt from the part of the regime to suggest that 'the problem of religious denominations' was solved (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 22).

[91] Although, on the outside, the regime made no distinction between the various religious confessions, the reality was that it considered some of them more dangerous, especially the so-called 'sects.' Thus, in a document from September 1949, the state created a hierarchy of the neo-Protestant communities, in ascending order, based on the potential threat they posed to the regime. The list began with the Brethren and the Baptists, and it ended with the Jehovah's Witnesses (Dobrincu 2018, 149).

As democratic as it wanted to sound, the 1948 Constitution was only a façade for what was actually happening in the background. The state went on to nationalize church property, restricted the training of priests, and banned the celebration of Christmas and Easter, as well as the teaching of religion, and schools run by religious orders were closed down in 1948 (Deletant 1995, 9). All of these were followed by a severe persecution and repression towards the religious minorities, but the Orthodox Church was not exempt from it either. The churches whose leadership resided abroad were the first targeted for persecution. In 1948, the communist regime revoked the Concordat with the Holy See, and in the same year the Greek Catholic Church was disbanded. In the second half of 1948, the regime abolished all foreign charities and institutions of philanthropy for fear of them being instruments of espionage (Bodeanu 2018, 16). In 1959 it adopted 'Decree no.410/ 28 October 1959' which aimed at abolishing numerous monasteries, as well as the reduction of the number of monks (Vasile 2006, 178). During the 1960s, the regime restricted the Sunday evening church services of the neo-Protestant communities, claiming that people had to rest properly in order to prepare for the new working week. Despite these measures, believers would secretly meet in their houses (Dobrincu 2018, 180).

The situation improved for a short period of time, during 1965-1977, as the state ceased to close down monasteries and Ceaușescu even acknowledged the important role that the Orthodox Church had in the development of the Romanian nation. From 1979 onwards, the persecutions were on the rise again; however, encouraged by the 1975 Helsinki Accords, in which human rights were an important issue, many members of different religious communities joined forces in an effort meant to counteract the intentions of the regime, by drawing the attention of the Western world to what was actually happening in Romania. Between 1977 and 1989, twenty-two churches and monasteries were demolished, and fourteen were closed down (Stan and Turcescu 2007, 25). Repression and persecution against religion, in general, and against religious minorities, in particular, continued in communist Romania until the fall of the regime in December 1989.

The Repression of Religion in Communist Romania

Hannah Arendt highlights in 'The Origins of Totalitarianism'[92] that totalitarian regimes used the state as a façade in order to represent themselves in a non-totalitarian world (Arendt 1994, 545); however, beneath that mask there were well-organised offices and an even better organized secret police which acted as a 'fifth column, directing the branches of the movement […] and generally preparing for the time when the totalitarian ruler […] can openly feel at home' (Arendt 1994, 546). Once it had the power in its hands, the secret police would degenerate into a force of repression (Deletant 2001, 69), following everyone and punishing every gesture that was considered to be dangerous for the safety of the state, thus spreading fear in the entire country. Amongst the persecuted, there were many religious communities, especially religious minorities, such as the Old Calendarists and the Tudorists.

The creation of the new man, another aspiration of the communist regime, entailed the cancellation of all aspects of private life. The secret police became the main instrument through which the Communist Party attempted to invade the personal lives of individuals, dictating what they could read, thus bookshops and libraries were purged of politically incorrect materials, what they learned, many textbooks being rewritten using Marxist-Leninist precepts, and even what they could believe in.[93] The secret police actively targeted religion and religious minorities as they were seen as dissenting elements and, in the eyes of the police, dissidence justified terror and persecution (Kuromiya 2012, 3).

In line with the Marxist materialist ideology, the communist regime was, in theory, meant to show no mercy or tolerance towards religion, irrespective of the forms that it took. In practice, however, the communist approach to religion was more complex.[94] For Marx, religion was 'the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the

[92] For Arendt, totalitarianism was a 'breach in modern civilization that began a long time ago' that had its major sources in imperialism and anti-Semitism (Grunenberg 2015, 963). Her understanding of the concept was criticized especially due to the fact that she used the terms 'radical evil' and 'banality' in order to describe the two sides of the evil nature of the totalitarian regime. Her description of Adolf Eichmann as 'banal,' which was meant to highlight his lack of conscience and self-reflection, was misinterpreted as an attempt to minimize his personal responsibility (Grunenberg 2015, 963). As I have already mentioned in the Introduction of the thesis, the concept of totalitarianism has been widely contested and redefined since Arendt wrote her famous 'Origins of Totalitarianism' in 1951.

[93] Gheorghe Pintilie, the first director of the Securitate, is believed to have said that there is no place in the secret police for people who believe in God (Oprea 2018, 61).

[94] For example, only one communist state formally banned religion, namely Albania, in 1967. Moreover, even though Stalin was initially hostile to the church, after the Soviet Union entered the Second World War he became more tolerant towards the official Russian Orthodox Church as he

heartless world, the opium of the people' an illusory happiness that had to be destroyed in order for people to be truly happy (Marx and Engels 1964, 42). According to both Marx and Engels, religion was an instrument of social control and oppression contributing, together with the bourgeois, to the existing system of exploitation (Haralambos and Holborn 2000, 436). Moreover, the belief in an afterlife discouraged people from trying to change their earthly situation, thus preventing their attempt to overthrow an oppressive system (Marx and Engels 1964, 316). Under communism, it was believed that religion would simply wither away, as it was only necessary under exploitative systems where men did not control the conditions of their labour. In a socialist society, however, religion was meant to disappear: 'Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves round man as long as he does not revolve round himself' (Haralambos and Holborn 2008, 437).

In the Soviet Union, the motto of the League of Militant Atheists became 'the fight against religion is the fight for Socialism.' Between 1925 and 1947, guided by Bolshevik principles of communist propaganda and following the Communist Party's orders with regards to religion, the union attempted to exterminate religion in all its forms and to propagate atheism and an anti-religious mindset. To this end, it contributed to the creation of anti-religious museums, in which they tried to expose the various miracles claimed by the Orthodox Church, and its so-called superstitious beliefs and practices (Lamont 1936, 11). Between 1921-1922, the Bolshevik regime attempted to seize the Russian Orthodox Church's possessions, arresting and executing any priest who opposed the measure (Lisnic 2022, 42). Starting from 1928, pages of the journal 'Bezbozhnik' (The Godless) began to be filled with photographs of destroyed churches that were then turned into clubs, shops, factories, and garages, while LMG (League of Militant Godless) were burning thousands of icons on the streets (Pospielovsky 1988, 38). These anti-religious campaigns of the 1920s, however, proved to be largely unsuccessful, especially in rural areas (Kapaló and Povedák 2022, 6).

In Romania, motivated by the same Marxist view with regards to religion, communists began publishing books in which the Christian message was mocked, or

understood the need to maximize the nation's support for the so-called 'Great Patriotic War' (Holmes 2015, 449).

performing theatrical plays with a profound anti-religious message.[95] The persecutions against religious individuals manifested in their most horrific form inside the prisons where priests, and other believers, were tortured in various ways; in all of them, it seemed that the communists took a sadistic pleasure in ridiculing various religious rituals, such as the Mass, or the Liturgy, or in mocking religious figures, such as the Virgin Mary, or Jesus Christ. Virgil Ierunca describes how at Pitești Prison,[96] before Christmas or Easter, Theology students were dressed in a manner that would resemble the figure of Christ, and then forced to perform the Mass using faeces and urine, while the rest of the prisoners were forced to sing Christian songs with a modified and perverted message (Ierunca 2013, 42).

All of these go to show how the communist regime remorselessly tried to destroy the message and the meaning of belief for the lives of other people. Paradoxically, many former prisoners state that it was only their belief in a higher power that helped them survive the tortures that they had to endure. Somewhat ironically, prisons and the Gulag, in the case of the Soviet Union, fostered religious sentiments, and the incarceration of members of religious communities had the unexpected effect of spreading faiths in places where these faiths had previously been unknown (Kuromiya 2012, 194).

The private 'universe' of these religious communities was not a direct political challenge to the communist regime; however, its sheer existence meant that the regime had failed to eradicate it and to 'conquer the hearts and minds' of its citizens (Kuromiya 2012, 8). Despite the harsh persecutions on the part of the state, the activities of these groups failed to cease; various police reports express the worries of the regime, caused by the increasing numbers of the 'sectarians,' and it was not rare for secret police informers to join religious groups in order to provide more information about what was happening inside it. The ways in which the Securitate tried to infiltrate these communities are described in numerous articles included in the journal 'Securitatea.' The approach taken to the Orthodox Church, that closely

[95] Such plays were: 'Rugul'(The Pyre), 'Porunca a 7–a' (The 7th Commandment), 'Martin Luther și Thomas Müntzer' (Martin Luther and Thomas Müntzer) etc. (Comisia Prezidențială pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste din România, Raport Final, 2006, 470, footnote 98.)

[96] The Pitești Prison is best known for its reeducation experiment which was carried out by the Communist Party between 1949 and 1951. The experiment's main goal was to force prisoners to discard their political and religious convictions, and eventually their personalities to the point of complete obedience.

collaborated with the Securitate in exchange for its protection and a privileged position among other religions, with harsh consequences for those priests who refused collaboration and openly opposed the regime was slightly different from the measures taken by the secret police in the case of other religious communities. They were designed to confuse and sow doubt in their members, which would then hopefully – from the regime's perspective – lead to their dissolution. For example, in the case of neo-Protestant communities, due to their evangelizing activities, it was an easy task for the informers to pose as new converts and infiltrate their churches (Banciu 1974, 51). Recruiting collaborators among the believers that were imprisoned for various crimes was another option, and the Securitate especially targeted young members (Banciu 1974, 52). In other cases, members of a community could be recruited in order to supervise and offer information about members of other communities, in an attempt to destabilize and generate confusion amongst believers (Lungu and Medaru 1975, 32–36).

If the police had any compromising information about the person that it was trying to convince to become an informer they employed blackmail and intimidation (Croitor 2010, 140), sometimes rumor spreading. These tactics were meant to discredit and marginalize the individuals and to coerce them into collaborating. One of the aspects that the secret police paid close attention to was morality, even the sexual behavior of the individual, and religious figures were not exempt from this scrutiny (see Șincan 2022). According to Marius Oprea, in 1948 the network of informers included 1,436 former Legionnaires,[97] 1,210 former members of the historical political parties, 387 Catholic and Greek-Catholic priests, 403 Jehovah Witnesses, and 254 members of the Zionist movement (Oprea 2018, 91), all of whom were considered enemies of the regime. In 1959, when repression against religious communities intensified, priests and pastors were arrested on false or fabricated charges, such as theft, drunkenness, homosexuality, womanizing, even selling things on the black market (Ploscariu, Unpublished Manuscript).

As a result of the oppressive conditions that they had to live under, many religious groups created underground communities, where they produced and disseminated different objects and materials. They managed to survive persecution by

[97] Members of the Legion of the Archangel Michael, or the Legionary Movement.

engaging in both conscious and unconscious acts of resistance and defiance and by creating alternative narratives in which they critiqued and contradicted the established order. Some of the objects and materials that members of these communities created were charged with such meaning that they managed to evoke deep feelings in individuals, turning into a form of resistance towards the regime. They became something that James Scott defined as 'weapons of the weak' (Scott 1985, vxi), although Catherine Wanner contends both these terms:

> Believers did not see themselves as weak, given their divine alliance. The term 'weapons' implies intent to harm or engage in battle, which I do not believe they would recognize, given their belief in the necessity to 'Render unto Caesar' and their lack of commitment to pursuing worldly forms of justice (Wanner 2007, 86).

Even though these communities might not have seen themselves as weak, in political and social terms they were susceptible to the purposes of the atheist communist regime; for this reason, comparative work needs to be done in order to understand the dynamic of this relationship and to fully support Catherine Wanner's assertion. Their actions may have been driven by other-worldly motivations, but the results had implications that were also intended to reshape this world (Kapaló and Povedák 2022, 10). This goes to show that these religious communities were not devoid of agency; they made use of creative means in order to avoid arrest and ensure their survival. Thus, some narratives suggest that they would use even the books published by the communist state in order to talk about their faith. Sometimes the communists would publish books in which they ridiculed, criticized, and mocked the verses in the Bible and the members of these communities would ignore the critiques and use the books as means to their end, that of sharing their faith (Wurmbrand 1994, 98).

Believers had little to no access to religious literature as the communist regime refused to allow for the printing and distribution of religious materials (Bodeanu 2010, 127–128). The distribution of Christian literature was prohibited in 1948 and many religious communities were forced to surreptitiously obtain it with the help of foreign people who smuggled religious materials in the country (see Cindrea 2020, 46-47). As the phenomenon spread, the Ministry of Interior adopted a plan in 1972, known as the 'Antidote Action,' that specifically targeted people who distributed these religious materials and provided for the latter's confiscation and destruction. The main

institution that was invested with the task of confiscating these materials and of ending the phenomenon of smuggling was the Securitate. In 1974, with the adoption of the press law, the regime created the legal framework under which individuals involved in the illegal distribution of religious materials could be fined, arrested, and even sentenced from three months' up to three years' imprisonment (Bodeanu 2010, 128). The largest operations that the Securitate conducted in order to trace the networks through which religious literature was introduced within the country were 'Channel 80' and 'Channel 81,' respectively, both during the 1980s (Dobrincu 2018, 177). The news of what was happening with the religious materials sent to Romania spread rapidly in the West; in the United States, for example, journals such as 'The New York Times' and 'Wall Street Journal' wrote in 1984 that Romanian authorities turned a number of confiscated Bibles into toilet paper (Dobrincu 2018, 178).

Some of the articles included in 'Securitatea' describe the measures and methods used by the secret police in order to infiltrate the various religious communities and attempt to weaken and destroy them by confiscating their materials. In an article entitled 'Măsuri hotărâte împotriva intenției de intensificare a activității iehoviste' (Appointed Measures Against the Intensification of the Jehovah's Witnesses Activity) Colonel Nicolae Dumitrașcu, the author of the article, describes how the secret police operated in order to eliminate a Jehovah's Witnesses community. The article provides details of how the group used young people in order to distribute their journals and materials and it mentions the fact that the secret police confiscated seven typewriters that the community used to reproduce their writings (Dumitrașcu 1970, 62). An interesting aspect that the article highlights is that the police decided to adopt a different method, that of invading the religious groups during their meetings so that they would be caught 'red-handed,' as well as photographing the most important moments of the procedure (Dumitrașcu 1970, 64).[98] Many of these photographs are embedded in the article and depict various books, type-written

[98] The Soviet secret police produced numerous documentaries and newsreels in which the meetings or gatherings of religious groups were interrupted by the police, which then went on to arrest the members and confiscate the religious materials that they found (Vățulescu 2010, 10). They would sometimes force the believers to re-enact religious rituals for the camera; the staged performance was then used by the regime, in close collaboration with the state media organs at the time, in order to portray the community in a negative manner. Such examples are the photographs of the ritual performed by Archangelists (a branch of the Inochentist movement in Bessarabia) in one of their underground chapels (see Kapaló and Lisnic 2020, 50). In Romania, even though similar documentaries and newsreels might have been produced, I was not able to find or have access to any.

documents, and other materials, some of which seem to have been hidden by members of the community before the police arrived. They found transcripts hidden inside the walls, the wardrobe, doors, chairs, ceiling, and even inside the fireplace (Dumitrașcu 1970, 67). All these materials were confiscated by the police; their content was declared dangerous for the safety of the regime, and further measures meant to discourage and destroy the religious movement were proposed.

Conserving their materials was important for these communities, but they sometimes destroyed the materials themselves; this process was meant to ensure their survival as a community and to deprive the secret police of any evidence against them. In this regard, another article mentions the fact that the members of the community who were responsible for the writing and multiplying of the materials had clear instructions to do it during the night with all their windows covered and a box of matches nearby along with a bottle of gas so that they could immediately burn the evidence in case of an unexpected house search on the part of the police (Ionuță 1972, 76). Despite these safety measures taken by the communities themselves, it was not rare for the secret police to fabricate evidence or to falsify declarations in order to incriminate a certain individual.[99]

Another interesting case is the so-called 'Ruginoasa case,'[100] the centre of attention of which was the religious community known as Millenarianists.[101] The Ruginoasa religious community was composed of more than 150 people and it drew the attention of the police due to its organized activities. When the police confiscated their materials, apart from the usual written material and typewriters, they came across two tape recorders and more than 25 tapes on which the members had recorded sermons and various songs with a 'mystical' significance (Necula and Chiș 1971, 87). Unfortunately, the article mentions that all of these were used as evidence in the trial against the two leaders of the group and that as soon as the trial was over the materials would be destroyed (Necula and Chiș 1971, 90).

[99] This was common practice for all secret services; the NKVD agents, for example, would force the arrestees to sign fabricated interrogations which incriminated them, and would sometimes produce documents that served as evidence against them. Because of these fake pieces of information, many individuals were sent to Gulag or were murdered during the Great Terror (Vatlin 2016, xiv).
[100] Named after the village where the community was located.
[101] Based on Revelation 20:1–6, the term refers to the belief that Christ will rule the earth for 1000 years before the Last Judgement will put an end to history altogether.

The Securitate also detected the activity of a Lord's Army community, led by an Orthodox priest and his wife. It seems that the two, together with their sons, all of whom were priests, managed to build 18 cells and small prayer rooms in which people, most of whom came looking for healing or a peaceful place, would find shelter. The one that drew the attention of the Securitate is the priest's wife, as she seems to have taken the identity of a saint, claiming that she could heal people and that she was sent on earth by God. The woman, states the article, became an important figure amongst the younger women in the village, and they would often gather around her, while she was dictating them songs and prayers that they wrote in their notebooks (Călărășanu 1973, 71). When their house was searched by the police, they confiscated as follows: 14 books and brochures, 19 notebooks with handwritten songs and prayers, 10 typed documents containing religious songs and prayers, all belonging to the Lord's Army religious group (Călărășanu 1973, 72). One issue that concerned the police was the fact that the leader of the group was the priest's wife, and not the priest himself. Considering that he had previously been imprisoned for two years due to his involvement in the organisation of the Lord's Army communities, it might be that taking on the spiritual responsibilities by his wife was a way of ensuring the survival of the community.[102]

Conclusion

These are just some examples of how the secret police acted when confronted with religious groups that were seen as a threat and a danger for the regime. Their attempt to seek an ontological exit from the atheist world around them was interpreted in a political manner, and where evidence of wrongdoings was absent, it was fabricated. The materials that the police confiscated from these communities are important elements that have the potential to offer new insights into the groups, their members, doctrine, and beliefs, different from the information that might be obtained from a written document. It is also important to highlight that all of these religious communities were aware of the fact that they were the target of the regime, which is why they took precautionary measures, some of which were indeed creative, and which they spent time defining to all the members of the group. This means that they

[102] In the absence of men (when they are imprisoned, for example), women take on crucial roles that sometimes ensure the continuation and survival of a message or of a religious community. This has been the case with other religious groups, such as the Inochentists (see Kapaló 2017), the Greek-Catholic Church (see Șincan 2019), and the Old Calendarists, as it will be highlighted in this thesis.

refused to accept the label and identity of a victim and did everything in their power to defy the hegemonic rule, proving once more that constraints and struggles can sometimes be an impulse for boundless creativity.

Setting aside aspects such as guilt or truth, my approach in this thesis is to explore the material presence of religion in the archives. My archival work on Tudorists and the Old Calendarists, which forms the empirical basis for this thesis, demonstrates that with regards to the study of religions, the archives of the former Romanian secret police have not been used to their full potential. As I have attempted to illustrate in the above examples, the measures employed by the secret police involved the confiscation of objects and materials, such as brochures, diaries, icons, letters, postcards, songbooks from these religious minorities, as well as the production of images, photo-collages and bricolages of those considered enemies of the state. These items carry the potential to reveal much more about the communities than a written document could ever do. For this reason, in the chapters that follow I exemplify how the religious materials produced by the Old Calendarist and the Tudorist communities, which are still present in the files, can be analysed on a number of levels both by scholars and by the contemporary communities themselves. Once used by the secret police as incriminating evidence against the religious groups, these creative materials nowadays represent their long-lost cultural patrimony and memory and demonstrate their creative agency that, in times of severe persecution and opposition, ensured their survival as distinct religious communities.

Chapter Three: Finding Women in the Archives: Old Calendarist Nuns in Interwar Romania[103]

Introduction

Lost among the pages of a yellowed penal file, this photograph depicts four Old Calendarist nuns (Figure 3.1). Dressed in standard monastic clothes, they pose for what was meant to be a personal memento. Confiscated in 1941 by the Siguranța from two nuns, Steliana Geangu and Măzărel Anica, who were discovered hiding in a hut in the Pralea Woods, Bacău county, the photograph was added to their penal file following their arrest. Born in 1913, Steliana was first arrested in 1935 for taking part in the violent events that happened at Cucova in the same year, which resulted in the destruction of the Old Calendarist church in the village (see chapter seven). Probably released by September 1939, the date written down on the reverse of the confiscated photograph, Steliana found shelter in a hut in the woods, together with this younger nun. In her statement, Anica, who was 22 at the time of her arrest, declared that she had known Steliana since she was a child because she used to bring food to her in the woods (ACNSAS, FP, P 096704, 8). Arrested and tried for 'stilist propaganda,' the two nuns were accused of posing a danger to the interests of the state. Amongst the documents that were confiscated from them we find books, personal correspondence, but also confessions of believers, written down and sent to these two nuns, which seem to indicate that Steliana and Anica became the advisors of some members of the community. In the absence of a male figure, they even conducted church services by themselves in that small hut in the woods (ACNSAS, P 096704, 6) and ensured their survival by knitting gloves and socks and exchanging them for food (ACNSAS, P 096704, 9). We lose track of Steliana and Anica after 1941, but we are left with too many questions about their past and their fate. Who were these women? Were there others such as them? Can we tell their stories?

[103] Some information contained in the present chapter has already been published in the article: Iuliana Cindrea-Nagy, "… as the young girl told them so": Women and Old Calendarism in Interwar Romania, in Religion and Gender, Volume 11, Issue 1, Pp. 15-38, Brill, 2021.



Figure 3.1 Photograph depicting Old Calendarist nuns. The photograph belonged to nun Steliana Geangu and it was confiscated by the secret police in 1941. © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), P 096704.

Though Leopold von Ranke, the so-called father of modern scientific 'objective' history, defined the archives in gendered terms, calling the archival documents 'princesses, possibly beautiful, all under a curse and needing to be saved,' the reality is that women had been largely invisible and silent in historical memory (Cook 2009, 506). Starting from the 1970s, postmodern critiques of the archives challenged their immutable character and a generation of scholars, most of whom were women, started to question the neutrality of the archival documents whilst, at the same time, learned how to read them in a new manner (Mayhall 2005, 232). They have soon realized that women's voices were often obscured, their texts were lost or deposited in collections named after male figures (Gerson 2001, 14). Kelly Ritter mentions a letter that was sent in 1899 by a father and mother to their son who was studying at Yale. Ritter notices that, whilst reading the contents of the letter, the mother appears as a silent partner in the process of the letter writing (Ritter 2010, 190); she is reduced to a mere final mention that she does not even make herself, but her husband. The methodological approach proposed by other scholars is that of 'reading against the grain,' claiming that 'every document, if read with vast contextual knowledge, can be used to examine marginalized women and uncover their agency and their – however

limited – power' (Perry et al. 2010, xv). In an essay about women in communist Poland, Malgorzata Fidelis manages to discover the real voices of working women in the letters that they sent to the state-sponsored magazine 'Girlfriend' in 1948. In spite of the state agenda, that always portrayed women in rather ideological terms, such as workers or peasants, these letters, free of censorship, reflect their true voices and opinions (Fidelis 2010, 112).

Similar to Fidelis' women, Old Calendarist women, most of whom came from a peasant milieu, were the object of stereotyping. Repressed by both the state and the Orthodox Church in Romania, their identities were obscured by events which were considered much more significant than the ones that framed their lives. Traces of their experiences and voices, although often fragmentary, can, however, be found in the archives.

The history of women has only recently become an important subject for scholars and historians in Romania,[104] some of whom have either published valuable works on the feminist movement or have begun to integrate questions of gender into their research and analyses of the recent past (see Jinga and Soare 2011; Jinga 2015; Sircuța 2016; Bucur and Miroiu 2018). However, the issue of religious women and their involvement and importance within their churches and communities, especially in times of crisis, has scarcely been approached by researchers (see Ploscariu 2017; Bucur 2011). This chapter explores the gender relations that existed within the Old Calendarist church during the interwar period, as revealed in the documents contained in the files of the former secret police. It focuses on the important role of women and young girls, not only in terms of membership, but also in relation to the impact they had on the spread and preservation of the Old Calendarist ideas. The Old Calendarist church, or 'stilists', named after 'the old style calendar,' rejected the 1924 Church reform in which the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church decided to adopt the Revised Julian Calendar, and went on to organize its own rules of worship and devotion. The group developed into a spiritual mass movement, mostly comprised of peasants, especially in the province of Bessarabia, today's Republic of Moldova, which soon became the target of the rural Gendarmerie and the Siguranța. The primary aim of this chapter is to contribute to our understanding of the agency of women in

[104] Research and studies relating to women's history began to appear in the first decade of post–communism, and they were mostly focused on the so-called 'exceptional women' (Bucur 2018, 52).

traditional religious contexts in twentieth century Romania and Orthodox Eastern Europe, more broadly. Moreover, the topic of incarceration of women has been rather overlooked in the Romanian historiography, especially when it comes to women religious and their detention in isolated places, such as monasteries. For this reason, the present chapter also aims to present some important new sources and pieces of information that relate to this neglected aspect of Romanian history, particularly as the archival resources suggest that, at the behest of the Holy Synod and the state's authorities, Old Calendarist nuns have been subjected to monastic incarceration during the interwar period.

American historian and feminist, Gerda Lerner made the case back in 1975 that scholars are too focused on the history of 'notable women' which, although valuable, fail to capture the true significance of women's experiences and contribution to society as a whole (Lerner 1975, 5). 'Who are the women missing from history?' was, in her opinion, the most important question that any scholar approaching the history of women should consider. More than thirty years later, the Romanian historian Maria Bucur addresses the same issue in relation to the Romanian historiography. Her conclusion is that 'women in history have become visible, though they remain marginal in broad historical narratives' (Bucur 2018, 53).

For the purposes of this chapter I have consulted archival documents in both the Romanian National Archives and The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, the former secret police archives, and conducted interviews with the Old Calendarist nuns at 'Buna Vestire' Monastery, in Călărași county. The turn to oral history as a way of overcoming the limitations of archival work, especially when dealing with the documents produced by the secret police, is an emerging approach amongst scholars in Eastern Europe. It is well known that the written files and records of the former secret police depict the events in a highly selective manner, their content being filled with the ideological biases of those who created them; moreover, one has to take into consideration the fact that, sometimes, officials wrote what they knew their supervisors wanted to hear, and it might not have always been the real progress of events (Luehrmann 2015, 72–73). For this reason, oral history and memories of the past come to fill in all blanks left by the archival documents, or by archive-based histories. The archive has been generally considered 'society's collective memory;' when it comes to the secret police archives, however, this memory is not present, it is

rather suffocated by the lies of a system that tried to falsify history and to inculcate new memories in the minds of the people.

This chapter brings forward the stories of Old Calendarist women, most of whom came from a peasant milieu and were the object of repression by both the state and the Orthodox Church in Romania. One of the principal sources of this article is a collection of letters and postcards that Old Calendarist women and nuns sent from or received in detention that I discovered in the Romanian National Archives. These archival materials have been supplemented with materials and histories gathered from members of the Old Calendarist Church, most of whom are women, with whom I conducted ethnographic research.

The Religious, Political and Social Context

The First World War and the unification of the Romania in 1918 with its new territories caused significant difficulties for the state. Three provinces were incorporated by Romania at the end of the war, Bukovina, Bessarabia and Transylvania; out of these, Bukovina was the least ethnically Romanian, with a population mostly comprised of Ukrainians, followed by Romanians, Jews and Germans (Livezeanu 1995, 49). Having belonged to Hungary and the Habsburg Empire since the Middle Ages, Transylvania, the largest of the three provinces, developed a strong national movement. The Romanian element, however, had to contend with the historically more privileged Hungarian, German and Jewish minorities (Livezeanu 1995, 129–130). In 1918, Bessarabia was an agricultural province, with most of its rural population consisting of Romanian-speaking ethnics that claimed a Moldavian identity, while the urban spaces were dominated by Russians and Jews (Livezeanu 1995, 92; Kapaló 2017, 139). The newly formed state faced a challenging situation, with a growing population due to territorial expansion whose needs it had to satisfy, and a religious diversity that it had never experienced before. The *Constitution of 1923* failed to provide the basis on which all religious groups would be treated equally or could worship freely; article 22 of the Constitution stated that 'the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic Churches were Romanian Churches,' implying that the others which included Roman Catholics, Protestants and many other smaller churches, were not. The Romanian Orthodox Church, being the religion of a majority of Romanians, was declared 'the dominant church in the Romanian state; the Greek Catholic Church has priority over other denominations' (The 1923 Constitution

of Romania).[105] Increasingly, the Orthodox Church began incorporating elements of national ideology, highlighting the strong connection that existed between the true Orthodox faith and Romanian history and identity (Leuștean 2009, 40), while its influence on the political scene became more and more obvious. During Ottoman rule, Orthodoxy was seen as a religious identity, but after the formation of the Romanian state, it became an integral part of national identity as well.

Initially intended to be adopted in Romania at the turn of the century, in 1900, the Gregorian Calendar, which had been used by the Western countries since the 16th century, became an issue that was only raised for discussion again after the First World War. Due to the fact that the Julian Calendar was 13 days behind the Gregorian one, the Romanian commerce and industry had been greatly affected. This delay was problematic for the Romanian society, especially as the need for synchronization with the West was urgent. The banks, the postal service, the telegraph, the railways, the army, and other services were forced to shift to the Gregorian Calendar much sooner than the Church did, mainly due to the country's territorial expansion. Transylvania and Bukovina, as former territories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, had already adopted the Gregorian Calendar, and this posed many issues for the newly formed country. Already ravaged by the war, the Romanian administration was now in a chaotic state. Given this situation, in March 1919 the government issued a decree which stated that April 1st 1919 would become April 14th 1919 (Diac 2012). It was in this context that the Holy Synod decided, in October 1924, after five years of delaying the process,[106] to adopt the Revised Julian Calendar,[107] following a consultative synod in Constantinopole in 1923. The Orthodox Churches of Constantinople, Greece, Cyprus and Poland adopted the new calendar in the course of the same year, whereas Mount Athos and many Slavic Churches rejected it (McGuckin 2011, 96). Described as a 'faithless' reform by many Orthodox hierarchs (McGuckin 2011, 97), the calendar change was seen as a heresy and an attempt at ecumenism on the part of the patriarchate of Constantinople. It led to dissent movements in parts of Greece, Cyprus

[105] http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act_text?idt=1517 (accesed on December 3rd 2020).
[106] The Orthodox Church in Bessarabia and the Principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia) rejected the idea of the calendar change, mainly for dogmatic reasons, fearing that the population will not adapt to the change. However, given the example of Transylvania and Bukovina, the Church was finally persuaded to make the change in hopes that the issue would be resolved within a few years.
[107] None of the Eastern Orthodox churches fully adopted the Gregorian calendar, meaning that they followed the Gregorian calendar for everything else, but reverted to the Julian calendar for things that were related to the Easter cycle (McGuckin 2011, 96).

and Romania, which came to be known as the Old Calendarism. In Romania, it mostly spread in the western part of Moldavia[108] and in Bessarabia, regions with strong monastic traditions (Kapaló 2017, 142), and came to be perceived as a threat to the idea of the Romanian nation state, from which it distanced itself (Radu and Schmitt 2017, 6), and its modernizing goals.

Similar to most countries in Central and South-Eastern Europe during the interwar period, Romania was a predominantly peasant society. The peasantry was considered by the political elite of the time as both the social backbone of the nation and the reason of its backwardness (Radu and Schmitt 2017, 1). According to the 1930 Census, 78.9% of the population lived in rural areas, with only 20.1% inhabiting urban areas. In Bessarabia, only 12.9% of the citizens lived in towns (Sircuța 2016, 29). The uplifting of peasant society through education became the main goal of the intellectuals of the time. Even though primary education[109] had been compulsory since Alexandru Ioan Cuza's 1864 educational reform, at the end of the nineteenth century almost 78% of Romanians were still illiterate (Leuștean 2007, 67). The main goal of the educational reforms that were adopted in 1924, 1925, and 1928 was the unification of the educational institutions that separately evolved in the old and new provinces of Romania (Livezeanu 1995, 44). The process was, however, rendered difficult by the destruction caused during the war; many schools had to be converted into hospitals, while others were completely destroyed (Sircuța 2016, 116). To this we can add the political instability that characterized the interwar period as well as the contrast in the terms of quality between the various pieces of legislation that had previously been adopted in the new and old provinces. As the level of education was higher in the newly incorporated regions, the expansion of the educational system of the principalities generated tension and numerous debates. Due to extreme poverty and lack of perspective with regard to their children's future, peasants were sceptical about the usefulness of education. Children would often be used around the household, or involved in various agricultural activities throughout the year, and it was only the threat of a penalty that would force the peasants to send them to school (Sircuța 2016, 121).

[108] It had been part of Romania since the 1862 unification that took place under the rule of Alexandru Ioan Cuza.
[109] Primary education consisted of four grade levels.

The genuine interest in peasant society that characterized the interwar period also led to the appearance of the sociological school of peasant studies led by Dimitrie Gusti. Minister of Education between 1932 and 1933 and professor of Sociology, Ethics and Politics at the Univerity of Bucharest, Gusti developed both a political and a scholarly interest in the countryside and attempted to reform the peasantry through academic knowledge (Mușat 2011, 24). With the help of his students, one of whom was Ernest Bernea, a well-known sociologist and ethnographer of the interwar period, he organized field trips and expeditions in all provinces of Greater Romania. His research, along with that of Bernea, aimed to grasp the mentality and fears of the peasantry. In his work, 'Spațiu, timp și cauzaliatate la poporul român' (Space, Time and Causality for the Romanian People)[110] written in three volumes and containing the work he conducted between 1932 and 1966, Bernea approached the issue of the calendar and its significance for the villagers he interviewed. He concluded that the calendar reform was introduced by some and had to be endured by others (Bernea 2005, 205). In the minds of the peasants, the reform had various consequences that impacted upon nature itself,[111] as well as upon their families and spiritual lives,[112] causing ruptures and psychological suffering. Bernea's best known study on the issue of the calendar is the one he conducted in Cornova village in Bessarabia. In this study he talks about the many tensions that appeared in such a small village, the manner in which many peasants were spiritually stripped and labelled as heretics, lost, or backward-thinkers, and how the reform produced a tragedy in the hearts and souls of these people, either because they had left the old calendar, or because, unwilling to accept the reform, they had left the Church (Bernea 1932, 197).

Similar studies were conducted by others, such as Sergiu Roșca, a priest and journalist of the time, who in 1937 analysed the calendar issue in Nișcani, a village close to Cornova. Roșca concluded that for these people the calendar was not a human construct, but a divine revelation, a God-given element that humans were not supposed

[110] Translation by the author.
[111] Drought and flooding were seen as consequences of the reform, as punishments sent by God who was dissatisfied with the new order of things. Moreover, the peasants claimed that the new calendar was not the true calendar because they linked every natural phenomenon to the calendar; thus, the trees and flowers were due to bloom at a specific date, the fruits would mature at a specific time of year, and these were all elements and guidelines according to which the peasants would conduct their lives (Bernea 1932, 201).
[112] According to Bernea's work, some peasants believed that one would lose his or her status of a true Christian by following the new calendar.

to change. Changing the calendar was considered a sin because it meant changing their religion, an issue they could not fathom (Roșca 1937, 351).[113] Interestingly, though, both Bernea and Roșca point to women as the gatekeepers of tradition (Bernea 1932, 199; Roșca 1937, 358). The reform affected people spiritually as they sometimes had to work while the church bells tolled in the background, announcing the church service of a celebration according to the new calendar, an issue that caused them deep sorrows (Roșca 1937, 359). The peasants slowly lost their faith in the local priests, accusing them of accepting and forcing the calendar reform for money or prestige. Moreover, starting from 1926, various politicians began manipulating the peasants' feelings on the calendar issue, promising the return to the old calendar if elected in 1927, an electoral year. Under these circumstances, many priests were pressured to celebrate Easter twice in 1926, which only added to the already tense situation; this event led many who had already accepted the new calendar to reject it, claiming that they had been betrayed and forced to violate their conscience (Bernea 1932, 193). According to Bernea, the reform constituted a revolution 'because accepting it brought about a radical change within people and in their attitudes towards life' (Bernea 2005, 205). This revolution materialized in the years that followed, especially in Bessarabia and Moldavia, as the Old Calendarists became a real 'problem' for the state and the Orthodox Church alike. In Neamț county and other counties in the northern part of Bessarabia such as Bălți, Hotin, and Soroca, because of local resistance to the new calendar became the target of the Gendarmerie and the Orthodox clergy, which kept a close eye on the Old Calendarist groups in there.

Both state and Orthodox Church institutions reacted to the Old Calendarist movement with a combination of repression and compromise, and the movement, out of necessity, formed a 'parallel society' (Radu and Schmitt 2017, 17) that came to challenge the project of national integration and homogenization (Petruescu 2016, 63). According to Andreea Petruescu, the Old Calendarist movement went through two phases during the interwar period: a passive one, that lasted until 1930, when the peasants expressed their rejection of the calendar reform by not attending church according to the new calendar, and an active, or aggressive one, which lasted until

[113] A similar point was made by Vasile Băncilă in 1924 in his work 'Duhul Sărbătorii' (The Spirit of Celebration). He claimed that for the Romanian peasant the calendar was a revelation, and not an element that could be changed by a group of people. God had to be the initiator of the change, thus any human attempt to do so produced a metaphysical fear within them (Băncilă 1996, 26).

1936, when the Old Calendarists began to build their own churches and responded violently to the measures taken by the state and Church authorities towards them (Petruescu 2016, 62). Violent responses to state measures were recorded by various newspapers of the time starting in 1934 although due to the extremely biased written sources at our disposal it is unclear who actually provoked the violence. Bloody conflicts between the Old Calendarists and the gendarmes took place in numerous villages in Moldavia and Bessarabia, such as Vânători, Brusturi, Cucova and Albineț to name but a few. Because of this, in 1936 the authorities decided to take decisive and more violent measures against the Old Calendarist communities in order to definitively solve the issue. Church newspapers, such as 'Renașterea' (Rebirth), reported that these measures were taken in order to stop the rebels from continuing their agitations, which were dangerous for both the nation and its belief system (Renașterea 1936, 3). The Orthodox journal 'Biserica și Școala' (Church and School) spoke about the state's actions as a definitive supression of the 'stilists,' a 'sect led by enemies' that wanted to dissolve and destabilize the Romanian nation (Biserica și Școala 1937, 128).

According to contemporary gendarmerie reports and correspondence, some of the causes that led to the development of the Old Calendarist movement were the ignorance and backwardness of the peasants, who were unable to give up on their traditions and conservatism, as well as the Orthodox Church's incapacity to educate the peasantry and to send missionaries that could better explain the calendar reform to them (ACNSAS, FD, D 015304, 296). On the other hand, the Holy Synod deemed the Gendarmerie guilty of being too tolerant towards the Old Calendarists and of failing to intervene effectively in some of the most important situations. These mutual accusations lasted until 1936 when the authorities decided to put an end to the religious dissent movements that were causing such disruption in Bessarabia and Moldavia.

The large numbers of Old Calendarists that appeared in these regions were labelled as heretical by Orthodox Church theologians such as Grigorie Leul Botoșăneanu (Botoșăneanu 1929, 146). In describing their characteristics and behaviours, Botoșăneanu aimed to inform the Romanian political and social elite of the danger that Old Calendarists represented for the country. In addition to being considered heretical and a sectarian community, the Old Calendarists were deemed 'rebellious' and 'dangerous' by the Orthodox clergy and the Holy Synod of the

Orthodox Church, and their efforts to counter their spreading is apparent in the numerous documents present in the secret police archives. One can say with certainty that the terminology and language that the Synod had used with regard to the Old Calendarists, or any other religious minority, for that matter, was later adopted by the secret police, and not the other way around.

From a religious point of view, Bessarabia, which had been part of the Russian Empire until 1918, presented a particular set of circumstances. The region had a strong monastic tradition with Russian Orthodoxy, as opposed to the Romanian Orthodox Church, having dominated the spiritual landscape (Baran 2014, 15). On April 30, 1905, however, the Russian Emperor Nicholas II issued an Edict of Religious Tolerance which gave legal status to religions other than the Orthodox Church. At a time when more than 70 percent of the Russian population belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church, this was seen as a controversial measure. The Decree paved the way for legal recognition for many marginal religious groups such as Baptists, Adventists, Evangelicals, and Orthodox dissenters such as the Old Believers and it led to a greater religious diversity in the region (Kapaló 2017, 140). Orthodoxy, nevertheless, remained the religious and cultural centre of life for the majority of the population. In 1918, when Bessarabia was incorporated into Romania, there were more than 1000 monks and 1400 nuns, most of whom came from rural areas and had a low level of education (Ciorbă 2011, 50). By 1940, the number of monasteries and sketes[114] had risen to 34, from 20 in the 1920s, and they sheltered more than 2500 monks and nuns (Ciorbă 2011, 71). Furthermore, monasteries functioned as important economic and cultural centres in which nuns would run orphanages, hospitals, and even schools for poor children and the illiterate monastic personnel (Ciorbă 2011, 71).

The strength of monasticism in Moldavia and Bessarabia, as well as the unstable social and political climate ensured the success of Old Calendarism, especially amongst the rural classes who conferred eschatological meanings to the modernizing measures of the state (Kapaló 2017, 143) out of which the calendar change was considered the most spiritually dangerous.[115]

[114] A skete is a settlement of monks inhabiting a group of small cottages around a church and dependent upon a parent monastery (https://www.merriam–webster.com/dictionary/skete, accessed 3 December 2020).

[115] Many religious groups, such as the Old Calendarists and Inochentists, that also spread in Bessarabia and Moldavia in the 1920s promoted the idea that the End of Times was near and large scale events

Visionaries, Con Artists or True Devotees?

Women, both young or old, played important roles in the Old Calendarist church from its inception and were considered by its members, according to some police reports, the recipients of divine messages that warned of an imminent apocalypse. The visible role that women played in the Old Calendarist church added to its religiously and politically destabilizing image. Women, in general, and peasant women in particular, were subject to various stereotypes and limitations in early twentieth century Romania. Apart from being deprived of full rights to education, and having roles that were mostly confined to the household area (Nechifor and Dimulescu 2018, 40) women were also portrayed as naïve and more prone to falling into the trap of charismatic religious figures and their mystical ideas (Croitoru 1936, 121)**.** They were discouraged by their families to attend school, especially in the rural areas. It comes as no surprise that the 1930 Census shows that there were more illiterate women than men in all regions of the country, with the lowest percentage being recorded in Bessarabia, where only 25.1% of women were able to read and write (Sircuța 2016, 124). Families would often encourage boys to attend school, either due to financial reasons, or simply because they had more chances of benefitting from it. Women, on the other hand, were encouraged to be good wives, mothers (Văcărescu 2013, 11) and housekeepers. This was an idea promoted by Gusti's Bucharest School of Sociology which aimed at reforming certain aspects of rural life. In the process of creating the so-called new peasant woman, which was supposed to remain in the home and in the countryside, mothers and wives had to take part in theoretical and practical courses that were meant to benefit their entire families (Mușat 2011, 260).

Following World War I and its numerous traumas, however, women started to take over some of the roles of missing men (Nechifor and Dimulescu 2018, 35). This led to changing aspirations that were automatically shaped by their wartime experiences which, at times, proved to be empowering (Bucur and Miroiu 2018, 24). Exile, occupation, mobilization, these were all experiences that widened the gap between working and middle-class women, between rural and urban women. Rural women were subject to more abuse from both the Romanian and the occupying armies, while they also had to surrender their agricultural produce and try to protect their

such as the First World War, the collapse of the Russian Empire, the rise of Bolshevism, and the calendar reform were clear signs of this (Kapaló 2017, 143).

children and family property, all of these in the absence of their husbands. Urban women, on the other hand, suffered numerous economic hardships, hunger and cold. Although they were presumably united by the goals of the nation, the ways in which Romanian women shared the sufferings of war were limited and they did not take up its challenges in a unified manner (Bucur 2000, 36).

As a result of the war, the woman of the 1930s was either reduced to naivity and frailty and limited to the household arena, or depicted as strong, independent, and educated. In the latter case, however, the tendency towards emancipation was described by the press of the time as 'the masculinization of women' (Nechifor and Dimulescu 2018, 35), a phrase that implied that women were aspiring to things that should have naturally been left for men to deal with.[116] When it came to the role of women in religion, as in other social and historical contexts, they were discouraged from speaking publicly, excluded from positions of authority or leadership, and prohibited from ordination. Therefore, it came as no surprise when the press of the time began interpreting the presence of women in the close proximity of Old Calendarist monks or priests as a sign of promiscuity and immorality, labels that were often used in order to discredit the so called religious 'sects' by both the Orthodox Church and state authorities (ANIC, DGJ, D 48/1935).

Against this backdrop, the image we gain of Old Calendarist women in this period is both varied and contradictory. Similar to the late-medieval works of hagiography about women, which are filled with stories about their supernatural powers (Coakley 2006, 7), the first archival records concerning Old Calendarist women refer to their allegedly prophetic divine messages. Traditionally seen as the gatekeepers to various mechanisms of 'sacred support' (Ghițulescu 2012, 226), as well as appointed with a natural gift of prophecy, it came as no surprise that it was women – young girls, more precisely – who supposedly began to receive divine messages from God at a time when the persecution of Old Calendarists intensified. Their messages were interpreted as validation of their faith by the Old Calendarists, and they

[116] Such portrayals were not unusual during the interwar period. Ecaterina Teodoroiu, an important female figure and heroine of the First World War, was portrayed by the press as a virgin heroine and many times depicted in an androgynous manner in paintings and sculptures. According to Maria Bucur, 'it seemed that most Romanians could make sense of Teodoroiu's actions and attitude only by divorcing her personality from what they understood to be authentic womanhood' (Bucur 2000, 46).

legitimized the narrative which stated that the calendar reform was a measure that disobeyed God's will.[117]

Two Gendarmerie reports, one from 1934 (ACNSAS, FD, D 15305, 4; ACNSAS, FD, D 13408/ vol.4, 334), and another one from 1936 (ANIC, MCA, D 125/1935, 1) speak of two young girls who had allegedly seen God who had told them that people should return to the old calendar, as the new calendar was the wrong one. The girls began making contact with God on behalf of others and, by serving the 'powerless,' they added to their sanctity[118] and strengthened the peasants' belief that they were following the right path: 'some people have rebelled against the priests and the Church and said that, from now on, they will follow the old calendar as the young girl told them so' (ACNSAS, FD, D 13408/ vol.4, 334). The phenomenon of young girl visionaries was soon ended by the interventions on the part of the gendarmes and, in exactly the same way as the case of the miracle of Maglavit (1935), the most well-known case of a peasant visionary in interwar Romania, contemporaries interpreted them as the direct response to a general socio-economic and cultural depression which led people to search for and hope for immediate miraculous intervention (Radu and Schmitt 2017, 21). For the Old Calendarist population, however, these supposed miracles validated and brought legitimation to their belief system and fuelled their fight for survival, especially in a period of time when the persecution against them had intensified.

Following the violent suppression of the Old Calendarists between 1934 and 1936, which culminated with the events in Piatra Neamț, when important male leaders of the community were arrested, the popular press of the time began writing sensationalised stories in a manner that stigmatized the Old Calendarist church and its members.[119] The press articles especially targeted women in order to discredit members of the movement and question their morals, using phrases and expressions that betrayed ingrained social prejudices: 'We can see, once again, that the old saying `wherever there is something sensational, a woman has to be involved` is true'

[117] According to Băncilă`s study, the only legitimate author of the calendar change, in the minds of the people, had to be God (Băncilă 1924, 26). A vision in which God claimed that the old calendar was the right one only validated and strengthened their beliefs.
[118] The report mentions that many people believed that the girl was a saint, due to her miraculous powers. It also makes references to her nourishment, which, according to her parents, consisted of only some milk and water with sugar.
[119] Some of the newspapers that would usually cover stories about Old Calendarists, such as 'Tempo' or 'Universul,' were specialized in sensational reporting (Clark 2015, 147).

(Capitala 1936). Glicherie Tănase, a former Orthodox monk who was defrocked by the Orthodox Church for opposing the calendar reform, became one of the most important figures of the Old Calendarist church and the target of numerous rumours (see chapter five). The press of the time started to portray him as a Rasputin-style figure,[120] and even gave him the nickname of the 'Rasputin of Bessarabia' (Universul 1936). This comparison was not coincidental, and it mainly referred to his power of attracting large crowds of peasants, many of whom were women. Portrayed as a womaniser and a conman, Glicherie was also accused of having a harem of women that were brought to him by peasants as offerings (Tempo 1936).

In 1936, Grigore Spiru, a well-known journalist of the period, published a propaganda brochure entitled 'Rasputinul Moldovei' (The Rasputin of Moldova) in which he attacked Old Calendarist ideas (ACNSAS, D 013408, Vol.1). The brochure was published with the support of the Metropolis of Moldavia and Bukovina and was part of a narrative that was encouraged and propagated by the official Orthodox Church. The main characters of the brochure were Glicherie Tănase and his alleged mistress and accomplice, Maria Gârleanu (Figure 3.2). While Tănase is portrayed as a charlatan who was motivated in his choice of monastic career by financial reasons, Maria Gârleanu is depicted as an adventurous, immoral woman (Figure 3.3), fascinated by monastic figures such as Rasputin, whom Glicherie is said to have resembled. Gârleanu continued to fill the pages of sensational newspapers as the con artist that convinced Glicherie to stage a miracle meant to fool the peasants from Neamț county:

> Glicherie, under the false pretext of having to convey an important message to the peasants, gathered a large crowd close to a forest in Neamț county. After he told the people that they should oppose the new calendar, he told them that God, in order to prove that he is spreading the true faith, will send the Virgin Mary to earth. After the 'bishop' said this, a woman came out of a bush, fully dressed in black, and Glicherie introduced her as the Mother of God. Amongst the people gathered there, there was also a man from Neamț

[120] This comparison with the famous Russian 'holy' peasant was not isolated to Glicherie Tănase. Inochentie, the main leader of the Inochentists, was also compared to Grigory Efimovich Rasputin. For writers and journalists in Bucharest or Moscow they were part of the same group of people who were able to use the power of peasant mysticism and spirituality, especially in times of crisis or social change, in order to attract devotees (Kapaló 2017, 141).

county who recognised Maria Gârleanu and told Glicherie that she was not the Mother of God' (Universul 1936).

Maria Gârleanu was not a fictional character, but a real nun whose monastic name was Glicheria. The fact that she was carrying the female version of the name Glicherie might have generated the rumours that she was, in fact, the wife or the mistress of Glicherie Tănase. Despite the negative labels she had received from the part of the press during the interwar period, the contemporary Old Calendarist community remembers and preserves a positive image of nun Glicheria. According to nun Varsanufia from 'Valea Roșie' Monastery, 'Maria Gârleanu became a nun at the fragile age of 13. She was a symbol of resistance against the oppressors and lived her life as a hermit, hiding in the woods. After that she lived the rest of her life at the Monastery and died almost ten years ago. She was a spiritual guide for all the nuns at Brădițel Monastery and nothing was done without her consent.'



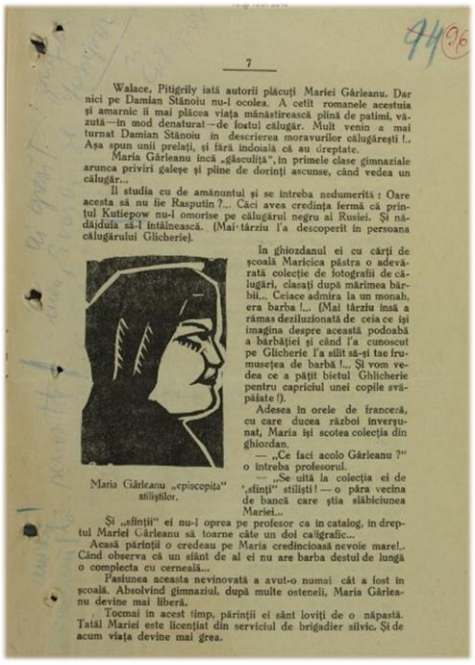


Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3 Glicherie Tănase and Maria Gârleanu as depicted in Grigore Spiru's brochure, ''Rasputinul Moldovei' (The Rasputin of Moldova). © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), D 013408, vol. 1.

In addition to these short stories that appeared in antagonistic and unreliable press and Orthodox Church sources, others have come to light in the state security archives. Despite being written in a specific manner meant to highlight the

dangerous character of the movement, as well as the disobedience of its members towards the state, these documents and reports offer some valuable information about Old Calendarist women. A 1934 gendarmerie report mentions Anita Coțan, an Old Calendarist believer from Tansa, Vaslui county, who donated some land to the Old Calendarists in the village in order for them to build a church. The report also mentions the fact that she was responsible for collecting the money and various donations from the people (ANIC, DGP, D 43/1934, 33). A similar position was held by Dubina Serafima, from Chișinău, whose house was turned into a church, led by Vladimir Poleacov, another controversial Old Calendarist leader (ANRM, D. 679.1.6202/ 1937, 4).[121] The report suggests that she also donated icons and other religious objects to the church, but they were later confiscated by the police (ANRM, D. 679.1.6202/ 1937, 3). [122]

Old Calendarist women were sometimes given the task of ensuring the protection of the Old Calendarist priest in the village. A gendarmerie report mentions the fact that the Old Calendarists from Albineț were thinking of organizing an attack against the Gendarmerie that should be led by women (ANIC, IGJ, D 64/1936, 33). Even though there is no mention of the fact that this attack ever took place, they were probably hoping that the gendarmes would be less violent towards women, and that women would be a good distraction whilst the men helped the priest escape. An article published in 'Dimineața,' in 1935, supports this view. It tells the news of a 'Stilist rebellion in Bălți' during which women and children ensured the protection of Ieremia Pletosul, the Old Calendarist monk:

> The women who were guarding the monk's house, seeing that he was being arrested, armed themselves with bats, mowers and axes and attacked the Gendarmes […] The Gendarmes fired a few times in the air and managed to get away with the prisoner' (Dimineața 1935).

These accounts suggest that women took on, or were invested with, a responsibility that was traditionally associated with men. Of course, interpreting these antagonistic reports is difficult in the absence of alternative sources. In the contemporary community, however, a strong oral history of these events is preserved. The nuns remember that their mothers and grandmothers told them stories of women, and

[121] My thanks to James Kapaló for pointing me to this file in the National Archives.
[122] My thanks to James Kapaló for pointing me to this file in the National Archives.

sometimes children, being sent prior to the sermon to a certain location where it would take place – it sometimes could have been in the house of an Old Calendarist believer – carrying the priestly clothes in a bag, while the priest would follow them dressed as a civilian. The reason for that was, according to the nuns, that 'nobody really looked at women and children, they were not that important in the eyes of society.' However, they were helping the priest to go unnoticed; police reports do mention instances of Old Calendarist leaders who, at the time of their arrest, were wearing women's clothes.[123] The priest Ioanichie Dudescu was allegedly dressed as a woman when he was arrested in 1935, after the Cucova rebellion (ACNSAS, FD, D 15305, 166); the same thing was reported in the newspapers about Glicherie Tănase after the Piatra Neamț rebellion, which led to his arrest in 1936 and to the so-called dissolution of the Old Calendarist movement (Universul, Sept. 1936). The events of 1935 and 1936 still echoe in the minds and memories of the contemporary Old Calendarist community. The most striking one, however, is the destruction of the wooden church in Cucova which was labelled as a rebellion by the authorities, but as a massacre by the Old Calendarists (see chapter seven). Every member of the community either remembers or was told about the event; even though it is still unclear what caused the incident, it led to the arrest of 40 believers, the wounding of 28 people, the death of five individuals, two of whom were part of the Old Calendarist community, and the destruction of their improvised wooden church. Amongst the arrested was the above-mentioned priest, Ioanichie Dudescu, of whom I lost track after this event.

Apart from being defenders of their leaders, women were especially defenders of ideas and tradition. After the violent interventions on the part of the state against Old Calendarist groups in Bessarabia and Moldavia, women shared the sad fate of their male coreligionists. Strongly believing that the Old Calendarist church was the right one, some of these women, be they nuns or simple members, fled into the woods where they built huts and tried to hide from the authorities. They made the personal

[123] When I asked my interviewees about this aspect they claimed that this might have been possible, due to the same reason, namely that it could have helped them slip past the authorities. I believe, however, that this might not have always been the case, and it could have sometimes been a detail made up by the journalists or the police. In the case of priest Ioanichie Dudescu, the photographs taken with the occasion of his arrest do not show him dressed as a woman. This begs the question, why would they not photograph him wearing the women clothes if such was the case? However, there might have been instances when the priest would resort to such a cover in order to avoid being arrested, especially as Old Calendarist priests used to travel from one village to another. For example, Glicherie Tănase seems to have been wearing women's clothes when he was arrested in Piatra Neamț in 1936 (see chapter five).

choice to lead a difficult life, hidden, and dealing with sickness and hardships, whilst keeping in close contact with their 'brothers and sisters' who found themselves in similar situations. From time to time, they would secretly travel to the Old Calendarist groups that existed in the villages nearby, from where they collected diptychs and received food and clothes (ACNSAS, FD, D. 11272. Vol.1, 280, 282). When caught by the gendarmes, in the woods, or during confrontations, these women were arrested and, most of the time, sent to detention in Orthodox monasteries. There, they were put to work and were forced to accept the new style calendar. A collection of letters and postcards written by and to these women whilst incarcerated in monastic institutions survive in the Romanian National Archives. From their correspondence with family and fellow members of the community we gain an insight into intimate aspects of their sufferings and the reasons for their detention as well as offer valuable information relating to the practice of incarceration in Orthodox monasteries in the region, a rather neglected aspect of history in Romania.

Letters and Postcards to and From Detention

In September 1936, after the 'stilist rebellion' in Piatra Neamț, news stories covered the front pages of many popular newspapers of the time talking about the decision of the civic and military authorities to close down any Old Calendarist church, monastery, or house of prayer (Dimineața, September 1936). Gendarmes and commanding officers set out to arrest the Old Calendarist priests who had allegedly provoked the rebellion, as well as any individual who was associated with the movement. According to the Church newspaper 'Renașterea,' The Holy Synod officially decided in October 1936 that the fate of the Old Calendarist nuns and monks was to be sent to detention at isolated sketes:

> The Holy Synod has analysed the Stilist agitations by and large and, taking into consideration the Government's measures, has decided that all agitating monks and nuns are to be sent to detention at isolated sketes where they have to repent, under strict supervision (Renașterea 1936, 3).

The events at Piatra Neamț attracted many Old Calendarist believers from all over the region and the authorities spent days and nights searching the woods, houses and any potential hiding places in search of the those who managed to run away. Archival documents in the form of letters, postcards, declarations and police reports, reveal that

what happened in Neamț county in the autumn of 1936 was a milestone in the history of the Old Calendarist church, forcing some to allegedly renounce the old calendar on fear of imprisonment, while also strengthening the faith of others, in spite of the consequences. What one also learns from the same documents is that women were at the forefront of these trials. An information note from 1936 mentions nine Old Calendarist nuns who were arrested on the occasion of the Neamț rebellion and sent to detention at Barbu Monastery in Buzău County. These nine nuns were: Irina Copătaru, Ioana Stănoaie, Sevastia Stănoaie, Maria David, Alexandrina Chiriloaie, Anisia Cosmoșanu, Safta Petreanu, Ileana Pista and Paulina Vârganici. With the exception of Irina Copătaru, the documents mention all of the above nuns as being sent to detention at Vărzărești Monastery. From the historical sources of the community we learn that not only did they survive incarceration but they went on to organize strong Old Calendarist communities and monasteries which still stand to this day.

The practice of incarcerating individuals in Orthodox monasteries was common across Orthodox Eastern Europe. In the case of the Imperial Russia, for example, people would be placed in monasteries for a variety of reasons, such as religious disobedience, heresy, apostasy, social disturbance, mental illness or political crimes. The scope was not intended to be punitive, but reformative, as the sentence would involve living under the monastic rule, attending church services and being involved in various works within the monastery (Demoskoff 2014, 43). Confinement in these prisons served the Orthodox Church as it meant removing the 'heretics' from access to the general population and hindering their proselytizing tendencies (Shubin 2001, 22). In Romania, Orthodox monasteries had played the role of prisons since medieval times until the appearance of modern penitentiaries in the 19th century, and sometimes even after. In some cases, the monasteries were turned completely into prisons and no longer functioned as an establishment for monks or nuns.[124]

[124] Such was the case with the Văcărești Monastery, which was demolished in 1986 at the behest of the communist president, Nicolae Ceaușescu, had been used as a penitentiary starting from the middle of the nineteenth century, when people who took part in the 1848 revolution in the principalities were incarcerated there. Along with Văcărești, nine other former monastic dwellings such as Dobrovăț, Cozia, Târgşor, and Mărgineni were converted into prisons around the same period of time. During the interwar period, political and common-law prisoners were imprisoned at Văcărești, as well as individuals who were considered a threat to the security of the state (Panaitescu, 2018)

During the communist regime, Căldărușani Monastery became a detention camp where Greek Catholic bishops and priests were imprisoned after the dissolution of the Greek Catholic Church and the confiscation of all its property in 1948 (Brînzeu 2011, 738). One of the monasteries where Old Calendarist nuns were sent in order to correct their behaviour and, presumably, accept the new calendar, was Vărzărești Monastery.[125] Even though there is little to no information regarding this issue, a perusal of the archival documents suggests that the Monastery functioned as a prison for at least three years, between 1936 and 1939.[126] In a book detailing the history of Dobru Old Calendarist monastery, the author, an Old Calendarist nun, mentions Vărzărești and offers details of the treatment that the nuns incarcerated there received:

> After they were arrested, the nuns were threatened that if they will not accept the new calendar they will never see daylight again and that their bodies will be cremated. They rejected this threat and said that they do not fear death, but the just judgment of God […] Because of that, they were sent to detention at Vărzărești Monastery, close to Râmnicu– Sărat, for two years and six months (from September 1936 until February 1939). There, they were forced to work during the days of rest according to the old calendar (Julian calendar) and if they fought against that they were punished by starvation. Due to these sufferings, and to the inhumane conditions of their arrest, five of the nuns died and others developed diseases that lasted for the remainder of their lives (Mănăstirea Dobru, 2007).[127]

Situated in Urechești, Vrancea county, Vărzărești Monastery[128] became the main place where Old Calendarist nuns were sent to detention.[129] Even though the official historical record fails to mention its function during the interwar period, the archival documents reveal that it was, indeed, used for the incarceration of religious dissenters,

[125] Old Calendarist monks were sent to Iezeru Monastery, which is situated in Vâlcea County. Some members of the church believe that at least two of the most important Old Calendarist monks died while they were incarcerated at Iezeru.
[126] There is no information that reffers to this period of time regarding the history of the Vărzărești Monastery.
[127] Since some of the nuns who spent their lives at Dobru Monastery had formerly been imprisoned at Vărzărești, it is most probably that these pieces of information were obtained from interviews or personal conversations of the author with the aforementioned nuns, or with others who had met them.
[128] Not to be confused with Vărzărești Monastery from the Republic of Moldova.
[129] Archival documents also mention Ciolanu Monastery, situated at less than 100 km away from Vărzărești Monastery. However, it is mentioned at least twice in the postcards (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937). In the book written by Epifanie Norocel about Ciolanu Monastery this aspect is not mentioned (Norocel 1987).

namely Old Calendarist nuns. Even though the incarceration was meant to make them change their minds and ways of thinking towards the new calendar, it paradoxically became the place that made it possible for their words and names to be preserved, mainly due to a rather strict control of its inmates' correspondence.

Vărzărești Monastery had strict rules and kept the Old Calendarist nuns under constant supervision. From an instruction sheet, written in 1937 on the occasion of the incarceration of 68 Old Calendarist nuns, we learn the specific instructions that the gendarmes who were in charge of ensuring their supervision had to follow:

> […] The 68 stilists will stay in the Southern pavilions. They will use the common beds that had already been installed. The rooms are sufficient and clean. […] Each room will have a nun that will be in charge of ensuring order and hygiene. The nuns will be involved in various agricultural activities around the monastery and will only travel in groups, led by the nun in charge, as well as supervised by a gendarme […] The older nuns will be exempt from working in the garden or in the yard. The back doors of the four pavilions will be sealed, as well as the windows that do not already have bars installed, in order to prevent breakaways […] The light in front of the pavilions has to be permanently turned on during the night.[…] In order to avoid contact with people, the stilists will only be allowed to enter the church when they are alone, or during work days, and forbidden to do so on Sundays or during any other celebration when people might visit the monastery […] The gendarmes are not to interact with the nuns under any circumstances. The same applies to monks or nuns, apart from the superiors of the monastery who, through sermons and messages, will try to bring them back on the right path […] The packages and letters received by the stilists will be closely checked by the head of the Gendarmerie post […] The stilists will have to pick up any coupons or money orders in the presence of the head of the Gendarmerie post. The latter will take a statement from each nun and add it to a special file (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937, 185).

Details about the monastery and the conditions there are sometimes inserted between the lines of the letters and postcards sent by the nuns under detention. For example, two of the 68 nuns, Maria Gliga, also known as Magdalena, and Maria Samoilă, also

known as Macaria,[130] write a postcard to their families on July 1937, right after their arrival at Vărzărești, describing the surroundings of the monastery, as well as their most urgent needs for the winter:

> Our beloved brother and sisters, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law,
>
> By the grace of God, we arrived at Vărzărești Monastery. Here we found 67 nuns. The Monastery is situated somewhere in the woods and the location is very nice. How are you all? Please write to us as soon as you receive this card. They allow us to receive money and packages here, if you are willing to send any […] We need shoes for the winter, if you want to make some for us […] We wish you all health and God's salvation (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937, 153– 154).[131]

On April 1937 Maria Miron sent a postcard to her parents in which she tells them that she had been at Vărzărești for two weeks and mentions its 'beautiful location and orchard filled with fruitful and blooming trees.' She also asks for some 'wheat flour, white eggs, tomatoes, butter, cheese, two hemp strings, a cotton scroll, some black thread, an old hat for the shoes,[132] and some money.' (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 143). The constant request for food, clothes, and other supplies indicates that there was a lack thereof. However, from a letter sent by the Gendarmerie to the Holy Synod on May 1937 we find out that the Superior of the monastery had complained about the large amount of packages received by the nuns from their families, causing an investigation into the issue (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937, 59). The situation was looked into by a lawyer who, after visiting Vărzărești Monastery, concluded that the nuns were compelled to ask their families for packages because they did not receive sufficient food at the monastery, nor did they have proper clothing for the

[130] The latter were most probably their monastic names. According to an information that was provided to me during the interviews, it seems that their monastic names would usually begin with the first letter of their laic name. This was not a compulsory condition, but it happened quite frequently.

[131] These two nuns had previously been hiding in the woods and we are able to trace them based on the information scattered in other postcards. Thus, a postcard written on June 3rd 1937 to nun Olimpiada Petreanu reveals that nun Macaria and nun Magdalena were in the woods; less than three weeks later we find them arrested and then incarcerated at Vărzărești Monastery from where they together send this first post card in July 1937. Born in February 1900, Macaria chose the monastic path at the young age of 13 and lived at Văratec Monastery for 14 years. After she left the monastery due to her rejection of the new calendar she built a hut in the woods where she lived together with nun Magdalena until they were discovered by the gendarmes. Their file states that they both took part in the Neamț rebellion and that they were 'unable to come to terms with the calendar reform' (ANIC, IGJ, D 5/1936, 7–13).

[132] It is not very clear from the postcard if she wants to make her own shoes using all the materials that she asked for in the postcard, but this might be a possibility.

winter, most of them walking around 'barefooted and naked' (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937, 61– 63). The scandal that followed the visit of the aforementioned lawyer led to the dismissal of two of the gendarmes in charge with the supervision of the nuns. They were found drunk and were accused of having broken the order which stated that no one was allowed to be in contact with the detained Old Calendarist nuns, something that the lawyer, allegedly a defender of the Old Calendarist church, had managed to do (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937, 66). This incident seems to show that there had been some violations that occurred at Vărzărești, violations which had been ignored for a period of time.

One of the constant complaints of the nuns, as well as of their families, was that the postcards and letters, as well as packages, often went missing, or were delivered late. In her correspondence with her sister and brother-in-law, nun Melitina Mihăilă expresses her concern about the fact that their communication was made difficult by unknown causes:

> My dear sister and brother-in-law,
>
> […] I have received the package from you. Nothing got lost, but the bread went bad due to the delay […] I was really happy when I read your letter and found out that you are all healthy. I am, however, saddened by the fact that you do not receive my letters, nor do I receive yours. I have sent you one envelope and two postcards since I arrived here and I understand that you have not received any of them. I do not know why that is (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 155).

In another instance she tells them that she had sent them a postcard, but fears that it had not reached them because the communication had been halted (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 154). In a letter sent by two Old Calendarist believers to nun Maria Vizitiu they inform her that they had only received one letter from her since her relocation to Vărzărești and wonder if 'the letters sent from there are being confiscated' as they did not always reach their destination (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 272). Similar concerns are expressed by other nuns' family members, such as Paulina Vârganici's brother, Ioan Vasili Vârganici, who delivers a postcard in May 1937 in which he demands Paulina to immediately send him a letter or a postcard detailing her living conditions:

> Firstly, I want to tell you that we are all healthy and the weather is lovely here. We have not received any letter since you told us about your relocation and now we do not know how you are and if you are in good health. We sent you another package, please send me a letter as soon as you receive it so that we know if it reached you or not. And tell us about the conditions in there. Mother is healthy and Costică is doing well in school. Please, as soon as you receive this letter and the package do send us an answer immediately (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 134).

In July 1937, Ioan receives a postcard from his detained sister in which she describes her urgent needs:

> My beloved parents,
>
> It has been so long since I last got an answer from you, I sent you a letter and I do not know if you received it or not. I was telling you that I need more money and in a previous letter I mentioned that I need a pair of shoes, as the ones that I now wear have broken. This is why I am begging you to send me new shoes and some money, no clothes, just shoes because, if it is God's will, I might return home […] Ever since they took me away from you I am always depressed. But I trust that God will help us and set us free […] Please send me what I need. I will not be able to send you another letter because I have no money (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 158).

Paulina writes down the address of the monastery at the end of her postcard, implying that she assumed that her family had failed to send her any letters because they did not know where to send them to. There are no other traces of their correspondence afterwards, but what some of these postcards convey is a fear of abandonment, of having been forgotten and a struggle to come to terms with a difficult situation.

This continuous state of confusion seems to have been intentionally maintained by the authorities entrusted with their supervision.[133] By controlling

[133] Due to the fact that the literature on this issue is almost absent, it is difficult to compare the nuns' detention conditions to those encountered in regular prisons during the same period of time. What we know for sure is that in 1929 the Law for the Organization of Prisons placed more focus on the educational aspect, thus all prisoners had to undergo writing and reading lessons, as well History, Geography, Mathematics and Religion courses (Bruno 2006, 499). The newspaper 'Aiudul' details the conditions encountered at Aiud prison in 1937; it seems that the prisoners had a library at their disposal

every package and letter, what information got to the nuns and their families, they were hoping to destroy the nuns' will to resist the change and with that to undermine the entire Old Calendarist movement. In the same concerned letter sent to the Holy Synod on May 1937, the authorities expressed their view about the allegedly false and undeserved image of martyrdom that the detention of the nuns provided to their communities. They asked for a more severe examination of the packages as they worried that there were letters slipped inside of them, letters the content of which urged the nuns to resist (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937, 59).

There was, indeed, a strong sense of admiration for their sufferings and trials, especially on the part of the nuns who had managed to escape detention. Freedom had paradoxically become a prison for some of them as they equated it with renouncing their faith and the messages they wrote to their imprisoned sisters convey a conscience which was burdened to the point of self-denunciation. In June 1937 Ruxanda Veica writes a postcard to her friend Maria David who was detained at Vărzărești. Both nuns were arrested in 1936, after the Neamț rebellion, but Ruxanda was released and returned to her hut in the woods:

> My dear sister,
>
> Please know that I received your letter and I was so happy, but I am so sickened by my state, that I am not in there with you. I am now still, in my hut in the woods […] and no one has bothered me for a month, I do not know what's going to happen to me from now on. And here I stay by the grace of God, I have no other place to go […] I hope that God will give you patience in everything, so that we could save our souls, because that is why we left the world, our mothers and fathers, in order to suffer for God [...] (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 2).

The tone of the postcard expresses a soft feeling of despair and hopelessness; even though she was free, Ruxanda feared that she had nowhere to go and wished she had been there, sharing the same fate as her sister.

(Aiudul 1937 a, 3), and were often entertained by and even involved in various cultural events, such as choir concerts and celebrations (Aiudul 1937 b, 2). In 1937 the newspaper reported on the visit of Margery Fry, the British prison reformer, at the Aiud Penitentiary which she allegedly found in good condition and was impressed by the humane and modern state of the Romanian prisons (Aiudul 1937 c, 4).

An archival document related to the Vărzărești Monastery reveals an extraordinary event that demonstrates the self-sacrifice some of these women were capable of. The report states as follows:

> To the Holy Synod
>
> We have the honour to report that on July 7th 1937, four women turned themselves in to the Gendarmes in Urechești, R. Sărat.
>
> – Margareta Ciontu from Liești, Tecuci, 24 years of age
>
> – Ștefana Lefter from Furceni– Noi– Tecuci, 19 years of age
>
> – Ștefana Zaharia from Ciușlea– Tecuci, 24 years of age
>
> – Ecaterina Zaharia from Ciușlea– Putna, 20 years of age.
>
> These nuns declared that they are Stilist nuns and that they know the Stilist nuns from Vărzărești [...] Until now they hid in their houses, but they are fanatics and now they know that that they will never give up on their religion and want to be imprisoned together with the rest of the nuns [...] Please let us know if they should be incarcerated at Vărzărești (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 228).

These four young girls appear to have chosen of their own volition to surrender themselves to imprisonment. They declared to the authorities that they wanted to join their sisters in suffering because they refused to accept the idea of giving up their faith. In so doing, despite the resulting possible incarceration, they exercised personal agency in their choice and over their fate.

On May 23 1937 Sofia Lefter, detained at Vărzărești Monastery, received a letter from her sister filled with strong feelings of guilt and self-deprecating expressions:

> My dear sister Sofica and all the nuns who are in there and suffer for the right faith, may God strengthen you until the end. Please pray for me, the sinner, because there is nothing else that I can do to help you and only God takes care of all of us and we are sinners, because we are in the world and we remember you, the imprisoned ones, from time to time. But even here, in the world, only God knows how hard it is because a nun in the world is like a fish out of water, it dies without the water. So are we without a

> confessor, we are dead even though we are alive. I wanted to be imprisoned with you, but I am not worthy to be in there with you. I trust God that He will gather all of us who are in the world and bring us all together again. I do not know what else to say, I am troubled by this thought, I do not know where to go because it is so hard to live in the world (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937, 99).

Even though she did not sign the letter, we discover from the statement[134] given by her father afterwards that her name is Ștefana (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937,102). Unsurprisingly, her name appears on the list of the four women that had turned themselves in to the gendarmes hoping to be imprisoned at Vărzărești, no more than two months after this letter had been written.

A perusal of the letters and postcards conveys the image of a close-knit community. We learn, thus, that Maria David and Alexandrina Chiriloaie, both at Vărzărești, were cousins and that their mothers were sisters (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 294). We find Maria Miron`s name in a postcard destined to nun Maria Vizitiu (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 272) and we learn about Macaria Samoilă's and Magdalena Gliga's whereabouts two months before their imprisonment from a postcard sent to Olimpiada Petreanu (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937, 4); in the same postcard we find out that a certain nun Antonina from Putna died in the woods and we once again encounter the name of Alexandrina Chiriloaie. We also see them preoccupied with the spiritual state and wellbeing of others in their families and communities and how even in those conditions they offered spiritual advice to their loved ones. The reverse, however, was also true and it is all summed up in the letter sent to nun Maria Pârjor by a group of believers from Boroaia, a village from Neamț also ravaged by conflicts in 1936:

> Sister Maria,
>
> I also heard that you were relocated from where you used to be and I was pleased to hear that you are all together now and that your faith has not weakened. That is why we all chipped in, brothers and sisters, and we sent

[134] People who were corresponding with the detained nuns had to write down a declaration in which they gave details about the relationship they had with the respective nun. These declarations,even though at times fabricated, are the source of valuable information regarding the lives of these nuns before imprisonment.

> you two packages of food […] Please, whatever you receive, share with the others (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 132).

Some of the postcards also reveal stories of family ruptures and disobedience. Behind nun Elena Seciu's postcard (Figures 3.4 and 3.5), written in May 1937, there lies a heartbreaking story that is only revealed to us by the declaration that her father had to write for the police in order to justify the reasons for receiving letters from his daughter.

> My beloved parents,
>
> By the grace of God I am healthy and I am at Vărzărești, but please do not be upset as I am who God wanted me to be. Please think of yourselves, because God sees everything, I cry all the time and I pray that God will not abandon you. I asked you to send me some money and some clothes, and some wool, but as I can see, you did not want to send them to me, as if I were not from your family. I asked because I knew that I have the same rights as my sisters; I did not bother you for 2 years, you did not give me anything. I tell you one more time, if you want to help me, if not, God will take care of me. But I hope you realize that I am entitled to these things and you are not willing to give them to me. I am quite far away from you, if you want to send me something do it via post, but maybe you are willing to come and visit me in person. I wish you happy holidays and please forgive me (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937, 260).

We later find out that Elena, together with her two sisters, had been sent to an Orthodox monastery by their parents who were afraid that they would die of tuberculosis, a disease that took six other members of their family. Once she arrived there, she ran away to an Old Calendarist monastery without saying a word to her sisters or her father. For that reason, he refused to send her money or any other help, until 1936 when he found out that she was in detention. When he later visited her he was informed that she was there because she refused to accept the new calendar and he told her that she was doing a bad thing and that he would reject her as a daughter if she did not come back on the right path. The declaration ends with the phrase: 'My wife and I go to church regularly, and we respect the new calendar. I never thought that my daughter Elena was right to reject it' (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937,

262). From her letter and other archival documents, we learn that despite being abandoned by her parents, she was confident that what she believed in was right and that she hoped that her own faith would be sufficient to ensure her parents' salvation in the eyes of God. We witness her struggle and her coming to terms with her situation, while also learning to stand alone, rejected by her family, but nevertheless empowered by her life of prayer and her strong belief in God.

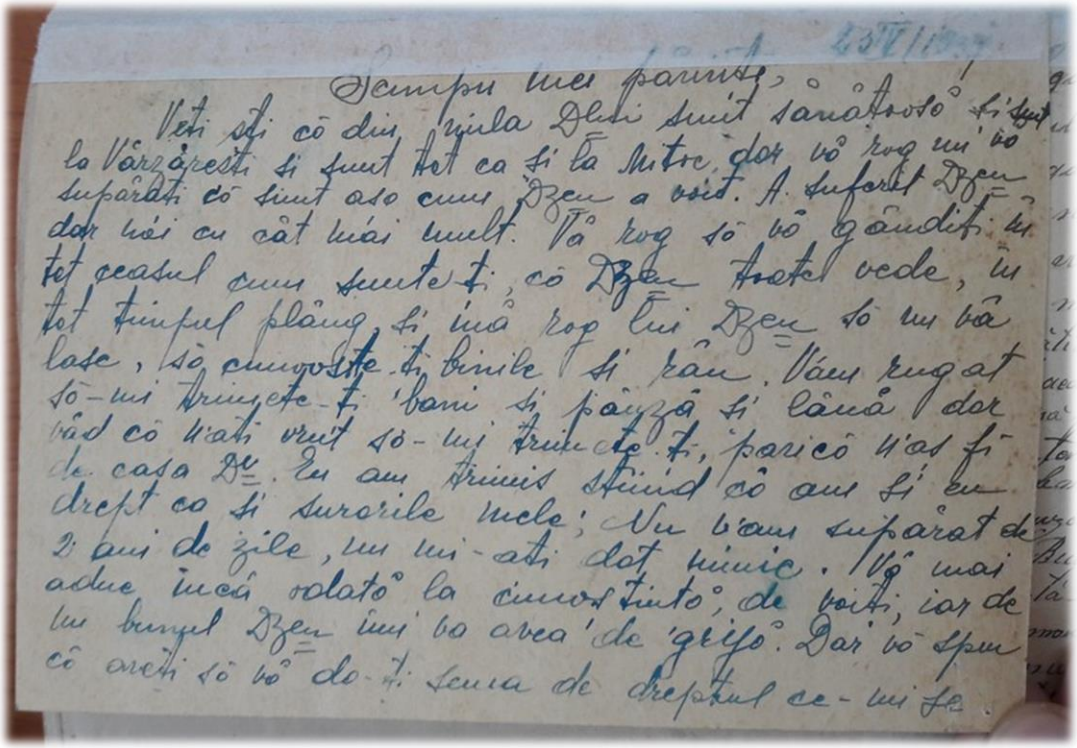


Figure 3.4 Postcard sent by Elena Seciu to her parents whilst in detention at Vărzărești Monastery. © Arhivele Naționale ale României (ANIC), Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, D 25/1937.



Figure 3.5 The back of the postcard contains information that makes it clear that the postcard was sent from Vărzărești Monastery. © Arhivele Naționale ale României (ANIC), Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, D 25/1937.

The same situation appears to hold true for other nuns who found themselves alone, defending a cause that the other members of their families seem to have abandoned. It is the case of nun Olimpiada Petreanu whose father declared that he followed the official church after having given up on the monks who defended the old calendar because 'they had lost their way.' His declaration closes with the following statement: 'I believe that my daughter will get back on the right path if she is kept in line' (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 20). Macrina David's father gave a similar declaration when asked about the relationship he had with his daughter: 'I used to follow the old style, but after the summer of 1936 I abandoned this erroneous way and I now follow the official church' (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 122). Ioan Vasili Vârganici, Paulina's brother, subscribed to a similar statement, namely that the events in Neamț made him and his family renounce the old style (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 135), while Elena Pintilie's mother, Anica, declared that she disagreed with the choice of following the old calendar made by her daughter (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1937, 19). As convincing as they were meant to sound, however, some of these

declarations come across as fabricated, especially due to the almost identical way in which they were worded and because most of these people were illiterate. To this we can also add the element of fear which was, in those years, widespread amongst the Old Calendarist believers according to contemporary nuns I interviewed. In the years that followed, all of the above-mentioned nuns went on to contribute to the organization of strong Old Calendarist communities which still hold to this day.

Surviving Incarceration

A deeper look into the archival materials, combined with the communities' own historical record which is sometimes based on first-hand testimonies, allows the reconstruction of some of these nuns' lives and voices. Their experiences do not end at Vărzărești, but go on for years thereafter, proving that they not only survived incarceration, but that they lived to tell their stories.

The history of Dobru Monastery began with ten nuns: Isidora Stănoiae, the founder and the first Superior of the monastery, Serafima Stănoaie, Paraschiva Bunduc, Eufrasia Pintilie, Olimpiada Petreanu, Asânefta Dumitroaia, Melania Mardare, Arsenia Archir, Macrina David, and Pangratia Vârganici (Mănăstirea Dobru 2007). Eight of them appear in the documents of the Vărzărești Monastery in the summer of 1937, most of them by their lay names. Thus, Serafima Stănoaie appears as Sevastia Stănoaie, while her sister, Isidora, appears as Ioana Stănoaie. Eufrasina Pintilie is the above-mentioned Elena Pintilie, and Pangratia Vârganici is the aforementioned Paulina. Their stories began before the changing of the calendar when they chose the monastic life and, according to the old calendarist historiography, were living at Agapia Monastery.[135] After the calendar reform, however, they were forced to relocate to the so called Old Agapia Monastery, which was more isolated and ensured them a safer environment.[136] Banished from there sometime between 1929 and 1930, they found shelter in the huts and woods nearby, until they joined the small community from Vânători, Neamț county, that was still following the old calendar. There, they went on to deploy the construction of a skete for nuns with the help of Pamvu Hoisu, who was afterwards imprisoned at Iezeru and believed to have died there, and Glicherie Tănase, whose arrest nun Serafima

[135] Agapia is an Orthodox Monastery situated at almost 50 kilometers from Piatra Neamț, in the middle of the woods.
[136] From here they sent food to the Old Calendarist priests who were hiding in the woods.

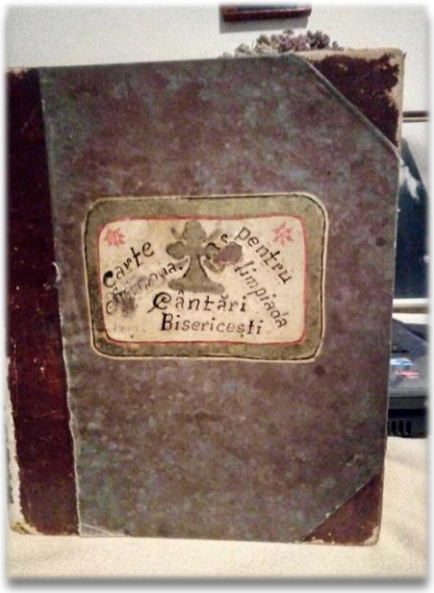
is said to have witnessed (Mănăstirea Dobru 2007). The skete became today's Dobru Monastery which in 2007 was home to 44 nuns.

Choosing the monastic path at young ages,[137] these nuns led tumultuous lives even after their release from detention. Constantly followed by the authorities and forced to also confront the challenges of the newly installed communist regime, they found comfort in secluded locations such as Dobru and other monastic dwellings. The following paragraphs unravel the stories of three nuns, stories that, even though fragmentary, come to show that their faith gave them power to rise above social convention and expectation in order to do what they thought was God's will (Holmes 2005, 71).

Born in Răucești, Neamț county, Olimpiada Petreanu, whose lay name was Safta, writes her first postcard from Vărzărești in May 1937, asking her parents to send her some food, her watch, some clothes, and money. From the onset, we learn that she used to live at Old Agapia Monastery, as she compared the location of Vărzărești Monastery with its location, and that she had partially lost sight in her right eye, an issue that is constantly mentioned in her correspondence with her family and acquaintances (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 19). According to the declaration of her father, she joined the monastery more than ten years prior to 1937, and after the Neamț rebellion she allegedly lost the support of her family who chose to follow the new calendar (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 20). Based on the concerned tone of the post cards that she received from them, as well as the fact that they continued to send her packages and whatever she needed in order to make her detention easier to endure, it is difficult to believe that such was the case. The time of her release is uncertain, and what we know about the rest of her life is based on the information I gathered during ethnographic research. She was allegedly sent to Oniceni, Buzău county, where she founded a skete for nuns at Drăgușeni, with the help of Glicherie Tănase. She became the mother Superior of the skete and spent the rest of her life there, embroidering, praying and being very active within the community. She died in January 2002 and

[137] Nun Serafima, for example, was born in 1913, meaning that she was 23 at the time of her arrest in 1936, and even younger when she became a nun.

left behind a songbook that she handwrote and beautifully decorated in 1940 (Figure 3.5 and 3.6).[138]



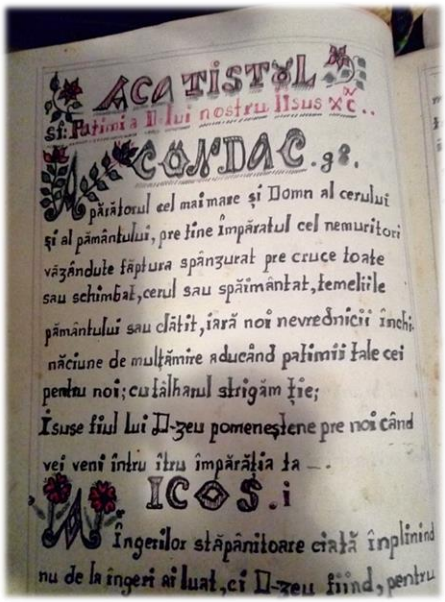


Figure 3.5 and Figure 3.6 Handwritten songbook belonging to nun Olimpiada Petreanu, 1940. These images were given to me by nun Varsanufia from Mănăstirea „Buna Vestire", Valea Roșie.

In July 1937 Dumitru Geangu, an Old Calendarist believer from Stănești, Tutova, declared that, as the elder brother of Catinca, known as mother Chirichioaia, who was being detained at Vărzărești, he felt the responsibility of sending clothes and food to his sister. There is no postcard and no other mention of her name, except this short reminder that she was also one of the imprisoned nuns (ANIC, IGJ, D 23/1937, 261).[139] Fastforward four years, and we find her again, this time by the name of Steliana Geangu and in her own penal file, after she was found by the gendarmes hiding in the woods, together with Măzărel Anica (ACNSAS, P 096704). The photograph that was meant to serve her as a memento, even though confiscated, now serves as a great reminder of hers and other nuns' stories. I know now that her fate did not end with the last page of the penal file, as her name still

[138] This information was provided to me by nun Varsanufia from 'Buna Vestire' Monastery, Călărași County. I also want to thank nun Varsanufia for sending me the photos of nun Olimpiada Petreanu's songbook.
[139] Catinca/ Steliana Geangu was most probably sent to detention for her participation in the events that took place at Cucova in 1935.

rings a bell with many contemporary Old Calendarist believers, and I hope that one day I will write down a wonderful ending of her story.

Conclusion

The correspondence of these Old Calendarist nuns from detention give us an insight into the personality and character of these mostly young women. Taken away from their families and communities, or sometimes rejected by them, they made extreme sacrifices for their faith and chose to suffer for their conviction that they had understood something that others had not. These women, who from one perspective were victims of repression, had come to understand that there is a reason for their sufferings and that, one day, they will be redeemed.

In contrast to the negative picture that was created of these women by the Orthodox Church and its journalists, police reports and press articles, the letters and postcards that they wrote from detention to their parents, brothers and sisters, offer us a glimpse of their personalities and their intimate lives. Old Calendarist nuns challenged the perceptions of the period with regard to women, while the significance of their activities belie the belittling and unjust stereotypes infringed upon them (Coburn and Smith 1999, 223); they became the propagators of a message, they had, thus, a voice, and were no longer silent. It was not any particular message of the Old Calendarist monks that drew these women into the community, but rather the connection and commitment to tradition, to something that had to be protected, guarded and then delivered to the next generation, to something that was seen as a divine duty.

Old Calendarist nuns, perhaps unintentionally, had a 'transforming power' (Magray 1998) within their communities by providing the strength and continuity which made it possible for the underground movement to survive over several decades of state repression (Snyder and Hecht 1996, 8). While not fighting for rights, but for survival, they contributed to the forging of a religious identity. They were empowered to choose this life for themselves, contravening common societal restrictions on their gender and, as their letters and postcards reveal, they found their source of strength in their faith in God and in a life of prayer (Kilroy 2005, 24). Choosing the monastic path from young ages, these nuns automatically chose a life-path as single women, committing themselves to their religious communities.

Entering a convent meant the abandonment of everything which was worldly, including their names, and dedicating themselves to a life in the service of God (Evangelisti 2007, 4). Set apart from the world, monasteries became for them the places where they received an education; even though some of the nuns might have still been illiterate at the time of their detention, the fact that they were able to write letters and postcards by themselves to their relatives and acquaintances outside the walls reveals that they had received at least a basic education.[140] Given the circumstances, their literacy became their authority and the postcards they had written function as the main vehicle for their own voices (see Cherewatuk and Wiethaus 1993, 14).[141]

In this chapter, I have focused on representations of the various roles played by women in the Old Calendarist communities during the interwar period.[142] Portrayed by the press and Orthodox Church publications of the time in extremely negative terms, women in these communities were also shown to be the protectors and disseminators of the tradition, as well as the gatekeepers to the spiritual world. What the press articles and archival documents seem to convey is that Old Calendarist women took on roles that were not very common for women of the time, neither in society, nor within the Orthodox Church. From conducting religious services, to guarding and protecting the Old Calendarist priests, these women challenged the perceptions of the time. Because they seemed to have abandoned the regular roles that women were supposed to perform and to have taken on more masculine roles, mainly as a survival strategy[143] (Massino 2008, 57), they were deemed dangerous and considered to be encouraging promiscuity, immorality and disobedience.

[140] An interesting aspect mentioned in the file of Macaria Samoilă and Magdalena Gliga is that they both became educated in the monastery, something that must have been true for other nuns, as well. Other postcards show us nuns who ask for their psalm books to be delivered to them, while the documents confiscated from Geangu Catinca's hut reveal that most of these nuns were, in fact, literate and capable of conducting their own correspondence.

[141] The fact that these postcards serve as an instrument that reveal many aspects of these nuns' personalities and personal struggles seems even more extraordinary given the fact that the main purpose of a postcard was to be functional and to communicate an immediate message, not to encourage personality or the personal (Popp 2014, 138).

[142] During my interviews the nuns have expressed their sorrow that this is the part of their church's history that is mostly unknown to them.

[143] According to Jill Massino, in times of crisis or disruptions, women are sometimes forced to perform roles that are traditionally seen as masculine, such as heavy labour, in order to ensure their survival, as well as their community's survival (Massino 2008, 57). This aspect can also be extended to spiritual duties which are supposed to survive despite the absence of a male figure.

Considered by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church as the most effective measure to bring the Old Calendarist women 'on the right path,' monastic incarceration in Orthodox monasteries such as Vărzărești Monastery, in Bacău County, paradoxically became the way that made it possible for their words and names to be preserved, mainly due to a rather strict control of its inmates' correspondence. More than 68 nuns were incarcerated at Vărzărești Monastery between 1936 and 1939 and based on archival information such monasteries existed in other places in the country, as well; however, details related to those cases are either insufficient or unavailable to scholars, for the time being. In spite of these measures, a perusal of the letters and postcards that the Old Calendarist women who avoided incarceration wrote to their imprisoned sisters convey a burdened conscience and the idea that freedom had paradoxically become a prison for some of them as they equated it with renouncing their faith. In the end, not only did these women survive incarceration and lived to tell their stories, but they contributed to the organization of strong Old Calendarist communities which still hold to this day.

The Old Calendarist identity, the teachings and values that they spread, gave these women a new sense of meaning in life; they were no longer supposed to sit in silence, but were instead commissioned with a new task, that of protecting what they considered it to be the true faith. For this reason, they donated their houses and properties to their leaders, gathered icons and religious objects, collected donations from people and were prepared to fight in order to protect the Old Calendarist priests. Above all these, young girls became the messengers of God, the bearers of a message that came to support the narrative of the Old Calendarists, legitimizing it and encouraging people to fight against the reforms and changes introduced by the state and the Orthodox Church.

During harsh persecution and in the absence of men, these women fought for survival and took upon themselves the difficult task of defending something that was deemed by others to be an element of backwardness and tradition, namely the old calendar, by challenging, at the same time, and for a limited period of time, another traditional element, namely the role of women in society and their involvement in religious issues, more precisely. As scholars of women have often noted, whenever disruption of the existing order occurs, be it social, religious, or political, despite being subject to stigmatization, women become the main keepers

and protectors of values and ideas, and take on crucial roles that ensure the survival and continuation of a message, or even of a community. This inevitably opens up the discussion about the present role of women in a male-dominated environment, such as the Orthodox Church. However, what history has shown is that even though these kind of crisis and ruptures, such as what happened to the Old Calendarist Church, tend to favour female enterprise, the return of stability pushes them back into more discreet stances and male dominance is restored (Coburn 1999, 224). Nowadays, Old Calendarist nuns still struggle for recognition, not of themselves, but of their church and its little-known and supressed history which they feverishly try to bring to light and make known.

Chapter Four: 'Can I have this songbook?' The Songbook as an Expression of Religious Identity

Introduction

It was a cold day of October 2017 when I first entered the archives, sat down, asked for the files that I had requested during the previous months, and began browsing the first one placed in front of me. It was an informative – surveillance – file of Teodor Popescu, a former Orthodox priest, and the founder of the Tudorist religious community in the early 1920s. The file was initially opened by the Siguranța, but was taken over by the Securitate[144] which not only continued to monitor Popescu, but also created new informative files under his name.[145] At some point while browsing the file, I came across a songbook entitled 'Cântări creștinești' (Christian Songs) that was randomly placed between a statement made by a Tudorist believer and a report written in 1934, which raised awareness of the propaganda conducted by the 'Christians According to the Scriptures'[146] in order to gain new adherents. The report was asking for the immediate closing of their prayer house, situated in Bucharest, on Carol Davila Street, No. 48 (ACNSAS, I 259046, 136) where it still stands today. I did not think much of the songbook at first. Fast forward six months, and I am sitting in a Tudorist believer's house having an interesting conversation about the history of the community. Even though I was in my early stages of archival research, I thought I could show my informant B.N. some of the materials that I had already come across in the archives, especially as enabling the re-encounter between the visual and literary materials and the communities that once produced them was to form a significant aspect of my research. B.N. laughed, and smiled, he was dismissive of some of the materials, even correcting a few pieces of information contained in the informative notes that he caught glimpse of in the file,[147] but then he stopped. 'This is a very rare

[144] The Securitate took over most of the files, reports and information notes gathered by the pre-communist Siguranța (Stan 2009, 131).

[145] There are at least two informative files opened by the Securitate under Teodor/Tudor Popescu's name due to his 'dangerous activity.' One of them was closed in 1958, five years before his death, with the mention that he would continue to be closely monitored by the secret police.

[146] Some reports from 1925, one year after the defrocking of Tudor Popescu, also call them 'Noi Renăscuți' (Born Agains) (ANIC, MCA, D 167/1925, 9; ACNSAS, D 015254, 37).

[147] I specifically remember that he smiled when he saw that an informer reported that the community organized catechism studies. Within the neo-Protestant communities, which practice credobaptism, i.e. the baptism of those who are able to make a conscious profession of faith, catechism studies precede

item,' he said; I looked at the file and realized that he was looking at the songbook (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). 'Can I have this songbook?' he asked. After a few seconds of silence on my part, I awkwardly tried to find the best way of explaining why he is not allowed to have it. Not from me, at least. I apologized and told him that the legislation of the archives was quite strict regarding this issue,[148] but that I could help him find out if he had a personal file. He was excited to hear that, but I felt guilty, as if I was confiscating the songbook all over again. B.N would share his opinion of who the real owners of these long-lost materials should be during a later interview that we had after he had seen his own informative file, an issue I discuss in chapter six.

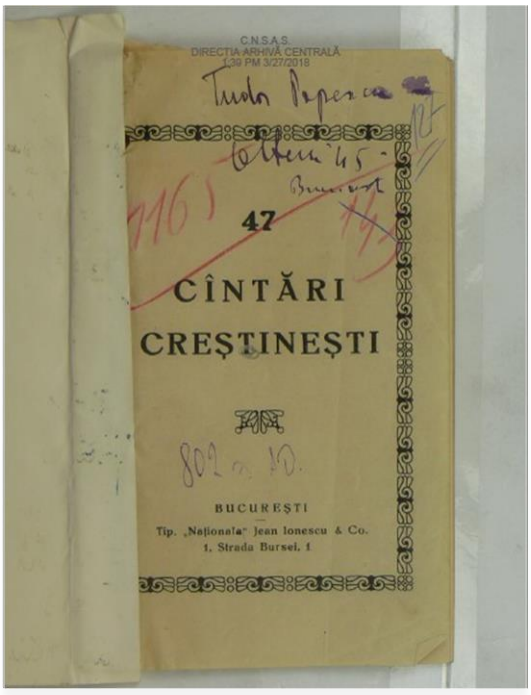


Figure 4.1 The first page of the songbook on which we can see that someone wrote the name of Teodor Popescu, the address Olteni 45, Bucharest, as well as the series 802 and AD. © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), I 259046.

baptism, or the decision to get baptised. B.N. pointed out that the Tudorists practice pedobaptism, i.e. the infant baptism, thus such studies were pointless.

[148] The legislation of ACNSAS mentions that 'supplicants' – defined as those individuals who are entitled to have access to their personal files, especially if they had been the target of the communist regime, and accredited researchers can have access to the files contained in the secret police archives. The difference is that supplicants can only have access to the files that mention them directly, while accredited researchers can have access to any file that is connected to their research topic. The latter are not allowed to distribute the copies of the documents that they consult and they are only allowed to use them for scientific purposes (see the legislation regarding the consultation of the documents contained in the archives of the former secret police, http://www.ACNSAS.ro/documente/cadru_legal/2021.05.17%20Regulament%20Sala%20studiu.pdf, accessed on 12 December 2021).

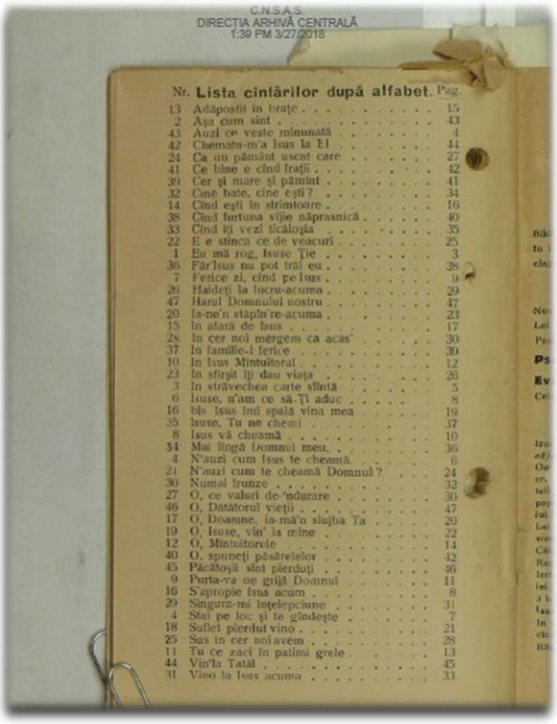


Figure 4.2 The list of the songs and hymns contained in the songbook © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), I 259046.

I was now cognizant of the value of the songbook, but due to its random placement in the file I was not yet sure how it ended up in Teodor Popescu's informative file. It was not uncommon for the secret police to place the confiscated materials in a haphazard manner, which automatically requires a more thorough investigation on the part of the researcher in order to weave together the pieces of a specific story. The advantage of this sometimes difficult process is what Sheila Fitzpatrick calls 'the ecstatic moments of discovery' (Fitzpatrick 2014, 189), the excitement of coming across a material that was either misplaced, or that one would simply not expect to encounter in that specific file type, or to encounter at all, even if one discovers the significance of said material at a later stage during the research. In this case, the Tudorist songbook was placed in an informative file of Teodor Popescu, even though it was not confiscated from him directly. After careful research, I came to the conclusion that the songbook might have been purchased by an informer of Popescu while attending one of his conferences in 1927 and was later attached to Popescu's personal file (ACNSAS, I 259046).[149] The

[149] Due to the songbook's random placement in the file, I initially looked at the reports that mentioned confiscations of religious materials and believed that it was confiscated from two Tudorist believers, both of whom were women, who were distributing brochures, calendars and other religious literature to various people on the street in Bucharest, in August 1938. However, I later noticed that the first page

songbook is indeed a rare item within the community, with very few members still being in possession of copies of it.[150] Unbeknownst to them, by placing it in Popescu's file, one of the most prominent figures of the community, the secret police managed to ensure the survival of an object that the Tudorists can nowadays look at and reflect on as a community.

For the purposes of this chapter, I have consulted archival documents in both the Romanian National Archives and The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, and conducted interviews with members of the Tudorist community. The chapter recounts the history of the beginnings of the Tudorist community, told through one of its first creations – the 'Cântări creștinești' (Christian Songs) songbook, which contained 47 songs and remained the standard song collection for some years until the late 1930s, by using the exemplar of the songbook mentioned above. It seems that this copy of the songbooks was purchased by an

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of the book contains three handwritten elements: the name of Tudor Popescu, an address – Olteni 45, Bucharest, and a series: 802 and A.D. Olteni Street 45 was the address where the community gathered between 1924/1925 and 1927. The earliest police report that I found that mentioned this address as a meeting place of the community is from December 1924. At the time they were mistaken for an Adventist community (ACNSAS, D 015254, 34). The location was given to them by John H. Adeney, the Anglican London Society for the Propagation of Christianity among the Jews' (LSPCJ) missionary who worked in Bucharest from 1900 in order to contribute to the education of Jewish pupils. He was employed by the Anglican Church but had close connections with the Romanian Baptists and Brethren (Ploscariu 2021, 52). He was also coordinating the activity of the British Bible Society in Romania and was aware of Dumitru Cornilescu's translation (Conțac 2019, https://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/tema-saptamanii/articol/str-olteni-nr-45-o-fila-de-istorie-Protestanta-din-bucurestiul-disparut, accessed on 18 December 2021). After Popescu's excommunication from the Orthodox Church in 1924 the community had to find a new gathering place. Adeney, who was aware of the former priest's situation, offered the location on Olteni Street as a temporary meeting place for the Tudorist community and they met there between 1925 and 1927, when they were given permission to build their church on Carol Davila Street, no. 48 (Azimioară 1988, 60, 73). This minor clue made me rethink my initial assumption about when the songbook was confiscated, and I concluded that it could have been taken from the community in the period of time when they were holding their meetings on Olteni Street. That is when I found the same series, 802 and A.D., on a few reports written in 1927 by an individual who attended some of Popescu's conferences. The reports do not mention the fact that he purchased the songbook, but a report that was written several month later states that the Tudorists used to sell their literature with the occasion of their conferences (ACNSAS, I 259046, 284). The individual might have purchased the songbook after such an event and it was later added to Popescu's informative file. Even though I do not know its exact story and can only presume what could have happened, what makes the discovery of this songbook even more interesting for me is precisely the fact that it is possible that it ended up in the file by sheer chance, due to the overzealous attitude of an individual, whose name remains unknown.

[150] None of the members that I interviewed held a copy of the songbook. I later came across another copy of the book, published by the Romanian Evangelical Society – founded by Cornilescu and Ralu Callimachi after the war – in 1922. This version also contains the sheet music for each song and it was published by Andrei Croitoru on his blog, https://baptistireformati.wordpress.com/2019/03/11/cantari-crestinesti-dumitru-cornilescu-1920/ (Accessed on 6 November 2021). The songbooks that contained the sheet music were less common as they would cost more in order to be printed; also, it was more difficult to carry them around due to them being thicker than the simple ones.

individual, possibly an informer of Teodor Popescu, while attending one of the conferences that the Tudorist community organized between 1925 and 1927. Containing songs that were written and translated by Dumitru Cornilescu, the songbook came to fill a spiritual need amongst believers and it became a means of creating a sense of community belonging and a new religious identity. Shown to B.N., a member of the community and one of my key informants, during an interview in 2018, the songbook and its history brought to light numerous memories and set in motion a chain of events that led to a personal journey of searching and finding oneself in the secret police archives. The story told in this chapter highlights the fact that materials such as this constitute a different legacy of the secret police archives that have the potential to reveal and tell other stories (Kapaló and Vagramenko 2020, 11).

The Call for Revival

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Romanian Orthodox Church reached its nadir as an institution. This state of affairs was pointed out by numerous priests and theologians of the time – such as Gheorghe Comșa, Gala Galaction, Nichifor Crainic – who agreed that the Church was in need of immediate reform. Not only was theological education underdeveloped, with priests being offered a practical education rather than a theological one, but the majority of the textbooks were outdated, and some were even handwritten (Clark 2009, 3). Moreover, the questions and subjects that the Church was addressing at this point had been long discussed by the Western countries (Clark 2017, 85). According to Nichifor Crainic, who studied at the Seminary in Bucharest prior to the First World War, the 'Book of books,' namely the Bible, was rarely if ever used, 'not even when the studies were directly related to it' (Crainic cited in Clark 2009, 3) were the students asked to read it; he considered this aspect an abomination (Conțac 2014, 51). The rapid spread of the so-called sectarian movements (see chapter 2) was attributed to the Orthodox Church's failure to satisfy the general desire for a spiritual revival (Clark 2017, 88). It was in this context that the Church started to promote renewal from within the Orthodox Church itself, even though, as highlighted by Clark, the Orthodox leaders were aware of the fact that by promoting revival they were increasing the risk that Protestant ideas would be introduced into the Church (Clark 2017, 86) and, indirectly, that the limits of Orthodoxy would be redefined:

> The unique historical context that catalysed the spread of the Baptists also impacted the Orthodox Church, which is why combating Protestantism was as much about negotiating the limits of Orthodoxy as it was about stopping foreign influences spreading through their own country (Clark 2021, 10)

After the First World War and the unification of the Romanian state in 1918, the country was facing a difficult situation from a political, religious, and social point of view (see chapters 2 and 3). In 1921 Gheorghe Comșa, the renowned anti-sectarian (see chapter 2), complained about the deplorable state of the Orthodox Church and advocated for its revival:

> In church life we see indifference about indifference […] People don't go to church anymore, the church laws and commandments are ignored […] the name of God is mocked, the holy mysteries are trodden under foot, and sectarianism wreaks havoc […] The most important thing for us is to know that the Romanian Orthodox Church will be the most passionate messenger of Christ's Gospel […] It has to end the spreading of the religious sects […] Most importantly, the Orthodox Church will be the protector of religiosity. Our priesthood also has the duty to work incessantly so that our state and church would thrive (Comșa 1921, 3-4).

Church publications such as 'Noua revistă bisericească' (The New Church Magazine),[151] or 'Biserica și Școala' (Church and School) would frequently write about the crisis that the Church was going through and encourage the spiritual revival of the people through a more concerted religious propaganda[152] and religious activism on the part of the Orthodox Church (Lungu 1925, 11). The situation in the monasteries was not better, especially as their number had been reduced after the secularizing measures undertaken by Alexandru Ioan Cuza (see chapter 2).[153] Nichifor Crainic

[151] Owned by Teodor Păcescu, a priest that wanted a revived Orthodox Church, and established in 1919, soon after the end of the war, this publication was considered one of the most pro-revival publications of the 1920s (Clark 2017, 86).

[152] An article published in the magazine in 1925 suggested the use of calendars as a means of religious propaganda conducted by the clergy of the Orthodox Church. The calendar would contain sermons, explanations of various beliefs of the Orthodox Church, and other similar information and was meant to be an instrument used against the sects, especially as these groups were already using brochures and other written materials in order to promote their beliefs (Magier 1925, 9).

[153] It is estimated that approximately one quarter of the arable land of Moldova and Wallachia belonged to the monasteries that, in their turn, were under Greek influence. The secularizing measures undertaken by Cuza had a significant economic impact on the monasteries. Moreover, around 75 monasteries, 31 from Moldova and 44 from Wallachia, were seized by the state.

believed that interwar Romanian monasteries were in a state of desolation and was certain that when the monasteries would flourish again a spiritual rebirth will take place in the Romanian society (Crainic 1998, 204).

The call for revival was loud and clear and in the early 1920s there was a widespread feeling that it was not far from happening. This seemed even more possible when young church leaders, such as Miron Cristea, Gala Galaction, Nicolae Bălan, Ioan Popescu-Mălăești, or Iuliu Scriban, returned from studies abroad and reinvigorated the Romanian Orthodox Church with new, Western ideas (Clark 2021, 33).[154] As Metropolitan-Primate of the newly unified Greater Romania, a position he obtained in 1919, Miron Cristea reorganized the Orthodox Church, marginalizing other religious confessions in the process, such as the Roman and the Greek Catholic Churches (Clark 2021, 5). In 1924, he agreed to the reform of the religious calendar which eventually led to the emergence of the Old Calendarist movement (see chapter 3). In Transylvania, where the Church was led by Nicolae Bălan, the main role of the Orthodox Church remained that of educating the Romanian village (Radu and Schmitt 2017, 20). To this end, Bălan established the church newspaper called 'Lumina satelor' (The Light of the Villages) which was dedicated to sharing the Gospel in rural areas. Edited by a young priest by the name of Iosif Trifa, the newspaper became the starting point of a homegrown religious movement known as 'Oastea Domnului' (the Lord's Army) which was originally conceived as an anti-sectarian movement but by the end of the 1930s it had drawn close to Repenter denominations[155] and had to be suppressed by Bălan himself (Clark 2021, 5).[156] Bălan was of the opinion that priests should serve as advisors to their communities and wrote a short political handbook that was meant to help them in this regard (Radu and Schmitt 2017, 20). Another smaller revival movement was the reading circle 'Ia și citește!' (Take and Read). Established by Ioan

[154] Miron Cristea studied in Budapest, Galaction and Bălan studied at Franz Joseph University in Czernowitz, Ioan Popescu-Mălăești studied in Strasbourg, while Iuliu Scriban studied in Strasbourg and Heidelberg (Clark 2021, 33). For this reason, Clark highlights the paradox that Church leaders were complainig about the Western ideas propagated by the so-called sects when, in reality, they had also been greatly influenced and shaped by the same Western ideas that they were condemning (Clark 2021, 33).

[155] In his 1930 publication entitled 'În slujba misionarismului ortodox' (In the Service of the Orthodox Mission), Gheorghe Comșa defended the Lord's Army in the face of allegations of sectarianism by stating that the movement was a direct answer to the spiritual thirst of the Romanian people (Bălăban 2016, 40).

[156] During the following years, the Tudorists would take many of the songs composed by members of the Lord's Army community, such as Traian Dorz or Nicolae Moldoveanu, and introduce them in their own songbooks (see chapter 6).

Popescu-Mălăești and sponsored by the revivalist newspaper he was running called 'Duminica ortodoxă' (The Orthodox Sunday), the circle's aim was to encourage priests and lay people alike to read more Christian literature (Clark 2017, 90). Teodor Popescu and Dumitru Cornilescu were both members of the circle; Popescu was its Secretary (Dobrincu 2018, 84) and Cornilescu was in charge of translating books and works that they were studying, and both of them would also speak at the circle's meetings (Măianu 2021, 34).

This was, by and large, the historical, political and religious context that favoured and eventually led to the emergence of the Tudorist community. With an Orthodox Church that was in urgent need of reform and in the face of a spiritual revival of the people, the sermons preached by Teodor Popescu, characterized by a simple and accessible language, along with a translation of the Bible that reflected the language of the people, proved to be the catalyst for a homegrown religious community that, at least for a while, would disrupt the Romanian religious scene in the years to come.

The Beginnings of a Homegrown Religious Community

On a Sunday morning of February 1927, almost 500 people gathered on Olteni Street, No. 45 to listen to Teodor Popescu's service. The community sang four songs from the 'Cântări Creștinești' songbook, then Popescu proceeded to read a few verses from Ephesians chapter 2, then from Luke chapter 4; the interpretation that he offered to these verses was not consonant with the teachings of the Orthodox Church. Popescu, according to a secret police report, used a 'wheedling tone' that was meant to brainwash the people and the fact that he had this effect on them was obvious from the way they defended their belief, using verses and quotes learnt by heart (ACNSAS, I 259046, 314). These observations were made by an individual, whose identity remains unknown, who attended Teodor Popescu's conference that Sunday. When he left the meeting, however, he did not – perhaps – leave empty-handed; he may well have purchased, or been given, a copy of the 'Cântări Creștinești' songbook which was later attached to Popescu's informative file.

Approximately ten years prior to this event, Dumitru Cornilescu, a young deacon of the Orthodox Church and a hardworking translator who had taken his monastic vows in the summer of 1916, was entrusted with the translation of the Bible by a noblewoman by the name of Ralu Callimachi. The grandson of two Orthodox

priests,[157] Cornilescu had been drawn to the priestly life from a very young age. Thus, in 1904, when he was 13 years old, he went to study at the Central Theological Seminary in Bucharest (Constantineanu 2017, 233), first under the direction of Constantin Nazarie, the priest who would become the leader and organizer of the Orthodox military chaplain during the First World War, and then under Iuliu Scriban, a well-known theologian and revivalist of the time (Clark 2017, 91). It was the latter who introduced Cornilescu to various Western authors whose perspectives and ideas proved to be different from the ones he was used to,[158] as he later noted in his autobiographical brochure:

> One day, I received from the director of the Seminary a catalogue of many foreign religious books. I was amazed when I saw so many Christian books, because at the time there were very few books in our country. I started to order these books and to read them. While reading them, I found out that all of them were talking about a different Christian life, very distinct from the one I had experienced in our country. The idea of such a life was refreshing and I would say to myself: this is going to be my duty when I become a priest, to make this life known to people (Cornilescu 2021, 5).

Shortly after coming into contact with these writings,[159] Cornilescu began translating them, and he even published some of his translations in various church magazines, such as 'Păstorul Ortodox' (The Orthodox Shepherd).[160] While a student of theology

[157] According to Dumitru Cornilescu's biography, his father was a school teacher, whilst both of his grandfathers had been Orthodox priests (Măianu 2021, 29-30).

[158] Among the authors that Scriban encouraged his students to engage with there were William James – an American psychologist that is well known for advancing the movement of pragmatism in philosophy – Frank Thomas – a Swiss Protestant pastor– and Grigorii Spiridonovich Petrov – a defrocked Russian Orthodox priest who advocated Christian socialism in many of his writings (Clark 2017, 92). As highlighted by Clark, the fact that young Seminary students were introduced to the writings of all these individuals goes to show how diverse the influences on early twentieth century Romanian Orthodoxy were, and they highlight the fact that a religious revival was on the verge of happening from within the Orthodox Church itself.

[159] Cornilescu later declared that he used to read the works of Charles Spurgeon, a well-known English Baptist preacher, and he would order books from the Oncken bookshop. The place was named after Johann Gerhard Oncken, the founder of the Baptist movement in Germany, who opened the bookshop in Hamburg in 1828 (Conțac 2019, 447).

[160] His first translation was published in this magazine in 1910 and it was taken from the writings of Frank Thomas (Conțac 2014, 50). The Romanian Academy Library houses approximately 40 books and brochures that Dumitru Cornilescu translated between 1915 and 1922 (Conțac 2018, 365, footnote 41).

at the University of Bucharest,[161] he became a schoolmaster at the Seminary, as well as a cantor at St. Stephen's Church in Bucharest, colloquially referred to as the Stork's Nest,[162] where he met Teodor Popescu, the priest that was to become one of his closest collaborators. Cornilescu used his savings in order to publish some of his translated works in an attempt to personally discover the spiritual life that they described. However, as he later declared in his short autobiography, 'that life was not coming' (Cornilescu 2021, 3). It was then that he realized that at the core of all the books that he admired lay a book that Cornilescu himself was not reading on a regular basis, namely the Bible; when he began reading it daily, however, he came to the conclusion that he did not like it, nor did he understand it:

> I started to read the Bible every day, but after just a few days I realized that I did not like it. I had before me a translation so bad that I could not understand it. I was wondering how one could praise the Bible so much when I was unable to find anything worthy of praise about it. But when I started to read it in a different language, I understood it and I liked it (Cornilescu 2021, 6).

It was this personal struggle that brought about a conscious desire to create a translation of the Bible that would be more accessible to the Romanian people.[163] After he translated the Gospel According to Matthew, Cornilescu realized that his savings were not sufficient in order to cover the costs that a Bible translation involved (Conțac 2014, 53). During the following years he would collaborate with a series of individuals, such as Vasile Radu,[164] the first great Romanian Orientalist and translator of Arabic and Hebrew, with whom he translated a tome entitled 'The Orthodox Church

[161] Even though it is not very clear when he graduated from the Seminary, based on the fact that in 1901 the law of secondary and higher education required a seven year period of study for the Seminary, Cornilescu might have gone to University in 1912 (Conțac 2018, 365, footnote 40).
[162] The name comes from the fact that in the past storks used to make their nests on the church's shingle roof.
[163] There were other Romanian translations of the Bible available during that time. The most popular one was the so called 'Iași Bible' that was printed in 1874. In 1897, Nicolae Nitzulescu translated the New Testament, but his translation was rejected by the Holy Synod as it was considered 'inferior to the previous translations' (Conțac 2018, 364-365). His New Testament was printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) in 1911, together with the Old Testament of the Iași Bible. In the same year the BFBS assigned Iuliu Scriban and Nicodim Munteanu to translate the Bible, but they were not able to complete it in time; the latter even lost two-thirds of what he had already translated and was forced to start over (Conțac 2014, 71). It was in this context that Cornilescu's translation gained ground. Munteanu published a translation of the New Testament in 1924, and was also responsible for the translation of 24 of the Old Testament books that appeared in the 1936 Synod Bible (Clark 2017, 94).
[164] Vasile Radu also worked on a new translation of the Bible together with Gala Galaction. The Bible, which was published in 1938, was intended to become at least as popular, clear, and prestigious as Cornilescu's translation (Conțac 2019, 439).

and Canon Law' (Clark 2017, 92), but it was his association with Olga Gologan, a young erudite nun, that would draw the attention of princess Ralu Callimachi. In 1915, Cornilescu and Gologan translated a devotional calendar that contained daily meditations written by the Swiss pastor Frank Thomas.[165] Praised by some churchmen of the time, such as Nicolae Bălan, the calendar found its way into the hands of Ralu Callimachi who immediately contacted Dumitru Cornilescu. Described by her sister-in-law, Anne Marie, as 'divinely naïve, and a religious maniac too' (Callimachi 1949, 211), Ralu Callimachi had been supporting the publication and distribution of the Bible for almost two decades before she met Dumitru Cornilescu, and was feverishly looking for someone who could offer a new Romanian translation of the Bible.[166] Both Callimachi and Cornilescu agreed that the Bible ought not to be the exclusive book of an institution, and were determined to put it in the hands of the people.

The noblewoman offered succour to Cornilescu, especially as in August 1916, after two years of neutrality, the Kingdom of Romania entered the war on the side of the Allied Powers and Cornilescu was eligible for recruitment. It is believed that Callimachi managed to convince Nicodim Munteanu, the then Bishop of Huși, to allow Cornilescu to take his monastic vows[167] and provided the young hierodeacon

[165] After receiving the news of Frank Thomas' death in 1928, Scriban wrote a piece in 'Revista Teologică' (The Theological Journal) in which he praised the work of the Swiss pastor and even mentioned the occasions in which he attended his conferences in Baden-Baden, where he served as a Superior of the Orthodox Chapel in there for five years, until 1909 (Conțac 2014, 48). On his return, Scriban brought with him a few volumes written by Thomas; these were the works that he later introduced to his students, and among them there was Dumitru Cornilescu (Scriban 1928, 261). Because by 1928 Cornilescu was a controversial figure in Romania and had already emigrated to England, presumably at the advice of Miron Cristea, the Metropolitan-Primate of Greater Romania (Măianu 2021, 89), in order to avoid a greater backlash to his ideas, Scriban takes the time to describe his former student as 'hardworking […] especially during his best years, before he became a sectarian' (Scriban 1928, 261).

[166] Ralu Callimachi was also a translator and, given her experience, Emanuel Conțac highlights the fact that she might have contributed to the first translation of the Bible made by Dumitru Cornilescu (Conțac 2014, 53), even though her role was overshadowed by the events that followed its publishing. In fact, in an interview that he gave in 1974, Cornilescu mentions the fact that Callimachi would often assist him in his work (Conțac 2019, 450).

[167] Bishop Grigorie Leu Botoșăneanu claims that Cornilescu became a monk in order to avoid the dangers of the war, implying that Bishop Nicodim Munteanu was tricked into allowing him to take his monastic vows (Botoșăneanu 1929, 44). In reply, Munteanu declared that all legal requirements had been fulfilled, even though the law demanded that all men who wanted to enter into the monastic life to have completed their military service. Conțac is of the opinion that Nicodim Munteanu was aware of Cornilescu's situation, but decided to ignore it because he believed that his goal of translating the Bible had to be encouraged. For this reason, he allowed Cornilescu to leave Dobrovăț Monastery that he belonged to in order to work at Stânceşti (Conțac 2019, 444), where Ralu Callimachi put her father's library at his disposal (Conțac 2011, 125). The fact that he left the monastery in order to work at Stânceşti was another reason that made Botoșăneanu believe that Cornilescu's sole reason for becoming a monk was to avoid being sent to the front (Botoșăneanu 1929, 44). This was restated by Dr. Stavrescu in a brochure that he wrote in 1932 entitled 'Tudorismul. Studiu medical' (Tudorism. A Medical Study):

with room at her mansion at Stânceşti, Botoşani county, until 1919, when he finished the translation of the New Testament (Clark 2017, 93). Whilst living at Callimachi's mansion, Cornilescu had a born again experience while translating the 'Epistle to the Romans' (Măianu 2021, 14; Cornilescu 2021, 8) which prompted him to 'tell others'[168] about what he had understood. He soon started to hold Bible studies with young soldiers who, struggling with various questions about faith prior to being sent to the front, paid him regular visits. It was during these Bible studies that Cornilescu began translating the first Christian songs in order to brighten up their regular meetings:

> Because the study was long, I felt the need for a change. As we were all young, we would have enjoyed singing, but we did not know what to sing. We could not sing worldly songs, and we knew no Christian songs. However, among the books that I ordered in the beginning there was a songbook. I perused the songs and realized that they were really beautiful, but it was a pity that they were in a foreign language, not in Romanian. I got used to going to our Savior with all my problems […] So, I prayed for a while and then, after much toil, I translated a song and then a few more. The next Sunday when the boys visited me, I told them that everything has to be new in their new lives, including the songs. Therefore, I began singing the song that I had translated. They enjoyed it and sang with me the last verse. We sang for an hour, they learnt it by heart, then went back to the barracks and sang it there as well. Some of their comrades began saying: 'This is wonderful, they party with music on Sundays. We have to go to this party as well.' They came to the party, and many decided to follow God. This was the beginning (Cornilescu 2021, 12).

In an interview that he gave in 1974, Cornilescu mentioned the fact that he used Ralu Callimachi's piano in order to create the rhythm of the melodies. After listening to them, a young military school student, who was also a talented musician, put together a choir that soon started to sing in the Military School in Botoşani (Conţac 2019, 455).

'In previous years, when we were supposed to enter the war, one of the graduates of the Seminary, namely Dumitru Cornilescu, was thinking about what to do in order to avoid going to war with all of us, where he would have suffered, like we all did. In order to prevent this suffering he became a monk' (Stavrescu 1932, 4).

[168] This is a reference to Cornilescu's short autobiography entitled 'Cum m-am întors la Dumnezeu şi cum am spus şi altora' (How I Turned to God and How I Told Others About It) in which he describes his conversion.

This led to the gradual spread of Cornilescu's teachings and popularity. The Orthodox Bishop Grigorie Leu Botoșăneanu notes that in the summer of 1918[169] there was already a group of young students in Bâlca, Bacău county, that were influenced by Cornilescu's teachings and formed a 'distinctive sect' (Botoșăneanu 1929, 45). These were the timid beginnings of a new, homegrown religious community whose echoes would resound in the years that followed.

In 1919 Cornilescu was finishing the translation of the New Testament. While still at Stânceşti, he maintained a correspondence with Teodor Popescu[170] who had been greatly affected by his wife's death that occurred in November 1918 (Conțac 2014, 65). Though a parish priest at the Stork's Nest, which had been his father-in-law's church (Azimioară 1988, 19), Popescu had not experienced a personal conversion and was initially taken aback by Cornilescu's ideas:

> My friend Dumitru Cornilescu was in Moldova. Having heard about the difficult situation I was in, he wrote me a few words of comfort, but he wrote in a language that I could not understand. Among other things, he was saying that God takes with one hand and gives with two. I cannot remember if this revolted me or if I just could not understand what it meant (Teodor Popescu cited in Azimioară 1988, 25).

In May 1919, Cornilescu arrived in Bucharest in order to make the necessary arrangements for the publication of his New Testament translation[171] and met with Popescu. Their discussion soon turned into a dispute and did not have the outcome

[169] Even though the autobiographical brochure does not offer any time reference of when Cornilescu's conversion might have occurred, based on the information provided by Botoșăneanu and the fact that Cornilescu began his translation in 1916, Emanuel Conțac places it some time in 1917 (Conțac 2019, 447; Conțac 2014, 63).

[170] Teodor Popescu also studied at the Central Theological Seminary in Bucharest and then at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Bucharest.

[171] In the summer of 1919, J.H. Adeney informed the British and Foreign Bible Society that Cornilescu's translation of the New Testament was ready for printing and that Callimachi wanted the Society to adopt and print this version of the New Testament. In the same letter, Adeney noted that Cornilescu was aware of the fact that one day he might be forced to leave the Orthodox Church. Due to the fact that BFBS was still expecting a revision of the New Testament on the part of Iuliu Scriban, it did not reply immediately to Adeney's letter (Conțac 2018, 367). Therefore, Cornilescu and Callimachi established the Romanian Evangelical Society under whose auspices they published the New Testament in 1920, and then the entire Bible in 1921 (Conțac 2011, 125). Cornilescu was later accused by his critics that the Society was founded with money donated by foreign people; in June 1922 he claimed that that was not the case, even though the letters kept in the BFBS archives suggest that though the Society was not funded from the outside, the first copies of the New Testament were printed with the help of Francis Berney, a Swiss missionary, while the BFBS donated the necessary paper. It is believed that Cornilescu avoided offering these details due to the fact that in 1922 he and Tudor Popescu were already under scrutiny by the Holy Synod (Conțac 2014, 66).

that Cornilescu had hoped it would; in fact, he later wrote in his short autobiography that 'Popescu thought he was too good to turn to God' (Cornilescu 2021, 16). Popescu's conversion would occur shortly after. In 1921, people were beginning to notice a change in his sermons, as well as in the way he was conducting church rites and services.[172] Sometime during the second half of 1921, Octavian Goga, the then Minister of Arts and Religious Affairs, visited the Stork's Nest after he had been told about a well-spoken priest whose messages attracted numerous people. Two years later, while recalling that day in an article entitled 'Răzvrătirea de la Cuibul cu barză' (The Stork's Nest Rebellion), Goga writes about a church that was 'crammed with people of every walk of life' and a priest 'with bright eyes […] and a daring speaker' whose message gave rise to questions and passions in all those who listened to him (Octavian Goga cited in Țon 1988, 137). In the same short article, Goga draws attention to the 'paralyzing inertia that ruled over the church' and calls into question the state of the clergy whose aphonia resulted in 'a superstitious peasantry and a pagan ruling class' (Octavian Goga cited in Țon 1988, 139).[173]

After returning to Bucharest in order to oversee the editing and publishing of the Bible, the translation of which was finalized in 1920, Cornilescu joined Teodor Popescu and together they began holding Bible studies in the parish every Tuesday evening (Măianu 2021, 74).[174] These meetings, as well as the appeal of Popescu's sermons, attracted large number of people from all walks of life to the Stork's Nest.[175] It was during these gatherings that Cornilescu continued an activity he began at Stânceşti, namely that of translating Protestant hymns; while translating these songs,

[172] According to Popescu's biography, some women were amazed to see that during confession on Palm Sunday of 1921 Popescu did not place the chasuble on their heads, nor did he ask them the typical questions a priest would ask. Instead, he started to pray for them; this was a deviation from the Orthodox custom (Azimioară 1988, 31).

[173] According to Horia Azimioară, the biographer of Teodor Popescu, Iuliu Scriban himself indirectly encouraged his students to visit the Stork's Nest by praising Popescu, whom he described as deserving (Azimioară 1988, 34).

[174] The studies were initially exclusively attended by men, even though women wanted to participate, as well. They eventually occupied the church one evening and demanded to be allowed to attend the Bible study. The two priests agreed to it (Măianu 2021, 76).

[175] Their meetings were attended by theology students, writers, and politicians. One of the best known poets and writers that frequently participated in the meetings was Dimitrie Nanu. He defended Popescu while he was being tried by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church for departure from Orthodox teachings (Gândirea 1943, 174). He later became the president of 'Trezirea' (Revival), a society whose goal was to edit and publish papers meant to spread the Gospel, but also to build or rent buildings that were to be turned into conference rooms. Such was the case with the building on Carol Davila Street, no. 48, which later became the headquarters of the Tudorist community (Azimioară 1988, 72). Nanu also introduced Teodor Popescu to the people of Cîmpulung, his birthplace, where a Tudorist community appeared later (Beloiu 2015, 89).

however, Cornilescu was not only attempting to find new ways of reviving the meetings, as he once did for the soldiers in Botoșani, but also to translate new religious ideas that would express the faith of the community creating and strengthening, at the same time, its religious identity.

Facing Opposition

The Stork's Nest revival drew the attention of other priests, such as Manea Popescu or Teodor Păcescu,[176] both of whom had been preaching revival but had not seen a similar effect within their own churches. In 1922 they openly challenged Cornilescu and Popescu to express their theological convictions on the pages of 'The New Church Magazine' (Conțac 2011, 125).[177] Among the questions that they had to answer there were some that reflected the teachings of Orthodoxy, such as the veneration of saints, or the significance of the prayers for the dead (Clark 2017, 100). Answers to these queries were of great importance, especially as various rumours had spread that Popescu ceased to teach his congregation about these issues and that he had changed the liturgy in the process. In June of the same year, an anonymous denunciation was made at the Church Consistory in Bucharest in which both Cornilescu and Popescu were accused of having become Protestant deviators from Orthodoxy (Dobrincu 2018, 86). Nae Ionescu even accused them of being a threat to the Romanian nation-state and of subordinating Orthodoxy to the Anglican Church (Clark 2017, 100-101).[178]

In the wake of these controversies, in December 1923 Gala Galaction[179] began serving alongside Teodor Popescu at Saint Stephen's Church, at the behest of the Metropolitan, in order to supervise his sermons. He soon came to the conclusion that Popescu was altering the liturgy by removing the prayers addressed to the saints or to the Virgin Mary and highlighting the centrality of faith in Jesus Christ alone, the only one who could offer salvation: 'Popescu and Cornilescu had rebelled against the Virgin Mary and against the saints!' (Galaction 1926, 105). In 'Piatra din capul

[176] Teodor Păcescu used the term 'neo-Protestant' in an article published in 'The New Church Magazine' in 1922 with reference to the community that was gathering at Saint Stephen's church. This was one of the first uses of this term in Romania, in this case being equated with that of sect (Dobrincu 2018, 23).
[177] According to Roland Clark, the debates that followed are useful and extremely instructive as they 'represent a candid attempt at clarifying the boundaries of Romanian Orthodoxy during a period of institutional and theological renewal' (Clark 2017, 100).
[178] A report written in 1924 linked their activity to the BFBS and claimed that Teodor Popescu was funded by the aforementioned society in order to spread Protestant ideas (ACNSAS, D 015254, 3).
[179] Gala Galaction was the pen name of Grigore Pișculescu.

unghiului' (The Corner Stone) Galaction notes that Popescu had changed the dismissal, also known as the 'otpust,' or the final blessing delivered by the priest at the end of the liturgy: 'The former priest gave this prayer a peculiar and personal form: the one who was raised from the dead, the true Christ, our God – He shall have mercy on us and save us, as he is good and loves us' (Galaction 1926, 51). Similar to other critics of Cornilescu, Galaction considered Popescu the victim of the former's evil influence: 'It was about a new dogma, stranger to Orthodoxy, that Cornilescu had put in the soul of poor Popescu' (Galaction 1926, 105).[180]

It was during all these disruptions that Cornilescu's translation of the Bible, which was initially met with silence from the majority of his critics, became the subject of much scrutiny.[181] In 1923 Cornilescu had renounced his monastic vows and left the country,[182] spending the time as an itinerant preacher until 1929 when he finally settled in Switzerland, never to return to Romania (Clark 2017, 109).[183] In 1924, at the request of a certain priest by the name of Runceanu who was working for the church magazine entitled 'Duminica Ortodoxă' (The Orthodox Sunday), the Holy Synod analyzed Cornilescu's Bible and recommended that priests no longer use it:

> As it was found that the translation of the Bible done by Mr. Cornilescu is a translation that does not correspond to the normative canonical text of the Orthodox Church and that it was done tendentiously, in a spirit that encourages the reader to reach conclusions that are not consonant with the doctrine of the Orthodox Church, it is recommended that the Orthodox readers use only those

[180] Cornilescu was aware of the fact that he was considered more dangerous than Popescu. In the interview he gave in 1974 he talked about a conversation he had with Miron Cristea who had told him that Popescu was seen in a better light and that Cornilescu was thought of as the 'great devil' (Conțac 2019, 445).

[181] In July 1920, Gala Galaction commented positively on the translation, considering that it was a 'deserving' work and highlighting the fact that it was based on Louis Segond's French Bible (Conțac 2018, 369), while priests such as Petru Chirică and D. Mangâru criticized the translation of 'sabbatimos,' which Cornilescu translated as 'a Sabbath rest,' claiming that it supported the Seventh-Day Adventist idea that Christians should worship on Saturdays instead of Sundays (Clark 2017, 95). This, however, was not the case, especially as in 1920 Cornilescu had translated two brochures that attacked the Adventist doctrine (Conțac 2014, 73). By 1923 Galaction's opinion of the young translator had changed, claiming that his translation was 'tendentious and heretical,' blaming Cornilescu for trying to insert his Protestant ideas into the Bible (Galaction 1926, 83).

[182] In August 1923, 'Unirea' (The Union) newspaper published two short reactions written by Professor Virgil Tempeanu and I. Gr. Oprișan – two laymen that would sometimes talk about religious issues – to the news of Cornilescu's exclusion from the Orthodox Church. Both of them blame the official Church for having driven out of its midst a theologian who was capable of 'dying for Christ,' accusing the Church of decadence and intolerance (Unirea 1923, 2).

[183] In 1930, Ralu Callimachi was no longer able to offer him financial support due to the fact that she had been greatly affected by the Great Depression (Măianu 2021, 95, footnote 19).

> texts and translations done by our church; all priests and clerics are forbidden to use Cornilescu's translations in their sermons (Renașterea 1924, 6).

'Foaia Diecezană' (The Diocesan Paper) even asked the priesthood to be cautious in order to prevent the spread of the translation among the people by colporteurs (Foaia Diecezană 1924, 1). Even though it was initially rejected by neo-Protestant communities, Cornilescu's Bible[184] was later embraced by them, as well as by the Lord's Army community that in 1934 was using Cornilescu's translation in its publications (Conțac 2018, 374).[185]

Teodor Popescu was oficially defrocked by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in April 1924, through sentence no. 152, on accusations of heterodoxy (Dobrincu 2018, 86) and his community was forced out of the official Church (Clark 2017, 83). His supporters published numerous pamphlets in which they tried to defend Popescu in the face of his detractors. Gala Galaction concluded that these 'voices that raised in support of Teodor Popescu are a fortunate sign that our society does not want to perish of religious starvation' (Galaction 1926, 104). In December 1923, several months prior to his exclusion from the Church, Popescu expressed his desire to remain in the Church implying that sectarianism was forced on him:[186]

> I am ready for anything! I wanted to work for the Church I was born and raised in. But this church wants to put us all in the same corner […] Other churches allow innovations that can only generate revival. The Romanian Church condemns a movement that would have been useful for it. If the minority that is the nowadays Orthodox Church decides to reject me, it is its fault. I did not get out of it by my own willing. Anyway, with God's help, I will continue my work. If this movement is from God there is no force that can stop it; if it is

[184] Especially the revised version he made in 1924.

[185] In 2012 the newspaper 'Adevărul' (The Truth) began distributing copies of the Bible. This generated a scandal at the time due to the fact that the Romanian Patriarchy soon realized that the Bible was a Dumitru Cornilescu translation and asked the journal to mention the fact that the Bible they were giving 'was not an Orthodox Bible' (see http://www.cuvantul-ortodox.ro/recomandari/cotidianul-adevarul-biblia-sectara-patriarhia-radu-preda/, accessed on 10 November 2021).

[186] In 1925 Grigore Comșa was admiring the sincerity of priest Ioan V. Popescu from Bălești, Gorj county, who was suspected of moving away from Orthodoxy due to the fact that he started to study the Bible and to preach more. Comșa admired the fact that the aforementioned priest, unlike Teodor Popescu who led others astray, proved to be faithful to the teachings of the Orthodox Church and focused his mission on bringing back the lost to Orthodoxy (Comșa 1925, 1-2).

not from God it will be destroyed and I will burn forever (Teodor Popescu in Lupta între Dumnezeu și Mamona 1924, 35).[187]

In August 1924 the Siguranța was informed of the fact that Teodor Popescu was no longer permitted to wear priestly clothes, or to speak in the name of the Orthodox Church (ACNSAS, D 015254, 25); in October 1924 Popescu's place as priest at the Stork's Nest was taken by priest Marin Ionescu (Benga 2012, 60).

Popescu's followers continued meeting in private homes (ACNSAS, I 259046, 236)[188] and between 1925 and 1927 they gathered on Olteni Street 45, a temporary location given to them by John H. Adeney. It was from this location that one copy of their first songbook was purchased by a possible informer of the former Orthodox priest. In 1925 the movement had already spread to the nearby city of Ploiești where Popescu was stopped from preaching in February of the same year due to the fact that the parish priest had complained to the police that the community was meeting in a private house situated on Novac Street[189] (ANIC, D 167/1925, 3).[190] It was during this period of time that individuals such as Gheorghe Cornilescu, Dumitru Cornilescu's brother, and Emil Constantinescu became more active within the community. They were both the target of the secret police during the 1950s and the 1960s and they were considered hostile elements, especially due to their evangelizing activities and sermons in which they sometimes attacked the Communist Party (ACNSAS, I 259045, vol.1, 7). In 1929, Grigorie Leu Botoșăneanu concluded his chapter on Tudorists in a largely dismissive tone: 'The sect seems to be a momentary phenomenon, having nothing original and no deep conviction in its doctrine' (Botoșăneanu 1929, 48).

[187] In his brochure Dr. Stavrescu accuses Teodor Popescu of dishonesty and duplicity precisely for his intention to remain in the Orthodox Church: 'Priest Teodor Popescu had done something that no honest individual does. He continued for years to grow fat on the Orthodox Church and, at the same time, to serve the Protestant cause until the entire city of Bucharest was alarmed that its belief was being perverted by a deceitful priest' (Stavrescu 1932, 8).

[188] Horia Azimioară claims that the believers met even more often during these times. They first met at a believer's house, then in Colentina neighbourhood, on Progresul Street, on 13 Septembrie Street, and on Abrud Street until 1925. The community was sometimes attacked by people who threw rocks at them (Azimioară 1988, 59) or even beat them (Azimioară 1988, 67). In 1930 the newspaper 'Dimineața' reported on a conflict between a small Tudorist community and the local Orthodox priests in Cîmpulung. The conflict led to the arrest of the former (ACNSAS, D 015254, 112). Teodor Popescu obtained the status of religious speaker which allowed him to legally organize and speak at religious meetings and conferences (Azimioară 1988, 58-59; ANIC, D 167/1925, 15), which is what he began doing once the community settled on Olteni Street 45.

[189] This was the house of Anica Achim, a well-known Tudorist believer from Ploiești.

[190] My thanks to James Kapaló for pointing me to this file in the National Archives.

During the following decade, however, the community spread and was seen as even more of a threat for the Orthodox Church and the state.

Numerous police reports written after the second half of the 1920s mention the highly organized colportage of the community.[191] A note from 1927 claims that one of their propaganda methods was to smuggle books in the bags of the customers with the help of various sellers and shop owners. The books contained verses taken from Cornilescu's Bible translation as well as the address where the community met at the time (ACNSAS, D 015254, 92). Other reports mention that their religious propaganda was rapidly being spread everywhere, as the believers distributed materials in the cities, in the villages, in schools, and even in trams (ACNSAS, I 259046, 1). Soon, small Tudorist communities appeared in counties such as Ploiești, Brașov, Constanța, Ialomița, Ilfov, and Tutova (Clark 2017, 111)[192] and Popescu was accused of transforming his conferences in a 'religious cult' (ACNSAS, I 259046, 157). In 1932, Dr. P. Stavrescu writes in a brochure[193] that Teodor Popescu was an 'evil minded conman' (Stavrescu 1932, 16), and described the Tudorist congregation as a group of 'hypnotized ascetics' (Stavrescu 1932, 9). Stavrescu, who would sometimes attend the church services on Carol Davila Street, no. 48 in order to analyse the community, implied that Popescu's 'audience' was composed of simple-minded people, such as 'women in search of personal redemption, poor men, and young people with no purpose in life' (Stavrescu 1932, 9).[194] Stavrescu's study came as a response to the Memorandum that the community had submitted to the Ministry of Religious Affairs in July 1932 (see ACNSAS, D 015254, 166-169). He criticized the choice of their name, that of 'Christians According to the Scriptures,'[195] due to its exclusive nature.

[191] During my archival research I did not find any confiscated photos or other visual materials that belonged to the community; however, I found plenty of brochures and pamphlets that were confiscated from believers. Among the confiscated brochures that I found there are: 'Vecinicia' (Eternity), 'Podul umblător' (The Moving Bridge), 'Vino și ia!' (Come and Take!), 'Singura scăpare' (The Only Escape), 'Calea către cer' (The Way to Heaven) all of which were written and translated by Dumitru Cornilescu, and 'Ești creștin?' (Are You a Christian?), 'Podul suspinelor' (The Bridge of Sighs) and 'Ceasornicul de nisip' (The Sand Clock) authored by Teodor Popescu.

[192] A report written in May 1924, shortly after Popescu was defrocked, stated that the fact that the former priest's story was published on the pages of many newspapers ensured his popularity; thus, wherever he travelled people would attend his sermons only out of sheer curiosity and be mesmerized by his 'power of persuasion' (ACNSAS, D 015254, 16).

[193] My thanks to Dumitru Lisnic for helping me access the brochure.

[194] This remark contradicts other, albeit older, reports that mention the fact that Popescu's conferences and sermons were attended by a large number of people, the majority of whom were intellectuals (ACNSAS, D 015254, 13).

[195] The community struggled for a while to find a proper name. Known as Tudorists, after Teodor Popescu, in 1925 they also appear as 'Born Agains' and even as members of the 'Romanian Evangelical

During the same year, the Ministry of Public Instructions ordered the closure of their meeting house situated on Carol Davila Street, no.48 (ACNSAS, D 015254, 148). The initiative was – apparently – unsuccessful, as in May 1934 the Police Department of Bucharest was again asking for its closure (ACNSAS, D 015254, 156). In 1937, a lay Orthodox Movement known as the 'Patriarch Miron Association' campaigned for the definitive ban of the Tudorist community, to no avail (ACNSAS, I 259046, 5). In 1939, the Ministry of Religious Affairs studied the doctrine of the Tudorists and that of the Brethren and decided that they were not very different, with the sole exception of the doctrine of baptism; thus, the two communities were advised to merge, but their union was a formal one, as they both attempted to preserve a distinct identity within this larger group (Rusu 2011, 47).[196] In a 16-page brochure that he addressed to his community in October 1939, Popescu emphasized the doctrinal differences between them and the Evangelical Christians, and even highlighted the indigenous character of the Tudorist community. His letter raised much discontentment within the Brethren church, even though the latter did not offer an immediate reply. In 1956, however, Florea Moisescu[197] responded to Popescu's brochure by reminding him of the help provided by John Adeney to the Tudorists in times of need, as well as of the influence of Protestant ideas on Dumitru Cornilescu's theology (Dobrincu 2018, 104) in an attempt to make Popescu aware of the fact that his community had also been impacted by 'foreign' elements. The two communities would split in 1990, after almost five decades of cohabitation during which they inevitably influenced each other's practice and theology (Rusu 2011, 48-49).

The Songbook as an Expression of Religious Identity

In August 1938 two women, Ana Raftopol and Stana Floarea Alexandru, were caught by the police distributing leaflets taken from 'a Tudorist calendar' (ACNSAS, I

Society' (ACNSAS, D015254, 48), most probably a reference to the society founded by Dumitru Cornilescu and Ralu Callimachi after the First World War. In 1932 they take the name 'Christians According to the Scriptures,' but in 1939, after they merged with the Evangelical Christians/Brethren, they come to be known as 'a second branch of the Evangelical Christians.' After 1989, however, the community adopts the name of 'The Romanian Evangelical Church.'

[196] Even though this was a priority for both communities, they did struggle to maintain at least a formal unity, especially during communism when churches with fewer members were in danger of being closed. Ieremia Rusu observes that the publications of the Evangelical Christian Union avoided discussing important doctrines, such as baptism, in order to ensure the unity between the two communities despite their different understandings of the topic (Rusu 2011, 49).

[197] Florea Moisescu was one of the main leaders of the Brethren Assemblies in Romania.

259046, 35) to various people on the streets of Bucharest.[198] They were arrested for 'Tudorist propaganda and religious proselytism' (ACNSAS, I 259046, 41). The report written produced on the occasion of their arrest stated that:

> Under the pretext of helping sick and disabled people, they went to Flămânda Street, where they gathered the residents, preached to them and sang various songs from their Tudorist songbooks that we found on them (ACNSAS, I 259046, 35).

Due to the vague and legally unspecified state of the Tudorist community that, at the time of their arrest was neither listed among the allowed, nor among the forbidden religious associations,[199] the two women were released. The police, however, went on to confiscate all the materials that they found in the possesion of Ana and Stana, which were the following: a Bible, a Tudorist calendar from 1936 and one from 1938, one 'book'[200] called 'Adevărul Creștin' (The Christian Truth),[201] 12 leaflets entitled 'Ești creștin?' (Are you a Christian?) and three songbooks entitled 'Cântări creștinești' (Christian Songs) (ACNSAS, I 259046, 35, 45).

This case alone highlights the fact that the Tudorist community had a vast collection of books, pamphlets and brochures, the majority of which were written by Dumitru Cornilescu and Teodor Popescu, that they relied on in order to spread their belief.[202] It also highlights the fact that members of the community used music and public singing of devotional songs and hymns as means of sharing their creed and religious ideas.

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[198] In 1936 the Holy Synod prohibited the use and distribution of books, brochures, magazines, and other materials that were written by 'atheists, communists, heretics, and sects' (Biserica și Școala 1936, 8).

[199] The Tudorists experienced trouble with the police throughout the entire interwar period due to the fact that they were neither prohibited nor legally recognized. They had to require permission from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to establish their meeting houses, while their authorizations to meet could be revoked without any warning (Clark 2017, 111). For example, one of Tudor Popescu's informative files contains a significant number of petitions that he addressed to the Police Commissioner in Bucharest in order to be offered permission to preach and organize conferences in various locations.

[200] The report calls it a book, even though it was a magazine.

[201] 'Adevărul Creștin' was a regular, bi-monthly magazine, established by Dumitru Cornilescu in 1921. It was very popular among Brethren and Adventist preachers who also bought and distributed it; due to this aspect, some of his Orthodox colleagues became suspicious of the fact that Cornilescu had embraced a Protestant belief (Clark 2017, 98). The publishing of the magazine was restricted for a while in 1941 (ACNSAS, D 015254, 218).

[202] Dorin Dobrincu notes that in the beginning the Tudorist community was extremely close to its initiators (Dobrincu 2018, 83). This might be due to the fact that at its inception the community lacked trained pastors and relied exclusively on written materials provided by Cornilescu and Popescu (Clark 2017, 111).

Music and singing, in general, play an important role in the construction and strengthening of religious and even national identities, and they also create a sense of group identity, community belonging and solidarity (Payerhin 2012, 8).[203] The fact that the songs that the Tudorist community sang had to reflect their new identity as born again believers was argued by Cornilescu himself when he began translating the songs that were meant to brighten up the regular Bible study meetings he organized for the young soldiers in Botoșani. By claiming that 'everything had to be new in their new lives, including the songs,' Cornilescu was reiterating the notion that music can serve as a means of agency for the individuals (Ploscariu 2021, 124), an avenue by which they can express themselves and their personal choices, including in matters of faith and, as it was pointed out by Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, music can become an action that carries with it social commitments and the potential to engender cultural and social change (Kielian-Gilbert 2011, 206), especially in times of crisis and turmoil. From the beginning, the hymns sung by Cornilescu's adherents managed to attract new members to a community that was not yet fully formed. These first songs that Cornilescu translated while at Ralu Callimachi's mansion in Stânceşti were not printed, but passed on 'from mouth to mouth,' and as the believers travelled, the songs travelled with them.

Music and singing, in general, can serve as instruments of resistance, sometimes in the true meaning of the word. Such was the case of a group of twenty-three members of the True Orthodox Church in Ukraine who were arrested in 1952.[204] During their arrest, as well as during their interrogations and while their photographs were being taken, they never stopped praying and singing religious hymns, forcing the police to restrain them (Vagramenko and Nicolescu 2021, 27).[205] David McDonald, who analyzed the Palestinian resistance songs, states that they 'engendered profound

[203] According to Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, music and songs have been important in the creation of social movements and collective identities (Eyerman and Jamison 1998, 7) as music making and singing, in general, engenders group bonding (Clark 2013, 252). Clark offers the example of the fascist legionary community that started to use songs rooted in folk tradition in order to communicate their ideology, but also to unite them as a group. Moreover, the songs that they were playing serve as an example that music can sometimes reflect the changes that occur in the society, in this case an increasing anti-Semitism that characterized interwar Romania (Clark 2013, 266).

[204] See Tatiana Vagramenko 'Resistance by Image: Arrest Photographs of True Orthodox believers'(http://hiddengalleries.eu/digitalarchive/s/en/item/443).

[205] Original and spruced-up copies of these images – which come from a recently opened criminal file retrieved from the former KGB archive in Kiev – have been displayed with the occasion of the exhibition organized by the Hidden Galleries Project in November 2019 at the Art Museum in Cluj-Napoca, Romania (Vagramenko and Nicolescu 2021, 25).

feelings of solidarity' within those who participated in the singing act (McDonald 2013, 197). He coined the concept of 'repertoires of resistance,' be they in the form of music, poetry, film, dance, a concept which, as highlighted by Ploscariu, can be applied to the music of the Romanian interwar neo-Protestant communities as it 'consciously challenged Romanian Orthodox social predominance, and ethnic, religious, and linguistic homogeneity' (Ploscariu 2021, 124).[206]

Music can also serve as an instrument that expresses the urgent need for change, be it cultural, social, political, or religious, because it reaches the largest masses (Povedák 2021, 6). As highlighted by Povedák in her analysis of the changes that occured in the popular hymnody and the devotional and liturgical practices in Hungary after the Second Vatican Council, the revolution of religious music is generally intertwined with the rising forms of various religious renewals and spiritual rebirth movements (Povedák 2021, 7), just as was the case in 1920s Romania. Through their songs, the Tudorists, along with the neo-Protestant communities and the homegrown religious movements, such as the Lord's Army, contributed to the creation of a new religious musical language by daring to defy the official Orthodoxy of the time (Payerhin 2012, 6).

Dumitru Cornilescu began translating Protestant hymns for the community from the moment he returned to Bucharest and joined Teodor Popescu at St. Stephen's Church.[207] By doing this he wanted to provide a way for the believers to publicly express their faith through song. The songs were collected together in a songbook that initially contained 47 hymns.[208] Distinguishing themselves from the austere and slow Orthodox pieces,[209] which mostly emphasized God's mercy, the songs collected by Cornilescu were more personal, focusing on the individual's relationship with Jesus Christ and on the security of eternal salvation (Clark 2017, 99). If the Byzantine music

[206] For more information about the performative power of music and the Romanian Evangelicals see Iemima Ploscariu (2021) 'A Dappled People: Jewish, Roma and Romanian Evangelicals Challenging Nationalism in Interwar Romania,' PhD Thesis, chapter 4.
[207] Măianu states that Cornilescu even composed some of these songs (Măianu 2021, 76).
[208] A police report that precedes Popescu's official defrocking mentions the fact that the choir sang two hymns, both of which are found in the songbook, namely 'Jesus Calls You' (song number 8) and 'Wait and think' (song number 5) (ACNSAS, D 015254, 13).
[209] To this we can add the fact that the Byzantine music of the Orthodox Church had 'deep roots in the spiritual life of the Romanian people' (Ploscariu 2021, 127). This highlights even more the fact that by translating these hymns Cornilescu was not only challenging Orthodoxy, but also its focus on national identity.

of the Orthodox Church was exclusively vocal (Teodorescu-Ciocănea and Crotty 2019, 53) Cornilescu introduced musical instruments when singing.[210]

The songbook included hymns such as C. Elliott's 'Just As I Am.' Initially published in 1836, the song represents a 'sound theological declaration about the inability of domestic good works to provide salvation' (Hodge 2013, 31). This was an obvious Protestant belief[211] and by translating it and including it in the first songbook of the community Cornilescu sent the message that he subscribed to the song's clear theological statement. Other songs included in the songbook were 'How Good It Is for Brethren,' composed by a German Lutheran by the name of Karl Friedrich Gottlob Wetzel,[212] and Philip Doddridge's 'O Happy Day,' written in 1775. According to Clark, Cornilescu replaced the Calvinist[213] overtones of Doddridge's hymn with Arminian ones, emphasizing the individual's choice to believe.[214] Moreover, Clark concludes that if by translating the Bible Cornilescu was not necessarily endorsing a Protestant belief, 'in publishing a hymnbook he was writing dogmatic confessions that people would reflect on every time they sang them' (Clark 2017, 100). In addition, by communally and publicly singing these songs, the Tudorist community was consciously making its presence seen and heard, thus exercising personal agency.

The publishing of songbooks by minority religious communities, such as the neo-Protestant ones, came as a natural response to the great demand for music in these congregations. In the beginning, the songs would be learnt by heart or written down in their personal notebooks by various preachers who, returning to their communities, attempted to teach them the songs that they had learnt. It was not rare for them to forget parts of the songs, which resulted in different congregations learning different

[210] In the beginning the songs were accompanied by piano or organ (Cuculea 2000, vol. 1, 30) as Cornilescu could play both of them. After he left the country, the community stopped using any instruments when singing. The community also keeps the memory of an event that made Popescu decide to give up on the organ: 'after the sermon, a sister came to Teodor Popescu and said to him: brother Popescu, the organ sounded so nicely today' (Cuculea 2000, vol. 1, 143). Apparently Popescu considered that this was a problem as the instrument was distracting the attention from the words of the songs and decided not to allow the use of any musical instruments while the community was singing together.

[211] Stavrescu claims that the songs were copied from the Baptist and Adventist communities (Stavrescu 1932, 9).

[212] This song was translated by the renowned Romanian poet Iacob Negruzzi.

[213] Calvinism places strong emphasis on predestination and the sovereignty of God, including in the individual's salvation. Arminianism, on the other hand, emphasizes the human free will and the individual's personal choice to believe.

[214] Gala Galaction called Teodor Popescu a 'Calvinist' due to the fact that he preached about the eternal security of salvation which is, indeed, one of the five points of Calvinism, expressed by Calvin as 'perseverance of the saints.'

versions of the same song (Ploscariu 2021, 130). This situation lasted until 1895 when Gheorghe Șimonca edited the first Romanian Baptist songbook called 'Cântările Sionului' (Songs of Zion) which brought together 200 songs (Popovici 2007, 195-196). The Romanian Pentecostals also had their first songbook, 'Harfa Bisericii lui Dumnezeu' (Harp of God's Church), in 1924; it was published in Detroit by the Pentecostal Church of God and brought to Romania by Pavel Budean, a Pentecostal believer and a Romanian immigrant to the United States.[215] The Brethren published 'Cântările Betaniei' (Songs of Bethany), which contained 147 songs, in 1938 (Ploscariu 2021, 133). The publishing of songbooks was meant to bring about more cohesion and to facilitate congregational singing. During communism, when the publishing of religious songbooks was forbidden, communities returned to writing them down in personal notebooks (Kis-Juhász and Teodorescu 2018, 738).[216] An interesting phenomenon that appeared during this period of time was that music enabled the crossing of denominational boundaries; thus, Ploscariu notes that 'among themselves, Romanian evangelical churches shared over sixty percent of the same translated or original hymns,[217] with slight lyrical or musical variations' (Ploscariu 2021, 135).[218]

Even though 'Cântări creștinești' initially contained 47 songs, the songbook became more and more voluminous as new songs were being added to it. The songbook that the unknown – possible – informer of Popescu purchased in 1927 was not the same version that was confiscated by the gendarmes from the two believers in 1938. By the end of the 1920s, the book already contained 118 (Azimioară 1988, 58) or 119 (Cuculea 2000, vol.1, 124) hymns collected by Dumitru Cornilescu.[219] After 1939, when the Tudorists joined the Evangelical Christians, a new version of the songbook was published; this one contained 287 songs. Even though I am not certain

[215] Ciprian Bălăban states that the songbook was first published in Romania in 1930 (Bălăban 2016, 114).
[216] Such was the case of B.N. whom I will discuss in chapter six.
[217] I analysed a copy of the 1968 version of the Baptist songbook 'Cântările Evangheliei' (Songs of the Gospel) and realized that it contains 23 of the 47 songs that Cornilescu included in the first songbook of the Tudorist community. In some cases, the lyrics are translated differently.
[218] Neo-Protestant communities, for example, started to borrow the poems and songs written by Traian Dorz and Nicolae Moldoveanu of the Lord's Army and incorporate them in their songbooks. Arrested and imprisoned for conducting 'religious propaganda,' both Dorz and Moldoveanu continued to write despite the persecution they endured. Nowadays the songs and poems that they wrote during imprisonment are highly valued by the neo-Protestant communities.
[219] Even though he left the country in 1923, Cornilescu was up to date with what was happening with the community and continued to be involved in its organization.

of the year when it was published, it must have happened sometime between 1939[220] and 1942.[221] Azimioară mentions that during the second World War, Emil Constantinescu composed 'the last songs that completed the songbook' (Azimioară 1988, 101).[222] He was referring to the so-called 'songbook with 300 songs' (Constantinescu and Miu Jr. 2013, 90) which became the primary songbook of the community for a while. This version also included songs composed by Traian Dorz and Nicolae Moldoveanu of 'The Lord's Army' (Cuculea 2000, 125). In 1991 there was a new version published which contained 400 songs and I believe that some time between 1998[223] and 2000 a version that contained 450 songs was printed (Cuculea 2000, 125). This is, by and large, the evolution of the 'Cântări creștinești' songbook. The maturing of the community is not only reflected in the thickness of its songbooks, but also in their internal organization; therefore, while the first version used a simple alphabetical method, which is often the case with newly formed churches (Tucker 2001, 194), the later versions contain a more complex conceptual scheme, the songs being arranged both by topic and in alphabetical order.

Conclusion

The Tudorist community is nowadays a rather small community with approximately 227[224] meeting houses all over Romania. Even though many books and articles have been written about Dumitru Cornilescu and Teodor Popescu, whom some call the 'Martin Luther' of Romania,[225] the materials that the community produced, such as the 'Cântări creștinești' songbook, have been largely ignored by scholars, the majority

[220] The cover page mentions the fact that the Tudorists were part of the Evangelical Christians Association.

[221] A copy of the songbook sold by a well-known Romanian antique shop has written on its front cover the year 1942 and the name of its former owner, meaning that the individual came in possession of the book before or in 1942 (https://www.anticariat-unu.ro/287-cantari-crestinesti-fara-note-muzicale-editie-noua-p56235).

[222] Azimioară wrote the book in 1988. The latest version of the songbook contains more than 300 songs.

[223] In the biography Nae Ionescu, a Tudorist believer from Târgoviște – not to be confused with the famous interwar philosopher – Valeriu Ionescu mentions that in 1998, shortly before his father's death, they sang together some hymns from the songbook (Ionescu 2007, 276). The order of the songs was identical to the 1991 version. This, however, does not exclude the fact that they might have used an older version of the songbook despite there being a newer one.

[224] According to the official website of the community (http://www.ber.ro/biserici.php).

[225] Emanuel Conțac disagrees with this comparison considering it rather exaggerated, even though it is largely used and preferred by many members of the Tudorist community (see https://vaisamar.wordpress.com/2010/11/14/t-popescu-un-luther-romanesc/, accessed on 12 October 2021).

of whom focus on Dumitru Cornilescu's translation of the Bible[226] and build the history of the community around this specific story. What I suggest here and have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter is that by looking at one of the first creations of the community, namely the songbook, one can understand how the community came to construct and strengthen, in time, its religious identity by challenging the official Orthodoxy of the time. Having religious revival as its main objective, the community translated and produced through some of its members, such as Dumitru Cornilescu and Emil Constantinescu, a series of hymns that were simple and melodic which meant that they could be easily memorized and spread. By translating these songs they were also translating new religious ideas that were intended to fill in a deep spiritual need, while creating, at the same time, a common set of beliefs and a shared religious vocabulary.

Even though the Tudorists are nowadays a rather secluded religious movement, they were once an active and visible community, as proven by numerous police reports and complaints that fill secret police files that mention proselytizing activities. Their presence was also made known through their singing, which was sometimes performed in public, allowing for their message to be heard. The songs produced by the community were intended to make a difference; they served as a means of crossing or even breaking different social and ethnic barriers, especially as there are a number of reports that mention the fact that Teodor Popescu's conferences were attended by both wealthy and poor people, as well as by intellectual and uneducated, simple people alike.

Materials such as the Tudorist songbook constitute a different legacy of the secret police archives. They exist in the archives and wait to be discovered in order to resonate again, and tell other stories, or to give people the chance to tell their stories. Even though I was not aware of its importance, the value of the songbook became apparent once there was someone who could recognize it. These materials do not belong to the past, even though they exist in files that have been forgotten by time; they challenge, disrupt, provoke conversation, and testify of the violence of the regime that wanted to destroy them but unintentionally ensured their survival. Brought back

[226] Especially in 2021, which marked 100 years since the first version of Cornilescu's translation of the Bible was published.

to light, the songbook allows the Tudorist community to re-evaluate its history and to recall and make visible shared beliefs, values and attitudes.

During my ethnographic research I presented or spoke about this songbook with all members of the community that I had the opportunity to interview. One of them was extremely pleased to learn that a copy of the songbook still existed, albeit in the secret police archives: 'I am thinking of opening a Dumitru Cornilescu museum,' he said to me 'and this information is extremely valuable.'[227] In 2019 I mentioned the songbook again while interviewing a Tudorist believer from Târgoviște. He wanted to see it and while he was browsing it I heard him mumble something about how today the songs are not in the same order. He then smiled widely and said 'but today we have more than 400 songs. Can you believe it?'[228]

[227] This statement belongs to Mr. Daniel Cuculea, whom I interviewed twice in the spring of 2019. He mentioned the Dumitru Cornilescu museum during an interview that I conducted on March 1st 2019.
[228] I conducted this interview on 26 October 2019.

Chapter Five: The Mugshot of Glicherie Tănase as Devotional Image

Introduction

The 1950s represent a period of time when the anti-religious propaganda was at its peak. It was, however, during this intensely repressive time that religious objects that were being produced and circulated in different places, such as pilgrimage sites, changed from being simply religious souvenirs or objects of devotion into ideologically and politically dangerous materials. One such case was the so-called 'photo-cross,' a pilgrimage card that praised the founding of the Orthodox nunnery of Vladimirești (Hanganu 2005, 160). The individual who contributed to the production and distribution of the postcard that displays 'small photographs of the nunnery of Vladimirești, arranged in the shape of a cross and surrounded by several religious images' (Hanganu 2005, 157) was I.R. It seems that he manually produced this collage in 1952 and, as a result, he was arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison. As Gabriel Hanganu states, 'this visual object emerged as an embodiment of the relationship between the political and religious spheres that entered into collision as soon as the communists seized political power in Romania' (Hanganu 2005, 157). I.R.'s arrest shows that by the time it was produced, the 'photo-cross' became an object that had the status of an enemy in face of the regime, and most probably the simple possession of a photocopy could have been dangerous for its owner.[229] Instead of putting an end to his activities, after he was released from prison, I.R. continued to produce various religious images, which he displayed in a domestic shrine where he allowed others to see them as well.

In June of that same year when I.R. produced the 'photo-cross,' just a few months after the arrest of 13 Old Calendarist leaders, among whom was Glicherie Tănase, the Securitate noticed a strange activity among the believers in Neamț county and Slătioara Monastery, Suceava county. With respect to this activity the culprit seemed to be a young monk by the name of Onofrei V. Onofrei. Born in 1924 in Rădășeni,[230] Suceava county, Onofrei was the secretary of the 'Associaton of the

[229]As Hanganu highlights, 'the alteration of the status of one copy affects all existing and subsequent generations of copies' (Hanganu 2005, 162).

[230] The Old Calendarist church in Rădășeni marks the place where Glicherie Tănase was attacked by the gendarmes in approximately 1934 and wounded one of his legs while trying to slip through a fence. He would remain with a limp for the rest of his life. Today, on the place where he made his wound the

Orthodox Christians' in Târgu Neamț (Asociația Creștinilor Pravoslavnici). Active and extremely determined to learn where his brothers in faith had been taken to, Onofrei set about finding a way to encourage the Old Calendarist community in the process. Thus, what the Securitate would discover once they investigated the issue was that the young Onofrei had come up with a creative way of reminding the community of its imprisoned spiritual leader, transforming his absence into a very tangible presence by the means of a postcard that was meant to serve as a devotional image, or even as an icon. The postcard, however, was not entirely produced by him, but was simply an old mugshot of Glicherie Tănase whose significance Onofrei attempted to shift from a symbol of criminality and imprisonment to one of suffering, hope, and continuity.

By 1952 the Old Calendarist community had divided into two major factions: the Traditionalist Christian Denomination, led by Ion Movileanu, which had its headquarters in Putna county[231] and the Religious Associations of Eastern Traditionalist Christians, that in 1948 changed its name to Eastern Orthodox Christian Denomination from Târgu Neamț, led by Gheorghe Iacobaș and having Glicherie Tănase as its spiritual leader.[232] The present chapter deals with events that took place within this second group.[233] In the summer of 1947 a number of Old Calendarist monks began submitting petitions in which they asked the Ministry to approve the building of a prayer house (ANIC, IRJ, D 219/1946-1947, vol.1, 88) on land donated to them by 'some believers from around Slătioara' (Sfântul Ierarh Glicherie Mărturisitorul 2012, 164). The Ministry allowed its construction and Slătioara Monastery soon became the most important religious centre of the community led by Tănase. In 1948, however, the Law on Religious Denominations did not offer recognition to any of the

contemporary community has built a so-called 'feast house' (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeHo6hG7m4c, accessed on 2 September 2021).

[231] The Ministry of Arts and Religious Affairs offered a temporary recognition to this religious group (Petre Mureșan 2012, 67).

[232] The Ministry of Religious Affairs recognized it in 1947 (Petre Mureșan 2012, 68).

[233] Radu Petre Mureșan claims that there was a strong rivalry between the two factions, each one attempting to attract state institutions on their side. Ion Movileanu, the leader of the Putna group, considered the second one a dissidence, a group that broke away from the Old Calendarist church altogether (Petre Mureșan 2012, 68). The conflict between the two factions is not the object of the current chapter, but it is worth mentioning the fact that the community was struggling with internal problems. This makes Onofrei's efforts to prompt the community to remember its spiritual leader even more significant.

two Old Calendarist factions (Petre Mureșan 2012, 71), thus forcing them underground.

After the Second World War, Glicherie Tănase attempted to create a hierarchy within the Old Calendarist Church. To this end, in 1947 a delegation of Old Calendarists from Slătioara Monastery contacted Galaction Cordun, the secretary of the Holy Synod (Bichir 2012, 66) and former confessor of the royal family,[234] who was on the verge of retirement, in order to ask him to become the Metropolitan of the Old Calendarists. After much negotiation, in April 1955 Cordun made public his intention to become the 'Primate[235] of the Eastern Traditionalist Orthodox Church' (Bichir 2012, 66). During the following months, he secretly ordained Glicherie Tănase a bishop,[236] as well as archimandrite Evloghie Oța[237] and Meftodie Marinache (Bichir 2012, 67), thus creating a church hierarchy within the faction led by Tănase.[238] All of these actions, however, were carried out clandestinely; for this reason, this period of time was marked by numerous and repeated arrests of the leaders of the Old Calendarist community. It was following one of these arrests that the community contributed to the creative 'production' and distribution of an item that stands as proof that the community made use of a tool of state security meant to incriminate, namely a mugshot, in order to motivate and ensure the community's continuation.

The chapter brings forward the creative strategies of the Old Calendarist community that even though it had never produced images of its religious leaders during the interwar or the communist period,[239]it made use of a photograph produced by the secret police by converting it into a postcard, which in turn became, I argue, an

[234] My thanks to Anca Șincan for putting me in contact with Florian Bichir. My thanks to Florian Bichir for sending me a copy of his PhD thesis.
[235] A leader, a bishop who has precedence in a province, a group of provinces or a nation (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/primate, accessed 20 December 2021).
[236] In August 1955 Cordun and Tănase were arrested and they were both placed under house arrest. Cordun was sent to Cernica Monastery, situated close to Bucharest, and Tănase was sent to the village of Răchitoasa in Bărăgan Plain (Petre Mureșan 2012, 93). Cordun passed away in 1959, soon after he escaped detention, mainly due to the his failing health.
[237] For more information about Evloghie Oța see Anca Șincan, 'Bishop Evloghie and His Prayer Beads,' 'The Typewriter,' 'Underground Monastery in Bucharest' published in Kapaló and Vagramenko (2020), 'Hidden Galleries. Material Religion in the Secret Police Archives in Central and Eastern Europe,' as well as her article 'Ethical Questions in Researching the Religious Underground in Romania's Secret Police Archives' published in two parts (accessed on 20 December 2021).
[238] This enraged Ion Movileanu who opposed the creation of a 'confusing Cordun hierarcy' within the church (Petre Mureșan 2012, 92).
[239] Such as the underground Greek Catholic community (see Șincan 2020, 'Postcards of Martyr Bishops'), or the Archangelist movement (see Kapaló 2020, 'The Archangel Michael Looked Just Like Me').

icon-style image, not necessarily because of its status, but because of the person it displayed. The confiscation by the Securitate of the mugshot-postcard created an interesting situation in which the secret police seized something it had created itself, albeit under the name of the Siguranța and under a different regime,[240] because it considered it dangerous in the hands of the community. In order for it to be prompted to do so, the Securitate had to recognize the shifting status of the mugshot once liberated from the confines of the file[241] and, ironically, it went on to place it in another secret police file. Revealed in a new context and a new time, these images now serve to vindicate (Kapaló 2019, 98). The chapter will focus on aspects such as police photography, icons and devotional materials, as well as on notions such as absence and presence and the relationship between the two. For the purposes of this chapter, I have consulted archival documents in both the Romanian National Archives and The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives and conducted interviews with members of the Old Calendarist community. Of extreme importance for the present study is a handwritten notebook given to me – in a digital form – by Father Ghelasie of 'Adormirea Maicii Domnului' Monastery in Bucharest (The Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery). Written by members of Păstrăvanu family who were close to Tănase,[242] the notebook contains stories about the miracles that the latter is said to have performed in his lifetime. The chapter also makes use of the interviews conducted by Andrei and Mihai Neguș with members of the Old Calendarist community and published on their Youtube page.[243]

What We Learn From the File(s)

In March 1952, approximately one month after a series of Old Calendarist leaders had been arrested,[244] Onofrei V. Onofrei summoned a meeting at Slătioara Monastery with several members from other Old Calendarist churches without any prior approval from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (ACNSAS, P 0068482, 8). The meeting

[240] As discussed in the first chapter of the thesis, the communist-era Securitate was not the creation of the communist state, but it rather inherited the methods, the logistics, and even some of the personnel of several interwar intelligence services.
[241] I am not certain if these mugshots were taken from a specific file, but I presume that is the case.
[242] Nicolae Păstrăvanu was among the 13 leaders that were arrested in 1952.
[243] Two Old Calendarist brothers whom I also interviewed in June 2019.
[244] The names of the arrested were: Glicherie Tănase, Hugeanu Dumitru, Marinache Neculai, Horia Gavrilă. Herta Teodor, Veniamin Irina, Cocos Constantin, David Dumitru, Nil Grip, Păstrăvanu Neculai, all of whom were monks at Slătioara Monastery, and Moșneagu Gheorghe – the then president of the faction, replacing Gheorghe Iacobaș – Urzică Alexandru and Nichifor Neculai (ACNSAS, P 0024181, vol.1, 4).

concluded with the organization of a commitee whose purpose was that of ensuring a continuation of the community in the absence of its leaders. We learn that Onofrei was considered dangerous because he had managed to convert a series of individuals from Suceava and Bacău to the Old Calendarist belief (ACNSAS, P 0022247, 1), and also that he had 'various mystical-religious ways of manifesting himself against the regime' (ACNSAS, P 0022247, 1). In April, Onofrei attempted to travel to Suceava Penitentiary in order to find more information about Glicherie Tănase and to 'let him know that the community had reorganized itself' (ACNSAS, P 0068482, 10). In June, Onofrei had smuggled with the help of a Militiaman from Târgu Neamț two mugshots of Glicherie Tănase (Figure 5.1 and 5.2). These photos had been in the archives of the Târgu Neamț police since approximately 1936, when he was arrested after the numerous confrontations between the Old Calendarists and the gendarmes that took place in Neamț county (ACNSAS, P 0022247, 2). He later made copies of these mugshots at a photo studio in Târgu Neamț; he kept 8 copies for himself, gave 25 copies to a certain Paslaru Maria from Oglinzi village, and 10 more copies were given to monk Alexandru Alexandrut from Slătioara Monastery (ACNSAS, P 0022247, 5). A police informer would later report that he had met Onofrei on June 3rd and the latter showed him the copies of Glicherie's mugshots (ACNSAS, P 0022247, 5). After the investigation, the Securitate draws the conclusion that the young monk had made a total of 45 copies of these photos with the sole purpose of distributing them among Old Calendarist believers so that they would not lose their faith and remember their spiritual leader, Glicherie Tănase (ACNSAS, P 0022247, 5). Out of all the copies, the police managed to confiscate only four; all of them were attached to Onofrei's penal files after his arrest in July 1952.

Following his arrest, the Securitate began an investigation intended to track the photocopies and collect them from where they have been distributed. It soon came to the conclusion that they had spread quite quickly among members of the community some of whom, in their turn, began making copies of the mugshot, as declared by a worker at the photo studio:

> On June 8, around six o'clock in the afternooon, Onofrei came to my studio and asked me if I can place the two mugshots on the same postcard. We did not agree on a price, and he came back the next day. He ordered eight copies and I made them, and Onofrei picked them up. I made 25 more copies for a

> woman whose name I do not know, and then I made two more for the same person […] I then made ten more copies for a monk who said his name was Alexandru Alexandrut and that he came from Slătioara Monastery. I have to mention the fact that the photo that Onofrei had shown to me was made with a large camera and it was a mugshot (ACNSAS, P 0022247, 19).



Figure 5.1 and Figure 5.2 The mugshot postcards of Glicherie Tănase that were confiscated from Onofrei V. Onofrei. © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), P 022247.

After his arrest, however, the Securitate changed the story with regards to who actually got hold of the mugshots from the Militiaman in Târgu Neamț. In a declaration written in October 1952, it was stated that it was a woman by the name of Axente Elena who had obtained them from another woman whose name remains unknown (ACNSAS, P 0022247, 30). This information came from Onofrei's personal declaration given during an interrogation (ACNSAS, P 0068482, 12). The Securitate began an investigation the main purpose of which was the retrieval of the distributed mugshots.

We know today that they did not manage to trace them all and copies of the postcard remained in the community.[245]

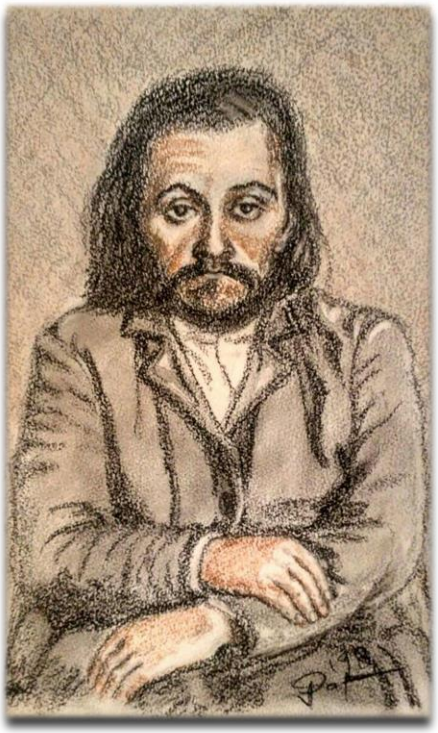


Figure 5.3 A sketch of the mugshot made by someone from the contemporary community. Source: The Facebook group 'Imagini de arhiva ale Bisericii Ortodoxe de stil vechi.'

Disciplining the Body

The modern police file emerged in the late nineteenth century as an interaction between numbers, photographic images and words. This interaction was especially important as each of these mediums had individually failed to respond to an urgent challenge of the police, namely that of identifying a repeat criminal (Vățulescu 2020, 799). This method was put forward by Alphonse Bertillon, a French criminologist of the late nineteenth century, and it combined anthropometric measurements of the body, a spoken portrait, as well as a mugshot, and a record of unusual characteristics, such as tattoos, scars, or a peculiar accent[246] (Vățulescu 2020, 800). By the end of the

[245] One copy can be found in 'Viața Sfântului Glicherie' (The Life of Saint Glicherie) on page 140. I was also given a copy of it together with other photos by Father Ghelasie. There have also been attempts to reproduce it, as a sketch, by someone from the contemporary community (Figure 5.3).
[246] According to Cesare Lombroso, an Italian criminologist of the nineteenth century, the number of 'signs' of criminality, in the form of tattoos, bodily anomalies, and so on, that a person displayed was

nineteenth century this system was adopted by Russia, the U.S., Argentina, and even Tunisia, as Bertillon would claim in 1895 (Vățulescu 2020, 800, note 9). The mugshot, which had a two-shot form, namely a full frontal facial view paired with a view from the side, came to be percieved as an objective and accurate representation of the criminal. For this reason, Jonathan Finn claims that some criminals opposed being photographed by twisting and turning, or changing their facial expressions (Finn 2009, 2).

In Glicherie Tănase's case, this mugshot was taken shortly after his arrest in Piatra Neamț, in 1936 (see chapter 3). Even though it is taken out of the context of the file, it presents an unkempt individual, wearing dirty civilian clothes and a long and dishevelled hair and beard. Glicherie appears stripped of personal agency and dignity.[247] Moreover, his right hand seems to be more swollen than the left one, suggesting a possible fight with the gendarmes, or an older injury. In the words of John Tagg, this type of mugshot represents more than just a picture of a supposed criminal:

> It is the body made object; divided and studied; enclosed in a cellular structure of space whose architecture is the file-index; made docile and forced to yield up its truth; separated and individuated; subjected and made subject. When accumulated, such images amount to a new representation of society (Tagg 1988, 76).

The central role of photography's use in police records was to bring more individuals and their bodies under the state's surveillance, and to be photographed meant becoming a subject of the state (Finn 2009, 29). This 'de-contextualization of the

related to the severity of the case, suggesting that certain individuals were biologically predisposed to commit a crime (Finn 2009, 15).

[247] A photo of him taken with the occasion of the 1936 arrest was also published in the newspaper 'Universul' (The Universe) (see Universul, 17 September, 1936). Another newspaper article, published in 'Naționalul Nou' (The New National) attempts to offer a description of his appeareance: 'Followed by a gendarme, the stilist bishop, dressed in a white coarse-stuff peasant coat, with long combed hair, walked slowly wearing a pair of heavy and lace free boots' (ACNSAS, D 006880, 250). On the community's Facebook page, 'Imagini de arhivă ale Bisericii Ortodoxe de stil vechi' (Archival Images Belonging to the Old Style Orthodox Church) someone commented the following on a photo of the mugshot: 'When they left from Buhalnița to Bodești in order to sanctify the church in there the saint was caught by the gendarmes and in the famous mugshot taken after he was arrested in Piatra Neamț he was wearing the coat of Elisabeta Vrajitoru.' Buhalnița is a town in Neamț county; the comment also mentions the fact that Elisabeta Vrajitoru and her husband, Gheorghe Vrajitoru were close to Tănase and were present when he was arrested in Piatra Neamț. It seems that Tănase was indeed wearing women's clothes when he was arrested in 1936.

body,' as Tatiana Vagramenko calls it, was meant to re-cast religious dissidents, such as Glicherie Tănase, as criminals (Vagramenko 2022, Article in print).[248] As stated by Finn, 'the police mugshot has become an icon in contemporary visual culture. The pose, framing, and formal conventions of the image are easily recognized throughout the general public. It is an image that is taken to indicate criminality' (Finn 2009, 1).

In his study of visual materials from the secret police archives in Hungary, Romania, and Moldova, James Kapaló also talks about the mugshot, a category of police photography that he calls 'photographs of arrested individuals' (Kapaló 2019, 96). The other types of photographs produced by the police that he identifies are: crime scene photographs, photographs taken during surveillance operations, re-stagings of religious rituals and religious gatherings, and confiscated photographs – of religious leaders or of members of religious communities (Kapaló 2019, 91-104). In the present case, I argue, we are dealing with a photograph whose significance is double-layered: one that was produced as a mugshot by the secret police, and it was later confiscated by the same institution due to the fact that in the hands of the members of the Old Calendarist community it had become, from the regime's perspective, a dangerous devotional material, an icon-style image of their spiritual leader who was absent, and yet present, at the same time.

When Absence Turns Into Presence: the Making of an Icon

Absence is made present through objects, images, texts, or thoughts, memories and, through various practices, absence has agency. According to Severin Fowles, absences prompt people into action and have their material consequences and effects on the world (Fowles 2010, 25-28). Even though it is defined as the state of not existing, absence has spatiality, it has materiality, and it has agency (Meyer and Woodthorpe 2008, 132),[249] meaning that it acts, or does something, or it prompts individuals to act in a certain way. Absence also leaves a marker, an idea that was first developed by Derrida in 'Of Grammatology.' He believed that absence always leaves a trace, that nothing can be truly absent (Baker 2017). Absence comes in various forms: pain, deceased people, destroyed buildings, silences and all of these absences can have effects on people's lives because they matter. Sometimes, they are even turned into matter in the form of objects, texts, pictures and so on (Meyer 2012, 103). Absence is

[248] Accessed at http://hdl.handle.net/10468/11254 on August 26 2021.
[249] https://www.socresonline.org.uk/13/5/1.html (Accessed on March 12 2021).

also something we often engage with, something we do something to. For example, Hastrup talks about the so-called scarred objects which are defined as missing, broken or unfinished artefacts which are both absent and present (Hastrup 2010, 107). They served as common materializations of loss and function as a means for the victims or survivors of traumas to reclaim their everyday life in the aftermath of the disaster (Meyer 2012, 105). Some absences can cause pain or regret, especially if they are 'desired things in one's mind, but not in one's grasp' (Fowles and Heupel 2013, 189). Even though strictly speaking absence is a thing without matter, it is remembered and evoked through materialities. Even though absence escapes, and it can only be impermanently contained in certain places, it is within these places and through the traces that it leaves behind that absence truly comes to matter.

Celia Lury defines images as 'absent presences' (Bartmánski 2012, 4). They live from the absence of the body that they depict, an absence that can be temporary or, in the case of death, final. The absence does not make the absent body return, but it replaces it with a different kind of presence (Belting 2005, 312). Onofrei made 45 copies of the mugshot in an attempt to encourage the community to remember their imprisoned spiritual leader who, even though was physically absent, was still alive. He went on to distribute 25 of these images to the monks of Slătioara Monastery and to other Old Calendarist members. Onofrei chose to use an old mugshot which he[250] obtained with great effort in order to remind the community that the monk had been absent before, but he was set free. The photo, which was turned into a postcard, was a symbol of the fact that he had been imprisoned before, and survived, he managed to overcome the hardships of imprisonment and he was able to do it again. He was alive and the community had to hope for his return.

Archival documents mention the fact that Onofrei wanted to get hold of the mugshots of other arrested members (ACNSAS, P 0068482, 20). It is not clear if he wanted to reproduce them for the same reason. He decided to make copies of the mugshots because 'he wanted to show his brothers that father Glicherie is still alive and we will have him among us very soon' (ACNSAS, P 0068482, 20). His intention was to mark the absence of father Glicherie Tănase with a physical presence in the form of a photograph, and not just any photograph, but a mugshot.

[250] Or someone else, the story of who came first in the possession of these images is not very clear.

A symbol of criminality and imprisonment, the mugshot becomes, in this case, the symbol of freedom, hope, suffering and the injustice of the regime. Even though he was absent, the postcards could work to powerfully evoke his presence. These postcards were meant to serve as mementos[251] and, even though the police managed to confiscate some of them, the community still has copies of them to this day, holding true to Onofrei's intentions. The photo of their absent leader was meant to remind them of the sufferings the community has endured and to inspire a communal sense of continuity. Father Glicherie was absent, but still present, just as he has always been. The photo, thus, became similar to an icon, as it had material force, but also symbolic power.



Figure 5.4 Postcard of the Old Calendarist community in Albineț, Bessarabia. © Arhivele Naționale ale României (ANIC), Inspectoratul General al Jandarmeriei, D 25/ 1935.

[251] This was not the first time the community had chosen to use a postcard as a means to encourage its members, or even to draw attention to itself, as a community. One such an example comes from the Old Calendarist community in Albineț, Bessarabia (Figure 5.4). It seems that some time during the 1930s the church in Albineț had produced a postcard that was distributed among the Old Calendarist believers in the region, most probably in order to bring encouragement and reassurance in times of severe persecution (ANIC, IGJ, D 25/1935).

The icon is central to Eastern Orthodox theology and is generally understood as the sign of the divine presence in the world. Its purpose is to remind the individual of their relationship with God (McGuckin 2011, 330). Birgit Meyer defines it as 'the artifact that is physically present, and also conveys the presence of what it depicts and what is not present in the same way as its own physicality' (Meyer 2016, 234). It is a religious image, a 'visual lesson […] a window through which the living and a saint could see one another' (Weaver 2011, 396). An icon expresses the spiritual struggle for the world of the one it depicts, as well as the fulfillment of that struggle (McGuckin 2011, 335), and it belongs to a 'visual paradigm of seeing into being,' where the 'seeing' influences the reality the individual lives in, as well as the person they become (Kivelson and Neuberger cited in Luehrmann 2016, 238). In her research on the impact of post-Soviet religious change on the practice of Russian Orthodoxy, Dorothy Weaver noticed the important role of the icons in her informants' experiences (Weaver 2011, 396). Moreover, at times they seemed to be discursively the same as the saints or divine figures they depicted, figuring both as symbols, but also as agents (Weaver 2011, 397). The mugshot become postcard of Glicherie Tănase functions as one such agent because it 'causes events to happen' (Gell 1998, 16) or is intended to do so; not only was it meant to mark the absence of father Tănase with a physical presence, it was also supposed to inspire a communal sense of continuity. Its quick distribution, as well as the prompt reaction that the news of its existence generated from the part of the Securitate suggests the fact that it had the potential to cause even more things to happen.

The etymology of the word 'icon' presents two senses, an archaic one, referring to an image or a totem, and a broader one, which became more popular during the nineteenth century (Prestholdt 2019, 9) and it refers to any image, thing, phenomenon, or personality that is 'widely recognizable, and provocative of powerful emotions' (Mitchell 2011, xvii). These so-called secular icons are considered images that have an extraordinary symbolic power and are carriers of collective emotions and meanings (Binder 2011, 101). In his study of how images become icons, Martin Kemp defines an iconic image as:

> […] one that has achieved wholly exceptional levels of widespread recognizability and has come to carry a rich series of varied associations for very large numbers of people across time and cultures, such that it has to a

> greater or lesser degree transgressed the parameters of its initial making, function, context, and meaning (Kemp 2012, 3).

David Morgan critiques this definition by claiming that many images meet these criteria and do not gain an iconic status (Morgan 2013, 121). He questions what an icon does that an image does not and builds a definition of the icon based on the Orthodox notion of the term. Thus, an icon is, according to Morgan, 'an image that promises viewers more than itself. An icon is an image that offers contact with the reality it pictures' (Morgan 2013, 121). Moreover, icons exceed the intentions of their makers and their reception is what truly makes them the object of devotion: 'icons are not what painters or photographers produce, but what devotees behold because what they really want is what they believe an icon promises to give them' (Morgan 2013, 122). Building on this definition, the postcard of Glicherie Tănase was meant to function as a memento of his spiritual leadership, as well as a catalyst for unity and continuation, even though the mugshot was not initially created with this purpose in mind. Only after this change of status from a symbol of criminality to one of hope did it earn a devotional character. Moreover, the quick reproduction of the image did not diminish its importance, but it actually enhanced it.

Orthodoxy emphasizes the fact that icons are devotional objects that convey 'spiritual energies between the visible humans and the invisible divine characters' (Hanganu 2005, 164). In order for the icon to be appreciated and experienced as an icon there is 'need for an object that conveys an absent presence,' a willingness to see that specific object as an icon (Meyer 2016, 234) and it has to also be venerated by the devotees (Hanganu 2005, 164), What I argue in this part of my chapter, however, is the fact that even though there is no proof that the image of Glicherie Tănase had ever generated such reactions on the part of its receivers, nor does it display the classic characteristics of an icon, there are a number of instances that suggest the fact that the community was already regarding Tănase as a saint, a 'living icon' and a miracle maker by 1952, when the arrest that prompted the distribution of this postcard occurred. For this reason and for the fact that the image was meant to have a strong symbolic power I argue that it became an object invested with a strong devotional character, similar to that of an icon. The image of Glicherie Tănase points back to the individual it signifies (Ruffle 2017, 333) and, as I will later show, Tănase himself was considered a 'living icon.' The image, thus, turns into an iconic presence which

maintains the absence of the body, but it replaces it with a visible absence (Belting 2005, 312). Even though we have no written proof of it performing miracles, or causing the reverence of its receivers, the postcard was created with the expectation to perform some kind of a miracle, namely to ensure the survival and continuation of a troubled and clandestine religious community, as well as to generate the hope that their imprisoned spiritual leader would return.

The stories that surround the figure of Tănase were dominated by the spectacular and the miraculous as early as the community's inception. In fact, it was these stories that conferred him legitimacy among the believers despite the status of a defrocked, vagabond priest that was put on him by the Orthodox clergy and the state (see chapter 3). The community had kept the memories of some of his supposed miracles written down in a notebook.[252] These stories have been recorded due to the fact that Glicherie's sanctification in 1999 was followed by rumours that contested his legitimacy as a saint.[253] For this reason, the grandchildren of priest Nicolae Păstrăvanu gathered and wrote down the stories that their father and grandfather had told them in order to prove that Glicherie Tănase had indeed done miraculous things and was worthy of veneration ('Sfântul Glicherie Mărturisitorul' Manuscript).[254]

To begin with, the role of Glicherie within the community seems to have been divinely predetermined. Even though he had initially left the country and settled at Mount Athos after the change of the calendar in 1924 with an expressed intention to remain there for the rest of his life, Tănase returned to Romania after a vision experienced by both the Patriarch of Jerusalem and the Metropolitan of the Holy Mountain during a church service. The vision, claimed the two, was urging Glicherie to go back to Romania because through him God would keep a seed of the true faith in the country (Manuscript). From the begining we see that his actions are justified, even dictated, by a divine purpose. This marks the inception of a hagiographical

[252] My thanks to father Ghelasie of 'Adormirea Maicii Domnului' Monastery in Bucharest (The Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery) for giving me a digital copy of this notebook, as well as other materials on the part of the Old Calendarist community. Some stories included in this manuscript also appear in Glicherie Tănase's hagiography, 'Sfântul Ierarh Glicherie Mărturisitorul. O viață pentru Hristos. Viața, pătimirile și minunile Sfântului Ierarh Glicherie Mărturisitorul.' Howver, they seem to be told in a different order, meaning that the handwritten manuscript records certain events as if they had happened during the interwar period, while the hagiography makes it seem as if the same events happened later in the life of Glicherie.

[253] Some of these rumours were most probably generated by the Romanian Orthodox Church.

[254] From now on referred to as 'Manuscript.'

discourse, but it also presents Tănase as an icon of dissent: though he was a mere weak individual, he was chosen for a grand purpose and had to make a significant self-sacrifice in service of a greater end (Prestholdt 2019, 10).

In an article describing the Murals of San Piero a Grado in Pisa, Assaf Pinkus and Michal Ozeri attempt to argue that in the lack of relics of the saints at the site, 'the murals become a visual argumentation for the cult of the saint's pseudo-icons as these appear on the nave's walls' (Pinkus and Ozeri 2014, 120). Thus, by following Hans Belting's triangular model of picture-medium-body, they proved that certain narratives chosen for the murals highlight the process by which the real bodies of the saints turn into an icon. The transformation consists of three stages:

> The first demonstrates the miracles performed by the saints in the name of God, highlighting their function as His living bodily vessels; the second illustrates the miraculous powers of the saints transferred from the dead physical body to a new medium – a painted image – by means of bodily touching and imprinting; and finally, the third stage, the validation and recognition of the images as a true icon through visual affirmation, embodiment, and likeness (Pinkus and Ozeri 2014, 120).

By extension, the 'living icon' character of Glicherie as claimed by the community can also be validated by these three steps. First, Glicherie is said to have performed numerous miracles, some of which are included in the manuscript, while others have been described by members of the contemporary community. For example, Nicolae Păstrăvanu talks about a night when his sister was visited by Tănase who wanted to scold her for something bad that she had done. The monk, however, was not present in bodily form, he was but a mere apparition as he was, in fact, at Slătioara Monastery.[255] Others have reported seeing his face and hands shining like the sun whenever he read the Bible, or sometimes even a white dove sitting on his mitre. He once prayed that it would not rain until the Slătioara Monastery, which was then under construction, would not be covered by a roof, and his prayers were listened. Hriscu Ion, a contemporary member of the community who had also personally met Glicherie tells the story of how in 1948 Tănase caused the muteness of Gheorghe Iacobaș, the then president of the faction, due to the fact that the latter had started speaking without

[255] See Mărturii despre Sfântul Ierarh Mărturisitorul, Episodul 1 (Testimonies about Saint Glicherie the Confessor, Episode 1, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mj8PMrFSaVs).

the consent of the monk. In 1965, claims Hriscu, Iacobaș was still not able to talk.[256] Another event, described in his hagiography, talks about the power that Glicherie had over the icons. Thus, it seems that he was the only one who could move a series of icons from the middle of the road by praying to them and asking them if they wanted to be taken to Slătioara Monastery. Even though many had tried to physically move the icons they failed because, we learn later, the Virgin Mary herself appeared in a woman's dream and asked for the personal presence of Glicherie (Viața Sfântului Glicherie 2012, 171-172).

Secondly, even though Tănase was not dead, there are stories of how his supposed miraculous powers were transferred to a new medium. We learn from the manuscript that after the conflict in Buhalnița that happened in 1936[257] the gendarmes beat and arrested Glicherie. One of the gendarmes ripped the monk's beard and had plucked some of his skin in the process, throwing it on the ground. The grandmother of Nicolae Păstrăvanu, who was a midwife, 'took the beard from the ground, kissed it, put it in a clean handkerchief, and kept it as a holy treasure.' She would later save from death many women and newborns, states the Manuscript, by placing that handkerchief on their bodies. This is how they discovered that Glicherie could perform miracles even though he was not present (Manuscript).

Thirdly, the recognition and validation of his 'true icon' character seems to have occurred amid a rather interesting event that happened to Glicherie Tănase after 40 days of detention during which he was beaten daily by the gendarmes. Tănase, claims the Manuscript, endured it all: 'How can I stay hidden and guard my body, but lose my soul and watch an entire people going to hell? How?' The aforementioned event is described in the manuscript in the following way:

> After 40 days of torment they all lost a lot of weight and were more dead than alive. Then, a meek policeman brought a doctor to check them in the hope that he will find them gravely ill and will let them go home. When the doctor checked them, all policemen watched in order to see if there was something wrong with them. Mihai and Ion Urzică had many broken bones, but father David was better. They then checkscanned the saint, they turned him around

[256] See Mărturii despre Sfântul Ierarh Mărturisitorul, Episodul 2 (Testimonies about Saint Glicherie the Confessor, Episode 2, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9j8orNCUHPU).
[257] It is assumed that the mugshot of Tănase was made after his arrest in 1936 in Buhalnița, Neamț county.

> and took turns to look at his scan, they were amazed but no one said anything. When it came the meek policeman's turn to look he said: all I see in this priest is an icon in the shape of a dove, and the shining face of Virgin Mary with the Son in her arms. Then the doctor and all the policemen said that it was true. They were all frightened and the good policeman said that he does not want to work there anymore. He took off his uniform, threw it away, and left (Manuscript).[258]

This event convinced the members of the community to consider Glicherie a 'living icon.' In fact, that is exactly the name of the chapter that presents this happening in the manuscript. We witness, thus, an inversion of the order by which an image could become an icon; in this case, it is not an image of Glicherie's body displayed on an icon, but an icon displayed on Glicherie's body. To add even more to this, the next day, frightened by this event, the gendarmes or policemen tried to put Glicherie on to the fire, but he would not burn. In the end, 'the saint looked at them and said: thank God, I feel warmer now, I was so cold in the cellar.' The author of the manuscript deplores the sufferings that Glicherie had to endure and is outraged that despite all of these persecutions some deny the sanctity of his relics.

Based on Belting's definition of photography as an index of the body, or as a continuation of the body's presence in its absence (Belting 2011, 192-193), by 'preserving' the body of a figure that the community perceived as a saint, more than that, as a 'living icon,' the postcard of Glicherie Tănase gains a devotional significance for its members. By looking at the postcard the members of the community were expected to go beyond the immediate image and symbol of criminality that it displayed, and see Glicherie as a spiritual leader and a beacon of hope. This involved a type of looking described by David Morgan as a 'sacred gaze,' defined as 'the manner in which a way of seeing invests an image, a viewer, or an act of viewing with spiritual significance' (Morgan 2005, 3). Believers still pray to him today, almost forty years after his death, for guidance and protection. Thus, Nicolae Păstrăvanu tells the

[258] Even though in the Mansucript this event is described as if it had happened some time during the interwar period, or, at least, it appears as such based on the chronological arrangement of the Manuscript, his hagiography tells that this event occurred after his arrest in 1952, which is the arrest that prompted Onofrei to make copies of the mugshot.

story of how he prayed at his relics for rain in a very dry season and saint Glicherie answered his prayers by sending the long-awaited rain.[259]

When the community was again deprived of its spiritual leader in 1952 another miracle seems to have happened at Slătioara Monastery. Fear had settled among the remaining monks who wanted to leave the Monastery when a red painting of the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared on one of the Monastery's windows; underneath it there was a message stating: 'Fathers, do not leave, father Glicherie will come back.'[260] It was around this period of time that Onofrei began distributing the postcards in order to remind the community of the same promise, namely that their leader will return. In the midst of all the turmoil, this postcard became a symbol of hope and continuity. It was symbolically displaying Glicherie as an icon of dissent, thus fortifying a sense of communal identity, but it was also presenting a suffering and undignified image of the monk. According to Sonja Luehrmann, these are not the typical traits of an icon as iconographers erase any physical signs of torture form the face, presenting only the spiritual essence of the person (Luehrmann 2016, 238). By the time the community shared this postcard among themselves, however, Glicherie Tănase had proven his own saintly and 'iconic character' to them by the numerous miracles he is said to have performed. Once a symbol of guilt and criminality, in the hands of the community the former mugshot turned into a devotional image of their spiritual leader whom they perceived as a true 'living icon.'

Conclusion

The contemporary community has forgotten the specific circumstances that led to the circulation of the postcard among its members more than half a century ago. Though the image is still present within the group, they now rely on the information provided by the archives in order to remember the story of an object that was once meant to serve as a catalyst for building unity and continuity. In the biography of Glicherie Tănase, the postcard is presented as proof of the sufferings that the leader had to endure at the hands of the gendarmes, pointing to his 'bruised' hands. Even though nowadays it does not carry the same meaning that it was once 'created' for, the

[259] See Mărturii despre Sfântul Ierarh Mărturisitorul, Episodul 1 (Testimonies about Saint Glicherie the Confessor, Episode 1, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mj8PMrFSaVs).
[260] Nicolae Păstrăvanu claims that his father witnessed this miracle. See Mărturii despre Sfântul Ierarh Mărturisitorul, Episodul 1 (Testimonies about Saint Glicherie the Confessor, Episode 1, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mj8PMrFSaVs).

postcard still serves to point to the injustices of a regime that persecuted the members of the Old Calendarist community.

Glicherie Tănase was officially canonized in June 1999. Since then, there have been numerous icons of him produced by the Old Calendarist Church. None of them, however, present him as a suffering individual in the way that the old mugshot did. What I have attempted to show in this chapter is that even though not an icon per se, the mugshot turned into a postcard earned the characteristics of a devotional image by the sheer fact that it displayed the image of a figure whose sanctity was recognized while he was alive. By the time it was produced, Glicherie had become both an icon of dissent, as well as a 'living icon' for the members of his community who had witnessed and heard about his miracles. Moreover, by reproducing it and circulating it among themselves, the believers enhanced its devotional character. The photo of their absent leader was meant to remind them of the sufferings the community and its leaders have endured and to inspire a communal sense of continuity. Father Glicherie was absent, but still present, just as he had always been.

The Old Calendarist community had used photos in the past in order to draw attention to their persecution and marginalization. Nowadays, it turns to a similar method in order to highlight the injustices that they had once suffered. By the means of social media platforms, such as Facebook or Youtube, the community has embarked on a journey of recovering its history and long forgotten memory that, it claims, had been erased and falsified.[261] The secret police archives come to play an important role in this process, despite the fact that the community was not aware of the valuable materials related to their past that they contain. In October 2019 I interviewed an Old Calendarist nun from 'Valea Roșie' Monastery; I asked her how she came across the Hidden Galleries Project through which we had come into contact and she mentioned the mugshot: 'I googled Glicherie Tănase and that image showed up.' After so many years, the postcard still travels.

[261] See Mărturii despre Sfântul Ierarh Mărturisitorul, Episodul 2 (Testimonies about Saint Glicherie the Confessor, Episode 2, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9j8orNCUHPU).

Chapter Six: Between Silence and the Desire to Tell Their Stories: The Tudorist Community and the Secret Police Archives

Introduction

I began my ethnographic research in the spring of 2018. Nervous and insecure, I walked the very short road from the apartment I used to stay in every time I travelled to Bucharest to the imposing building that I had been passing by for at least a year prior to finally understanding its true significance for my study. I always knew it was a church because it looked like one, but the name 'Romanian Evangelical Church' inscribed on a plaque rang no bells for me, at least not at the time. As quiet and empty as it seemed then, the church situated on Carol Davila Street, no. 48, and the community that met there had once been the target of numerous attacks on the part of the authorities and the Orthodox Church. It was, in fact, in a police report that I first read the address of the meeting house of the Tudorist community in Bucharest and realized how close to it I had been during my entire time researching in the archives there. The building had once been the house of Teodor Popescu and Emil Constantinescu; in 2018, its only inhabitants were B.N. and his family. Thus began my ethnographic journey.[262]

In this rather brief chapter, I intend to present an important aspect of my fieldwork and ethnographic research that focuses on the personal encounter of a Tudorist believer with his surveillance file, as well as his experience with the secret police archives. The chapter addresses important notions such as memory, silence and oblivion, and analyses, based on interviews conducted with members of the Tudorist community, the ambivalent attitudes that they manifest towards the secret police archives; these attitudes oscillate between the desire to tell their stories and fear of the archives. It also focuses on the meaning of confiscated objects and materials, which in the present case is a small handwritten songbook, for the Tudorist believer that came into contact with it almost fifty years after its confiscation. This story constitutes a sensitive part of my research, especially due to the memories and experiences that these materials brought to light. The chapter ends with the story of the believer's personal songbook, which he wrote, cared for, and treasured, only for it to be confiscated during a luggage inspection in 1975 whilst he was doing his military

[262] I offer more details of my first interaction with B.N. in chapter four.

service. As he was the first person to point to the significance of the first songbook produced by the Tudorist community (see chapter 4), this chapter is unique as all the elements of my research converge in one place: the archive, the secret police file, the community, memory and a story that ties everything together. Moreover, the chapter raises the question of what should happen to the creative and literary material found in the secret police archives, which represents the stolen or lost cultural patrimony of these religious groups. For the purpose of this chapter, I have consulted archival documents in The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, and conducted interviews with members of the Tudorist community.

Between Fear of the Archives and the Desire to Tell Their Stories [263]

The second phase of my research focused on retrieving from the archives examples of the materials created by the two communities, the Tudorists and Old Calendarists, and on producing copies of them in order to acquaint them with these archival findings. In general, these small religious groups have little awareness that the secret police archives still deposit some of their long-lost cultural artefacts. Through the use of oral history and the appeal to various elicitation techniques (see chapter 7), defined as 'research tasks that use visual, written, or verbal stimuli in order to encourage people to share their ideas' (Barton 2015, 180), I attempted to allow alternative narratives to emerge, stories that were independent of what was described in the secret police file. This was not meant to constitute a counter-narrative, but rather 'one that was liberated from the confines of the file' (Povedák 2022, 244). At the end of each interview that I conducted I would ask my interviewees if they were interested in ever stepping foot in the secret police archives. The question had multiple layers and I was aware of the fact that for the majority of the members it meant finding out if they had once been the attention of the regime or, even worse, learning that someone they considered trustworthy had given information about them. What I encountered in the case of the Tudorist community was an interest to know things about the archives – how a secret police file looks, how the secret police operated, what can be found about their community in the archives – but not necessarily to enter the archives in person. This

[263] Some information included in this subchapter has been published in the form of an article entitled 'Redeeming memory: neo-Protestant churches and the secret police archives in Romania' in Kapaló and Povedak (Editors), 'The Secret Police and the Religious Underground in Communist and Post-Communist Eastern Europe,' Routledge, pp. 316-334, 2022.

manifested through a mixture between their desire to tell their stories, but a fear of the archives, or sometimes even a complete detachment from the topic.

As I have already discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the narratives surrounding the Romanian secret police archives have been largely guided and dominated by an emphasis placed on the information that might be obtained from the written document and on issues such as justice, historical truth and guilt. For this reason, they were invested with a special status and were highly coveted after the fall of the communist regime in Romania. For some individuals, however, the archives also have the potential to generate feelings of fear and angst that quickly overshadow any glimmer of curiosity. Such was the case with some members of the Tudorist community.

Following the fall of the communist regime in Romania, efforts were made by numerous historians and theologians to produce, based on research done in the archives of the former secret police, a literature that would encompass the sufferings and repression endured by the various religious communities present in the country. In the last decade, religious minorities, such as the neo-Protestant ones, have also made efforts to come to terms with their own past. At first, when they started to record their history during the communist regime their writings took the form of memoires, or partial attempts at writing a general history of the communities.[264] When access to the former secret police archives became possible, in the early 2000s, numerous members of neo-Protestant groups, some of whom were historians, took the opportunity to conduct more thorough research and bring to light documents that could prove the sufferings their communities had endured as religious minorities as well as the efforts they made to oppose the vicious communist regime. These works were often times accompanied by statements that their place in historiography was imperative, aiming to fill the blank pages of a history theretofore unwritten. From the perspective of the neo-Protestant communities, it was seen as a just and fair measure, meant to also address the wider Romanian population that hardly knew anything about these groups, much less understood them (Silveșan 2012, 19). For the most part, especially in the beginning, the need to tell the story of the sufferings that members of neo-Protestant communities had to endure was the most important task and determined the specific

[264] See, for example, 'The History of the Romanian Baptists. 1856-1989 (Istoria Baptiștilor din România. 1856-1989)' by Alexa Popovici, published in three volumes.

agenda with which historians who were members of neo-Protestant churches, entered the archives. However, they were conscious that their communities were unable to escape a phenomenon that affected all structures and institutions during communism, namely that of collaboration with the secret police.

Coming to terms with the past of their own communities implied, for some members of the neo-Protestant churches, accepting both their history of opposition and the repressive measures they were subjected to as religious minorities during their short history in Romania, as well as the duplicitous existence of some of their brothers and sisters in Christ during the communist regime. The latter aspect, however, according to some members of these communities, had to be confronted so that the past mistakes could be redeemed, the memory purified and the people who compromised themselves could be offered and receive forgiveness. From 2006 onwards, a series of published works have shaken the neo-Protestant communities in Romania. Written by important members of these churches, some of whom were preachers, these works were the result of a more or less thorough research conducted in the archives of the former secret police.[265] The motivation behind these attempts was frequently mentioned within the pages of these works, and it stated that 'the church should be the first one to bring to light the wrongdoings of the past in order to reflect the truth' (Mitrofan 2009, 166) because 'it was the only way it could make peace with its past' (Croitor 2010, 366). Another purpose, however, was of exposing the names of people who had collaborated with the secret police while they were still performing their everyday tasks within the churches they belonged to. Taken out of context, some of these works seemed like vengeful attempts to purify the neo-Protestant communities of their weakest individuals.

Against the backdrop of all the conflicting emotions engendered by the publishing of such books,[266] as well as the fact that more and more individuals became aware that the archives not only offer answers but also generate new conflicts,

[265] Some examples of such works are: 'Pigmei și uriași' (Pygmies and Giants) and 'Pași' (Steps) both written by Daniel Mitrofan, 'Răscumpărarea memoriei' (Redeeming the Memory) written by Vasilică Croitor, or Gheorghe Modoran's'Biserica prin pustiul roșu. 1944-1965' (The Church through the Red Desert. 1944-1965).

[266] Whenever I spoke about the secret police archives with members of the Tudorist community the conversation was inevitably led to the issue of collaboration.

sometimes both, some members of these religious communities, like the Tudorists, took an 'it is better not to know' stance.

Such was the case with one Tudorist believer whom I interviewed in 2019. He and his wife happily welcomed me on a cold morning of January. V. I. had prepared an 11-page long handwritten story that, in the beginning, I thought would be given to me to read later. A copy of the document did, in fact, remain with me, but not before V. I. read it to me out loud, with feeling and intonation. I interpreted this as an exercise that, by reading out loud all those experiences, was meant to have a cathartic effect on him. In his story, he had written about the confrontations he had had with the communist regime and the hardships he endured for being a believer, including that of being dismissed from his workplace. I empathized with V.I.'s personal story and was impressed to learn that the news of my visit prompted him to write down all these rather painful memories, perhaps in an attempt to make sense of the past (Portelli 2003, 69) and to exercise his voice of memory (Cojocaru 2019, 317). [267] By writing down his story and reading it to me he both ensured that the story that he wanted to tell was being heard and that he was indirectly controlling the direction of the interview. This is, as highlighted by Ludmila Cojocaru, a form of silence and self-censorship on the part of the informant (Cojocaru 2019, 316); he wanted to express only what he was comfortable with addressing. The silence manifested itself in the true sense of the word when I opened up the discussion about the secret police archives. V. I. became almost absent and he no longer participated in the discussion; I continued my conversation with his wife, N. I., who joined us in the meantime and graciously accepted to have a look at some of the secret police files that were related to the Tudorist community. However, not even her presence could undo his decision to remain silent on the topic. Sensing my confusion, she added: 'You don't want to know what you might find out. Maybe there are brothers and sisters that said something and you don't want to have hard feelings towards them because of that. It's better not to know.' For V.I. and his wife the sole meaning of the secret police archive was that it could be the depository of painful memories and sensitive information.

As Erin Jesse points out, 'silences affect the stories we hear and how we interpret them' (Jesse 2013, 219). V.I.'s chosen silence on the topic of the secret police

[267] I later found out that he typed the handwritten document in order to keep it as a memory and, perhaps, to be published at a later point.

archives spoke louder than any words he could have used in order to explain to me why the secret police archives constituted a sensitive topic. The most precious information came from what he was trying to hide or avoid expressing by being silent, rather from what he could have said (Portelli 2003, 69). It was this experience[268] that prompted me, as argued by Luisa Passerini, to 'reformulate problems' and challenge my habits of thought (Layman 2009, 226) in relation to notions such as silence and memory.

Memory as Silence

The twentieth century has mostly been a time of what Anna Rossi-Doria calls a 'cancellation of memory' (Passerini 2003, 241), a mixture between memory and oblivion, a process that is usually associated with totalitarian, or transitional political regimes. This has been a reality for a number of communities, such as the Jewish refugees in the Soviet Union,[269] whose existence was threatened and it was then followed by a period of silence, as their suffering was considered minor compared to the one of the Holocaust survivors (Goldlust 2017, 76), or the Roma community, whose Holocaust and persecution during the Nazi regime has been largely neglected (Asavei 2020, 108), and the Gulag survivors who, forced to live in Soviet society afterwards, were forbidden to speak about their times in the labour camps for decades, finding creative, non-narrative ways to cope with their traumatic memories (Gheith, 2007, 172).

In the introduction of 'Night,' a work in which he described his and his parents' horrific experiences at Auschwitz, Ellie Wiesel highlights the moral obligation that he carries in order to bear witness to what happened to them so that the crimes would never be forgotten or erased from history:

[268] One member agreed to offer me an interview but he later changed his mind implying that he was not comfortable to speak about the past. I later learnt, while interviewing another Tudorist believer, that during communism the religious literature that was smuggled into Romania used to be sheltered in his family's apartment and then distributed to other churches. This was, perhaps, the event in the past that he felt uncomfortable with addressing.

[269] A number of Polish Jews managed to escape probable extermination by choosing to flee eastward to the Soviet occupied territories of Poland. Here they faced persecution and deportation, as they were considered a security risk and possible spies. After the war, however, their stories became of secondary importance and they were made aware that their suffering had been rather minor compared to that of the Holocaust survivors. This sometimes led to a reluctance to speak or write down their experiences, as they considered them of lesser value than those of the people who had been incarcerated in concentration camps (Goldlust 2017, 76-77).

> I only know that without this testimony, my life as a writer- or my life, period- would not have become what it is: that of a witness who believes he has a moral obligation to try to prevent the enemy from enjoying one last victory by allowing his crimes to be erased from human memory (Wiesel 2006, viii).

He continues by stating that the witness 'has no right to prevent future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory' (Wiesel 2006, xv). For Wiesel, silence was not an option because silence could lead to forgetting, and 'to forget would be not only dangerous, but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time' (Wiesel 2006, xv). According to Dori Laub, a Jewish-American psychoanalyst and Holocaust survivor, the need and obligation to tell the story of the Holocaust is most of the time inhabited by the impossibility of telling and it is not rare for silence about the truth to prevail. The more the story is being silenced, the higher are the chances of the memory being distorted,[270] even forgotten. What also enforced silence on the survivors, after the Second World War, was the fact that they returned to a world that was not ready to hear their stories (Wajnryb 2001, 61). This generated the notion of 'conspiracy of silence' which is common in trauma survivors who want to speak about their experiences, in order to make them real and to begin their healing process but society would not let them speak (Fivush 2010, 91).

Jehanne Gheith, however, challenges the notion that only through narration can individuals remember or heal from a traumatic past. In her article about Gulag survivors she draws attention to the fact that speaking was not, at the time, a realistic option for them because they still had to continue living their lives under the Soviet regime. Being silenced for so long they, however, found creative ways to deal with

[270] Trauma is one of the elements that can also lead to something that is called 'false memory,' defined as a memory that was forgotten, mostly because it was 'too terrible to belong to a normal register of memory' (Hodgkin and Radstone 2003, 99), and then remembered, but in a distorted manner. Dominick La Capra tells the story of a Holocaust survivor who was narrating her Auschwitz experience to interviewers from the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale; during her testimony, she mentioned the 'four chimneys going up in flames.' Months later, the same testimony gave birth to a heated debate during a conference attended by historians, psychoanalysts, and artists. The reason the debate came about was the misrepresented number of chimneys because, historically, only one chimney was blown up. Since her memory proved to be false in connection to this detail, the researchers found it difficult to accept and consider accurate any other detail of her testimony (La Capra 2014, 87-88). Lowenthal argues, however, that even a false memory can be as valuable and significant as a true one, especially if it is important for the self-image of the person recollecting it. In order to prove that, he gives the example of Mary Antin who, in her 1912 autobiography 'The Promised Land' mentions the memory of the dahlias in her childhood garden in Belarus. Once she was told that the dahlias were, in fact, poppies, Antin held to her memory stating that changing that detail in it would make the entire garden "crumble away" (Lowenthal 2015, 316), emptying the memory of its meaning.

the painful memories of the past. One of them named his dog Stalin as a subtle opposition directed against the government (Gheith 2007, 167), while the other named her daughter after her mother, whom she lost when she was only 16 (Gheith 2007, 166). This creative way of avoiding forgetting and of dealing with the pain, despite the inability to speak of it, shows that there can be memory within silence, as well as memory through silence (Passerini 2003, 248).

Silence has multiple meanings and, as Robyn Fivush points out, one can be silent even when one is speaking and talking does not always imply voice (Fivush 2010, 90). Although it is usually associated with forgetting and denial, silence can, at times, become the example of acknowledgement and remembrance. When societies, nations, and communities wish to remember and make others remember, as well, they often turn to moments of silence (Vinitzky-Seroussi and Teeger 2010, 1108). Moreover, silence can also be shared and provide the space for the creation of dissenting narratives. Mark Harrison talks about how generations of young people, whose voices had been silenced by the communist regime, can become dangerous for it at the moment when the dissenting values their parents or grandparents had silently instilled in them become visible (Harrison 2016, 32-33). Silence, thus, can also become a form of power and opposition.

In Romania, the victims of the so called Pitești Phenomenon,[271] some of whom were Zionist members of the Romanian Jewish community, or religious believers and seminarians, were not allowed to speak about their memories and past, in an effort to re-educate and brainwash them into absolute obedience to the atheist, communist regime (Ierunca 2013, 79). The survivors of the experiment also chose silence to the outside world, either for fear of being caught by the Securitate, or due to the shame and unwillingness to relive a traumatic past (Ionescu 2019, 54). A similar fear characterizes some members of religious communities in Romania, especially those whose existence was continuously threatened from the moment of their appearance on the Romanian religious landscape. Marginalized, persecuted and labelled as sects for most of the twentieth century, these communities, amongst which are the Old

[271] The Pitești Phenomenon was an experiment that was carried out between 1949 and 1951 at Pitești Prison by the Communist regime in Romania. Its aim was to force the mostly young prisoners to discard their religious and political convictions and to violently re-educate them and alter their personalities to the point of absolute obedience. It is considered one of the most violent and intensive brainwashing torture program in the Eastern Bloc.

Calendarists and the Tudorists, were also silenced for a while in post-communist years by the official Orthodox Church's attempt to dominate the public discussion on religious persecution. Even though their voices and faces have been buried deep within the secret police archives for a long period of time, traces of their existence have extraordinary significance nowadays when attempts to give voice to the voiceless are no longer solely made by scholars but by members of these communities themselves.

A Different Form of Silence?

B. N. was the only Tudorist believer who wanted to find out if he had an informative file and, unlike other members of the community who only theoretically expressed their desire, [272] he was determined to do so.[273] He was almost certain that he had, at some point, come to the attention of the secret police during communism. In June of 2018 I returned to Bucharest and we walked together to the headquarters of CNSAS; I left him in the care of an employee and I did not hear from him until September of that year when he wrote me an e-mail in which he stated: 'Tomorrow I am going to see my file at CNSAS. I am curious to see who was interested in me.' After he gave me the news that he had seen the file, I asked if we could have another interview in which he would describe to me this unique experience. He accepted and we met on October 15 2018.

B. N.'s only file was connected to his evangelizing activities from when he was doing his military service. Born in the 1950s, B. N. assumed his military duties in the early 1970s. During those two decades of his life the community had lost Teodor Popescu (died in 1963), Gheorghe Cornilescu (1968), Emil Constantinescu (1974) and in 1975 the believers received the news of Dumitru Cornilescu's death. While during the interwar period the Tudorist believers constituted a problem for the state and church alike due to their proselytizing actions, during communism they had to find creative ways in order to distribute their materials because owning books that had a religious content could put believers and their communities in danger.[274] Moreover,

[272] One Tudorist believer claimed that he was certain that he had at least an informative file and would like to read it, but did not think that 'it was worth the effort of looking for it.'

[273] He, in fact, mentioned that he wanted to find out how to have access to the archives prior to me visiting him and he interpreted my entrance in his life in a providential manner.

[274] A Tudorist believer confessed to me that while he was in hospital some time in 1980 someone confiscated his Bible and some religious books. He was particularly afraid because he had written his home address on the first page of the Bible and feared that someone would pay him a visit and would discover how many religious books and brochures he owned. For this reason, he moved his library somewhere else for a while. He was never approached by the Securitate.

the tensions between the two branches of the Evangelical Christians had deepened during communism.[275] They were mostly caused by the different understandings the two communities had with regards to the doctrine of baptism.[276] Their meetings were also greatly affected by the regulations imposed by the communist regime. As mentioned in chapter two, during the 1960s the regime restricted the Sunday evening church services of the neo-Protestant communities (Dobrincu 2018, 180). According to B.N., the Tudorist community on Carol Davila Street resorted to a creative way that ensured the continuation of their evening meetings by organizing late afternoon visits to the sick members of their church who could not attend the Sunday services. There, they would sing and read their Bibles together, thus conducting a rather clandestine meeting. Moreover, in 1962 some members of the community suggested the idea of an afternoon service that would be held between 12:30 and 2 p.m.[277] This was intended to be a youth meeting during which the younger members of the community would learn new songs; the gathering came to be known as 'the third meeting' (Constantinescu and Miu Jr. 2013, 38). It was later replaced by a Wednesday evening meeting[278] of which the younger members of the community were in charge.

B.N. remembered those times as being characterized by a sobriety that was 'of Orthodox import.' The church was no longer using musical instruments when singing, but rather practiced a spontaneous, unrehearsed congregational singing. The instruments were excluded because they feared that people would come to church only for the music and the 'show,' and 'not for their love for the Gospel.'[279] It was during this time that the songs written and composed by members of the Lord's Army, such as Nicolae Moldoveanu,[280] became popular among the Tudorists. A number of these

[275] A report written in 1950 mentioned the fact that there was no 'Tudorist' community known in Romania and asked the agents to only use the term 'Evangelical Christians' when they reported on this religious community (ACNSAS, D 0014404, 174).

[276] Some members of the Brethren joined Baptist or Pentecostal churches during communism, the reason being that they could not accept the idea of being in the same community with someone who practiced infant baptism (Dobrincu 2018, 158). They considered the Tudorists as un-baptized; a Tudorist family that I interviewed mentioned the fact that they once visited a Brethren church but were left disappointed when the people there referred to them as their 'un-baptized brothers in Christ.'

[277] The reglementation stated that Sunday church meetings were allowed until 2 p.m.

[278] Churches that had choirs were allowed to meet on Wednesday evenings for practice (Constantinescu and Miu Jr. 2013, 40).

[279] Other Tudorist sources claim that their Wednesday meetings attracted people from other denominations, such as Baptists, Evangelical Christians, and even Orthodox seminarians. The hymns that would 'animate the young, as well as the elder,' together with their Bible studies, played a significant role in this phenomenon (Constantinescu and Miu Jr. 2013, 40).

[280] During an interview conducted in October 2019, a Tudorist believer mentioned that in 1979, when he was not yet a member of the community, he shared a dormitory with two Tudorists. They used to

songs were also included in their songbooks. Suffering imprisonment and persecution on charges of religious propaganda for composing religious hymns,[281] Moldoveanu became a beacon of spiritual sacrifice and steadfastness and his songs, the majority of which he composed while in detention, came to be greatly valued by all neo-Protestant communities.[282] This is the overall context in which B.N. spent the first two decades of his life. The majority of the aspects that characterized the community during that time are reflected in a personal item that was confiscated from him and that he rediscovered in his informative file, namely a handwritten songbook that I will discuss later in this chapter.

B.N.'s visit to the archives was marked by anxiety and fear: 'I prayed before leaving the house and I promised God that I would forgive anyone who gave information about me. I did not want to have hard feelings towards those people.' He did, in fact, discover that it was a fellow comrade whom he evangelized that gave information about him: 'I spoke with him about God and he went on to report me. What he said about me was true but I thought it was shameful that he was easily recruited.' Despite the disappointing tone I could sense in his voice, B.N. claimed that he wanted to find a way to contact his former comrade; not to confront him, but to inform him that he holds no grudges towards him: 'Maybe he was somehow forced to do what he did.' He thought that studying the archives was also important because it could create an environment in which individuals who have 'betrayed' their communities could be encouraged to confess their past sins. It was his 'proselytizing activity' among his colleagues that caused the opening of his informative file. Accused of trying to attract others to his 'mystical-religious beliefs,' B.N. was labelled as a 'dangerous' and 'fanatic sectarian' (ACNSAS, I 0456045, 15). These names, however, were not interpreted as an insult by B.N. He considered them an honour and was

listen to Nicolae Moldoveanu's hymns on a tape recorder. Another believer, whom I interviewed the same day, mentioned that he had personally met Moldoveanu and remained in contact with him until his death in 2007.

[281] The Lord's Army had been outlawed in 1949 and became an illegal underground movement (Clark 2021, 164).

[282] Nicolae Moldoveanu was imprisoned at Gherla Prison, in Cluj county, between 1959 and 1964. During the communist regime, the Penitentiary was infamous for the ill treatment of its political inmates. According to Moldoveanu, he composed 350 songs during those five years of detention; as he had no way of writing them down, he memorized every hymn and wrote them down from memory after his release from prison (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ce4V8fevH-4, accessed on 20 October 2021).

pleased to see, after all those years, what he was once able to endure and that he passed that 'test of his faith.'

Scholars such as Katherine Verdery talk about a so-called "Döppelgänger" effect[283] that is common in people who read their personal secret police files and are faced with the need to come to terms with the information within it. B.N., however, was not necessarily surprised, nor did he oppose the identity that was given to him by the secret police. On the contrary, he found it truthful and authentic and he seemed to accept the labels of 'dangerous' and 'odd sectarian' that the secret police had put on him in the past:

> I was deeply moved by the thoroughness with which they constructed my file, the great care they put into collecting notes about me. Finding all of these after 44 years was really emotional. What amazed me was the fact that they did not exaggerate, they said only what I did. There was only one remark that I have made that they interpreted in the wrong way, I said something about an officer and I was misinterpreted.

B.N. was referring to an information that the police had obtained by intercepting his correspondence with other believers. In one of his letters he made a claim about a major he had a conversation with stating that after the talk he reached the sad conclusion that 'it does not matter if one is a simple-minded person or someone educated, they remain the same lost sinners irrespective of the stars that they carry on their shoulder' (ACNSAS, I 0456045, 11). B.N.'s observations about the labels that the police had given him align to the believers' conviction[284] that being considered an enemy of the communist regime was undoubtedly a positive thing. As stated by Cristian Tileagă, 'the authoritative version contained in the documents and records of the Securitate can be said to be a significant dimension of mediation in the creation and writing of biographies, memories, and identities' (Tileagă 2011, 199). The epithet of 'dangerous sectarian' was not taken as an offence because it strengthened his identity of a true believer by reinforcing the idea that he did not comply to the pressures of the regime. By stating that the file presented the truth about him he was, in reality, referring to the fact that it presented a distorted image about him but one that

[283] While reading her own file, Verdery began to wonder if she might have, indeed, been a spy, if the portrait the police had made of her was real or not (Verdery 2018, 26).

[284] And the conviction of any individual who opposed the communist regime, for that matter.

nevertheless could only testify of his steadfastness. The Securitate had not only misinterpreted the claims that B.N. had made about that specific major; the Securitate misinterpreted his motivations, monitored him, confiscated his books and intercepted his correspondence. I am certain that B.N. did not consider himself a 'dangerous sectarian,' or a 'mystical-religious' believer. Were these not misinterpretations and exaggerations of his actions? In the present, however, they seemed to function as an encouragement: 'I forgot about all of these experiences and I remembered all the things I was subjected to, I found my identity of 44 years ago and I was pleased to see that I was able to endure and pass that test of faith.'

Our conversation ended with a brief discussion about what should happen to the materials that the secret police had confiscated from the Tudorist community[285] and are now considered to be part of the state's patrimony. He expressed the opinion that they should be given back to the community as in the archives they are only an object of study and research, dusted and yellowed by time. For the community, however, they are sacred and could constitute a reason for its members to contemplate their past and the liberties they now enjoy, to appreciate the fact that they 'once had 40 hymns, but now they have more than 400.' This opinion was soon contrasted with the answer he offered me when I asked if he had made photocopies of his personal file. [286]The question about the copies was in part motivated by the fact that he informed me that among the confiscated letters and informative notes in the file there was also a notebook in which he had written some religious hymns. It was confiscated from him during a luggage inspection, together with a copy of a New Testament; this one, however, was not in the file.

'I don't want the photocopies' was his reply. This prompted me to wonder if B.N. was more attached to something that belonged to the community than to an object that once belonged to him personally, better yet, that he produced himself? Would the presence – even of a photocopy, or, perhaps, especially of a photocopy – of his file and of his notebook engender painful memories? B.N. did not offer any details in that sense, but simply stated that he already had too many books and magazines to take care of, he did not need more pieces of paper around him. This inevitably made me

[285] In this case I was specifically referring to the first songbook of the community (see chapter 4).
[286] The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, which houses the archives of the former Romanian secret police, offers copies of their personal files, at their request, to individuals that were the target of the secret police during communism.

wonder if this was indeed a simple piece of paper, or if it was something that carried the potential to bring to life memories that as eager as B.N. was to bring back to light, he now wanted buried again? 'Maybe someone will find them useful if they remain in the archives' he continued. This was an opinion that was not consonant with his initial statement about the materials that belonged to the community. Perhaps this was another form of silence that I had to learn to understand and accept, despite my desire to receive answers. B.N. allowed me access to his file, as well; in fact, he was glad to hear that I wanted to study it. Perhaps I was about to be one of those people that would find it useful; and I did.

The Handwritten Songbook as a Reflection of the Community

It was April 1975 when the luggage of B.N. was inspected due to the fact that his behaviour had attracted the attention of his superiors. During the inspection, a number of 'materials with a mystical content' were found and they were confiscated from him (ACNSAS, I 0456045, 11). Among the confiscated materials there was the handwritten songbook that he had carried with him in the military (Figures 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3). As I have previously mentioned, this handwritten songbook, as well as its story, mirrors the character of the Tudorist community of the time.

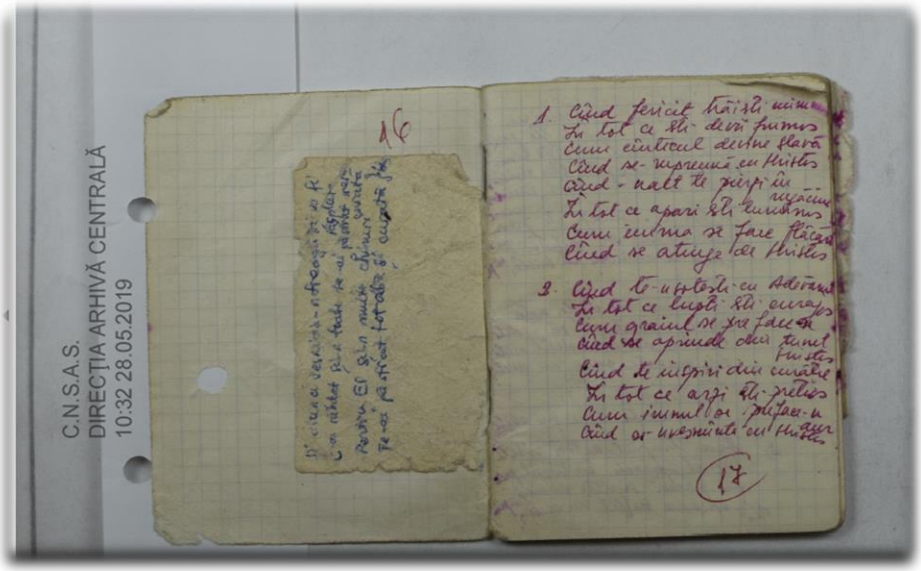


Figure 6.1 The first page of the handwritten songbook. It displays the verses of a song written by Traian Dorz. © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), I 0456045.

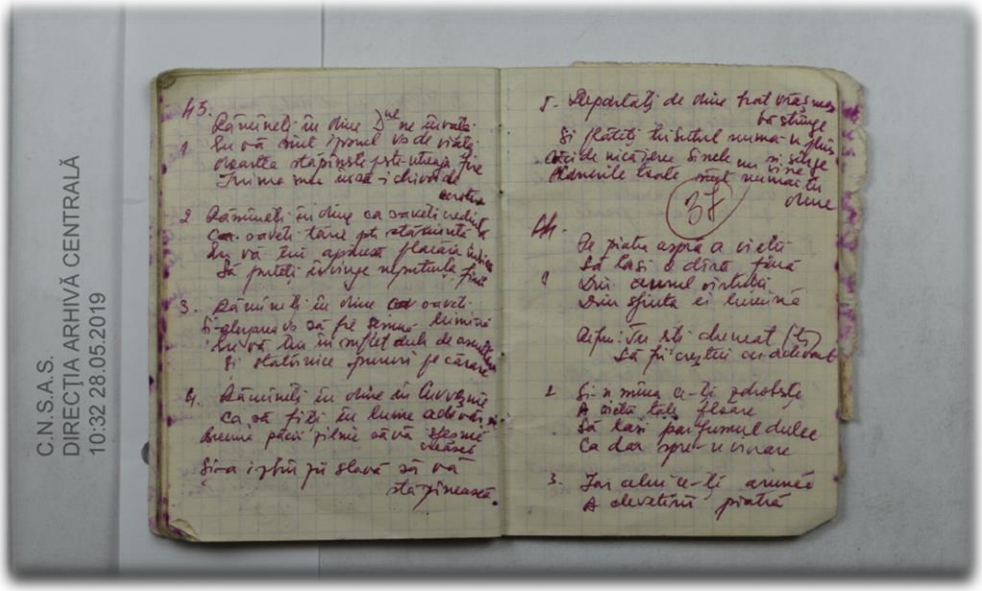


Figure 6.2 The inside of the handwritten songbook. It shows a song written by Nicolae Moldoveanu entitled 'Rămâneți în mine' (Remain in Me). © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), I 0456045.

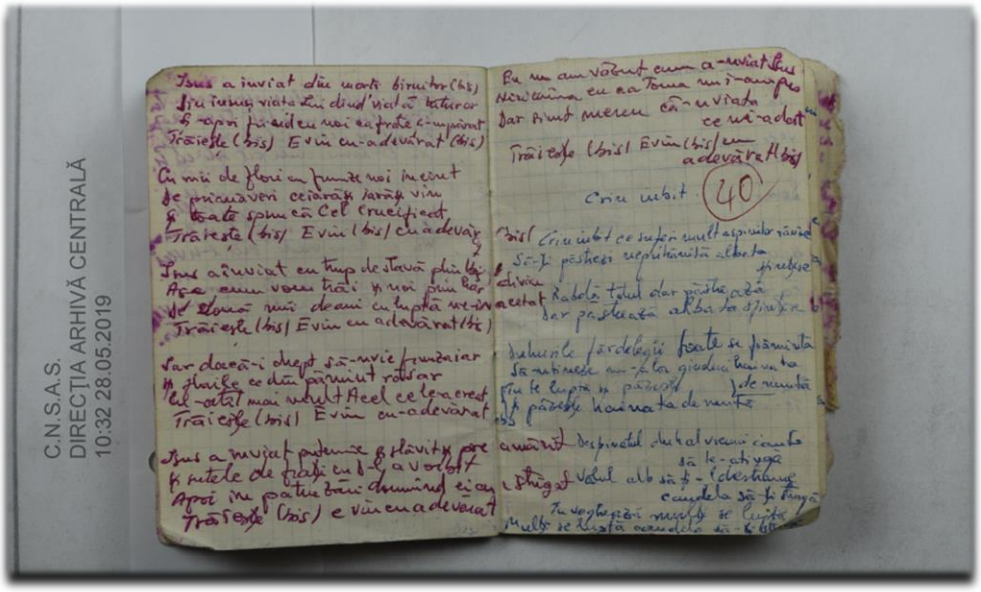


Figure 6.3 The inside of the handwritten songbook. It shows another song written by Traian Dorz entitled 'Crin iubit' (Beloved Lily). © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), I 0456045.

Firstly, B.N. had to smuggle the songbook in the military, while its small dimensions suggest the fact that he was trying to keep it secret or hidden.[287] This also reflects the situation of the community that by the 1970s had to resort to an underground

[287] I am not aware if B.N. had written the songs in the notebook prior to him going to the military, or while he was already there.

distribution of its religious materials. Moreover, if during the interwar period Teodor Popescu was claiming that the Tudorist community had received no foreign support, especially regarding the religious materials, by 1970 it was also involved in the smuggling of such materials in the country, as suggested by the testimonies of some believers that I interviewed. Secondly, the fact that B.N. carried a handwritten songbook with him speaks about the value that the community still placed on its religious hymns. B.N. claimed that all of the songs that he included in the notebook were songs that he had learnt in church. As a member of the Carol Davila church he was, most probably, one of the younger members that had once been in charge of organizing the 'third Sunday meeting' and then 'the Wednesday meeting,' both of which had hymn singing and the Bible study at their heart. Lastly, a brief perusal of the small songbook reveals the fact that the songs that B.N. chose to write in his notebook were not composed or translated by members of the Tudorist community, but by Nicolae Moldoveanu and Traian Dorz[288] of the Lord's Army, among others. This goes to show that by that time the community was already using songs that were borrowed from other religious communities, moreover, from communities that had a clandestine existence. This is an indicative of the fact that an underground form of communication existed between these religious groups.

The handwritten songbook contained songs such as 'Când fericit trăiești' (When you live happily), 'Minunată-i noaptea sfântă' (Lovely is the Holy Night),[289] 'Nu te teme, crede' (Don't be Afraid, Believe), 'Crin iubit' (Beloved Lily) written by Traian Dorz, 'Isuse, numele Tău sfânt' (Jesus, Your Holy Name), 'Noi avem acolo în cer' (We Have In Heaven), 'Pe piatra aspr-a vieții' (On the Harsh Rock of Life), 'Rămâneți în Mine' (Remain in Me) written by Nicolae Moldoveanu, and 'Pe calea strâmtă' (On the Narrow Path) a poem written by Costache Ioanid, a Christian poet of the time who used to attend the Lutheran Church.[290] The majority of the hymns that B.N. handwrote in his small songbook are also to be found in the 1991 version of the 'Cântări creștinești' songbook, and they are still highly valued by the contemporary Tudorist community.

[288] An important figure of the Lord's Army, Traian Dorz assumed the leadership of the Lord's Army after Iosif Trifa's death. Arrested multiple times, it is said that Dorz similar to Nicolae Moldoveanu, composed some of his poems while in detention.
[289] This song was, in fact, a carol.
[290] The poems written by Costache Ioanid are to this day extremely popular among the neo-Protestant churches in Romania.

Conclusion

Materials such as this songbook exist in long forgotten files, waiting to resurface in order to resonate again. Sometimes, they encapsulate a series of memories that are submerged, waiting to be revived only to resonate in our lives 'in the most unlikely of circumstances' (Toltz and Boucher 2019, 325). Other times, however, they can also bring to life painful memories and disappointments, prompting the individuals to reject them, or detach themselves from them. Even though B.N. had identified himself with the description given to him by the secret police after reading his personal file, he refused to request a copy of the file, despite the fact that it also contained a small songbook that was confiscated from him more than 40 years ago. The main reason for doing so was that, after he had confronted one of his fears, namely that of searching for and reading his informative file, he might have wanted to leave all of these events in the past, including an object that he once treasured. Bringing the file home, be it even just a copy, might have meant allowing painful memories into the present. B.N. was the first person to point to the significance of the first songbook produced by the Tudorist community. The fact that he had come across his personal, handwritten songbook in his own informative file compensates just a little for the injustices he and the community he belongs to had suffered on the part of the communist regime. At the same time, however, it engendered the wonderful opportunity for him to tell his version of the story and, perhaps, to receive answers to questions he has had for decades. Even though B.N. did not want the photocopies of his file, which also meant recovering a copy of this handwritten songbook and of all of his confiscated letters, I believe that the fact that he was able to browse it and reflect on its meaning after so many years has brought some comfort and closure to him.

Chapter Seven: Echoes of Cucova

Introduction

After stumbling upon a "top secret" document in the Fundamental Library of the Social Sciences in the Soviet Union while conducting research there during the late 1960s, Sheila Fitzpatrick noted that "if this document had been in an archive, as it should have been, I would never have got it because it was classified" (Fitzpatrick 2014, 190). I have experienced this 'ecstatic moment of discovery' (Fitzpatrick 2014, 189) that she so nicely describes more than once during my research within the secret police archives. One of those occasions was in January 2018, approximately a year after the start of my archival research within the Hidden Galleries project, when I first caught sight of the photographs of the Old Calendarist community in Cucova in the secret police archives of Romania. Part of the surprise was engendered by the fact that the photographs were not placed as evidence in a penal file, such as one would expect, but were rather stored in a documentary file entitled: 'the change of the calendar, the propaganda and dissatisfaction of the population with regard to the changing of the calendar, 1934-1936.'[291] Since then, these images that were taken as evidence of the so-called Old Calendarist rebellion of 1935 have become very important for my research, and I have spent long hours looking at them closely, exploring every detail to try and understand the event they depict. At the time they were taken, these eight photographs were intended to serve one purpose, that of supporting the official version of the story as written in the police reports by representing the Old Calendarists as dangerous and rebellious individuals. Nowadays they testify to the injustices of the state and its authorities against this religious community, as well as to the victims having been there, thus becoming central to the act of mourning and subsequent recovery.

In the first chapter of my thesis, I discussed the so-called allure of the archive, of its capacity to fascinate, as well as about its dangers and potential to generate angst and fear in some individuals. In this chapter, I draw attention to what Eric Ketelaar calls 'the infinite meaning' of the archives which are never truly finished (Ketelaar 2008, 12). Objects and visual materials contained within it can be revisited and

[291] Similar to the informative file of Teodor Popescu (see chapter 4), this file was also initially opened by the Siguranța, and then taken over by the Securitate.

reactivated, each time gaining new meanings. In this way, archives unintentionally become 'acts of commemoration' (Ketelaar 2008, 13), 'spaces of memory' (Ketelaar 2008, 21) or even 'safe havens' (Ketelaar 2006, 146) that, in the case of the secret police archives, unintentionally preserve the materials that have the potential to heal communities, or to complete their stories. The Romanian secret police archives, thus, have a twofold power: they stand as evidence of repression and wrongdoings, but they also contain materials and pieces of evidence that can undo the wrong (Ketelaar 2006, 146) and even generate the healing and vindication that so many religious communities have been struggling for.

The focus of this chapter is on the Cucova photographs, a series of rather controversial and painful visual materials retrieved from the secret police archives, and the manner through which they have gained a new status for the contemporary community that, during the 'Hidden Galleries: Clandestine Religion in the Secret Police Archives' exhibition, had the chance to connect the memory of an event they have only heard stories about with a series of visual elements. This chapter discusses how the material and the visual can become aids of memory, and it focuses on notions such as collective memory, image, photography and the process of photo elicitation. For the purposes of this chapter, I have consulted archival documents in both the Romanian National Archives and The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives and conducted interviews with members of the Old Calendarist community.

What We Learn From the File(s)

On May 27 1935 a confrontation broke out between the Romanian Gendarmerie and the Old Calendarists in the village of Cucova, Putna county. Against the background of the villagers' complaints in relation to the so-called aggressive attitude on the part of the Old Calendarists in the village, 20 gendarmes[292] surrounded their house of prayer; the 'stilists,' however, had barricaded themselves inside the church, armed with forks, axes, and some even with revolvers (ANIC, IGJ, D 15/1935, 53). Given this situation, 50 more gendarmes were called for backup and with the help of the infuriated villagers[293] they broke the two meter high wooden fence and arrested the

[292] Other reports mention a number of 17 gendarmes (ANIC, IGJ, D 15/1935, 64).

[293] One report mentions the fact that there were 600 villagers that were not Old Calendarist believers that had gathered in front of the church, threatening that they would attack it if the authorities did not intervene (ANIC, IGJ, D 15/1935, 57). Other reports mention the fact that the crowds were so infuriated that they could hardly be stopped from attacking the church (ANIC, IGJ, D 15/1935, 64).

believers. Six individuals were hurt,[294] as well as a gendarme, two Old Calendarists were killed (without a given cause of death), and 66 believers were arrested (ANIC, IGJ, D 15/1935, 54).[295] The church, the surrounding sketes and the wooden fence were destroyed (ACNSAS, D 15305, 158).[296] During the search, the gendarmes found the Old Calendarist priest, Ioanichie Dudescu, hiding in a pit,[297] dressed in women's clothes and armed with a hatchet (ANIC, IGJ, D 15/1935, 64). This is the manner in which the reports produced by the gendarmes in the aftermath of the event describe, by and large, the unfolding of the confrontation.

The problems in Cucova seem to have begun several months before this violent event occurred when 'foreign elements' had snuck in the village and managed to convert approximately 80 villagers to the old calendarist belief (ACNSAS, D 15305, 152). The methods used by these elements, led by Dudescu, in order to convince the local population for the old calendar had little to do with the sermons, and more with performing staged miracles in public:

> Ioanichie Dudescu had accepted a certain monk by the name of Marin within the community; he used to fake paralysis and dementia […] At the right time, the monk faked epilepsy, and the alleged priest would read a few texts from the Gospels and the monk was cured. As a reward for these supposed miracles, his followers paid him with food and money, and all of these were found in their church during the search (ANIC, DGP, D 48/1935, 22).[298]

The community had soon drawn the attention of the villagers who were following the new style calendar when Old Calendarist believers from villages such as 'Irești, Mărăști, Răcoasa, Drăgușeni, all of them in Putna county' gathered in Cucova in order to help with the construction of a house of prayer, built without any authorisation on land that they had purchased from a local (ANIC, IGJ, D 15/1935, 53).[299] The community had built a two meter high wooden fence that they surrounded with barbed

[294] Măzărel Anica, one of the Old Calendarist nuns that was hiding in the woods and was, most probably, imprisoned at Vărzărești (see chapter three) is mentioned among the wounded believers (ACNSAS, D 15305, 158).
[295] During the following days, the reports mention that three other Old Calendarist believers died in the hospital (ACNSAS, D 15305, 158).
[296] One report mentions the fact that the church was not destroyed (ACNSAS, D 0012388, vol. 4, 168).
[297] Another report mentions the fact that he was found in the kitchen, hiding under the table. It also mentions that he was dressed in women's clothes (ACNSAS, D 0012388, vol. 4, 168).
[298] My thanks to James Kapaló for pointing me to this file in the National Archives.
[299] Other reports mention that it was built with the approval of the mayor (Kaltenbrunner 2018, 223).

wire. Moreover, they made sure that the church was protected at all times; thus, a few members of the community would take turns guarding it[300] and they would alert the rest of the group in case the gendarmes or the authorities made their appearance (ANIC, IGJ, D 15/1935, 53). There were rumours that orgies and acts of bestiality were performed within the church which made the authorities suspect that 'there was not an actual stilist movement in Cucova but, under the mask of the old calendar, there was an Inochentist movement'[301] (ANIC, DGP, D 48/1935, 22). Moreover, some police reports claim that the community held people hostage inside the church, abusing and mistreating them in various ways (ANIC, IGJ, D 15/1935, 60).

According to Andreea Kaltenbrunner, the Old Calendarist community in Cucova was a peculiar one due to the fact that it was characterized by a form of isolation (Kaltenbrunner 2018, 224). When analyzing the event, she draws the conclusion that the gendarmes highly exaggerated the information that they reported to the power centres in Bucharest: they repeatedly emphasized the violent character of the Old Calendarist community despite the fact that it did not have the necessary means to attack the gendarmes, and they downplayed the number of victims,[302] as well as the level of violence that the authorities had used against the community[303] (Kaltenbrunner 2018, 230-231). Kaltenbrunner concludes that both the Old Calendarist community and the Gendarmerie acted outside their legal framework[304]

[300] Each guard, or protection unit, consisted of approximately 20 members of the community (Kaltenbrunner 2018, 223, footnote 27). The Manuscript mentions the fact that during the religious services the churches would be guarded by four or more believers (Manuscript).

[301] Soviet anti-sect propaganda, as well as the Romanian popular press would produce sensationalist reports about the orgies, murders and other such events that took place in the Inochentist community (Kapaló 2019, 9-10).

[302] The number of victims differs from one report to another.

[303] From the Mansucript, as well as from believers' testimonies we learn that, especially during the 1930s, there was a lot of violence manifested against the Old Calendarist community on the part of the villagers, the local Orthodox priest, the gendarmes, and sometimes even of the mayor of that specific village or town: 'We all know that the holy canons say that men should wear a mustache and, for some time, even a beard. During the persecution this thing bothered the politicians. If the police man, the mayor, the clerk, or the priest saw two or three people with beards walking on the road they would follow them in order to see where they gathered' (Manuscript). Other stories talk about how the Old Calendarists were summoned by the police every time something bad happened in the village, and there they were fined and beaten. In one instance, in the village of Brusturi, Neamț county, the mayor and the local priest summoned all Old Calendarist men at the village hall where they were held captive and beaten repeatedly by the gendarmes. This happened during the fasting period when the gendarmes would enter believers' homes and force them to eat meat or milk in order to discover if they followed the new or the old calendar (Manuscript). This final story is backed by personal testimonies collected by Mihai and Andrei Neguș from members of the contemporary Old Calendarist community.

[304] The Interior Ministry gave an order in April 1935 which stated that the gendarmes were forbidden to 'interfere in the spiritual affairs of the peasants.' The fight against old calendarism was the responsibility of the Romanian Orthodox clergy (Kaltenbrunner 2018, 231).

(Kaltenbrunner 2018, 231). The story of the violent event in Cucova had also reached the press of the time, but it mainly presented the version of the authorities according to which the gendarmes were the heroic characters.[305] Thus, in June 1935, the newspaper 'Unirea' (the Union) described it as a confrontation between the 'non-stilists and the stilists' (Unirea 1935, 4). The article mentioned that two believers were killed – one was hit with an axe and the other one with a cane.

Police reports written several days after the confrontation mention the fact that things were peaceful and quiet in Cucova in the aftermath of the event: 'the stilists go to church according to the new style and the rest of the population is glad that the stilists had come on the right path' (ACNSAS, D 15305, 173). The reality was that the incident was perceived as a 'catastrophe' from which the community recovered with great difficulty (Kaltenbrunner 2018, 220). While the incidents that took place in Cucova in 1935 are described as a massacre in various narratives of the Old Calendarists,[306] the archival documents portray the event in a light that favors the image of the authorities, making the Old Calendarists appear as rebels and troublemakers.

The photos that the police had taken with on occasion of the confrontation seem to tell a different story. Not only do they point to the contradictions and exaggerations of the police reports of the time, but they now open new layers of the past despite the fact that they were meant to capture a totally different version of reality (Povedák 2022, 234).

The Photos of Cucova as an Expression of Collective Memory

Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist and student of Émile Durkheim, was the first to have used the concept of 'collective memory' systematically.[307] Prior to his studies, Aby Warburg developed the concept of 'social memory,' which he never studied methodically; he believed that all human products were expressions of human

[305] Due to the distance between Cucova and Bucharest, the event received little attention in the press (Kaltenbrunner 2018, 232).

[306] See, for example, the testimony of priest Pahomie Morar about the Cucova persecution (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsmV7pIjKe4, accessed on October 10 2018).

[307] The concept of collective memory has been criticised by some scholars, who consider that the word has no real meaning. One of those scholars was Susan Sontag for whom the notion of collective memory was fictional, it was just another name for ideology. In her work entitled 'Regarding the Pain of Others,' Sontag argues for the idea that memory is individual because memory is not something that can be thought of independently of an organism or a physical structure. For this reason, she believes that when the individual ceases to exist, the memory dies as well (Sontag 2003, 67-68).

memory that has been passed down through various symbols since ancient times (Confino 1997, 1390). Halbwachs believed, similarly to his mentor, that individual memory was socially determined, that memory could only be created through communication with other members of society (Ned Lebow et al 2006, 8), and that every memory is carried by a group that is limited in time and space (Confino 1997, 1392). He did not believe that a person could have an individual memory that was not created through the process of socialization. Even though it is the person that has the memory, that specific memory is generated collectively, through what one learns and shares, but also through the way others respond to what one considers to be important (Assmann 2011, 22):

> A man must often appeal to others' remembrances to evoke his own past. He goes back to reference points determined by society, hence outside himself. Moreover, the individual memory could not function without words and ideas, instruments the individual has not himself invented but appropriated from his milieu (Halbwachs 1980, 51).

Halbwachs dealt with the collective memory of the family, of nationalities, and religious communities. These memories, such as the religious traditions of a family, are models and a basis for education and development, they contain the attitude of the group, its nature, strength and weakness (Bartlett 1995, 295). Collective memory and remembering as a collective activity is valuable for the maintenance of group identity (Middleton and Brown 2005, 35) because it is the memory that echoes among the members who share common values (Maier 1993, 136), who remember together. Shared memories of a group become valuable for opposition and rebellion (Selbin 2010, 60) because they also lay at the core of the group's identity. When this identity is being threatened or challenged, memories become valuable in the process of reshaping the unity and coherence of the community (Bell 2006, 6). For the specific group, memory becomes a matter of knowledge that is internalized and shared by each member. Furthermore, collective memories and their ritualization are the ones that lie at the heart of families, communities, friendships, generations, nationalities, they help individuals find meaning in their everyday lives by bonding with other people (Ned Lebow et al. 2006, 8). According to Halbwachs, the group in itself does not have the capacity to remember, nor is it the source of memories. What persist over time are the collective, impersonal "frameworks" that ensure the continuity of a group.

Communities, therefore, be they religious or not, can survive even when the majority of their members are absent because it is not the group that remembers, but the framework which ensured its coherence and unity in the first place (Middleton and Brown 2005, 38). It is sufficient for an individual to locate himself or herself within that specific framework in order to ensure the group's continuity (Halbwachs 1980, 118-119).

The Old Calendarist community represents what Tuula Sakaranaho calls a 'community of memory' (Sakaranaho 2011, 144). They are permanently involved in the telling and re-telling of their collective history which is mostly centred around stories of persecution and exemplary individuals from within the community, such as Glicherie Tănase or Evloghie Oța. These stories, through their repetition, are the ones that give the group an identity (Sakaranaho 2011, 145). The events that happened in Cucova function as a landmark in the history of the community. As one member of the contemporary community told me:

> The events at Cucova are still part of the collective memory of the community. Actually, just the name of the place, Cucova, brings to mind the thought of something special, but bad, that happened there, even if not everyone kows the details, especially the younger members, as the older ones are all aware of what happened.[308]

During the 'Hidden Galleries: Clandestine Religion in the Secret Police Archives' exhibition, organized in November 2019 at the Museum of Art in Cluj-Napoca, the story of Cucova greeted visitors with large reproductions of these photos covering the walls of the first room of the exhibition. It was then that I became even more aware of the value that they carry for the collective memory of the Old Calendarist community. Although they were not present at the events in Cucova, they were able to identify themselves with the sufferings of their predecessors, and some even began telling stories of what happened there, stories that they had heard from their parents and grandparents. Some of these photos depict the arrested members of the community, barefoot and surrounded by gendarmes and members of the authorities (Figure 7.1); looking directly into the camera, the believers seem to want to speak, to tell their version of the story. Other images show the church on the verge of being destroyed

[308] My thanks to Elena Zodieru for discussing this topic with me.

(Figure 7.2), as well as the intrusive gaze of the gendarmes into the sacred space (Figure 7.3), a metaphor for the violent interventions of the state in the lives of the marginalized religious communities. These photos are particularly affecting because, as we look at them, we know that soon these people would be arrested, some of them would even die (Figure 7.4). We are also aware that their church and sacred environment will be destroyed, that they will soon become an element of the past and that our only access to them is through these pictures, pictures that were absent for such a long time, buried in a yellowed secret police file, never meant to see the light of day.



Figure 7.1 The arrested Old Calendarist community in Cucova, together with the gendarmes and members of the authorities. © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), D 0015305.



Figure 7.2 The wooden church on the verge of being destroyed. © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), D 0015305.



Figure 7.3 Gendarmes looking inside the wooden church. We can see the way the icons were originally displayed; the random character of the small lithograph objects suggests that they were donated by members of the community. © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), D 0015305.

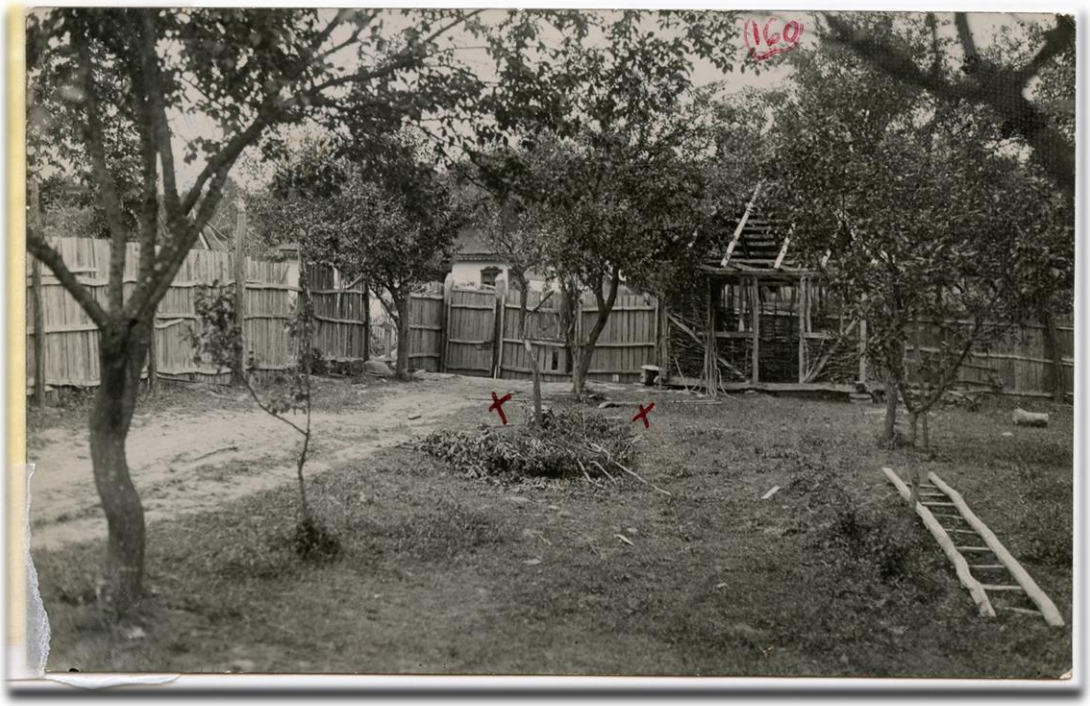


Figure 7.4 The two small red 'X's mark the place where the two Old Calendarists were killed during the confrontation with the gendarmes. © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), D 0015305.

The images of Cucova, though absent for a long period of time, now function as a vehicle for collective memory. Not only do they allow the Old Calendarist community to reflect on their identity and memory, they also complete and confirm their collective memory. Moreover, they offer it the opportunity to revisit its stories and, once again, share them with others; this time, however, the story is also backed by a visual element. During the exhibition in Cluj Napoca, the 'missing finger' of the priest triggered a story in the mind of one member of the community, a story that was told to him by his grandfather and that he wanted to share with me: 'Cucova was not his first encounter with the authorities,' he said, 'they once beat him and he lost a finger. Look, there, can you see it?' He pointed to one of the men in the photograph on the wall that showed arrested Old Calendarists lined up, sitting on chairs (Figure 7.5). There he was, with his hands on his knees, barefooted, dressed in civilian clothes,[309] with nothing to set him apart from the other members except for a large 'X' that the authorities had drawn next to him in order to identify him. The priest Ioanică Dudescu

[309] This is a very important aspect that challenges the written reports of the Gendarmerie. Two separate reports mention the fact that the priest was found wearing women's clothes. Even though he might have been given the chance to change his clothes, I doubt that the police would have missed the opportunity to visually capture an instance that would support such a controversial claim for those times.

was, indeed, missing a finger (Cindrea 2020, 96).[310] It was that small absence, that trace of a supposed previous violence (Hallam and Hockey 2001,465), that made him tell me a story that allowed me, for a few seconds, to add to the priest's personality and identity because he, just like many others that were arrested that day, is absent in all the other archival documents that I have encountered.



Figure 7.5 The arrested Old Calendarists. Priest Ioanichie Dudescu is identified by a large 'X' drawn next to him by the authorites © Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (CNSAS), D 0015305.

The Material and the Visual as Aids of Memory: Photo Elicitation

In Antiquity, the art of memory was focused on images, not on texts, it was a so-called pictorial art (Samuel 2012, xxi). During the Middle Ages it was believed that memory had two portals, namely sight and hearing, and each one of them had a road that allowed access to the 'house of memory,' which contained all human knowledge of the past, called 'painture' and 'parole.' The first served the eyes, while the second served the ears (Carruthers 2008, 277). Images started to be used as a form of pictorial writing in order to fix the sacred narratives in the minds of the illiterate (Samuel 2012,

[310] A short narrative about priest Ionică/ Ioanichie Dudescu, however, tells a different story of not one, but of his two missing fingers. Thus, it tells the story of an accident that the priest had suffered while he was still at Mușunoaiele Skete, in nowadays Vrancea county, before the changing of the calendar, an accident that led to him losing two of his fingers. My thanks to Cozmin Movila for sending me a copy of this text (Cozmin Movila, Ieromonahul Ioanichie Dudescu- Preot)

xxi) to the point that some bishops became concerned that some of their flock might have engaged in superstitious worship of the images in their church.[311]

Memories can be transmitted without verbalisation, they can be incorporated in gestures, images and objects, even in silences (Passerini 2003, 248). Sometimes even without our knowledge, many objects that we use in our day to day lives are not simple tools for survival, but are linked with memory, they embody our goals and are valuable in shaping and sustaining our identities (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 1). When discussing relics, Lowenthal quotes an elderly Norwegian for whom 'every single thing has its history, its memories; and whenever he talked to his things he talked to the people he associated those things with (Lowenthal 2015, 386).

Along with the objects, pictures, images and photos are the ones that carry us back in the past. At the beginning of the 20th century, Oliver Wendell Holmes described photography as a 'mirror with a memory' (Zelizer 2010, 2). For the psychologist Frederic Bartlett, it was through the function of images that things played their role in the act of remembering (Radley 1990, 56). When photography emerged, in the second half of the 19th century, it was considered that it carried a scientific authenticity and credentials that could not be challenged, as it captured every detail, and was, therefore, free from omission (Blouin Jr. 2006, 3): 'The photograph, however, cannot deceive; in nothing can it extenuate; there is no power in this marvellous machine either to add or to take from: we know that what we see must be the truth' (Schwartz 2006, 70).

Ever since the invention of photography, it has been so closely related to memory that it made scholars wonder if it is beneficial or detrimental to the manner in which memory functions, mainly for the same reasons that writing was considered dangerous for memory during Antiquity.[312] Due to the fact that photography became a constant in our everyday lives, some fear that we might lose our capacity to remember anything simply because we rely too much on photographs and their ability to help and influence our recollections of past events (Steinfort 2011, 2-3). According to Susan Sontag, the main problem is not that 'people remember through photographs,

[311] Such was the case of Serenus of Marseilles who, for fear of something like that happening, destroyed all the pictures in his church, scandalizing the congregation which, in response, deserted him (Carruthers 2008, 274).
[312] In ancient times, writing had been considered a threat to memory because, as Plato argued, it could produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who used it (Lowenthal 2015, 406).

but that they remember only the photographs […] To remember is, more and more, not to recall a story, but to be able to call up a picture' (Sontag 2003, 70). Photographs are, after all, elements of the past due to the fact that once they have exited the camera, they captured a moment that is gone forever. For Kathryn Steinfort a photograph is, therefore, a memento mori as it evokes memories of people who are either dead or who will die at some point in the future, but it is also a record, a piece of evidence that a specific event happened somewhere, at a specific time in the past (Steinfort 2011, 16-17). Photographs enlarge the process of remembering by their ability to seemingly 'capture the impossible,' be it a dead person, or a past event (Harper 2010, 23).

Memorializing the achievements of family or community members is one of the earliest popular use of photography, and it is through the photograph that the community creates a portrait of itself, irrespective of the activities that are being photographed (Sontag 2005, 5-6). The images are the ones that play a significant role in confirming and, sometimes, challenging the identity and history of their users. Șahika Erkonan noticed that when the relationships within her family started to change, the family's photography also started to alter to the point that she observed that there were differences between her memories and the images that she was looking at (Erkonan 2016, 258). According to Annette Kuhn, family photographs' value stem from the fact that they are both repositories of memory (Kuhn 2010, 304), as well as occasions for performances of memory (Annette Kuhn cited in Steinfort 2011, 6). While browsing her maternal grandmother's family albums, Steinfort was amazed to observe how the memories her grandmother was telling her in connection with certain images, even though they were not her own, seemed familiar. This made her ponder about the power of imagination, as well as how much of the memory had her grandmother remembered, and how much was actually prompted by the presence of the photograph itself (Steinfort 2011, 4-5).

For Marianne Hirsch, the photographic image, and family images in particular, play a central role in the transmission of what she calls 'postmemory,' defined as the response of the second generation to the trauma of the first (Hirsch 2001, 8). More specifically, Hirsch describes postmemory as:

> The relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they remember only as narratives

> and images with which they grew up, but that are so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right (Hirsch 2001, 9).

The importance that Hirsch ascribes to photography in her conception of postmemory has to do with the fact that the history of the Holocaust has been transmitted to the second generations through a number of photographic images, taken either by bystanders, by the perpetrators themselves, or even by the victims, clandestinely (Hirsch 2008, 107). However, Hirsch is aware that any image that depicts a traumatic event, such as the Holocaust, does not represent and cannot be compared to the crime that it actually depicts (Hirsch 2001, 15).

According to the historian Luisa Passerini, the visual sources are the ones that stand at the forefront in the fight for innovation in history and its methodology (Passerini 2003, 249). Placed and analyzed in context, the visual element, which lies at the heart of the present thesis, serves as a valuable means of retelling the past. Through the use of photographs and images, the past can be revealed in more accessible forms because they provide a way of giving a voice to individuals that have been previously marginalized by history (Cross and Peck 2010, 129, 131). One of the first scholars that attempted to approach the past not through the written documents, but through the visual, was the French historian Jules Michelet. He developed the notion of 'resurrectionism' which defined a type of history that was meant to give a voice to the voiceless (Samuel 2012, xxi). Michelet was mostly interested in a history that was not revealed in the texts, as they were the most dependent on the permission of those in power, thus easily fabricated or manipulated. He, therefore, looked at history through its visual arts which he thought were extremely important for the understanding of its main ideas. In the case of the Cucova confrontation, the written documents are, indeed, the product of those in power and, as we have already seen, the reports produced by the gendarmes were twisted and exaggerated in order to cover for the fact that they had acted outside their legal framework. The photos that the authorities took in order to support their version of the story, however, no longer serve this purpose. In fact, they nowadays point to the persecution that the community had to endure, as well as to the injustice of the authorities.

Another powerful example in this sense is given by Caroline Bressey who, in her research on Black people in the British Archives, observed the discrepancies between the visual and the textual representation of them in the archival records. In

the absence of any indicators of skin colour or ethnicity in the written documents, she would have reached very different conclusions if she had only searched the textual element; only by consulting the photographic albums was she able to identify that some of the inmates that were listed in the written records as white were, in fact, black. Her observations challenge the way scholars look at the archives, especially its written dimension, and highlight the importance of the visual element (Bressey 2006, 61).

Similar to Bressey's example, the photos of Cucova challenge the official narrative of the time with regards to the events that took place there in 1935. The public displaying of these images during the 'Hidden Galleries' exhibition turned into a photo elicitation experience that engendered interesting conversations and brought to light valuable information. The method of photo elicitation places images at the centre of the research agenda and allows them to replace the questions that a researcher might have addressed (Povedák 2022, 242). The method is meant to trigger memories and open topics that the researcher might have had no prior knowledge about (Povedák 2021, 242). Moreover, as pointed out by Douglas Harper, some images depict events that, such as in the case of the Cucova confrontation, have been part of the collective past of a community. They have the potential to connect an individual to experiences, people and eras even if the said individual had not personally experienced them (Harper 2010, 13). Harper states that his fascination for the method of photo elicitation comes from 'the collaboration it inspires' because, he points out, whenever people 'discuss the meaning of photographs they try to figure out something together' (Harper 2010, 23). While preparing the exhibition, my colleagues and I found ourselves looking at the Cucova photos, analyzing them and trying to discover details that could tell us the community's story. Thus, we discussed, for example, about how the interior of the church was covered with small images and icons; we noticed the fact that the majority of these images were repeating themselves. This random character of the small lithograph objects suggests that they were donated by members of the community in an attempt to make the inside of their improvised wooden church mimic the interior of a bigger church.

Even though the method of photo elicitation is usually intended to be applied in a more intimate environment, most of the time during an interview, the context of the exhibition encouraged a more emotional and affective conversation (Povedák 2022, 242) around the photos of Cucova and, at times, it even challenged previously

taken-for-granted ideas (Barton 2015, 197). It was a unique experience in which I captured members of other religious communities who, struck by the powerful expressions of the Old Calendarists' faces, verbalized feelings of compassion and asked more questions about what exactly had occured at Cucova. This brought about a dialogue between these religious groups, a so-called 'reciprocal-ethnography'[313] (Lawless 1991), a series of conversations that would have probably never happened in a different context. As pointed out by Vagramenko and Nicolescu, telling such as story in a museum context totally shifts the way these images are perceived (Vagramenko and Nicolescu 2021, 29). Even though they were once meant to incriminate, these photographs nowadays earn new meanings for the Old Calendarist community that had the opportunity to look at them and reflect on its collective memory and identity.

Conclusion

The stories that get told and re-told within a group become the core of its identity. In the end, the Old Calendarist community lives in the stories the members tell themselves and among themselves. The Romanian secret police archives, understood this time as 'spaces of memory' (Ketelaar 2008, 21) and 'safe havens' (Ketelaar 2006, 146), have paradoxically and unintentionally preserved the visual materials that have the potential to complete these stories.

In the absence of these photos, the community managed to maintain a collective memory in connection to the events that occurred at Cucova almost a century ago. The Old Calendarist community was, however, marked by numerous absences during the interwar period, as well as during communism. Starting from their lack of churches which prompted them to improvise their places of worship by hiding in woods, caves, cellars, or by building their wooden churches – such as the church in Cucova – to their worship places being destroyed, their religious objects being confiscated, their leaders and community members being imprisoned (see chapter five), their voices being silenced, their calendar being changed and, last but not least, their lack of representation on the religious field after the fall of communism, all of these instances are examples of how absence was part of the Old Calendarist church's life. The community managed to navigate through and make use of these absences by

[313] Elaine Lawless defines reciprocal-ethnography as a 'mutual exchange of information, of creativity, a moving back and forth' (Lawless 1991, 53).

finding new and creative ways to survive persecution and marginalization and maintain a collective memory and identity.

The event in Cucova is another instance where presence is turned into absence, as it usually happens when buildings are destroyed, or people die, and then into presence again. This absence still has an enduring presence within the community and it has led to the creation of a memorializing narrative that is triggered even in the absence of any knowledge about what actually happened in Cucova. Twenty years after the event, Hieromonk Pahomie Morar made efforts to purchase the same land where the former church used to be – which, in the meantime, had been turned into an orchard – in order to rebuild it. Today, a monastery stands on the approximately same place where the former church used to stand. Even though this monastery is nowadays present, it is also a marker for an absence, for what was destroyed and is nowadays missing. It, however, stands as proof that what the secret police thought it could make disappear by destroying its tangible forms, only generated an absence that instead empowered the community's determination to survive. The nowadays monastery creates a sense of permanence that reflects agency rather than victimhood. By taking a tragic space and making it sacred (MacConville and McQuillan 2010, 199; Francis et al. 2005, 34), the Old Calendarists gained agency; they gave order to the chaos of a painful memory. Constructing the site and choosing to visit it while also knowing that doing so might bring to life a painful memory are acts that gain agency, and this is how healing might eventually begin.

Conclusion: Creative in Struggle, Watchful in Liberty

The secret polices archives and their content continue to represent a sensitive and controversial topic in post-communist Romania, especially as people tend to equate them with issues such as collaboration, betrayal, suffering, uncomfortable information, and a tainted past. Nevertheless, they remain one of the most valuable resources for the study of e events in the 20th century, the nationalist, authoritarian and extreme right regimes of the interwar period, as well as the communist regime, and how they envisaged that history should unfold; they are also valuable for the transitional justice processes – initiated in Romania in the early 1990s – and their attempt to bring the truth to light, as well as to deliver collective reparations to the victims of various forms of persecution. If for more than a decade the archives and the history of religious groups have been approached by scholars from various fields of study, in recent years religious communities have become more interested in their past and entered the archives in order to discover it for themselves. Some have used the archives as a means to highlight the sufferings and persecutions that their religious communities endured in an effort to fill the pages of history left blank, whilst others have seen it as the sole repository of the truth about the past and have taken the responsibility upon themselves of exposing the names of all those community members who collaborated with the secret police.

This thesis demonstrates how religion and religious communities can be studied through the material dimension of the secret police archives, thus advancing a new approach to the archives and what their content can reveal to scholars. Instead of focusing on the textual evidence stored in the secret police archives, evidence that was most of the time fabricated and written through the lens of a secret police agent or an informer that had to serve the interests of the regime, or who, for the most part, had a distorted view about the religious lives of those they had to supervise or control, this study explored the materials that the Old Calendarists and the Tudorists produced and that were confiscated from them, thus ending up in the secret police archives. This methodology is particularly valuable when conducting research on religious communities which are, in general, creative communities and produce numerous objects and materials, such as icons, photographs, handwritten prayer or songbooks, hymnbooks, letters, postcards, brochures, magazines, and so on. These represent

alternative narratives and methods through which religious groups critiqued and countered the established order, and their presence in the archives of the same institutions that were charged with destroying them but, instead, ensured their survival, constitutes a paradox. This thesis represents the first attempt to apply this particular methodology and bottom-up approach to the Old Calendarist and the Tudorist communities. Moreover, by shifting the lenses from the written to the visual materials, this thesis shows how elements that were once meant to serve as evidence of the so-called criminal character of the Tudorists and the Old Calendarists now tell us much more about the police itself and its methods against these religious communities. Examples such as the Cucova photographs, discussed in chapter seven, or the confiscated handwritten songbook, discussed in chapter six, demonstrate this aspect and show how these pieces of evidence, initially meant to incriminate the communities, nowadays testify of the wrongdoings of the regimes that the secret police served and operated under.

The issue of monastic incarceration, addressed in chapter three, constitutes one of the most neglected aspects of Romanian history. This study, thus, not only presents the topic and the role played by the Romanian Orthodox Church in attempting to discipline and reform religious dissenters, but it also opens up the discussion about how church history and Romanian history is written, whose voices are included, and whose voices are left out, and why is that happening? As demonstrated by the example of the Old Calendarist nuns, women religious have played an important role within the community in times of crisis and sometimes in the absence of men. Their voices, however, have been neglected for a long period of time and this thesis illustrates the fact that they are very much present in the archives and in the memory of their communities. The issue of monastic incarceration is, nevertheless, far from being exhausted; the phenomenon extended to Old Calendarist monks, as well, and some of them are even believed to have died whilst in detention. Thus, further research has to be conducted in order to find answers to questions such as: how large was the phenomenon of monastic incarceration? How many monasteries did it involve and how long did it last? What were the conditions in these monasteries? How does the present Old Calendarist community relate to these archival materials? Were there other religious groups affected by this measure during the interwar period?

I am, nonetheless, cognizant of the fact that the Hidden Galleries Project – of which this thesis forms a part – and the phases that it included have given me the opportunity to study and analyse the two communities in a manner that has not been applied before to the Tudorists or the Old Calendarists. Apart from doing research on them in the archives, I also conducted ethnographic fieldwork among the members of these two homegrown communities; this second phase, however, has not gone as smoothly as I expected. If approaching the Tudorist community proved to be less challenging, access to the Old Calendarist community was not so easily obtained. It was in this context that the digital dimension of the project came to play an important part, as the community found and approached the project first, and not the other way around. The Old Calendarist community, as opposed to the Tudorist community, seemed to be more interested in the secret police archives and what they contain in relation to their history. The interest was not completely absent among the members of the Tudorist community, as revealed in chapters four and six, but it was not shared by all the members that I interviewed, as it happened in the case of the Old Calendarist community who also attended the project's exhibition in large numbers. The Tudorists, unfortunately, were not present at the launch of the exhibition, the absence of my interviewees being motivated by the fact that the majority of them live in the Southern parts of Romania, such as București or Târgoviște, and the exhibition was organized in Cluj Napoca, situated in the Northwestern part of the country. I concluded, however, that the Tudorist community, though not unconcerned about its past, prefers to maintain a low profile in the current Romanian religious landscape, whereas the Old Calendarists are only at the beginning of their attempt to recover their past and history that stayed for so long in the shadow of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The present study captures all of these aspects and, I dare to say, it opens new avenues for these religious groups to learn about their past now that they are aware of what materials the secret police archives store and contain about their communities.

The stories that are being told and re-told within a group become the core of its identity. All the members of the Tudorist community that I interviewed knew and told me stories about how Dumitru Cornilescu translated the Bible with the help and support of Ralu Callimachi, how Teodor Popescu was (mis)treated by the clergy and the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church, and how the community has flourished during the interwar period despite the opposition it faced, and how it managed to

survive during communism. Similarly, the Old Calendarists told me stories about Glicherie Tănase, Pamvu Hoisu, one of the monks that is believed to have died whilst incarcerated in an Orthodox monastery, and they were also aware of what happened at Cucova, Piatra Neamț, Buhalnița, and they were even cognizant of the fact that during the interwar period members of their communities were sent to detention in Orthodox Monasteries. These stories have become part of the collective memory of the communities, they are now the reference points for their members who find meaning and significance in these histories that testify of their sufferings, but also of their victories and of the fact that in the face of repression, religion provided a significant outlet for individuals to create alternative communities and identities. This thesis shows how these two religious groups have constructed their memory and how they relate to it; from B.N., the Tudorist believer who seemed to be more attached to an object that belonged to the community than to something that once belonged to him personally, to the Old Calendarist believer who told me the story about priest Ioanică Dudescu's missing finger that he had heard, in his turn, from his grandfather, all of these instances illustrate a close sense of community belonging and attachment.

The material examples that I offer in the thesis come from both the interwar period, as well as from during commmunism, thus highlighting the fact that these two communities have been the target of the secret police for the entirety of the 20th century. The study also approaches the notion of absence and the nuances that it carries, showing that, in the case of the Old Calendarists, absence also had agency and it prompted them to act in order to ensure their survival as a religious community. This, however, can be applied to the majority of religious minorities that have been repressed by the authoritarian or the communist regime and had to learn to work with and despite the absences in order to secure their continuity. These regimes generally equated the absence caused by the confiscation or destruction of religious objects with the dissolution of the religious groups which it sought to destroy, unknowingly empowering them with even more creative potential and will to endure the repressive strategies targeting them. Moreover, as demonstrated in chapter six, silence, a different form of absence and a concept that was generally linked to oblivion, carries the potential to reveal much more about the past of individuals, their relationship with difficult memories, as well as their reluctance or unwillingness to approach certain topics, such as the secret police archives. Instead of looking at this aspect as a

drawback this study shows how silence can point to valuable insights, such as a painful past or memories and their carriers' struggle to cope with them, and, in some cases, it can speak louder than any words uttered by an individual; as already discussed in the thesis, talking does not always imply a voice (Fivush 2009, 90).

The title of the present research, 'Hidden Galleries, Silenced Communities: Homegrown Religious Communities and the Secret Police in 20th Century Romania' sums up its essence and connects all the chapters under its umbrella. First of all, it is about the hidden galleries, which simultaneously constitute 'the stolen cultural patrimony of religious groups as well as their ideological construction as illegal, hidden, dangerous or secret things' (Kapaló 2019, 88). It is also about two silenced communities, the Tudorists and the Old Calendarists; they have been silenced multiple times, either by the regimes they managed to outlive, or by the Romanian Orthodox Church that has attempted to define and re-define these communities, secluding their voices for years, even during post-communism. Moreover, it is about their homegrown character; both of these communities appeared around the same period of time, namely in the first half of the 1920s, and they were a direct consequence of the reforms and renewal strategies that the Orthodox Church has adopted at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as of the spiritual crisis it was going through at the time. The 1924 reform of the religious calendar, an attempt to synchronize Romanian society with the Western countries in the aftermath of the First World War, led to the emergence of the Old Calendarists, whilst the call for religious revival promoted by a series of theologians from within the official Church led to the development of the Tudorists. Both of these communities appeared on the religious field without the help or direct influence of foreign missionaries. Last but not least, the thesis is about the Romanian secret police and the manner in which it developed and operated for the entirety of the 20th century, especially in relation to or against religious communities.

There is a strong belief among both the Tudorist and the Old Calendarist communities that the times of struggle and persecution are never too far from happening again. Appearing on the religious scene during a period of time when the Romanian Orthodox Church was claiming its role as the official, national church, these communities were faced with rejection and persecution since their inception in the 1920s. Constantly targeted and marginalized during the communist regime, as well, they are nowadays very cognizant of the liberties they are enjoying and, at the same

time, they are always apprehensive and watchful of what the future holds for them. As my research unfolded, I had the chance to see how their warnings and expressed concerns of the difficult times to come seemed to have materialized in the events of the last two years. Echoes of a not too distant past started to resound within these communities; similar to all churches and religious groups around the world, they found themselves in the situation of having to limit their contact with other believers, as well as their religious services and rituals. How do communities survive in such cases? How do they ensure their continuation in the face of such restrictions? The Old Calendarists have spoken about the 'perilous times' for a while, while the Tudorists have always greeted each other with 'Maranatha!' (Come, O Lord!). Creative in struggle, but watchful in liberty, they nowadays resort to their past stories and histories in order to remind themselves of what they have once overcome and to encourage themselves for what might come in the future. It is during times such as these, when the present seems challenging and uncertain, that the past is invoked and becomes even more relevant, particularly for those who have, directly or indirectly, experienced trauma and persecution. It is also during times like these that we are reminded, once again, that constraints are not the boundaries of creativity, but the very foundations of it. These two homegrown religious communities have demonstrated this to great effect.

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