
BOOK REVIEWS

ION GUMENĂI

**Comunitățile romano-catolice,
protestante și lipovenești din Basarabia
în secolul al XIX-lea**

(The Roman Catholic, Protestant and
Lippovan communities from Bessarabia
in the 19th century)

Chișinău: Institutul de Studii Enciclopedice, 2013

NO ONE doubts today that the diversity of traditions and cultures has constituted, for centuries, one of the riches of Europe and that the principle of tolerance has represented, in the past few decades, the guarantee for maintaining an open society in Europe, with respect for cultural diversity. The Republic of Moldova is today a sovereign, independent state, but for many centuries it was part of an important province in present-day Romania, Moldova. From 1812 to 1918, it was part of the Russian Empire, just like from June 1940 to June 1941 and from the summer of 1944 to the summer of 1991 it was part of the Soviet Union, which had wrested this territory from Romania. In Moldova (known as Bessarabia), starting from the early Middle Ages, several peoples settled alongside the Romanians in durable, peaceful and organic manner, just like, during the timespans in which Bessarabia belonged to the Russian Empire and to the Soviet Union, there were systematically and intensively colonized several populations that have influenced the history of the autochthonous inhabitants with variable intensity over time. Among the ethnic

groups that settled here spontaneously or were the subject of the colonization organized by the Russian authorities, there were Russians, Hungarians, Germans, Jews, Armenians, Bulgarians, Gagauz, Lippovans, etc. Naturally, their presence among the native Romanians, who always represented the majority despite the demographic policy of Russification waged in 1812–1918 and 1944–1991, was not unitary either in chronological (they had come here at different historical moments) or demographic terms, some settling in greater numbers, others in a smaller proportion. Ever since the Middle Ages, Bessarabia has had a population composed of Romanians and, then, in the modern and contemporary periods, of Russians, Germans, Gagauz people, etc., belonging to the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran religions, besides which other ethnicities and denominations were also recorded: Mosaic, Muslim, etc.

The work written by the historian Ion Gumenăi comes to fill a gap in the historiography produced in the Republic of Moldova and elsewhere, addressing the history of ethnic and confessional communities that are extremely important for this space, which is multi-ethnic and multi-denominational by definition. Minorities have represented, ever since the interwar period, and all the more so today, a priority subject on the agenda of international relations. States, supranational political bodies, have been concerned, for many decades, to protect the national minorities within the states and to avoid, as much as possible, inter-ethnic and inter-

confessional conflicts. At the end of World War I, the League of Nations championed a minority protection system that included the right to petition, cultural rights, the right to education, to one's own language, etc. The Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, adopted in Strasbourg on 1 February 1995, promotes non-discrimination, the equality between national minorities and the majority, as well as individual freedoms: the right of assembly, association, expression, thought and conscience. Moreover, linguistic freedom, openness to the other and the preservation of cultural identity are issues that represent a constant concern of the European institutions. The European Convention requires the member states to promote conditions that will enable persons belonging to the national minorities to maintain and develop their culture, to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage.

After the annexation of Moldova's territory between the Pruth and the Dniester in 1812 (which is called Bessarabia and today is large independent Republic of Moldova), Russia endeavored to provide the province with a new administrative structure, in an attempt to alter its Romanian specificity. Bessarabia witnessed a transition period in the first decades, with a view to its full integration in the Russian Empire. In 1818, Tsar Alexander established the capital of the province at Chişinău. It was also then that the warrant governing the territorial reorganization was issued, known as The Decree for Organizing the Province of Bessarabia. It stipulated the preservation of and respect for the ancient laws and customs of Moldova, as well as the unrestricted use of the Romanian language. The decree served as a provincial

constitution, with a somewhat liberal character. Bessarabia was subjected to a military governor, but the other administrative and judicial bodies were civilian, elective. Apparently, favorable conditions had been created for the development of the province in the spirit of historical traditions, the majority Romanian population accepting, without much resistance, the new political regime. The policy targeted at centralization and the restriction of the privileged provinces' rights waged by Tsar Nicholas I after 1825 shortly entailed the loss of Bessarabia's autonomy. On 29 January 1829, the Tsar sanctioned the so-called Voronzov "Regulations," which had awarded the governor general appointed by the tsar decision-making power in the entire province. Virtually all of Bessarabia's autonomy was canceled. Russian officials were introduced in the administration and Russian became an official language. There began a long process of Russification in the province, which meant a period of ordeals for the Romanian elite: arrests, deportations, etc., along with an intense policy of colonization with foreign populations—German, Bulgarian, Gagauz, French, etc.—promoted by Russia. In this way, over the decades that followed, the massively Romanian ethnic structure of the province between the Pruth and the Dniester was adversely affected, decreasing the proportion of Romanian population, which nonetheless preserved its demographic majority. Thanks to responsible religious prelates, concerned about maintaining national identity—Metropolitans Gavriil Bănulescu-Bodoni and Dumitru Sulima—there were built over 200 Orthodox churches and Romanian was maintained as the language of worship. Moreover, the religious and school books that were printed circulated throughout

Bessarabia. In 1844, when a Russian metropolitan was appointed, there started the massive Russification of the Romanian church and school system.

The research conducted by Ion Gumenâi has not been in the least easy because it has required complex documentation and because its subject had not only to be projected against the local and provincial contextual background of Bessarabia, but also to be included in a broader perspective on demographic policy from around the time of the first Tsarist rule. Thus, the author uses mostly unpublished archival sources from the Republic of Moldova, but he also brings historical and statistical information from archives in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania, along with published documentary sources and a rich specialist literature comprising several national historiographies. The work is structured into four chapters, logically articulated and balanced in terms of their length, starting from the first chapter, which is dedicated to the problem of religious minorities in Bessarabia during the years 1812–1828 and examines the quantitative aspects and the organization of these communities. The following chapters focus on the demographic evolution of religious minorities in Bessarabia from 1828 until the late 19th century, insisting on the manner in which these Roman Catholic and Protestant communities were established and evolved naturally. The author also manages to restore, extremely coherently, the relations of these ethnic and religious minorities with the authorities of the central Russian power and with the Orthodox ecclesiastical authorities of the majority Romanian population. The numerous statistic information from the actual text and the tables at the end of the book convincingly demonstrate how rich, in ethnic and confessional terms,

the Romanian province between the Pruth and the Dniester was in the modern era, this ethnic-demographic reality being visible even today, in the present-day state of Moldova.



IOAN BOLOVAN

MIRCEA GHEORGHE ABRUDAN

Ortodoxie și luteranism în Transilvania între Revoluția pașoptistă și Marea Unire. Evoluție istorică și relații confesionale

(Orthodoxie et luthéranisme en Transylvanie entre la Révolution quarante-huitarde et la Grande Union. Évolution historique et relations confessionnelles) Sibiu – Cluj-Napoca, Ed. Andreiană, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2015

FAISANT SUITE à d'autres livres parus le dernier temps sur le même thème, tels que ceux appartenant à l'académicien Mircea Păcurariu, à l'évêque Johann Schneider et au professeur Paul Brusanowski, cet ouvrage de Mircea Gheorghe Abrudan constitue l'une des contributions les plus importantes à l'étude de la vie et l'activité du hiérarque orthodoxe transylvain Andrei Șaguna. Il est d'abord important par le matériel documentaire inédit qu'il met en circulation : de nouvelles sources découvertes dans les archives et les bibliothèques d'Autriche, Roumanie, Allemagne. Ensuite, il est important par le sujet qu'il nous propose : les rapports de l'Église orthodoxe roumaine de Transylvanie avec l'Église évangélique, respectivement les relations d'Andrei Șaguna avec les leaders spirituels et politiques de la communauté saxonne de Transylvanie.