

THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF IDENTITIES IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF BESSARABIA. THE TRANS-ETHNICAL ORTHODOXY*

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Abstract:

The blending of the national and the religious aspects which occurred in the regions of Central and Eastern Europe has not occurred in Bessarabia, where a transethnic orthodoxy is present (the same religious values are shared due to common religious belonging, even if the ethnicity is different). Thus, it is interesting to understand which theoretical model could explain this relationship or the relationship configuration of ethnical either confessional identity which are different or overlapped in the Orthodox Church of Bessarabia. Another question is to what extent the ethos associated to the orthodox community in Bessarabia, whose distinctive feature is the ethnic diversity, can be considered to be as a model for managing the cultural diversity, a unique model in the area of the Eastern Christianity, which generally has strong ethnical connotations in different countries.

Keywords: trans-etnical orthodoxy, confesional belonging, ethnic belonging, identity, Bessarabia

Introduction

The working hypothesis is that when there is a common religious affiliation, it normally is quite strong, even if there are also other elements included for describing cultural identity (ethnicity, language), they are distinct: in the Bessarabian Orthodox Church there are functional models to

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manage diversity, based on a tradition of cohabitation with other ethnicities. Thus it is interesting to study the way these models are built and how the functional relationships are put in place in a space marked by a diversity of ethnic groups, as far as Romanians, Russians, Ukrainians, Gagauz people, Bulgarians etc., have distinct historical archetypes and different languages.

Concerning the elite's discourse and behavior, a comparative perspective became interesting: how different are the cultural realities, and consequently the discourses, formulas and positioning of the interwar period elite and of the modern, contemporary one, and how exactly is expressed the attitude towards the Orthodoxy and ethno-nation.

Ethnical diversity and religious unity

To explain the absence of national conflicts in the Bessarabian Orthodox Church, we refer to the ethnic cohabitation experience existing before 1918, and even during the the interwar period, and to the bilingualism accepted by intellectuals in the region. The formulas of managing diversity were accepted programmatically – in programs of some publications, in discourses of leaders / heirarchs – promoted by elite, which also were unhomogenous in certain periods of times. So, we can talk about a sort of local "tradition" of cohabitation.

The ethnic diversity of the territory is confirmed in 1812 by the Russian government too. Thus, in the context of endeavours oriented to set up a dioceses in Bessarabia, is cited also the argument regarding "the various tongues and customs of the multitudes of peoples (understood as nations – Author's note) living in this province," alongside of that of the "remoteness of this place from other Russian dioceses and because of various tongues and customs of peoples living in this province"¹. These elements are mentioned in the Letter of the Metropolitan Exarh Gavriil of August 6, 1812, addressed to the Admiral P.V.Ciceacov, in which the Exarh exposes its plan to create a diocese in the territory between Prut and Nistru and asks for support in this regard.

On the other hand, religious and ethnic diversity of this area was accepted by the local intelligentsia, and at the same time national elements

¹ The creation of the Eparchy of Chisinau and Hotin – 1813. Actas. (Dossier 224/1812, page 1-2), in *Arhivele Basarabiei, (Archives of Bessarabia)* 1929, Nr. 2, p. 34.

were valued. Although one of the objectives of the journal "Viața Basarabiei"², stated in its very first issue, was "the guidance of the sons of Bessarabia towards the ways of the Romanism and of Romanian national state"³, the desideratum of an inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue is programmatically expressed too. In the same first issue, another goal is made clear: "to create spiritual links between the inhabitants of Bessarabia *irrespective of their nationality and religion*"⁴. Exposure of this goal reflects the existence of several ethnic and religious groups as well as the possibility of cohabitation, and the lack of major conflicts.

Ecclesiastical press in the prewar and interwar period

In the prewar and interwar ecclesiastical press⁵, in journals or Yearbooks of Archdiocese of Chisinau, the presentation of diocesan institutions⁶ faithfully reflects the realities of the place, the existing

² The most important cultural journal from the postwar Bessarabia, published by the Cultural Association „Cuvânt moldovenesc” („The Moldovan Word”).

³ Pan. Halippa, „Un cuvânt înainte” („A Foreword”) in *Viața Basarabiei* (Life of Bessarabia), January 1932, Year 1, Nr. 1, p. 2.

⁴ Pan. Halippa, „Un cuvânt înainte” („A Foreword”) in *Viața Basarabiei* (Life of Bessarabia), January 1932, Year 1, Nr. 1, p. 2..(s.m.-I.D.).

⁵ Regarding the religious press, among religious publications from the prewar and interwar Bessarabia, we cite *Buletinul Eparhiei Chisinaului* (*Kisinevskaia Eparhialnaia Vedomosti*) (Journal of the Diocese of Chisinau) – the first religious journal Bessarabia (first published since 1867, is printed in Russian and Romanian till 1871, when the Romanian version is suspended); *Luminătorul, Jurnal Bisericesc*. The Journal *Luminătorul* is the official publication of the Diocese of Chisinau, is published in the period from 1908 to 1944.

⁶ From *Anuarul Arhiepiscopiei Chișinăului*, (The Yearbook of the Diocese of Chisinau), 1930, p. 21: „The Bessarabian diocese have had since 1867 a journalistic medium, «Revista eparhială a Chișinăului» („The Journal of Diocese of Chisinau”), to which all the churches subscribed; till 1872 it was printed in two languages: in Russian and Moldovan with Russian letters; (Moldovan was the name used in this region for the Romanian language – *Author’s Note*); the journal had two parts: the official and the no official one. Lately, which is since 1872, it appeared only in Russian until 1917 in May, when its name changed to «Glasul Bisericii Ortodoxe din Basarabia» (The Voice of the Orthodox Church from Bessarabia). On the other hand, the Bessarabian clergy has had since 1 of January 1908 another ecclesiastic journal «Luminătorul», written only in Moldovan, with Russian letters, and containing articles for the people to learn, and not only the clergy was subscribed but also many of the Romanian people from Bessarabia and from beyond the river Nistru. In the last times, over spring of 1918 both journals cease to appear. But, accordingly to the report written by a committee of

bilingualism. In the Yearbook of Chisinau Archdiocese 1930⁷, can be found the presentation of the Historical-Archeological ecclesiastic Society of Bessarabia and of Antiquities Museum, situated in the Diocesan House, Chisinau, "created on 4 April of 1904 at the initiative of local bishop", whose purpose is "to study the past of the life of the provincial church in its various manifestations and from different points of view, from the first appearance of Christianity." It cannot be deduced the clear attitude towards one administration or another, whereas the changes the administrations made and their consequences – as the change of the language in which the publications and documents were written, etc., - are exposed in a neutral tone.

Cultural activities and documents of the church are considered to be part of the patrimony, and ecclesiastical activity, irrespectively of what language they were written in: "The activity of the Society was considerable in the field of the historical science and archeology of church.

The periodic journal has published till the moment the following: 10 volumes in Russian, with an average length of 250 pages each, and since 1918 were published other 10 volumes of historical material in Romanian⁸ and other things in Russian. Currently the volume 21 is in press".

The same neutrality is also found in other texts, documents, ecclesiastical journals: in the Yearbook of Diocese of Chisinau and Hotin (Bessarabia), 1922, it is described the activity of the "Religious Books Printing House from Chisinau"⁹, where "were printed, besides various official and

clergimen and lego on 10 December 1918, Î. P. S. Nicodem approved that starting from 1 January 1919 both journals are to be substituted by only one journal of the diocese, of 64 pages, named «Luminătorul». Text available on-line at <http://www.moldavica.bnrm.md/biblielmo?e=d-01000-00---off-0periodice--00-1---0-10-0---0--0direct-10---4-----0-11--11-ro-50---20-about---00-3-1-00-0-0-11-1-0utfZz-8-00&a=d&cl=CL1.1.18&d=JD1725.10>, last accessed at 10.04.2015.

⁷ *Anuarul Arhiepiscopiei Chişinăului*, 1930, p. 21. (The Yearbook of the Diocese of Chisinau). Text available on-line at: <http://www.moldavica.bnrm.md/biblielmo?e=d-01000-00---off-0periodice--00-1---0-10-0---0--0direct-10---4-----0-11--11-ro-50---20-about---00-3-1-00-0-0-11-1-0utfZz-8-00&a=d&cl=CL1.1.18&d=JD1725.10>, last accessed at 17.04.2015.

⁸ The denominations of the language: „Romanian” and „Moldovan”, used in the same page alternatively demonstrate their use in free variation connexion.

⁹ *The Year Book of the Diocese of Chisinau and Hotin (Bessarabia)*: official edition / made by C.N. Tomescu, Secretary General of the Archdiocese of Chisinau and Hotin (based on official dates). – Ch.: Tip. Eparhială, 1922, 272 p.

particular Russian publications, others in Moldavian, as are for example: the lives of saints, religious books"; and after a break of twenty years it started to publish again "Many good works for the Romanian people, in its own language, with Slavic or Russian letters, and from 1919, with Latin letters.¹⁰ "The alleged identitarian concepts also reflect certain neutrality: the Romanian and Moldovan denomination used to refer to the same nation or language is used in free variation, and the use of Slavonic and Latin letters is only noticed.

In the first issue of "Luminatorul" ("The Illuminator"), in the *Information* - after announcing "the permission" to "bring to light" in the "Moldovan language" this magazine – it is stated in categorical terms the establishing of distance from the politics and it is explained the context of the publication in Moldovan language "Approved by the Order (Ukaz) of the Council of 20 December 1907, with no. 174,441 - according to the proposal of the Chamber of Deputies from the Diocese, from September 21, 1907, no. 8 – the permission is given to bring to light, (to publish) , starting from 1908, through the Council of the Orthodox Brotherhood of the Nativity of Christ from Chisinau – the religious journal "Luminatorul" - in the Moldovan language¹¹." Besides preaching Christian moral teachings, "it will show, for Moldovan people, documents related to the history of the ecclesiastical life of the Diocese of Chisinau"¹², but without any involvement of politics: "According to its program, "Luminatorul" will

¹⁰ *The Year Book of the Diocese of Chisinau and Hotin (Bessarabia)*: official edition / made by C.N. Tomescu, Secretary General of the Archdiocese of Chisinau and Hotin (based on official dates). – Ch.: Tip. Eparhială, 1922, p. XXV: „In the city existed an ecclesiastical typography between 1814 and 1883, founded by the Metropolitan Gavriil Bănulescu. Its first director was the monk Ignatie, brought from the Neamt Monastery from Moldova. Beside different official and particular Russian publications, here were published others in Moldovan too, for example: lives of saints, religious books. But since 1883 the typography ceased. 20 years later, the Bessarabian priests which wanted to publish *Moldovan* books decided to re-constitute the typography. Thus, in 1906 they brought to life the current typography (...) And since that date until now, they have been published many good things for the Romanian people, in its language, with Slavic or Russian letters, and from 1919 with Latin letters too, of any sort, and then others with musical notes , and it is today clasified as the first between the local typographies: here are published all the documents needed for the institutions and churches of the Diocese." (Emphasys added: I.D.)

¹¹ *Luminătorul*, Nr. 1, 1908, p. 77.

¹² *Luminătorul*, Nr. 1, 1908, p. 78.

follow only enlightening /teaching religious purposes, and will be separated of any sort of political themes."¹³

The Church and the valuing of the tradition in Bessarabia

The relationship between church and authorities in Bessarabia passed through different configurations, because the status of this territory has changed: from province to gubernia, and later it became a republic in the compenence of the Soviet empire. The Church suffered the consequences of transitions from one administration to another, from one language to another, nonetheless there was a certain freedom constantly, in terms of the rituals and traditions to follow, which have not been affected by the change of power.

In the marginal regions and provinces the role of the church is growing; the church became a stronger institution, increases the weight of religious affiliation in the identitarian construction. In Bessarabia, the church functioned as a powerful institution that gave value to the tradition, so that no amendments could be operated there, and there was no mandatory "pious spirit by the official power."

The process of Russification and politicization of the church were rejected until the interwar period: "Together with the landlords, the Moldavian church contributes to preserve the national consciouness, being influenced by the cultural activities of the Bishop Amfilohie Hotiniul, as well as the Bessarabian priests who were guided by the well-known founder of the Bessarabian Metropolitan, Gavriil Banulescu Bodoni, helped by the bishop Dimitrie, and both of them have had an important cultural role in Bessarabia - (...) Synod of Pobiedonostev and and the bishops sought to inspire official orthodoxy to our church in Bessarabia. Though, it remained faithful to old traditions settlement of the Moldovan people, and kept intact the treasur of its ancestral soul".¹⁴

After the annexation of Bessarabia by Russia in 1812, the new authorities accepted to keep the local ecclesial structures. The Essay of the Holy Synod for the founding of the Diocese of Chisinau and Hotin asks for certain independence and for the existing local structures to be preserved,

¹³ *Luminătorul*, Nr. 1, 1908, p. 78.

¹⁴ Pan. Halippa, „Cu gândul la Unirea Basarabiei” („Thinking of the Union of Bessarabia”), in *Life of Bessarabia*, 1932, Year 1, Nr. 3, p. 4.

etc¹⁵. Thus, it is explicitly mentioned: "in the management of the newly established Diocese, is requested for the Exarch Metropolitan to be allowed to follow local customs, since these will not be in contradiction with fundamental civil and ecclesiastical laws of Russia. (...) "¹⁶. This way, the following approach is stated: the absence of major contradictions and differences is the reason why the local Church has been granted a relative independence and freedom.

In August 1812 the foundation of a diocese has been approved, in which the "local customs" had to be respected; it was named Diocese of Chisinau and Hotin, and preserved the same organization. In 1814 in Chisinau it approved the opening of an exarch printing house. Also in 1814 the Theological Seminary has been set in Chisinau. In 1858 the official newspaper of the Bessarabian church has been issued, called *Vestitorul Eparhiei Chişinăului şi Hotinului* (The Herald of Diocese of Chisinau and Hotin), with texts in Romanian and Russian.

Nonetheless, the Russification process intensified lately, getting to the point of imposing to the Church of Bessarabia the use of Russian language as a compulsory language when holding the church services. In the interwar period, however, the *national church* became valued by the elites.

In the article "The utility of the Moldovan newspaper" signed by I. Pelivan, published in the first issue of the review *Basarabia*, the author draws some "claims": he says that Moldovans need their "*Romanian school and national church*"¹⁷. Also in the cover story of the third issue of the newspaper *Basarabia*, which was not signed (but Stefan Ciobanu said was written by I. Pelivan) and whose motto was "Awaken thee, Romanian, shake off thy deadly slumber, The scourge of inauspicious barbarian tyrannies"¹⁸, beside statements concerning the unity of religion, was expressed the discontent with the fact that the prayers (church services) were held mostly

¹⁵ „Înfiinţarea Eparhiei Chişinăului şi Hotinului – 1813” („Founding of the Diocese of Chisinau and Hotin - 1813”), in *Archives of Bessarabia*, 1929, Nr. 1, p. 34.

¹⁶ „Înfiinţarea Eparhiei Chişinăului şi Hotinului – 1813” („Founding of the Diocese of Chisinau and Hotin - 1813”), in *Archives of Bessarabia*, 1929, Nr. 1, p. 34.

¹⁷ Ion Pelivan, „Folosul gazetei moldoveneşti”, („The utility of Moldovan newspaper”) in *Basarabia*, 1906, nr. 1, *apud* Ştefan Ciobanu, „Din istoria mişcării naţionale în Basarabia” („From the history of the national movement in Bessarabia”), in *Life of Bessarabia*, January 1933, Year II, Nr. 1, p. 9.

¹⁸ Part of the lyric of the current Romanian anthem.

in Russian. "Only we, from Bessarabia, we are the most oppressed and miserable people, although we all profess *the same orthodox religion* as our masters - Russians. (...) That is only us who have no any authority, any national institutions. The Church, our only consolation, even this one has been turned away from us, and the service is now held more in Slovenian than in Moldovan"¹⁹. There have been many articles in which it was requested and justified the need to introduce Moldovan language in schools and in the church. Including after the opening of the Moldovan religious printing house of the Diocese, the newspaper staff continued to claime, asking for schools, churches and for other institutions of national character.

In the article "Russian Culture in Bessarabia took refuge in the family"²⁰, published in 1934 in the magazine *Viața Basarabiei (Life of Bessarabia)*, F. Săgeată presents the new realities in the weight (influence) of the Russian language and culture in schools and churches: "Russian language, then, has been chase out of school, church and public institutions, introducing instead Romanian"²¹. The bilingualism, nonetheless, due also to mixed families, continues to exist in the Bessarabian families, especially in the case of intellectuals: "The families of intellectuals from Bessarabia speak two languages: Russian and Romanian. (...) Families of Bessarabian intellectuals are also keepers of rich Russian libraries"²².

The conclusion of the author is that the Russian's culture influence is very strong, and reached an important segment of the population, the intellectuals, being absorbed in the family: "The family is the nest where sought protection all the traditions of the previous rulers. And as tradition can not change from one day to the next, it would take a long time to feel

¹⁹ Basarabia, 1906, nr. 3, *apud* Ștefan Ciobanu, „Din istoria mișcării naționale în Basarabia”, („From the history of the national movement in Bessarabia”), in *Life of Bessarabia*, January 1933, Year II, Nr. 1, p. 11. (Emphasys added: I.D.)

²⁰ F. Săgeată, „Cultura rusă în Basarabia s-a refugiat în familie”, (Russian Culture in Bessarabia took refuge in the family), *Viața Basarabiei*, 1934, nr. 4, p. 223.

²¹ F. Săgeată, „Cultura rusă în Basarabia s-a refugiat în familie”, (Russian Culture in Bessarabia took refuge in the family), *Viața Basarabiei*, 1934, nr. 4, p. 223.

²² F. Săgeată, „Cultura rusă în Basarabia s-a refugiat în familie”, (Russian Culture in Bessarabia took refuge in the family), *Viața Basarabiei*, 1934, nr. 4, pp. 224-225.

the wind of Romanian spirituality renewal."²³ The author explains why this influence persists, citing "the spiritual affinity for everything bears the seal of the Russian culture", which is "deeply rooted in the hearts of all members of these families and is a product of Russian tradition of live before the Union."²⁴

Elites, discourse and concepts of identity

The social functionality of Bessarabian elite's discourses is different: to legitimize positions, attitudes, attitudes, affiliations, identities.

In the article "From the history of the national movement in Bessarabia"²⁵, Ștefan Ciobanu presented elites existing before the Union of 1918, groups of intellectuals, their proximity to certain political parties, the groups structure. It also describes the behavior and ideological options leading (orienting) intellectuals of the time: Pan Halippa (which was part of the group of Bessarabian intellectuals and students at the University of Dorpat, along with P. Grosu, N. Bivol, V. Platonov, etc. Referring to other groups, the historian reminds the Bessarabian landowners who created a Moldovan national party that intended to promote nationalism, and a group around the National Democratic Party), together with C. Stere, I. Pelivan etc. These intellectuals managed to start a newspaper, "Basarabia", whose first issue was printed in 1906, in Romanian (texts were written with Cyrillic alphabet, and the title of the newspaper with Latin letters).

Regarding the behavior of elites (nobles/landlords/, priests, teachers and "professionals from different intellectual areas") from Bessarabia during the annexation by the Russian Empire, Pan. Halippa speaks about their *Moldovan consciousness*: they opposed to Russification's tendency and to absolutism, and supported the Romanian national cause in Bessarabia.

In the identitarian discourses in Bessarabia the notion of national identity and of cultural identity is in a relation of free variation. In S. Murafa's article, entitled "Who the Moldovans are? (From the history of the

²³ F. Săgeată, „Cultura rusă în Basarabia s-a refugiat în familie”, (Russian Culture in Bessarabia took refuge in the family), *Viața Basarabiei*, 1934, nr. 4, p. 226.

²⁴ F. Săgeată, „Cultura rusă în Basarabia s-a refugiat în familie”, (Russian Culture in Bessarabia took refuge in the family), *Viața Basarabiei*, 1934, nr. 4, p. 225.

²⁵ Ștefan Ciobanu, „Din istoria mișcării naționale în Basarabia”, (From the history of the national movement in Bessarabia) în *Viața Basarabiei*, ianuarie 1933, Anul II, Nr. 1, p. 3.

nation)"²⁶, published in May 1913, the political realities of the context are explained - the author remembers the ethnic belonging of Moldavians (part of the Romanian *people*), mapping Romanian living space: "But not the whole *nation* lives under the same leaders. Some of Romanians are subjects of Austro-Hungarian emperor, such as those from Transylvania, Banat, Crisana and Maramures, Bucovina, others live in Makedonia and Albania – former Turkish country until today; and we *Moldovans* from Bessarabia are faithful to His Imperial Excellency, Emperor of all the Russians, Nikolai Alexandrovich II. And only those from Moldova, Muntenia, Oltenia and Dobrogea are autonomous and make up their country, Romania."²⁷

Discourses in the interwar press are recalled /cited/ because they are representative for the specific to those period modes of conceptualization and questioning. This measure, or step, of building an identity image has been updated years later. In the contemporary period we have seen that in this action historians are involved too. Referring to the direct involvement of professional historians from the Republic of Moldova, which assume the role of "public intellectuals", in the formulation of identity discourse, in the process of building a collective identity (a generally valid phenomenon in the Eastern Europe, but in some regions with more intensity), Andrei Cusco and Igor Sarov²⁸ explain how exactly this involvement manifests itself, and the mechanisms of this "self-assumed militancy": "historians from Moldova in the late twentieth century and in the start of the millennium appear (show themselves) not as 'guardians' of an academic or scientific tradition "objective" in its essence. On the contrary, the professional historians are involved in symbolic competitions oriented to legitimize a certain "discours of nation", and their public positions can

²⁶ S. Murafa, „Cine-s moldovenii? (Din Istoria neamului)” (Who the Moldovans are? (From the history of the nation)), în *Cuvînt Moldovenesc*, Nr. 1, May, year 1913 (with Cyrillic script), p. 17.

²⁷ S. Murafa, „Cine-s moldovenii? (Din Istoria neamului)” (Who the Moldovans are? (From the history of the nation)), în *Cuvînt Moldovenesc*, Nr. 1, May, year 1913 (with Cyrillic script), p. 20. (Emphasys added: I.D.)

²⁸ Andrei Cușco, Igor Șarov, „Identitate, memorie și discurs istoric în Moldova postsovietică: o abordare critică”, (Identity, Memory and Historical Discourse in Post-Soviet Moldova: A Critical Approach), in: Svetlana Suveică, Ion Eremia et al. (ed.). *Istoriografie și politică în estul și vestul spațiului românesc (Historiography and Politics at the Eastern and Western Periphery of the Romanian Cultural Space)*. Chișinău / Oradea: Oradea University Press, 2009.

better be analysed from the positions of their implications in «field of battle» of the fight for «identity» and «memory».²⁹

More specifically, the identity discourse has similar coordinates: many elements, concepts used in the interwar discourses are valid in the postwar or contemporary discourse. Critics of the elites, of intellectuals which are not fighting enough for "the national needs of Moldovans" is part of the mode of rhetoric that have assumed /assimilated/ also the postwar intellectuals.

Citing the Ukaz (Decree) of February 17, under which "all nationalities of the Russian Empire, through their representative institutions (...) presented a whole range of applications, petitions, resolutions on their needs; according to their historical, national, economic situations, I. Pelivan mentions the behavior of the Bessarabian's elites, which he critically amends. "But in this era of extraordinary general awakening, at this unanimous and unprecedented in the Russian history attack to the bureaucracy, from all conscious and intellectual forces from the empire, irrespective of class or nationality – our Bessarabian intellectuals maintain the most shameful silence: not a word has been pronounced openly regarding the Moldovan national needs."³⁰ The Bessarabian intellectuals, thus, from the beginning, are criticized for their alleged apathy, insufficient mobilization etc. It is a rhetoric that intellectuals reactivate in some socio-political contexts, punishing this way the passive behavior of the elites.

Regarding the reiteration of the critical discourse about the elite behavior in the postwar period, it is accompanied by the critic of the ideological positions of the intellectuals, the political proximity being equally criticized. In the postwar period, though, discourses can not be ideologically neutral.

²⁹ Andrei Cușco, Igor Șarov, „Identitate, memorie și discurs istoric în Moldova postsovietică: o abordare critică”, (Identity, Memory and Historical Discourse in Post-Soviet Moldova: A Critical Approach), in: Svetlana Suveică, Ion Eremia et al. (ed.). *Istoriografie și politică în estul și vestul spațiului românesc (Historiography and Politics at the Eastern and Western Periphery of the Romanian Cultural Space)*. Chișinău / Oradea: Oradea University Press, 2009, p. 73.

³⁰ Ion Pelivan, „Din Istoria Nouă a Basarabiei” („From the New History of Bessarabia”), *Life of Bessarabia*, [Russian Newspaper in Chișinău] from 15 of October 1905, No. 255/310, *apud Arhivele Basarabiei*, 1932, nr. 2, p. 112.

In the interwar period, however, existed /there were/ different attitudes, and groups of intellectuals involved in the city's life. It is worth to mention the intellectuals who have taken the aim, explicitly exposed in the first issue of "Doina of Dniester": "the revival of the national consciousness in these lands." This review - "a review of general culture and national propaganda" was "the Body of the company with the same name" and proposed "radical measures of correction and consolidation of the nation's destiny"³¹. Thus, the concern for the preservation of the identity was constant.

In a letter to the editorial board of the newspaper "Cuvânt moldovenesc" ("Moldovan word") of March 17, 1917, signed by several intellectuals from Bessarabia in Bolgrad (Ioniță Pelivan, Ștefan Ciobanu and Ionel Văluță) Russian Empire's policies in this province are described - the Russification of this territory by "the extirpation of mother tongue" and the destruction of the "national features": "The principle of national development of all peoples of Russia upheld by the current provisional government of the empire fills our hearts with joy and hope that our Moldavians from Bessarabia, which were in danger to have their maternal speech eradicated and national features destroyed by the old stepmother domination, would finally awaken to a new life and freedom"³². Beyond the updating of the claiming discourse, it is included the memory of diachronically suffered injustice.

Still, in 1905, in the review "Life of Bessarabia" ("Russian Newspaper in Chisinau"), I. Pelivan wrote about the inefficiency of the Russification and confirms that empire policies will change: "The experience of a century, though, which was made by bureaucracy to this purpose (the experience of Russification - my note - ID) of all nationalities in the empire, seems it need to convince all those who It have to, that interdiction of the tongue, and any means of forced Russification, are absolutely ineffective."³³

³¹ „Cuvânt introductiv” („Foreword”), in *Doina Nistrului*, June 1936, Year 1, Nr. 1, p. 1.

³² *Archives of Bessarabia*, 1930, nr. 1, p. 120

³³ Ion Pelivan, „Din Istoria Nouă a Basarabiei” („From the New History of Bessarabia”), *Life of Bessarabia*, [Russian Newspaper in Chișinău] from 15 of October 1905, No. 255/310, *apud Arhivele Basarabiei*, 1932, nr. 2, pp. 111.

The absence of the national conflict in the Bessarabian Orthodox Church

The model of the trans-ethnic orthodoxy is the only one functioning in Bessarabia, where the confessional belonging is cohesion, coagulation factor. The argument of the Moldovan Church – subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchy – is that its aim and mission is to keep the sense of common belonging of the Orthodox of the separatist regions of Moldova - Transdnistria and Gagauzia. Here the reactivation of the ethnic problems is functioning as a pressure factor: ethnic conflicts are reactivated due to political reasons. Given the fact that the ethnic connotation of the church in Moldova would have a potentially schismatic connotation, it renounced to confer ethnic connotations to the church symbols in order to avoid conflicts.

Thus we can talk about confessional unity in ethnic diversity. A project like "The Church of people" could not function as it does in other areas – because it would revive irredentist impulses etc. In Romania, however, as well as in Russia, the confessional belonging has ethnic connotations. In the study *“Romanian orthodoxy, between ideology of exclusion and sécularisation amiable”*³⁴, that aims to reveal the structural link between modernity and (radical) nationalism, expressed in the ethnocentric discourse which is still dominating Romanian Orthodoxy, respectively outlining its potential for exclusion - "the exclusionist potential"- Florin Lobonț speaks about the auto-centrism ideological impasse which still dominates orthodoxy „the deadlock of ideological self-centrism that still dominates our Orthodoxy”, because as the author puts it, the relationship between the State and State is a problematic one here. Florin Lobonț explains how the discriminatory potential is expressed: as far as a clear distinction between citizenship and nationality persists, and the nationality, the ethnic belonging is inseparable from orthodoxy - any citizen who does not belongs to Orthodoxy, and does not claim its affiliation to Orthodoxy, excludes himself, and can not claim the belonging to the nation.

³⁴ Florin Lobonț, „Romanian orthodoxy, between ideology of exclusion and sécularisation amiable”, in *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 8, 24 (Winter 2009), pp. 46-69.

In Bessarabia we can talk about trans-orthodoxy. (Florin Lobonț³⁵ spoke about an overlapping of the ethnic identity over religious identity and the discriminatory consequences for ethnic minority groups in Romania). In Bessarabia the split or the cleavage occurs for other reasons - political, ideological. Here, power relationships, about which Sorin Frunza says that they are "behind the claims on cultural identity"³⁶ are more evident.

In the volume *Skinny, people or nation? – about European political identity*³⁷, Victor Neumann explains "the inconsistencies between the idea of nation of the French, British and Dutch people on the one hand and that formulated by the Poles, Serbs, Romanian and Greek, on the other hand".

The historian says that "on the basis of the cultural differentialism", "the significance of *citoyenneté* or *Citizenship* of the West European political and legal languages is receiving a different interpretation in the Central and Eastern European cultures³⁸." After, the author interprets the differences regarding questioning of identities: "Instead of the idea of equality of all citizens, the central and Eastern European intellectuals preferred to promote the idea of an identity based on origin, continuity, blood (race), space and language. The latter aspect explains why actually the Central and Eastern European nation of yesterday and today are nothing more than a *Kulturnation*, that is, an ethnic nation, namely, a nation of the main ethnic group³⁹". Moreover, we could mention here that in some central and eastern European regions the national belonging is conditional on religious affiliation.

³⁵ Florin Lobonț, „Romanian orthodoxy, between ideology of exclusion and sécularisation amiable”, în *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 8, 24 (Winter 2009), pp. 46-69.

³⁶ Sandu Frunză, „Pluralism și multiculturalism” („Pluralism and multiculturalism”) in *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, Nr. 9, (Winter 2004), p. 137.

³⁷ Victor Neumann, *Neam, popor sau națiune? - Despre identitățile politice europene*³⁷, („*Skinny, People or Nation? On the European Political Identities*”), Bucarest: Curtea Veche Publishing House, 2003.

³⁸ Victor Neumann, *Neam, popor sau națiune? - Despre identitățile politice europene*³⁸, („*Skinny, People or Nation? On the European Political Identities*”), Bucarest: Curtea Veche Publishing House, 2003, p. 10.

³⁹ Victor Neumann, *Neam, popor sau națiune? - Despre identitățile politice europene*³⁹, („*Skinny, People or Nation? On the European Political Identities*”), Curtea Veche Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, p. 10.

In Bessarabia, however, the Orthodox religion becomes the basis for common identification and belonging; it is a religion /confession/ that transcends national boundaries, or rather does not overlap or coincide with ethnicity. The cultural-religious identity is more important in this multicultural space; ethnic conflicts and tensions caused by ideologies are diluted. Here the tradition functions as an "authority", called by the hierarchical structures in order to bring legitimacy. Traditional forms of social life are marked by rituals associated with this confession: religion is a unifying element favoring dialogue between ethnicities⁴⁰.

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