

# The Armenians in Iași (the First Half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century) Economic and Social Aspects

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*“Nobody shall be robbed  
of anything from their  
home, neither carpet,  
nor crumb, nor mattress,  
nor blanket, nor vessels,  
nor other item worth one  
penny, be they Christians,  
Armenians, or Jews.”*

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**T**HE ARMENIANS, “an honorable guild and traders and useful to the land,”<sup>1</sup> settled east of the Carpathians before the founding of Moldavia, some coming across the Black Sea and more coming from the kingdom of Poland (the regions of Lvov, Kamianets and Sniatyn).<sup>2</sup> By settling in this area, once their central authority became constituted and consolidated, the Armenians were granted internal administrative and religious autonomy (they founded an Armenian bishopric on 30 July 1401, with its headquarters in Suceava)<sup>3</sup> and they also had the right to build their own churches. Approximately 3,000 Armenian families were received into Moldavia by Alexander the Good and they were distributed among the main towns of the country (Suceava, Iași, Botoșani, Roman, Siret, Dorohoi, Vaslui, Khotin, Kilia, Cetatea Albă). After 1627 a new wave of Armenians came to Moldavia from Poland, where the Bishop Nicholas Torosovich was putting pressure on them to unite with the Church of Rome.<sup>4</sup>

After experiencing periods of repression and persecution, around the mid-

dle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (during the reigns of Stephen Rareș, Stephen I Tomșa, Bogdan Lăpușneanu),<sup>5</sup> as well as a period when a number of Armenians emigrated from Moldavia to Transylvania (1672),<sup>6</sup> the Armenian community remained an active presence in the economic and social life of the country, as frequently mentioned in the documents from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. N. Iorga mentions that “trade was not ours, but it belonged to the foreign element that was conducting commerce, the Armenians. A Moldavian fair could not be organized then without the Armenians. Thus, they are, in a way, the parents of Moldavia, that is, our ancestors.”<sup>7</sup>

In the Middle Ages settlements were built around parish churches and they had their own cemetery. Generally, they were grouped according to the traditional ethnic and social-economic factors which governed the towns of Wallachia and Moldavia until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Iași, on one side of the Old Road (Ulița Veche) an Armenian community was settled around a church, close to the princely court, where, during the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, there was available land.<sup>8</sup> Behind the Old Bridge (Podul Vechi—currently Costache Negri St.) the Armenians had St. Mary’s church and the Armenian Lane (Ulița Armenească). The dating of the church (1395) is still a controversial issue among specialists,<sup>9</sup> as it seems too early, given that the independent Moldavian state was only founded at the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, the establishment of the Armenian bishopric was proof of the importance of Armenians in Moldavia.

The Armenians created their own guilds, specializing from early on in the cattle trade. In the Moldavian towns Armenians were allowed to have properties inside the city walls (houses, cellars, shops), but they could not own land, except for vineyards. The Armenian traders settled close to the market and they owned shops placed “in front of the market.” Apart from distribution according to ethnic criteria, in Iași there were also occupational criteria (there were areas named Cizmărie, Băibărăcărie, Arcărie—shoemakers, tailors, bow makers’ quarters—the latter located near the Armenian quarter etc.).<sup>10</sup> Moreover, during the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, due to an expansion in wine-trading among citizens, there was an unprecedented increase in the number of cellars that sold wine.

From the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the attributions of stewards grew, especially in regard to town administration, trade-related matters, official decisions, plots and buildings assessment, price-setting for buildings, solving local quarrels,<sup>11</sup> all aspects richly reflected in the documents from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which frequently focused on the Armenians in Iași.<sup>12</sup>

The documents from the 18<sup>th</sup> century provide valuable information on the evolution of properties owned by the Armenian churches in Iași, as well as by the members of that community, on Podul Vechi lane and in the Armenian quar-

ter. There are frequent mentions of names of various citizens who owned houses, shops and land. By studying those documents one can also draw up lineages for certain merchants in Iași, make a list of the trusteeships of the Armenian church and draw a clearer map of the area under study, for that period.<sup>13</sup> The rich information found in the local documents in regard to the Armenians in Iași made us take into account only the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century for the present study, which will be continued with the second half of that century in the near future.

The most valuable and therefore the most desirable housing places were the ones near churches, and the Armenian ones, such as St. Mary and St. Gregory the Light Bringer<sup>14</sup> (erected in 1616 and located on Ulița Cizmăriei) were no exception. Thus, on 15 October 1704 mention was made of a house on Podul Vechi lane, owned by an Armenian named Măcuța, the former wife of Ilie the Armenian.<sup>15</sup> In 1713, Jacob, son of the Armenian bow maker Latef, sold to Iane, the elder merchant, a house lot, for the sum of 60 lei. That property, whose precise location was not mentioned, had been bought by Latef from another Armenian, Melic.<sup>16</sup> The former Armenian elder, Ivan, bought from the married couple of Toderașcu and Calița a house on the same Podul Vechi lane, as well as other houses, in the presence of the father superior of Bărboiul monastery and of the Armenian Marin, for the sum of 70 lei.<sup>17</sup>

A property confirmation by the voivode was also granted to Cârstea Latef, an Armenian bow maker for whom, on 2 June 1715, the ruler of the country, Nicholas Mavrocordato, recognized the ownership of the houses with cellars located in Arcărie, on Podul Vechi lane, near the Armenian church of St. Mary. The sum of 216 newly minted lei was paid by the new owner to Sandul, the son of Tănase the merchant.<sup>18</sup> Another Armenian, Drăghici, together with his wife, Soltana, sold a place in Iași, obtained as dowry from the father-in-law, Simon, for the sum of 8 newly minted lei, to the priest John, the brother-in-law of the seller. The document was signed by Drăghici, “by my own hand, as Armenians do” and “before our elders, priests and other good persons that signed their name and also placed the community seal.”<sup>19</sup> In 1723 an Armenian family consisting of Katrina, wife of Sandu, an Armenian tailor (*băibănăcar*—the term designates a type of cheap cloth, affordable even to the poor), the tailor Neculai, Sanda and Măriuța, the children of Katrina, sold to the brothers Hariton Harepul and Azbei a house with a bit of land, located on Podul Vechi, for 160 lei.<sup>20</sup>

An interesting transaction occurred in 1719, when the Armenian Bogdan Soronar, together with his wife Anna, offered as a gift to their son-in-law Bogdan and to the nieces Anna and Soltana a house located near Bărboi monastery, as well as a vineyard in Miroslava. In exchange for that gift, the son-in-law, Bogdan, had to “take care of Anna and her husband Bogdan Soronar, until their death and afterwards, as customary.” The signing of that document was also witnessed by the elder of merchants in Iași, the priest Marzam.<sup>21</sup>

Sitting on the throne of Moldavia for the third time, on 15 February 1726, Michael Racoviță confirmed that Aracăl, an Armenian bow maker, was the rightful owner of a house lot on Podul Vechi, which had been bought from Lupul for 60 newly minted lei. The place was bordered by the “fence of the Armenian church,” where the “Armenian cemetery” started.<sup>22</sup> Another transaction involving a property from the Armenian area took place on 1 September 1727, when the former treasurer, Vasile Adam, sold to Vasile Mardare, for 370 lei, a “house with a yard and a stone cellar” on Podul Vechi. We note that both the seller and the buyer were not Armenians, but the house that was sold was near the property of Manii, son of the Armenian Ilii.<sup>23</sup> Later, on 20 September 1741, another property was sold, again near the house of Mane, son of the Armenian Ilie—it was the one sold by Grigoraș Mărdari to Aristarhu Hrisoscoleos vel ban, for 600 lei, a house with stone cellars.<sup>24</sup>

On 22 February 1730, Norăș, son of the Armenian Gligorie, together with his wife, Ruja, sold to the spouses Manole and Bălașa a place on Chervăsărie lane, “across the street from our Armenian church,” for the sum of 30 newly minted lei. As we can see, that was a new property, neighboring the Armenian church and also the house of the priestess Hagioaia<sup>25</sup> (we should mention that on the fourth page of the document there is a note saying “the place in Băibărăcărie”). Several months later, on 22 December 1730, Voivode Gregory II Ghica was summoned to solve a dispute between two Armenian tailors, Parfene and Manole, regarding the place on Chervăsărie lane, where a shop had been added. Parfene, the son-in-law of Norăș, who had bought the house lot in February 1730, had paid to Manole a debt of 20 lei on behalf of his father-in-law, and therefore the ruler of the country decided: “I deemed Manole and his wife reimbursed, so they had to leave that place be and they were taken their deed, which was handed to Parfene.”<sup>26</sup>

On 30 May 1731, Voivode Gregory Ghica confirmed Cârstea Latef’s ownership of several houses with cellars, located in Arcărie, on Podul Vechi, properties which had been bought from Sandul for 216 newly minted lei. The deed had been initially issued by Nicholas Mavrocordato.<sup>27</sup> In 1734, Hagi, an Armenian merchant, acquired for the sum of 75 lei “a house lot with a small house on it,” located on Podul Vechi, near Bărboiul monastery, from Cârste, the son of Peter. The transaction was witnessed by “leading persons from the Princely Court” (out of which seven were Armenians), who signed the deed.<sup>28</sup> Another transfer of property occurred on 20 August 1735, when Jacob, an Armenian shoemaker and his sons, Petri and Sava, sold to Toader, the son-in-law of the former, for the sum of 30 newly minted lei, a house lot located “uphill of Hagioaia bridge, at the end of the lanes that come from Curălarilor church, on the road that goes up towards the cattle market and downhill to the courtyard of Păscăloai Paraskeva.”<sup>29</sup>

On 6 May 1738, another house on Podul Vechi was sold for 92 newly minted lei, by the family of Balica and Katrina, the daughter of Axinte, an Armenian tailor.<sup>30</sup> That property was resold several months later by Axinte to Manolachi and Tudosca (on 17 September 1738).<sup>31</sup> A similar transaction happened on 11 April 1740, when Cârste, son of Ivan, elder of the Armenians, sold to the merchant Lohan a house on Podul Vechi, for the sum of 450 lei, in the presence of the witnesses Mardiros the Elder, Ovanes and Donigas.<sup>32</sup>

An interesting episode is mentioned in a series of three documents from 1743–1744. Thus, on 20 November 1743, the Armenian Cerchez and his wife Katrina sold to Ene the Greek, a former guard, a house lot on Bârboiul lane, for the sum of 50 lei. Among the witnesses there was an Armenian, Andrieş “an old man, townsman, son of Avidec, a free peasant.”<sup>33</sup> That property was bordered several months later, on 27 May 1744, by Simon Cheşco, a registry keeper.<sup>34</sup> The second day, on 28 May 1744, the buyers Iane (Ene) and Katrina confirmed that the sum of 40 lei they paid to Cerchez had been received from Vasile, a merchant in Iaşi, thereby breaching the right to first option of that merchant in regard to the sold/bought asset. On the back of the second page of that document, a note from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century mentions that the place in question “was reclaimed with priority by Vasâli the merchant, after a trial against the aforementioned, for the place was next to that of Vasâli the merchant.”<sup>35</sup>

In May 1745, the daughter of the Armenian Ovanes, Milica, together with her husband Lebentu, sold to Bârboi monastery the place she had inherited from her father. The transaction took place for the sum of 160 lei, in the presence of the father superior, Kir Parfenie the hieromonk, but also of the bishop of the country, Kir Gavril.<sup>36</sup> Near Curelari church, dated 1663,<sup>37</sup> a house was sold by Duca, his wife Nastassia and their children, to Enachi, for the sum of 130 lei. We should mention here that Duca had bought that house from Jacob, an Armenian shoemaker, but had lost the document proving that “during the Russian period.”<sup>38</sup>

**D**URING THE 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries vineyards had become increasingly important in the economy of Iaşi, their ownership and exploitation being frequently mentioned in the documents of that time.<sup>39</sup> Armenians also owned vineyards on the hills around the town and they sold the product thereof—wine—in shops and cellars.

Thus, on 1 January 1701, Mary, the wife of the Armenian Luca, together with daughters Ruja, Antonia and Florica, sold to the Jesuits in Iaşi an old vineyard in Urşulea, located “between the vineyards of his holiness” for the sum of 5 lei and one farthing.<sup>40</sup> On 13 March 1722, Stephen and his wife, Sanda, together with their son Andreiaş, sold to their relatives Dumitru and Safta a vineyard on Dealul Hroncii, located “next to and between the vineyard of Sandul, a

crafty Armenian,” the latter also being among the witnesses to that transaction. The price paid for the property was 25 lei.<sup>41</sup>

On 1 March 1724, the Armenian Peter Latif, together with Cârste, the son of Ivan the Armenian, sold to the merchant Panait some old vineyards in Șorogari located on the lands of Golia monastery (we should mention that during the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, most vineyards in Moldavia belonged to monasteries). The two sellers offered an explanation for that transfer of property: “We being unable to tend to them anymore and the father superior of Golia monastery not bearing to see them left untended, as they were on the lands of the monastery.”<sup>42</sup> An Armenian merchant, Ioanes, bought from George the Greek and his wife and children a vineyard located on Dealul Coroiului, on the land of Socola monastery, for the sum of 75 lei. The document was sealed on 30 July 1742.<sup>43</sup>

A vineyard on Dealul Coroiului was sold by Tudosia to Lazor the Armenian for 15 lei in cash, on 6 December 1746. The one who sold the property had been left “without a husband with three sons and two daughters.” Two of Mary’s sons had fled “and they left their unpaid taxes to me. And I, being subjected to the scorn of villagers for the taxes of my sons, sold that piece of land with the old vineyard . . . as it was untended and full of weeds.” That vineyard was located on land belonging to Socola monastery and the transaction took place with the “agreement” of the nuns and their superior.<sup>44</sup>

Closely related to the extension of vineyards was the increase in transactions involving shops and stone cellars, a situation already mentioned above. Thus, a shop lot in Băibărăcărie, near the Armenian church, was offered as a gift by Crăciun and Măricuța to Parfene. That place was also next to the shop of “the old priestess.”<sup>45</sup> On 29 April 1740, there is mention of an act drafted by the courtly stewards for a shop in the Cizmărie area, located between the shop of Sandu the crafty community leader and that of Enachi. That border-setting was also witnessed by Cârste the old Armenian and by Sava the Armenian public servant.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, on 8 July 1740, Jeremiah, an Armenian deacon, bought a shop “broken down, with a stone cellar and its own lot, located in Iași, near the Armenian church, downhill from the house of Lohan the Armenian and next to the road descending from Arcărie to Cizmărie,” for the sum of 150 lei. It was sold by Anița, the wife of a border guard, and was confirmed by Voivode Gregory Ghica just a few days later, on 30 July 1740.<sup>47</sup> A transaction between the Armenian merchant Ioanes and the father superior of Sf. Vineri Filaret monastery was recorded in a document dated 10 June 1742. The Armenian merchant agreed to pay a rent of 12 new lei per year for each of the two shops erected on the land of the monastery on Ulița Rusească (the Russian lane), located near Târgul de Jos.<sup>48</sup>

We have already mentioned the role played by stewards in the economic and social life of Iași. We find mention of those public servants in various busi-

ness transactions involving members of the Armenian community. Thus, on 28 November 1733 the boundaries were set for a lot in the Armenian area, belonging to the Armenian Cârste, the son of the Armenian elder Ivan the Old, on Podul Vechi.<sup>49</sup> Half a year later, the court stewards testified in regard to certain shops located on Băibărăcarilor lane, which were the subject of a dispute between two siblings, Cârstea and Floarea, the children of the Armenian priest Jacob.<sup>50</sup>

On 1 February 1742, the Princely Council recognized the legitimacy of the complaint of John Bosie against Cârstea, an Armenian priest. The latter took over a debt of his brother Gligorie, who had left for Hungary (the debt was eight years old and consisted of the sum of 30 lei and 20 pots of honey). Nevertheless, Cârstea the priest did not pay the debt of his brother to John Bosie, so the court steward Neculai Tiron was assigned to investigate the matter and decided that the plaintiff Bosie was to receive 100 lei (50 lei for the debt and 50 lei “başul,” that is, interest for the delay).<sup>51</sup> On 15 May 1742, the court steward Gavril Pilat testified to Aristarh following an investigation of the house of the Armenian Niculai who owed Gavril the sum of 240 lei. Among the witnesses there was the Armenian Cărăcaş, who signed in the Armenian script.<sup>52</sup>

On 11 October 1744, the stewards were summoned to testify in court in regard to a place in Târgul de Jos, for which Mary and her sons had priority over the Armenian Evanes, the brother of Enachi Botezatu. The shop had been bought from the father superior of Sf. Vineri monastery, Neofit, and next to it there was “an empty place” and “on that place of their own they wanted to build another small shop, but Enachi Botezatu, sitting in the shop of his brother, did not allow them to do that.” After taking measurements, the court stewards “concluded and proved that Enachi Botezatu had done wrong against Mary and her sons in regard to their lot.” Consequently, found in favor of Mary and her sons.<sup>53</sup> In another document, which set the limits of a shop lot located on Podul Hagioaiei, in Târgul de Sus, the public steward Gavril Pilat was summoned to give testimony. Next to the new property of Neculai, who had bought it from Mary and her daughters, there was another shop, belonging to the Armenian Earoh.<sup>54</sup>

The Armenians in Iaşi enjoyed certain privileges and exemptions, proof of the appreciation of their economic role by the courtly authorities. During his second reign, Michael Racoviţă let the boyars and the tax collectors know that three priests and three deacons from the two Armenian churches in Iaşi were exempt from paying any taxes and so were certain Orthodox priests.<sup>55</sup>

The Armenian merchants transiting Moldavia were granted exemptions and privileges by voivodes Constantine Mavrocordato and Gregory Ghica, that state of affairs benefiting both the merchants involved and the country they transited. Thus, on 16 June 1734, Prince Nicholas Mavrocordato informed the Armenian merchants coming from Poland to trade in cattle in Moldavia that their

custom would be respected and that they would not be required to pay, during that year, the pasture tax—“we will comply in everything with your custom and conventions: you shall not have other worries and neither shall you doubt that you will enjoy peaceful trading according to your custom and will. Neither will you pay pasture tax until next year.”<sup>56</sup>

Five years later Voivode Gregory Ghica established the taxes to be paid by the Armenian merchants coming from Poland to trade in cattle. Those taxes were relatively low (40 bani pasture tax for a cow, 1 leu pasture tax for a bull, 1 leu custom tax for a bull etc.) and the prince intervened so that local public servants “not judge or rob them . . . and wherever they may roam with their cattle, nobody shall require anything of them, nor ask anything of them, or offend them.”<sup>57</sup> Among the exemptions for Armenians we should mention that granted by Constantine Mavrocordato on 10 October 1741, whereby the citizens of Iași were required to welcome any newly arrived guests of the town: “Nobody shall be robbed of anything from their home, neither carpet, nor crumb, nor mattress, nor blanket, nor vessels, nor other item worth one penny, be they Christians, Armenians, or Jews.”<sup>58</sup>

A record dated January 1742 contains the names of merchants in Iași that conducted retail trade and were exempted from taxes. Among them there was the Armenian Zeric, son of Mardaros from the Armenian quarter, who “conducts his trade in the Hungarian country.” The decision of Constantine Mavrocordato took into account that Zeric and his sons “are foreigners and have no house here and do not reside here,” but also that the trade needed an impulse—“given that we wish our country to be populated by traders and fairs . . . both they, as well as others that will come under the princely seal, shall not be offended in any way.”<sup>59</sup> A case of individual exemption from all the taxes and duties in Iași was recorded on 5 August 1741, when Voivode Gregory Ghica exempted the Armenian Pambuc, a string maker, from all the taxes paid by the other craftsmen: “For he is a foreigner wishing to earn a living with his craft . . . I took mercy on him and exempted him from all the taxes and duties paid by others from here, the town of Iași, he shall never give anything to anybody, neither more, nor less, for I have exempted him thereof.” Moreover, the Armenian craftsman was urged “that wherever he may find the sheep intestines needed for his craft, he shall be allowed to collect them . . . and nobody shall prevent him.”<sup>60</sup>

We find mention of members of the Armenian community in specific daily contexts, such as the situation recorded on 1 April 1722, when two women bearing the same name, Horopsima, filed a request “to Father Superior Hagi Marcar in regard to a shop in Băibărăcărie, where they resided with the agreement of the church, so that they be allowed to stay there until the end of the year.” That agreement was recorded in the presence of several witnesses, all of them Armenian—



Poma, Avac, Garabed, Bedros.<sup>61</sup> An interesting note in Armenian was found on the back of a document dated 21 May 1734: “As I am a skinny hag I enjoyed living as a hag with my daughter until the Lord decided to shorten my life.” According to that document, Despa and her son sold to Zamfira and her son a house located near St. Sava monastery, for the sum of 20 lei.<sup>62</sup>

An interesting episode was recorded in a document dated 10 March 1736, whereby the Armenian Bogdan offered as a gift to the metropolitan bishop of Iași the gypsy Nicolai, the murderer of his brother, Agopșa. As a motive for that act, the donor invoked Christian mercy: “I pondered and came to believe that there shall not be a death for a death, and by my own will, before the Princely Council, I gave and offered this gypsy, Nicolai, to the holy metropolitan bishop of Iași, for him to forever be a bound servant, for I considered that the death to which he was sentenced would not undo the death of my brother and that by giving him to the holy metropolitan bishop my brother would also benefit from remembrance.”<sup>63</sup>

On 3 February 1742, before the Princely Council appeared the siblings Nicolai, Ioniță and Mary, who disputed an inheritance. The latter two accused Nicolai that “he stole goods from the house,” but the investigation of the case revealed that the plaintiffs “broke into the house and took the silver girdle of an Armenian, which had been pawned with their father.”<sup>64</sup>

On 10 March 1742, Ioniță Mardaros, an Armenian from Iași, received a courtly order to reclaim some lost beehives. Following a time of turmoil and dislocations within the population, Ioniță Mardaros had been dispossessed of 83 beehives “during the Russian period” (this refers to the conflict between Austrians, Turks and Russians from 1736–1739). Constantine Mavrocordato ordered the cavalry commander “to ride to the villages that had been affected by the conflict and to remove the thieves, to collect taxes everywhere, for all damages, and to also pay for the missing beehives of Mardaros and for the damages incurred.”<sup>65</sup>

Another case, in which one party was an Armenian, was recorded on 30 March 1742, between Ilie the baker and Cârste, an Armenian merchant in Iași, who disputed 60 coats which had been taken by the former from the Armenian merchant, by princely order. The latter complained that the wares had not been paid for, while Ilie the baker defended himself by asserting that “the wares remained in possession of the prince, not in his possession, also showing a receipt from the treasury, whereby it was stated that 523 lei had been spent.” Ilie the baker threatened Cârste, the Armenian merchant “to place a curse on him that he shall not live in peace lest he pay for the coats.”<sup>66</sup>

The record of debts of the Great Steward Ion Neculce, from 25 February 1745, mentioned the existence of two debts to the Armenians. Thus, the renowned

chronicler owed “140 lei to the Armenian Cârstea, without 40 lei which he is to give to my son Ilie,” as well as “59 lei to Budzilă, herding debt from Alexiandru to Pătraşco the Armenian to be paid by Alixandru from the pubs he keeps.”<sup>67</sup> Another record dated 29 March 1749 was written by Tofana who listed the debts of her late husband, Ilie the baker. Among the debts mentioned there was one of “12 lei, 6 potronics to Cărăcaşu the Armenian, 12 lei, 7 potronics were given to Cărăcaşu the Armenian from the money that were taken from Filipu Catargiu” (120 lei).<sup>68</sup>

Many Armenians in Iaşi took part in various transactions, especially in the selling and buying of properties, as witnesses, as mentioned in the paragraphs above. We may add other situations, such as: on 30 June 1720, Aniţa sold the house of Basil, a former elder of undertakers, to the spouses Gligoraşcu and Mary, for 23 lei, old money. Among the witnesses there were several neighbors, Jacob the Armenian and his sons, Basil and Peter, as well as Noroş the Armenian.<sup>69</sup> On 25 March 1736, witnesses to the sale of Cârstea the skinner’s house to Oprea, a cavalry captain, were the neighbors Andrii Polobocu, an Armenian, Peter Chirtu, also an Armenian, and Sava, the Armenian community leader.<sup>70</sup>

Grouped around the two churches of St. Mary and St. Gregory the Light Bringer and also on the Armenian Lane, the Armenians in Iaşi played an important economic role during the period under study. We find mention of them in various situations connected to the economic activities of that time, or in daily activities. Thus, we found records of Lateaf the bow maker (1713), Hagi Marcar, the father superior (1722), Sandu the crafty (1722), Sandu, Neculai, Parfene, Manole, Axinte, all tailors (1723, 1730, 1738), Aracâl the bow maker (1726), Ivan the elder (1733, 1740), the priests Jacob and Cârstea (1734, 1742), Jacob the shoemaker (1735, 1747), Sava the Armenian leader (1736, 1740), Jeremiah the deacon (1740), Pambuc the string maker (1741), Hagi, Cârste, Zeric and Ioanes the merchants (1742), Ioniţă Mardaros the bee keeper (1742) etc. Many other Armenians are mentioned only by name, with no reference to their occupation, but present as witnesses in various transactions, or on various special occasions in the life of the community.

**B**Y PERFORMING a wide variety of economic activities, by being skilled craftsmen and merchants, by having an elevated social and spiritual life, the Armenians in Iaşi, as well as those in all of Moldavia, were active participants in the evolution of our country as a whole, in a period of unrest, marked by the presence of Phanariot princes on the thrones of the two Romanian principalities, but also in an unfavorable external context, when the Romanian area served as a battleground for the conflicts between Russia, Austria and the Ottoman Empire.

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## Notes

1. Ioan Caproșu, *Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași: Acte interne*, vol. 5 (1741–1755) (Iași: Dosoftei, 2001), 139, no. 254.
2. N. Iorga, “Armenii și Români: o paralelă istorică,” *Analele Academiei Române: Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice* (Bucharest) 36 (1913): 1–2, 25–37; Sergiu Selian, *Schiță istorică a comunității armenice din România* (Bucharest: Ararat, 1995), 16–25.
3. P. P. Panaitescu, “Hrisovul lui Alexandru cel Bun pentru episcopia armeană din Suceava,” *Revista istorică română* (Bucharest) 4 (1933): 44–56.
4. G. Goilav, “Armenii ca întemeietori de orașe în partea de răsărit a Europei,” *Revista de istorie, arheologie și filologie* (Bucharest) 10 (1909): 5–21; Tigran Gregorian, *Istoria și cultura poporului armean* (Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1993), 383–399.
5. Minas Tokații, *Cânt de jălire asupra armenilor din Țara Vlabilor*, trans. (Bucharest, 1895), 7–44; Selian, 25–29.
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11. Mihai-Cristian Amărieuței, “Despre vornicii de poartă și atribuțiile lor în Iașii secolului al XVIII-lea,” in *Orașul din spațiul românesc între Orient și Occident: Tranziția de la medievalitate la modernitate*, ed. Laurențiu Rădvan (Iași: Ed. Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2007), 131–163.
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13. Zamfira Pungă, “Documente privitoare la comunitatea armeană din Iași aflate în patrimoniul Muzeului de Istorie a Moldovei (secolele XII–XIX),” pt. 1, *Ioan Neculce: Buletinul Muzeului de Istorie a Moldovei* (Iași) 8–9 (2002–2003): 256.
14. Baronian, 1229; Selian, 59.
15. Ioan Caproșu, *Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași: Acte interne*, vol. 3 (1691–1725) (Iași: Dosoftei, 2000), 241–242, no. 277.

16. Ibid., 384–385, no. 438. See also Pungă, pt. 1: 277.
17. Caproșu, 3: 386–387, no. 440. On 1 July 1713, the ruler of the country, Nicholas Mavrocordato, confirmed the ownership of those houses for Ivan the Armenian (ibid., 398–399, no. 451).
18. Ibid., 434–435, no. 494.
19. Ibid., 440–441, no. 503.
20. Ibid., 548–549, no. 633. See also Pungă, pt. 1: 276.
21. Pungă, pt. 1: 273–274.
22. Ioan Caproșu, *Documente privitoare la istoria orașului Iași: Acte interne*, vol. 4 (1726–1740) (Iași: Dosoftei, 2001), 3, no. 5.
23. Ibid., 29, no. 37.
24. Caproșu, 5: 36, no. 48.
25. Ibid., 4: 74, no. 96. See also Pungă, pt. 1: 274.
26. Caproșu, 4: 80–81, no. 110.
27. Ibid., 89–90, no. 123.
28. Zamfira Pungă, “Documente privitoare la comunitatea armeană din Iași aflate în patrimoniul Muzeului de Istorie a Moldovei (secolele XII–XIX),” pt. 2, *Ioan Neculce: Buletinul Muzeului de Istorie a Moldovei* 10–12 (2004–2006): 193–194.
29. Caproșu, 4: 179, no. 252.
30. Ibid., 244–245, no. 339.
31. Ibid., 247, no. 343.
32. Ibid., 284–285, no. 387.
33. Ibid., 5: 227–228, no. 417.
34. Ibid., 240–241, no. 432.
35. Ibid., 241–242, no. 433.
36. Pungă, pt. 1: 256.
37. Bădărău and Caproșu, 379.
38. Caproșu, 5: 329–330, no. 548.
39. Bădărău and Caproșu, 60.
40. Caproșu, 3: 146, no. 172.
41. Ibid., 538, no. 617.
42. Ibid., 557, no. 644.
43. Ibid., 5: 155, no. 286.
44. Ibid., 313–314, no. 526.
45. Ibid., 4: 264, no. 363.
46. Ibid., 288–289, no. 391. See also Pungă, pt. 1: 261.
47. Caproșu, 4: 185–186, no. 263; id., 5: 300, no. 405. See also Pungă, pt. 1: 259.
48. Caproșu, 5: 144, no. 262.
49. Ibid., 4: 135, no. 191.
50. Ibid., 144, no. 202.
51. Ibid., 5: 99–100, no. 177.
52. Ibid., 135, no. 242.
53. Ibid., 254–255, no. 451.

54. *Ibid.*, 303–304, no. 514.
55. Pungă, pt. 1: 64. Those exemptions were renewed by his successor to the throne, Nicholas Mavrocordato, in 1709 (*ibid.*, pt. 2: 199) and explicitly formulated in a document dated 15 March 1710—“they shall not pay anything: neither zloty, nor lei, nor hay, nor any tax or duty as customary with others here in the town of Iași” (Caproșu, 3: 341–342, no. 385). Several months later, that same voivode was exempting from any taxes five priests and a deacon from the two Armenian churches in Iași (*ibid.*, 369–370, no. 419). A renewal of those exemptions was also made by Gregory Ghica on 17 August 1727 (*ibid.*, 4: 28, no. 35).
56. *Ibid.*, 148, no. 206.
57. *Ibid.*, 258–259, no. 357.
58. *Ibid.*, 5: 40, no. 56. We should mention that on 1 July 1742, that same voivode, Constantine Mavrocordato, also granted to the Armenians in Kishinev the same exemptions as to those in Iași: “With them too I took mercy in regard to the taxes on beehives and on sheep, so that they give according to their assets, twenty pieces for one leu, as do the Romanian merchants in Iași and those in other towns” (*ibid.*, 139, no. 254).
59. *Ibid.*, 88–89, no. 162.
60. *Ibid.*, 4: 41, no. 31.
61. Pungă, pt. 2: 188.
62. Caproșu, 4: p. 144–145, no. 203.
63. *Ibid.*, 196, no. 274.
64. *Ibid.*, 5: 101–102, no. 179.
65. *Ibid.*, 114, no. 201.
66. *Ibid.*, 120, no. 213.
67. *Ibid.*, 267, no. 468.
68. *Ibid.*, 365–366, no. 589.
69. *Ibid.*, 3: 518–519, no. 590.
70. *Ibid.*, 4: 198–199, no. 277. See also *ibid.*, 271, no. 370: “Toader Turcul buys a house with land in Bărboiul quarter, having as neighbors Andrew Poloboc, Armenian courtly porter and Sava, leader of the Armenian community.”

**Abstract**

The Armenians in Iași (the First Half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century):  
Economic and Social Aspects

The study investigates the role and place of Armenians in Iași, during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The author includes an introduction into the subject, in which he presents the way in which the Armenians settled east of the Carpathians, starting from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, as well as their evolution during the following centuries. Based on a corpus of recently published local sources, the author presents the main economic activities performed by the Armenians—bowmaking, shoemaking, tailoring, trading, peddling, as well as the roles that certain members of that community fulfilled—father superiors of the Armenian churches, deacons, priests, elders etc. By buying houses near the Armenian churches, by owning shops, vineyards, cellars, the Armenians in Iași represented a strong community in that town, with their own guilds, but also with representatives among the leaders of the town. The rich information in regard to the presence and role of Armenians in Iași encouraged us to undertake a partial investigation of the subject, which will be followed shortly by additional research focusing on the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Keywords**

Armenians, Iași, Moldavia, properties, privileges