

# The Residence and Social Life of the Jews in the Romanian Principalities

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LIVIU ROTMAN

**B**EFORE ANALYZING the formation process of the communal institutions, I would like to refer to their infrastructure, first of all for those which were the obvious sign of an organized Jewish life. Let me underline that the decisive signal of the Jewish presence in any area of the Diaspora is the existence of a communal life, proven by the presence of specific institutions. Of them, the most obvious are: the synagogue, the *mikveh* and the cemetery. This list continues with the school, the rabbinical tribunal and various social welfare organizations.

The absolute need of any Jewish settlement to have these structures is confirmed by all Romanian documents which acknowledge the settlement—in a certain area—of a Jewish collectivity. They are documents issued by the Prince, boyars, or the Church, depending on who was the owner of the place, and refer to the establisher's obligations, their rights, as well as certain limits imposed on them. These confirmations of settlement are the Moldo-Wallachian variant of the *bazaka*<sup>1</sup> act. Thus, in the earliest still existing settlement *hrisov*<sup>2</sup> of a Jewish community, in 1780, referring to the fair of Soldănești, which later became Fălticeni, Jews were to “keep a house for their prayer, but aside, not among Christians. It should be similar to other houses, not different. Also, an outer plot of land will be given to the Jews for graves, where the *ispravnic*<sup>3</sup> of the land will show them. The plot will be six *stânjeni*<sup>4</sup> long and eight *stânjeni* wide.”<sup>5</sup>

The issue of the Jewish communal needs was approached in more detail in a document from 1823. It was a decision issued by Ioan Sandu Sturdza, a Moldavian Prince, who confirmed the contract signed by the Jews with the owner of the estate where the Podul Iloaiei fair was founded. It mentioned: “The Jews will be free to hold one place for the *casap*.”<sup>6</sup> Separately, it approved the creation of two Jewish schools (which were, in fact, synagogues), of “a *feredeu*<sup>7</sup> and a cemetery outside the town.”<sup>8</sup> With some differences of form, this approval can be found in all documents which mention the settlement of Jews in various places. It is clear that, in time, there appeared a standard relationship between the Power and the Jewish communities which settled down.

I would like to list a few sources which refer to the—certain, documented—existence of a few synagogues, cemeteries and other communal institutions. They testify of a first wave of Jewish communal life in the Principalities. There could be earlier documents about their life in this area and, as a matter of fact, there is a lot of information, but I prefer to exclusively count on data which is certain.

There are more and more such pieces of information in the Romanian Principalities in the last 15 years of the 17th century. These mention the exterior signs of communal life, not the communal life proper.

Thus, it seems that there was a Jewish cemetery in Piatra Neamț, in 1676–1677. This date was mentioned in the transcription of a tombstone which no longer exists.<sup>9</sup> Thus, we have pieces of information about a kosher slaughterhouse called *mesernișă*. It is mentioned in 1685, in Iași, in a sale document issued by the abbot of the Cetățuia Monastery, in the Moldavian Capital City. Another synagogue is mentioned the following year in the *Curelarilor* (Belt Makers) neighborhood.

Historical documents reveal a development of the Jewish settlements in Moldova at the end of the 17th century, including specific communal institutions. This process is connected to another: the development of certain Jewish elements, followed by a certain acknowledgement of this development, by the local collective mentality. Thus, this was the case of a house owner, whose respectability is obvious, since a sale contract was signed in his home.

After 1700, documents on communal life increase in number. A tombstone from 1703—it seems to be the oldest—shows the timeline of the Jewish community of Bacău. In 1711, Prince Cantemir posted his army “below the Jewish graves.”<sup>10</sup> This confirms the existence of the old Jewish cemetery in the *Ciurchi* neighborhood, in Iași.

Jewish merchants, on their way from or to the two large markets traveled in the area in the 16th century, as well, but did not generally settle down. The settling process was determined by a certain stabilization of the political situation. A Jewish cemetery, in the first half of the 18th century was signaled by the unexpected discovery of partial tombstones with Hebrew inscriptions—reused in the building of a church, in Wallachia, the current county of Prahova. They were taken from the cemetery of the Jewish community in Bucov, a large urban settlement and county capital at the time, which later lost its importance, at the turn of the 18th and 19th century, because of the town of Ploiești. This fact would make local Jews migrate to the new center.<sup>11</sup>

Most of the information refers to synagogues. One first observation is that, for a long time, the Power, forced the Jews to make their religious buildings of wood, only. Thus, Dimitrie Cantemir mentioned in one of his proclamations the Jews’ right to build their place of worship: “wherever they want, they may build a synagogue, but it can only be made of wood, not of stone.”<sup>12</sup> Also, they had to be located in a marginal place, not too close to the Christian places of worship.

In 1714, in Bucharest, Șerban Cantacuzino (1714–1715), a Wallachian Prince, decided to demolish the Sephardi synagogue in the Popescului neighborhood—the historical Jewish bedrock of the town “despite the fact that it is in a far place.”<sup>13</sup> Thus, in 1714, the Sephardi synagogue was quite old.

In Iași, a document written in 1714 reminds of an act from 1670 which mentioned that the Jewish community bought a piece of land in order to build a synagogue (“Jewish school”).

The turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century can be considered a beginning of Jewish visibility in the Principalities. This stage of the Jewish settlement is connected to a few factors.

First of all, their immigration is connected to the instability of Jewish life in Poland and Ukraine, because of the traumas suffered by the Jewish world, caused by the massacres during the Cossack revolt led by Bogdan Khmelnytsky. The Cossacks’ pogroms created a “Jewish tsumani” heading towards the South-West. In the 50’s, it reached Moldova (at the same time, it reached Transylvania, which is not included in this study).

But the immigration was not caused only by the Cossack pogroms. It was also caused by the fact that there was a large number of Jews in Galicia. There, they were attracted by the large-scale activity of the great trade centers of Cracow and Lemberg.

The annexation of Bucovina by the Habsburgs, in 1771, and its merger with Galicia facilitated the migration of the Jews to Moldova, through Chernowitz. One of the first signs of this process is the mention made by a Swedish preacher, Jacob Hildebrandt, who noted in December 1656, about Iași: “Among the local inhabitants, there are many Jews who trade various items, together with Greek and Moldavian merchants.”<sup>14</sup>

This very important factor is confirmed by no other than the Prince of Moldova, Gheorghe Ghica, in 1658, in his proclamation, by which he invited foreign merchants “who mainly bring merchandize to Lemberg, Iaslovice and other fairs . . .” and underlined that . . . “deep in my State, the roads are open and there is peace. Thus, you may come in full safety, with no fear of violence or disturbance. . .”<sup>15</sup> Of course, the phrase “deep peace” was an exaggeration—which is the case of advertising materials of all times, but it may be understood as an expression of a pending reality, of a certain trend.

The quoted proclamation is part of an older tradition of the Power in the Principalities, that of inviting economically active foreign elements. This tradition was inaugurated in 1402, by Alexander the Good, who mainly referred to Armenians, as well as to Greeks. The same quoted proclamation, issued in 1658, is the first that mentions Jews, in such an “invitation.” Of course, this was due to the fact that there were more of them in the areas nearby the borders with Moldova, as well as due to their economic activism, which became “attractive” for the Power of the Principalities. In short, they became a social and economical reality in Central and Eastern Europe, which made them visible and, implicitly, one of the terms of the complex socio-economic equation of the time. Still, a certain dynamics of the economy in the Principalities also contributed to stimulating the immigration process. The rise of agricultural production and the improvement of transport capabilities led to the development of trade, both inside and abroad. The Romanian society needed professional trade agents. But it was also important to have an infrastructure meant to support trade activities and permanent exchange markets meant to replace the temporary ones. This situation entailed the apparition of urban-type structures. The apparition of these “small towns” also called fairs is one of the defining phenomena of the Principalities’ modernization, especially in Moldova, where the difficult

terrain—in general, areas with a lot of hills—facilitated the apparition of small urbane structures. In Wallachia, the number of fairs was much less, for two reasons: on one hand, there was mostly flat land and the possibility of using the plots for agriculture. On the other hand, in the middle of these plains, “large” towns formed. I am referring, first of all, to the capital city of Wallachia, Bucharest, which witnessed a spectacular territorial and demographic development, becoming the largest urban center, after Istanbul, in South-East Europe. Still, new urban structures were founded in Wallachia too, and they attracted the Jewish population.

Nevertheless, the main feature was visible in Moldova. Thus, in 1774, Moldova had 23 urban settlements, 15 of which had less than 1.000 inhabitants. In 1803, there were 26 urban settlements. After a slight decrease, of 22 settlements in 1832, there were no less than 72 in 1845.<sup>16</sup> An interesting fact was that urbanization in Moldova was based, first of all, on the fact that there were more fairs, the development of the capital city, Iași, being limited by its geographical configuration, i.e. the nearby hills. It is also worth mentioning the location of these fairs. Some of them are placed on the chain of the Carpathians, close to the many gorges of this chain of mountains, which connect Moldova to Transylvania. Thus, as far as their location is concerned, the fairs are meant to support the commercial axis between the West and the East.

In parallel, the development of internal trade—for short and average distances—which became more and more important in the Moldavian economy, entailed the process of founding fairs in the various boyars’ estates. It seems that this economic phenomenon had important, long-lasting consequences which influenced the structure of the Moldavian society. Thus, they were encouraged by the Power.<sup>17</sup> After receiving the Prince’s privilege, these centers legally became an urban area. Thus, they were open for Jews.

The new Jewish inhabitants of Moldova had an important role in the creation of these fairs. Jews either came to completely new fairs or urbanized rural communes, remaking localities which had been destroyed in various military actions.

In the case of the creation of the already mentioned fair of Soldănești—which later became Fălticeni—townspeople of various ethnic groups gathered together. As mentioned in the Prince’s document signed in 1780 by Constantin Moruzi, a Prince of Moldova, “. . . we hereby acknowledge the appointment of the Christian, Armenian and Jewish townspeople. . .”<sup>18</sup>

There were situations when a fair was created exclusively by Jews, such as Vlădeni, (later known as Târgu Nou and, after that, as Mihăileni, after Mihai Sturdza’s name, the Moldavian Prince). Thus, in an agreement from 1792, signed with the boyar who owned the place, Costache Mareș, there was mentioned: “Since there are a number of Jewish tradesmen from abroad who came in Moldova to settle down and make a fair, they liked the place on my estate, at Vlădeni . . . the County of Suceava . . . we negotiated for them to settle here, as mentioned in writing, with the respective Jewish merchants. . .”<sup>19</sup> As a matter of fact, in this act, the owner of the place underlines the role of Jewish merchants: “for these Jewish merchants traveled and worked hard to make this fair, according to their plan, it is proper to thank them.”<sup>20</sup>

The third situation is when a place was reconstructed, such as that of a place in Suceava. This former capital city of Moldova lost importance after the capital moved to Iași, at the

beginning of the 17th century. Later on, it was involved in war operations and was plundered two times by Polish armies, in 1674 and 1691. In a princely letter written in 1761 by Grigore Calimachi, some Moldavian, Armenian and Jewish townspeople were allowed to settle there.<sup>21</sup>

A similar situation, when a town was rebuilt, is connected to the Jews' settlement in Târgu Frumos, a former center that had fallen into disrepair and no longer had enough inhabitants. Ioan Calimachi mentioned his wish to remake this fair and he invited foreign inhabitants to settle down. He attracted them by promising fiscal privileges.<sup>22</sup> The settlement of the Jews in these fairs was facilitated by the Romanian tradition, which forbade Jews from settling in rural areas, especially from buying properties for agriculture. In this sense, we mention the very clear order given by Grigore Ghica. He forbade Jews to live in the countryside.<sup>23</sup> This order was repeated by several Princes. The clearest decree in this sense is the one issued by Constantin Mavrocordat in 1782: “. . . We hereby decide for all Jews in this country to inhabit fairs, as they settled down. . . Among the villages of the country, there will be none willing to live or make *alisheris*—trade. . .”<sup>24</sup> In fact, the charge against Jews was that, because of the alcohol trade, they presumably tricked and took the wealth of the Moldavian peasants. This charge would later become a permanent cliché of the Romanian anti-Semitic discourse, in the modern period. Nevertheless, these decisions to stop Jewish settlements were breached—with the complicity and encouragement of estate owners and even of the Princes. There were many Jews in rural areas, especially “tavern managers” (the so-called *cârciumari*), as well as people of other professions. The repetition of this interdiction is, by itself, a proof of the fact that the Jews were living and active in rural areas.

Prince Mavrocordat's interdiction, in 1782, which forbade Jews from settling down in rural areas, would entail a development of the Jewish presence in the towns and fairs of Moldova. Nicolae Iorga (unpleasantly) mentioned that, at that moment, Jews began to play an important role, as merchants.<sup>25</sup> His observation is partially true, for there are many sources before 1782, but we have to take into consideration this historian's idea, as a marker of the beginning of the development process.

Even after 1782, there was a Jewish population in the rural areas. Thus, a debt register written in 1790 also lists Jews, tavern managers from the village of Trifești, in the land of Neamț, as well as Samuel Iacobovici, a miller from Cuturi, Suceava County.<sup>26</sup> In 1821, the general census of the Moldavian population lists 1.009 Jews, heads of family, in the rural area. Most of them lived in the County of Suceava, with 206 families, followed by 155 in Dorohoi, 108 in Botoșani, 93 in Roman, 71 in the County of Iași, 70 in the County of Hârlău, 66 in Vaslui, 64 in Neamț, 62 in Herța etc.<sup>27</sup> But the mainly urban settlement of the Jews also has other causes, entailed by the shape of the Jewish society, its occupational structure and type of civilization they cultivated. This happened mainly because the traditional socio-professional structure of the Jewish population which settled down in Moldova was, first of all, compatible with urban structures.

At the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, a fast urbanization process took place in Moldova, mainly due to the large number of fairs, as well as to the development of a few relatively large towns, except for the capital city of Iași, took. I am referring to Botoșani, Galați, Bacău and, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Roman. In all of them, the num-

ber of the Jewish population rose. The Jewish population grew constantly during this period, in the capital city of Moldova, Iași. There was a development in quality, as well. In 1755, of a total population of about 120 Jews, there were 65 house owners. It is interesting to see where they lived in the town. Most of them lived in the commercial streets: *Ulița Rusească* (the Russian Street) and *Podul Hagioaiei*. Of them, there was a certain Marcu, the *Staroste*; Solomon, the tavern owner; Leiba Jidov, a tailor, etc. In the aristocratic *Ulița Mare* (the Broad Street), also named the Boyar's Street, only four Jews lived, probably richer persons, such as David Jidov—a goldsmith and Cerbul Jidov—a wine merchant, etc.<sup>28</sup> Thus, we see a Jewish concentration in the commercial area of the town. We can see the evolution of the spreading process that the Jewish population went through. In 1774, the census made in the town of Iași counted 171 Jews. Most of them—44—lived in the Russian Street, which was an important commercial area at the time. It is interesting to mention that it was a new commercial street, added to the old center. Thus, we may conclude that the inhabitants of the place were relatively newcomers. In the Hagioaia neighborhood, there were 43 Jews, and in the Podul Vechi area, only 16.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, professions are not mentioned for all of them, for some had no occupation, at all. Thus, in the Russian Street, there were four moneylenders, a few tavern managers—called *horlicari*—and an *ahhtarlicar* (tradesman of small items). In the Făinii Street, there were only five heads of family, of whom a certain Francu, the halva merchant attracts attention. The Jewish elite of the time lived in the Hagioaiei Street. Despite the fact that his name is not given in the census, there lived the *hahambasha* and a certain Gavrilă Jidov, the *Staroste*.

A Street Measurement Register of the Town of Iași, drafted in 1811, lists the location of the houses and their various owners, in different streets. This document shows that the town was multiethnic, where the local Moldavians were living together with various foreigners. Even if there were streets or neighborhoods with a strong ethnic concentration, the habitat is common; they were all together. Thus, on the left side of the *Cizmarului* Street, the shops belonging to Costea the pie maker, Hercu (probably Herșcu) the Jew, Fiodor Lipovan (the Russian), Ivăniță Brașoveanu—who seems to have been a Romanian ethnic who came from the area of Brașov—Israil Foçșăneanu, Hagi Teodor Arman (Armenian), Galitin's shop (who seems to be Russian or Ukrainian) and the shops of Haiha the Jewish Woman.<sup>30</sup> There were Jews such as Israil, who lived in a largely Armenian area, such as the Street of *Podului Vechi* (the Old Bridge). His neighbors were “Ștefan the Armenian, Cristea the Armenian, Ioniță the Armenian, Ovanes Arman, etc.”<sup>31</sup> It is worth mentioning that in the Broad Street, starting from the Gate of the Prince's Palace, where members of the Moldavian social elite lived, such as *Vornic* (Minister) Dimitrache Sturdza, Alecu Ghica or *Vistiernic* (Treasurer) Grigoraș Sturdza, only one Jew was present. His name was Locman *Spîțerul* (the Pharmacist).<sup>32</sup>

One other issue refers to the “source” of this immigration. Where did the Jews of the Moldavian fairs and towns come from? The main source is Galicia, where the Habsburg fiscal burden was huge. At the same time, a large part of the Jewry of Galicia, especially the very orthodox, did not enjoy the modernizing reforms implemented by Emperor Joseph II. The fact that the imperial administration imposed the reforms led to the great discontent of many social categories of Jews, who decided to emigrate. They

came to Moldova in the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and in the first years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Statistic sources of later censuses, in 1836, provide interesting statistic data. Of the Jews recorded in the census of 1835, in Dorohoi, a large number were born in Galicia. Thus, a certain Buium sin Mendel, born in Borohod, Galicia, came to Moldova in 1799. He was the *staroste*, an official of the community. David Sin Marcu, a tavern manager, was born in Sniatyn, Galicia and came to Moldova in 1806; Iosif sin Beilis, born in Galicia, came to Moldova in 1811, etc. Another source is Bessarabia, especially after this province was annexed by the Czarist Empire, in 1812. Jews were scared of the danger entailed by the very long mandatory army draft.

The first years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about an innovation in the administrative reality of the Principalities. Thus, the data became much more precise. A census from 1803 listed, in Moldova, 3.245 Jews, heads of family who paid taxes. There was an extra 198 families of *Sudiți* Jews. In fairs and towns, there were 2.515 families. In the country side, there were 730 families.<sup>33</sup> A statistical document from 1832 mentions a number of 24.299 Jews who lived in urban places in Moldova. They represented 18.78% of the total number of townspeople in Moldova.<sup>34</sup> In the capital of Moldova, Jews represented 24.2% of the inhabitants, but the small fairs had much larger percentages: Bucegea 86%, Frumușica 79%, Dorohoi 62%, Fălțiceni 60%, Hârlau-60%, etc.

In Central and Eastern Europe, due to a series of economic, political, cultural and religious conditions, Jews were able to form an original urban structure: the *shtetl*, which complied with their economic needs and represented a specific framework of social organization which entailed a certain level of autonomy. At the same time, the *shtetl* is an area of Jewish concentration that promoted a model of civilization, having its own universe, which can no longer be found in other socio-cultural areas.

As it is clear from its name, *shtetl* is the diminutive of “der Stadt.”<sup>35</sup> This “little town” is a small place with urban structures, but very connected from the economical point of view, most of all to the surrounding rural ambiance. Thus, a first definition is that of a small place. A second definition refers to the *shtetl* as being the “complex of socio-economic relations, the interaction with the population of the nearby rural area and the activity of the Jews for communal (religious, educational, social, legal) functions.” The *shtetl* was the framework of Jewish life found in Moldova, where a specific civilization flourished. This had many implications, for the community as well. The rapid creation of fairs and the growth of the Jewish urban population is specific to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The spreading of the Jews in Moldova, in urban areas, especially in small settlements, is confirmed by statistics. Thus, a number of 24.299 Jews were mentioned in 1832. They lived in 40 urban structures. Of them, only six communities include more than 1.000 Jews: Iași (11.601), Fălțiceni (1.422), Botoșani (1.118), Herța (1.056), Dorohoi (1.056), Roman (1.055). On the other hand, there were 14 fairs which had less than 100 Jews: Târgul Neamț (44), Tecuci (60), Drăgușeni (92), Nămolosa (91), Odobești (70), Fălciu (7) (!!!), Adjud (15), Nicorești (12), Panciu (62), Săveni (64), Buhușoaia (76), Căiuți (26) Frumușica (71), Drăgușeni (92).<sup>36</sup>

In 1845, there were 65 urban settlements which hosted Jews, in Moldova. There, no less than 17.087 families lived. Of them, some places were inhabited exclusively by

Jews: Bucecea (43 families), Frumușica (48) Târgul Damieniști (11), Bara (24), Bozieni (20).<sup>37</sup> In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the capital city, Iași, had the largest Jewish concentration. As a matter of fact, it was the place of a continuous development, from 171 families in 1774 to 6.178 families in 1845.<sup>38</sup>

As far as the quality of the Jewish habitat is concerned, there were great differences, an expression of the important stratification of the Jewish population. There were large, elegant houses, such as the one belonging to Isac the *Haham*, in Iași. This is how it was described by the ones who saw it: “this little house (!) made of wood, with a stone foundation, with floral adornments and whitewashed, has a brick oven with floral adornments, as well, and a garden behind . . . Its door has an iron lock and it’s made of wood . . .” That house was located in the main commercial street: Podul Hagioaiei.<sup>39</sup> Despite the fact that, in the analyzed period of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the growth of the Jewish population is a main feature most of all in Moldova, the same process took place in Wallachia, but at a lower scale.

Apart from the old, stable Sephardi community which had a well-established place, there was a continuous immigration from Moldova. This migration wave reached the large economic center, the capital city of Wallachia, Bucharest, since it offered many opportunities to Jewish immigrants to earn a living. I have to mention that Bucharest was like a strong magnet for many foreigners. Documents remind of various foreigners who were active in many fields. There were Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Armenians, Serbians, Poles, Russians, Italians, Czechs, French, Germans, Hungarians, Turks, etc.

At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Bucharest became strongly multiethnic, and this influenced its development. The capital hosted Jews mostly in specific quarters. I am referring to a Jewish “bedrock” which includes the neighborhood of Văcărești-Dudești, the Popescuului slum and the *Culoarea de Roșu* District (a district of the town which was painted in red). The Jewish concentration in the area makes it possible for me to define it as a special type of *shtetl*—in the middle of the great urban agglomeration of Bucharest. Of course, they belonged to the “large city” which entailed a certain dilution of the *shtetl* features. At the same time, the respective areas kept that impression of “land of the Jews” and the cultural background of the *Yiddishkeit*.

But the interesting element, specific to the Jewish presence in Bucharest, was the phenomenon of the Jewish habitat within the multiethnic habitat. This reality developed even more in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Especially in the trade area of Lipscani, which is located quite close to the Jewish bedrock, they were very active, together with various other minorities and many Romanians.

It is also very interesting to see the collaboration between the various craftsmen and merchants, the fact that they were not isolated. This is how Scarlat Vărnăv refers to the multiethnic ambience of Bucharest at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: “The Greek tradesman . . . was a young man who spoke fluent German, French and Italian, apart from his mother tongues: Romanian and Greek. He was walking around in Turkish clothes . . . In the morning, he drank German coffee or ‘chocolate’. . . The young man later changed his master and worked in Lipscani Street, for Constantin Nazlam, an Armenian. Later on, he moved to another merchant from Lipscani Street, Canusi the Italian, who closed down his shop because of *mofluzie* (bankruptcy)”.<sup>40</sup> The situation was the same



in Moldova. Thus, in Iași, the census of 1783 presents a multiethnic trade market: There were “. . . a horseshoe workshop with a Gypsy, two shops managed by Danil the Jew, and another shop managed by a Jewish widow; another shop was managed by Avram the Jew. Close by, Giovanni Berltrami (the Italian) was living.”<sup>41</sup>

The ethnic mosaic, implicitly the cosmopolite ambiance that was very strong in Bucharest, was a reason why Jews were interested in this town. In 1831, Bucharest had 60.000 inhabitants, plus some 10.000 people who were considered “temporary population.” That year, the census recorded 2.583 local Jews, plus the *Sudiți*, whose precise number can only be guessed. Statistics refer to 1.795 *Sudiți*, but their ethnic group is not mentioned.<sup>42</sup>

It is interesting to see the way in which they were spread in the area of Bucharest. The large majority (1539) lived in the *Culoarea de Roșu* (Red Color) District, which included the Jewish Quarters of Văcărești-Dudești and the trade center of the town, the already mentioned area of Lipscani. A relevant number (642) lived in the *Culoarea de Negru* (Black Color) District. It includes the important commercial area of Moșilor-Obor, the real gateway where merchandise entered and exited the town of Bucharest. Quite a large number of Jews also lived in the *Culoarea de Albastru* (Blue Color) District—an area of workshops where 383 Jews earned their living. The *Culoarea de Galben* (Yellow) residential area—with the elegant Batiște Street—was inhabited by the Romanian social elite. Practically, there were no Jews in the area—only two Jewish inhabitants are mentioned. The same situation was in the *Culoarea de Verde* (Green Color) District, which had only 17 Jews.<sup>43</sup> Other Jewish concentrations—much more modest than in Bucharest—were found in Focșani (the Wallachian Focșani, for the town was divided between the two Principalities), Brăila (which joined Wallachia only in 1829, having been taken from the Ottoman Empire), Ploiești and Craiova.

A register issued for the period of 1694-1701, during Constantin Brâncoveanu’s reign, mentions taxes taken from the “Jews living in Bucharest and Focșani.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, we may reach the conclusion that, during Prince Brâncoveanu’s reign, there were only two stable Jewish settlement towns in Wallachia: Bucharest and Focșani (the Wallachian part of Focșani).

Another document, issued in September 1797 by Prince Constantin Hangerli, appointed an old *staroste* for the Jews of Focșani, “because in the County of Slam Râmnic (later Râmnicul Sărat – L.R.), in the fair of Focșani, there are some Jews who have their abode there. . .”<sup>45</sup>

In Ploiești, a document issued in 1775 reminds of a Jewish tenant in the “fair outside” of Ploiești.<sup>46</sup> The significant rise of the number of Jews in Ploiești is confirmed by a statement made in 1811 by the Great *Logofăt* Constantin Dudescu: “For now, Jewish inhabitants have gathered (in Ploiești).”<sup>47</sup> The almost continuous immigration of the Jews from Moldova to Wallachia was closely monitored by the police of Wallachia.

It is clear that the pace of economic life in Wallachia and the opportunities provided to active economic agents, created this immigration flow. As a matter of fact, the protection measures of the state in both Principalities were incomplete and not very determined, for several reasons. First of all, this immigration, despite being upsetting for those who were subject to xenophobic bias, as well as because of a certain “disorder,” was

useful, after all, because it provided for the country's treasury. This is why both the Princes of Moldova and those of Wallachia would have a zigzag policy to them. Thus, interdictions—some of them being implemented as a result of the Church's pressure—were followed by “positive” acts, of acceptance. From this point of view, it is interesting to mention the contradictory orders issued in Moldova in the 1840's.

In 1844, the boyars' assembly (similar to a parliament, in the period of the Organic Regulations (1832–1848) voted a law on the beverage trade, as well as on other specifically Jewish trades at the time, both in the rural and urban areas. Mihai Sturdza, a Moldavian Prince, rejected the law, because:

1. *In the Principalities, there are private properties inhabited by Jews, so that the inhabitants of Moldova can better work for their own household, in the field of agriculture.*
2. *Should the Jews be stopped from making alisveris (trade) with beverages and food, it is clear that, when lacking possibilities to earn a living, they will leave those towns, which will become empty.*
3. *As they become empty, those properties would be terribly affected, since it is not possible to fill them with villagers. Nevertheless, most of the estates need inhabitants*
4. *The Jews would cancel their legally-binding contracts.*<sup>48</sup>

The Prince's message is an objective analysis of the relation between the town and Jews, as far as the economic needs of the Principalities were concerned. Still, as I said, we should not ignore the “mutual interests” of other factors—both of decision and execution—in the immigration of the Jews.

I also need to mention that this situation is similar and comparable to that of other foreigners, but of course, due to clear reasons, the sensitivity and various reactions are stronger towards the Jews, who are seen as being the “most alien.” In short, we may conclude that the habitat of the Jews in the Romanian Principalities was, *par excellence*, urban. They settled either in large towns or in small urban structures called fairs.

As far as the “large towns” are concerned, the specific cases are those of the two capital cities, Iași and Bucharest, plus average-sized towns, compared to other places. In this sense, we may remind of the port-town of Galați, where the Jewish population developed after 1850, when it became the third largest Jewish center in the Principalities, as well as Botoșani and Bacău. In these large towns, Jews lived in multi-ethnic areas, together with Armenians, Greeks, Bulgarian and obviously, Romanians. Their number increased continuously during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The multi-culturalism of these urban centers is a fact proven by all types of historical sources: censuses, writings of travelers, internal Romanian documents.

As far as the fairs are concerned, they were specific to Moldova. In general, they were only bi-ethnic: Romanians and Jews, many of them having a Jewish majority. It is in these fairs that the Jews developed the civilization of the *Shtetl*, which is specific to the Jewish ambiance in Eastern Europe.



## Notes

1. A document (issued by the Power) by which Jews were allowed to settle down in a certain area.
2. Princely commandment which authorized the settlement of those Jews in the Principalities.
3. Representative of the Prince in the county.
4. *Stânjen* is an ancient unit of length varying from 1.96 m. to 2.23 m.
5. Elias Schwarzfeld "Așezămintele evreilor din Moldova în veacul al XVIII-lea și jumătatea secolului al XIX-lea. Studiu istoric (1885)," in *Evreii din România în texte istoriografice. Antologie*, ed. Lya Benjamin (Bucharest: Hasefer Publishing House, 2002), 81
6. *Kosher* slaughterhouse.
7. *Mikveh* – ritual bath.
8. Schwarzfeld, "Jewish Settlements," 25.
9. IMER, I, *Izvoare și Mărturii Referitoare la Evreii din România* (Bucharest: Hasefer Publishing House, 1986), 119–120.
10. *Ibid.*, 20.
11. *Ibid.*, 35–36.
12. Lya Benjamin, *Evreii în texte istoriografice. Antologie* (Bucharest: Hasefer Publishing House, 2002), 82.
13. *Ibid.*, 23.
14. IMER, I, *Izvoare*, 104.
15. Elias Schwarzfeld, *Împopularea, reîmpopularea și întemeierea târgurilor și târgușoarelor în Moldova* (Bucharest: Editura Evreilor Pământeni (the Publishing House of the Local Jews, 1914), 13.
16. Alexandru Florin Platon, *Geneza burgheziei în principatele române—a doua jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea, prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea. Preliminariile unei istorii* (Iași: The Publishing House of the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, 1997), 272.
17. *Ibid.* 283.
18. IMER, vol. II/2 (1990), 211; Schwarzfeldt, *Împopularea, reîmpopularea și întemeierea târgurilor*, 24–25.
19. Schwarzfeldt, *Împopularea, reîmpopularea și întemeierea târgurilor*, 27.
20. *Ibid.*
21. IMER, II/2, 42.
22. *Ibid.*, 50.
23. M. Fotino, *Condițiunea juridică a străinilor în Principate* (The Legal Status of Foreigners in the Principalities), (Bucharest: 1902), 248.
24. IMER, II/2, 247–248.
25. Nicolae Iorga, *Opere economice*, ed. by Georgeta Penelea (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1982), 661
26. IMER, II/2, 349–350.
27. Dumitru Ivanescu, "Populația evreiască din orașele și târgurile Moldovei," in *Studia et Acta Historiae Iudeorum Romaniae* 2, (Bucharest: Hasefer Publishing House, 1997), 63.
28. IMER, II/2, 15–17.
29. Ioan Caprosu and Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, *Documente statistice privitoare la orașul Iași 1*, (Iași, the Publishing House of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, 1997), 74–130.
30. *Ibid.*, 287–288.
31. *Ibid.*, 291.
32. *Ibid.*, 279–280.

33. IMER, III/1, 143. The data is based on the *Condica Liuzilor*.
34. Ibid., 144.
35. "Town," in German.
36. IMER, III/1, 144.
37. Ibid., 145.
38. IMER, III/1, 147.
39. IMER, II/2, 11.
40. Nicolae Iorga, *Opere economice*, 90–91.
41. Ibid.
42. IMER III/2, 31.
43. Ibid.
44. IMER II/1, 3.
45. IMER II/2, 452.
46. Ibid., 134–135.
47. IMER III/1, 344.
48. Schwarzfeld, *Impopulara, reimpopulara și întemeierea*, 92–93.

### **Abstract**

#### **The Residence and Social Life of the Jews in the Romanian Principalities**

This study focuses on the issue of Jewish settlement in the Romanian Principalities and the dynamics of the social structures of the Jews. The study refers to the timeline of the first Jewish settlements in the Romanian Principalities (mid-16<sup>th</sup> century in Wallachia and mid 17<sup>th</sup> century in Moldova) and follows up the territorial distribution of the Jews. I analyzed the conditions under which the Power (the local Princes) approved their settlement and the main requirements of the Jews: permission to build houses of worship (*beit tfila*), to have a cemetery, a ritual bath and other needed communal institutions. A special place is reserved to the formation of Jewish fairs (*shtetls*) and to the social and economic context of the evolution of these structures.

### **Keywords**

Jewish community, urbanism, *shtetl*.