

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AS AN INDICATOR OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

(The case of religious minorities in Bessarabia)¹

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Key words: Bessarabia, Russian Empire, Armenians, Lipovans, Protestants, Roman Catholics.

Summary: This paper addresses the correlation between ethnicity and confessional identity existing in different communities of Bessarabia in the 19th century. Historiography and data from archive documents show that a number of ethno-confessional communities can be found on the studied diachronic segment of the Prut-Nistru territory, where the ethnic and religious affiliation constituted one whole, while both components constituting to the same extent elements that used to determine the affiliation to one or other community. In this case, we refer to Armenian, Romano-Catholic, and Protestant communities or to a number of religious denominations.

Клучни зборови: Бесарабија, Руска империја, Ерменци, Липовани, протестанти, римокатолици.

Резиме: Овој труд се осврнува на корелацијата меѓу етничката припадност и конфесионалниот идентитет што постои во различни заедници на Бесарабија во 19 век. Историографијата и податоците од архивските документи покажуваат дека голем број етноконфесионални заедници можат да се најдат на проучуваниот дијахрониски сегмент на територијата Прут-Нистру, каде што етничката и верската припадност претставуваат една целина, додека двете компоненти во иста мера се елементи што ја детерминирале припадноста кон една или друга заедница. Во овој случај, ние се осврнуваме на ерменската, римо-католичката и протестантската заедница или на бројните религиозни деноминации.

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The topic under consideration is not at all simple, as it may seem at first sight. The complexity and cross-cutting character of the issue is due to numerous subterfuges which are difficult to perceive in many cases while having a significant share in the course of this action, as well as due to the paradigms that resulted in the relationship between different subjects in some conceptually difficult to accept situations.

We need to clarify from the very beginning that the focus in the proposed approach is not on the Orthodox Church institution, but rather on the elements constituting the extra-orthodox world, if it is possible to say so, this choice made because the given topic has been insignificantly researched, in our opinion.

The integrationist policy in form of russification, promoted by the Russian Empire, would be implemented in different regions and different people using different methods and intensity, in some cases by even abandoning the accepted line. The differentiation of this policy would directly depend on the approximation in terms of language, culture or religion of some peoples and the “threat” of separatism that could persist among certain ethnic groups, oftentimes confused in terms of profession of certain religions, for ensuring unity of the empire and forming a single imperial construct. In this context, it is worth noting that, for the time segment studied in this paper, religion was a much more tangible instrument in what the ethnic identity represented than the still rather frail manifestations of national feeling. Here, again, we cannot but state that the link between ethnic consciousness and religion (professed) continued to be the most powerful in those communities where it was linked by ethnic or national consciousness, regardless of the context and details.

In addition, for Basarabia, we generally confuse the ethnic element with the religious one, in this sense obviously talking about the Armenian-Gregorian and Jewish religions, as well as about the Roman-Catholic and Protestant religions. Hence, the status of different religious communities, these being confused with ethnic elements and being applied a certain policy direction on behalf of the state and the dominant church.

This process can be generally traced throughout the Russian Empire. So, some researchers state, for instance, that the terms „Russian”(русский) and Orthodox were considered synonyms, and the Catholic or Protestant believers once converted to Orthodox religion would automatically become Russians. In turn, the terms „Catholic” and „Polish” would have an identical meaning for Russian population (Bendin, 2010).

In our opinion, the evolution of these ethnic-religious communities from the Prut-Nistru space was directly proportional to the attitude shared by the secular administration of all levels and by the church administration.

Depending on how the decision makers viewed one or another community, the latter could be stimulated or subject to pressures, which could lead to settling down and increasing the number of one or another community's population, or to adopting a position of reticence or even migration inside or outside the empire.

The loyalty viewed in certain ethnic-religious collectives by the imperial power would actually constitute the main factor in the evolution of the latter, with no exception, in this regard, for Basarabia within the timeframe under study.

Groups, i.e. communities with a full social structure confessing a certain religion would be obviously considered as being more dangerous for the interests of the Russian Empire. The assimilation percentage of some ethnic-religious groups in a double sense, i.e. the capacity of being converted into Russian (russified) or recruiting or influencing other representatives of some ethnicities or confessions, in their turn, also had a role to play in this sense.

Finally, it was stated in many cases, and it is a known fact that the general principle guiding the Russian imperial power in its religious policy was the following: The Orthodox Church dominated and kept under auspices of the state, declaring loyalty towards the other Christian confessions, while keeping the remaining religions under state protection. However, we need to see to which extent this principle was observed, moreover that the generally declared situation was practically suggesting tolerance towards all religions.

The annexation of Basarabia to the Russian Empire in 1812 brought a number of religious changes, along with other ethnic, economic or cultural changes.

The policy of colonizing and populating this region with people from different guberniyas, as well as with emigrant arriving from the South Danube region and being under Ottoman administration led to a change in the religious spectrum in this area and to emergency of different communities constituted on basis of the ethnic or religious principle.

It is necessary to reconfirm that, regardless of all the changes, the local Orthodox population constituted in continuation a majority of the Basarabian population, and was capable to assimilate other ethnic or religious groups.

In this way, religious affiliation continued playing an essential role in the determination or acceptance of one communion or another. For the time segment under discussion, oftentimes one or another ethnicity would identify (or compare) itself with one or other religion. For example, the synonym for the word „Polish” in the Basarabian society of the 19th century would be „Catholic”, while the Catholic cemetery in Chisinau used to be

known among people as “Polish” cemetery before the beginning of World War I, which fact cannot stir confusion if take into account the fact that 90% of the Catholics in this region were ethnic Polish people (Saganova, 2005:122).

Approximately the same thing can be stated in the case of Lutheran-Evangelist cult established in Basarabia after 1812, which constituted of ethnic German people. This is the very reason why a number of localities with names, such as Leipzig or Lihtental were settled on the map of the Prut-Nistru interfluve territory (NARM, f., 7, Op., I).

Obviously, there was no question mark with regard to Jewish communities, which significantly increased numerically due to the privileges received from tsarist authorities (both the number of communities, and the number of the population). This very statute makes us find a series of information confirming that a number of representatives of other ethnic-religious communities were striving to convert to this cult and, by doing this, to be assimilated by the given communities (a good example in this sense can be the community of Sabbath believers (sâmbotiști/жидовствующие), but such actions would practically never end with success (NARM, f., 2, Op., I).

Things evolved approximatively in the same sense in Armenian communities, where one could trace a consistent inflow of parishioners, for which reason an Armenian Episcopate of Basarabia and Nahicevan was organized in 1830, with the headquarter on the territory of Basarabia, which settled and operated in Chisinau until 1875. Moreover, during the incipient period when Basarabia was a component part of the Russian Empire, the relationships between the Armenian bishop Grigorie Zaharia and the exarch of Moldova and Hotin Metropolis Gavriil Bănulescu-Bodoni were rather tensed because of the interference of Orthodox priests in the activities of Armenian communities, and vice versa (NARM, f., 205, Op., I). Nevertheless, it is necessary to mention that the tsarist authorities strongly supported the Armenian-Georgian community to the detriment of the dominant church. Due to this very reason, the leadership of Armenian community was distributed 13.300 fathoms of land already in 1813, as it was stated later – for building an Episcopal House, and this land lot was added 11970 fathoms more, upon request of Zaharean – for building a church and a parish house. As Gh. Bezviconi stated, there was one more reason of increasing the area of Armenian land lots, and namely: Archbishop Grigor initially received a land lot for the Episcopal House in Mitropolit Gavriil (Gogol) street; however, the Metropolitan, himself, wanted to build a seminary here, and requested to change the Armenian lot,

giving the latter a bigger land lot as a reward, which was located father (Bezviconi, 1934:9).

On the allocated lot, called Armenian Metropolis at that time (since August the 2nd of the same year “Armenian Backyard”), Archbishop Griogor built a house and surrounded it with a vineyard, the place thus becoming a basis for putting in place the entire Eparchy of Armenians in Basarabia, which otherwise would not have existed. In addition to the government subsidy of 4,000 lei, the Armenian Bishop spent another 40,000 lei for spatial planning and development, on his own (Bezviconi, 1934:10).

Speaking about Muslim communities, we can confirm that the representatives of this religion did not practically constituted any standalone community after 1812. The number of representatives of this religion did not exceed a few dozen throughout the entire 19th century, which is why the latter used to live dispersedly and there was established no separate community. This fact is also confirmed by the fact that, when a number of Russian army officers filed a request to the Basarabian gubernia government to send Muslim priests to military units for conducting religious and other services for Muslim soldiers enrolled in the Russian Army, they received a negative answer, given the fact that there would be no such persons on the territory between the Prut and Nistru Rivers (NARM, f.,2, Op., I, d., 4108).

The most indicative in this sense are the statistics and censuses of those times, which show very small figures or a total lack of this segment of the population in the majority of cases when referring to Muslim population (Gumenâi, 2016).

After 1812, the number of the population related to Lipovan cult (who called themselves, in fact, old-rite Orthodox believers (старообрядцы), while in the official state documents the latter would be called „raskolniks/расколники”). On the one side, these included inhabitants who had migrated from internal gubernias of the Russian Empire, while on the other side – Lipovans returning from the territory of Ottoman Empire where they fled from tsarist persecution during the previous period. Regardless of the migration vector, respective population used to settle in or form isolated villages inhabited by Lipovans only, or settle in cities, where they would form separate communities. Judging by data provided in the statistics prepared by central authorities, the so-called raskolniks mainly settled in villages, while the old-rite Orthodox believers would settle in towns (NARM., f., 2, Op., I, d., 3652). In our opinion, this information is incorrect, as the terms used in both cases describe representatives of one and the same religious community, revealing the fact

that the central authorities couldn't make a delimitation or classification of different religious movements or cults either.

Anyway, Lipovanism was always within the range of attention of the religious tsarist administration and Church institution with the view to put different forms of pressure and reintegrate the exponents of this cult in the dominant religion, which was also the religion of the Russian state.

It is a known fact that already on 2 January 1812, upon request of Gavriil Bănulescu-Bodoni and with the consent of ober-prosecutor of the Holy Synod Alexandr Nicolaevici Golițan, Teodor Carasev was allowed to carry out missionary activities among old-rite Orthodox believers in Basarabia, with the aim to promote the idea of omopist Church within the Prut-Nistru space, and reconvert the representatives of the given cult to Orthodoxy (Parhomovici, 1910:13).

On 26 March 1818, Gavriil Bănulescu-Bodoni received an answer from the Holy Synod and Department I of the Senate, which wrote that, as per approved decision, and having listened to the report of the Minister of Justice Dimitrie Lobanov, as a result of incidents occurred in Sarata, Kaluga, and Ukrainskaia Sloboda gubernias, it was decided to preserve all the existing Lipovan churches, however prohibiting the construction of new ones (NARM., f., 205, Op.,I, d., 2006, and l.1-2v).

The Lipovans were prohibited to hold public positions and propagate religion. Within the Orthodox Church of Basarabia, G. Bănulescu-Bodoni issued an ordinance of strict character by which all the church servants were requested to oversee the observance of respective provisions, which fact was fulfilled exactly, according to existing documentary information (Parhomovici, 1910:15).

With the accession on the throne of Emperor Nicolai I, and due to his political orientation in this area, certain priests were ordained to the Basarabian Eparchy in 1837 to carry out missionary tasks in localities where old-rite Orthodox believers (raskolniks) lived. According to existing data, among these were: archpriest Vasile Purișchevici – in Chisinau, priest Adam Sâcinski – in Ismail, priest Petru Morgunov – in Chilia and Vilcovo, archpriest Teodor Maliavinski – in Cetatea Albă, priest Gacichevici – in the villages around Cetatea Alba, Tatarbunar, and Cicima, archpriest Nichita Zaushevici – in Tighina, archpriest Simion Baltaga – in Orhei and Fuzovca, Sârcova, and Telenești, Alexei Dubitchii – in Culișauca, Mihailovka, and Belousovca villages from Hotin region, archpriest Avramie Glijinski – in Colincăuți village from the same region, and Avramov Antonovschi – in Balti (Sosotoianie raskola i sektantstva v Bessarabii, 1883: 688-689).

Education was another area designed to fight the divide „raskol”. In 1835, the top authorities developed rules „Pravila” for the initial education and training of children in the villages of Oloneț gubernia, where very many old-rite believers lived. By this law, the old-rite believers’ children were allowed to study by using „old books”, while the teachers were required to show a lenient attitude towards the children and their parents, but being imposed to inspire respect for the Orthodox Church. On 12 November 1836, Dimitrie Sulima received an Order from the Holy Synod regarding primary education in villages, with reference to Oloneț gubernia, which was to be applied in all gubernias of the Empire. According to this document, the given process was to start by attracting Orthodox children, and then bringing the children of old-rite Orthodox families to study together. Therefore, all the priests (blagocinii) had to present the localities and parishes where Lipovans resided and assign church persons responsible for respective schools. The priest (blagocinul) of Orhei, Baltaga, responded that there were Lipovans in the Sârcovca, Fuzovca, Telenești, and Orhei localities, but none of the church staff wanted to deal with this issue. In reaction, the Clerical Consistory issued an order by which they requested appointment of person capable to work in primary church schools or displacement of these persons from parishes. As a result, the following deacons were designated: Dimitrii Lușchevici (Orhei), Ivan Muranevici (Sârcovca), Zinovii Zalețchii (Fuzovca), and Andrei Timoșevski (Telenești). Among them, only the last one graduated from Chisinau Theological Seminary, the rest undergoing training at the level of primary village school. (NARM., f., 208, Op., I, d., 120 and l. 1-16).

In some cases, superior bodies of the dominant church would interfere directly in order to organize certain measures against Lipovan communities. In those times, they would apply what is called “spotted strikes policy” in the contemporary terminology, as was the case of Lipovan communities from Telenești and Sârcovca in 1842(NARM., f., 208, Op., I, d., 99).

In 1845, the Chisinau Consistory resent the decision of the Holy Synod to priests, which specified the moral means and attitude of priests towards old-rite Orthodox believers (raskolniks), while on 23 June 1853, based on imperial decree, Archbishop of Chișinău and Hotin Irinarh provided new instructions to priests with regard to combatting raskolniks, and obligating them to submit reports on their activity and successes achieved in this field twice a year (Popovschi, 1931: 106).

As a continuation of this policy, in May 1857, as well as in September and November 1858, the Clerical Consistory issued dispositions on basis of the Sankt-Petersburg Holy Synod decrees, which provided for

catalyzing the clerics' activity in annihilating the Lipovan schismatics (NARM., f., 208, Op., I, d., 638, 639, 640) .

A very astonishing change happened in the south of Basarabia with regard to Lipovan segment due to tsarist laic administration.

On another note, it was exactly in this period when the tsarist authorities resorted to the limitation of the increase in number of churches to the maximum extent possible in the rest of the empire in order to avoid the spreading of ideas shared by the discussed denomination. In this sense, an imperial decree issued on 21 February 1818 prohibited the construction of new chapels, sanctuaries and pray houses, to make their number remain constant. Moreover, another decree with a similar content would be repeatedly issued on 17 September 1826, adding a clause by which respective edifices had no right to get repaired or renovated, being suggestively entitled „On Prohibiting the Construction by Raskolniks of Anything New Resembling a Church ”(Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imerii, vol.1, 1830: 946). Several years later, in 1835, a decision was approved to create a special class of missionaries, ordering again that the peasant houses no longer be transformed in public pray houses, and no altars to be built in chapels, allowing only those built before 17 September 1826 to continue functioning, and, at the same time, prohibiting the Lipovans to hold public positions and promote their religion (Izvolechie iz otcheta missionerskogo Komiteta Kishinevskoi eparhii za 1839 g., 1894:254-255).

However, already in 1816, the construction of a Lipovan Nativity Church was allowed in Izmail, south of Basarabia. The case of old-rite Orthodox church in Izmail was not a sole one in the region. The construction of Lipovan churches continued until the loss of South Basarabia by the Russian Empire, pursuant to Paris Peace Treaty (1856). According to data available, as per the census carried out in the southern region of Basarabia in 1827, one can notice that all the Lipovan communities were insured churches. In Chilia, Vilcovo, and Jebreni there were chapels made of twigs. The Careacica locality had a similar type of construction dedicated to the Cover of the Holly Mother of God, the Cicimea locality had their chapel dedicated to Saint Haralampus, in Tucicov town there were two brick churches – Nativity and Saint Nicolai, while in Muravlevca, there was a wooden church dedicated to the Cover of Holly Mother of God. According to known sources, a wooden church was built in Vilcovo in 1830 and named after the Cover of Holly Mother of God, but was destroyed by fire first time in 1843, and the second time in 1853. After the church had burned twice, a decision was made to build a new brick church in the place of the wooden one, dedicated to the Birth of

Virgin Mary (Statisticheskoe opisanie Bessarabii sobstveno tak nazyvaemoi ili Budjaka s prilozheniem general'nogo plana sego kraia, sostavlennoe pri grazhdanskoi s'emke Bessarabii, proizvodivshei po Vysochiaishemu poveleniu razmezhivaniuu zemel' onoi s 1822 po 1828 god, 1828: 381).

In this regard, we can say even more, and namely that the construction of churches was not the only specific feature of this area. The same year, 1812, marked the launching of the construction of a monastery with had a church dedicated to Saint Nicolae (Gumenyi). The new community owned a wind mill, pastures and hay fields, as well as three desetines (3.27 ha.) of vineyard, which were farmed by the same monks (Sapozhnikova, 238). In addition to this property assets, the monastery received land lots within the range of Necrasovca village, close to the Danube River, and the Crivoi lake with a total area of 284 desetines (310.46 ha.) in ownership (Statisticheskoe opisanie Bessarabii sobstveno tak nazyvaemoi ili Budjaka s prilozheniem general'nogo plana sego kraia, sostavlennoe pri grazhdanskoi s'emke Bessarabii, proizvodivshei po Vysochiaishemu poveleniu razmezhivaniuu zemel' onoi s 1822 po 1828 god, 1828: 381). All this property would insure an annual income of 1,150 rubles.

An interesting case is also linked to the request forwarded to the Tsar by a delegation of Cossacks, in which, among others, they were requesting for the Lipovan church in the Babadag region, more exactly in Sarichioi village to be transferred to the south of Basarabia. This case was unusual and without precedent with regard to the current legislation of those times, but on 25 November 1830, Nicolai the 1st positively endorsed the given request through an imperial decree (Sobranie postanovlenii po chiasti raskola, 126). Moreover, by imperial disposition, the local administration bodies were ordered to allocate an amount of 2,030 rubles for transportation needs, knowing that just for the transportation of the church from Tulcea to Ismail, over the Danube River, a ship was rented and cost the Lipovans 20 silver rubles. Shortly after the church was remounted, and in 1831, it was already functioning in Ismail (Prigarin, 2010: 244).

One can notice that throughout the period when this region was within the Russian Empire, until the south of Basarabia was returned to the Principality of Moldova, there was no initiative or act on behalf of the Orthodox Church or secular administration, which would stipulate the interdiction to build or repair the Lipovan churches, or what would have been more serious – to close the latter.

If refer to the attitude of local authorities in other aspects, Lipovan communities were treated differently and duplicitously in other religious issues, as well. In this regard, we consider as eloquent the manner of

applying the Imperial Decree on Prohibiting Bells in the Lipovan Belltowers, of 1840 (Sobranie postanovlenii po chiasti raskola, 1858: 377). In reaction, the Military Governor of Basarabia filed a request for the Decree not to apply to Ismail, Vilcovo, Jebreni, Caracicov, Potcoava, and Muravliovca localities, i.e. to the southern part of the region. Although the request was not accepted, the achievement of the latter was that the change was to be made within a longer timeframe, while the local police was requested to more rigorously check the number of bells in the Lipovan churches. Later, the event evolved in an even more unexpected manner, as in 1842, when Ismail was to remove the bells, the decision was not implemented under the guise of the need to show indulgence towards Nekrasovists who were errant in their faith. (Prigarin, 2000: 276). In Chilia, it reached even farther. On 15 February 1841, the Chilia administrative authorities received the disposition of the Basarabia Oblasti leadership and of the Archbishop of Chişină and Hotin on removal under a special pretext of the bells from Lipovan church and their transfer to the Orthodox Cathedral. The deadline for carrying out this task was 1 March. We don't know in which form and what levers and strings were pulled by Lipovan communities, but this disposition was not carried out. On the contrary, they obtained the permission for Chilia and Vilcovo churches to run the bells on a daily basis. (Prigrain, 2010: 252).

The situation is also dual for the part related to celebration of worship services, as well as for the attitude towards priests representing the old-rite religion. In this sense, the Lipovan communities from the south of Basarabia would be usually defended by local authorities, although they should have observed the general imperial legislation. An illustrative example is the case of Lipovan community from Chilia, where in 1834, having analyzed their complain, S. Tucikov explained to the chief of the police that, pursuant to the dispositions of His Imperial Majesty, old-rite believers residing in the administrative unit managed by him have all the rights to freely follow the religion they practice. For these consideration, the latter warned the police chief not to interfere in any way in such issues in the future (Fedorova, 2004).

The Lipovans from the south of Basarabia enjoyed a privileged statute, due to which their communities finally enjoyed freedom of action in all spheres of religious life. This fact can be demonstrated by a paragraph in a document issued by Tucikov, in which the latter showed that „despite of this fact, it is categorically prohibited to call the old-rite Orthodox believers other than raskolniks, and their churches as pray houses, as is the case in the rest of the country”(Fedorova, 2004).

From the examples provided above, we can clearly understand that the religious-ethnic factor was the main factor taken into consideration in organizing the population newly settled on the territory of Basarabia after 1812. The religious structure in these communities would constitute the principle by which the community would be organized, moreover, it was the principle followed in relationships between different subjects.

Oftentimes the administrative and religious power would be concentrated in the hands of one and the same person in these communities, such as, for instance the Evangelical-Lutheran priest in Chisinau or the rabbi in Soroca city. In this way, the community organized on basis of religious principles, which had the head of spiritual life as a leader would become one of the main forces by which the national identity was maintained.

In communities of this type, the church institution would perform the function that conserved the national component on the one hand, and the function of communicating with other national components from other dwelling spaces, on the other hand.

Thus, if refer to the first function, it can be related to the statute of Protestant church.

A first document referring to the attitude of Russian rulers towards representatives of Protestant confessions is the Disposition of the Committee of Ministers of 17 July 1814(Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imerii, vol. 22, 1830-1884: 841-843). In fact, this was an answer to an enquiry forwarded by the chief military and civil officer of Basarabia, chief engineer-major Harting who had requested instructions on how to resolve the problems related to the refusal of colonists to swear faith. Another issue raised related to ensuring clerics of the same religion as the one shared by the newly-come persons who counted 1,072 families or 5,500 souls.

If put aside the first topic, and refer to the religious one, the document stipulated that actions were to be taken in compliance with the dispositions entered in the registry of the Committee of Ministers of 25 August 1809 and of 23 March 1810, which provided for the following:

„1. The salary shall be paid from the state treasury (coffer): a Protestant pastor shall receive 400 rubles, while a Catholic priest shall be paid 300 rubles a year, for a period of 10 years; this money shall be due to colonists as a privilege of paying taxes.

2. For settling the housing issue, a loan shall provided from the state treasury (coffer) to: Catholic priests, as poor households - 300 rubles; Lutheran priests - 600 rubles.

3. Land lots shall be distributed as follows: for pastors - 120 desetines of arable land, as well as for hay making, while for Catholic priests – half of the above quantity, plus three desetines for house and orchard each.

4. The imperial disposition also stipulated the obligation to build houses for priests and church readers (citet /anagnost) in collonies. The state treasury had to allocate money to clerics for travelling to those places, while some of them, upon imperial benevolence, were paid the amount of 600 rubles as a benefit”.

This was the first document in the range of acts issued by the laic tsarist administration in favor of Evangelic-Lutheran church. All the subsequent legislation, including the Code of Laws of the Russian Empire (Svod Zakonov Rossiskoi Imperii, 1857: 407), as well as a number of other dispositions and laws, strengthened further the position of Protestant Church and clerics, so that these elements practically became the ones managing German colonies, the education of young generations being inclusively concentrated in their hands.

Due to the structure that the Protestant religion had in place, where the act of confirmation or the confirmation constituted one of the key elements of religious life, and particularly of life, in general, the school could in no way neglected. For this reason, before 1891, the Basarabian Germans used to have only schools within churches, and the teachers were remunerated by parishioners. A teacher had up to 300 pupils, while after 1858 – up to 165 pupils. Pursuant to the law, starting 1839, school education became compulsory for all children between 7 and 15 years of age, which was followed by another three years of „kinderlehre” (class hours organized at the end of the week, even on Sundays, beyond the religious service). In such conditions, a child would gain education and training, as well as develop skills of continuity in all his/her occupations, a strict discipline common to German social traditions.

Upon graduation of primary school, pupils were allowed to proceed to confirmation and would spend Sunday noon in catechism classes. During one week, they were to be able to read one chapter from the Testament well. The graduates were also obligated to be able to write one page of text first on a slate board, and then in the copybook.

Pursuant to the Charter of the Evangelic-Lutheran Church, approved on 28 December 1832, confirmation ceremonies would involve all children of both genders between 15–18 years of age.

The Protection Committee developed compulsory school attendance rules and submitted the latter to mayors. Absence from school and catechism would be punished. If parents could not pay the fine in cash

(3 kopecks for one absence from school, 5 kopecks for absence from catechism), they had to do unpaid work (Chirtoaga, 2003: 176).

It is obvious that such situation, like in the case of Armenian-Gregorian religion, would not provide a possibility to the Orthodox Church, as an institution, to interfere at least a little in the moral-spiritual life or on other segments of the existence and evolution of the German or Evangelic-Lutheran colonies.

Only in the 70ies of the 19th century, after the changes occurred in the German world, the secular tsarist administration would change its attitude towards the German population living in the Russian Empire, trying to remove schools from the Protestant church influence and attempting to insure russification of this segment of the population.

With all measures taken, the results were not as expected, although a certain movement in this sense can be noticed. According to data of 1897, approximately 24.5% of the German Population residing in the Russian Empire knew Russian language (including 27.5% of men, and 21.6% of women), constituting 15.75% of all the non-Russian population. If refer to Basarabia, then available data looks as follows: generally, 20.8% (23.5% men, and 18.0% women) knew Russian language in the German colonies; respectively in towns - 45.8% (46,1% men, and 45,3% women), while in villages – 19.9% (22.4% men, and 17.3% women). Under age categories, the share of rural population would be as follows: 1–9 years of age – 6.3% (6.7% boys, and 5.9% girls); 10–19 years of age – 44.5% (44.4% boys, and 44.5% girls); 20–29 years of age – 26.3% (32.3, and 20.8%); 30–39 years of age – 20.4% (27.5%, and 13%); 40–49 years of age – 12.4% (17.6%, and 6.9%); 50–59 years of age – 8.7% (11.4%, and 6.0%); and persons aged 60 and more – 8.0% (10.4% men, and 5.8% women, respectively) (Dizendorf, 17-20).

An example in favor of the second function can be the case of Catholic community in Chisinau. So, according to data of Chisinau police, after the Polish uprising of 1830, a rumor was spread among Polish population, according to which a new revolt was being prepared with the participation of European countries, and, according to reports, the church led by its priest was the source of respective rumor.

After the riot of 1863, Generla, Governor of Novorosia and Basarabia wrote in their correspondence with the Chisinau administration that, according to the information held, the Catholic priest from the city was hiding representatives of Polish revolt who were collecting 10% of the income and salaries of local Polish people for supporting the national liberation movement. Although this information was never confirmed, the

Catholic priest was kept under police supervision, by limiting the possibility of his movement to the maximum (NARM., f., 2, Op., I, d., 7641).

In the same year, police report of 28 May in Hotin informed that Catholic priest Ioan Lozinskii performed a divine service and a requiem in the Catholic church of the town to honor the Polish men who died during the revolt (NARM., f., 2, Op., I, d., 7640).

The Roman-Catholic confession was in fact the most constrained one by tsarist authorities. Although the number of representatives of this religious movement was rather limited, this did not help abolish the intense surveillance of and attention to the latter on behalf of different administrative structures and tsarist power executors. In addition, it was due to their small number that the Roman-Catholics in Basarabia managed to avoid the massive repressive policy of the state carried out with the view to convert them to „autocrat’s religion”, as it happened in the northwestern gubernias of the Russian Empire. And although we cannot state cases of physical eliminations or massive exiles, the tsarist decision making bodies anyway promoted a policy of maximum limitation of the existence and development of this cult by both prohibiting the construction of different Catholic churches and limiting the possibility to follow certain traditions and customs, these constraints being based on two reasons: first, this cult had links, and even the top management of it was outside the country borders, and secondly, the term Catholic was equal to the term Polish, this ethnicity being considered as the most dangerous for the unity of the Russian Empire.

The ethnic or national-religious community also represented the body that made all efforts to avoid the loss or migration of their representatives to other ethnic or religious communities. In this sense, the communities of different religious denominations manifested themselves most strongly in Basarabia. The most eloquent in describing the conservatism of denominations (and below, please find the example of molokans and stopits) are the minutes of the meetings of Basarabia Oblasti Government. For example, in the meeting of 5 August 1826, based on the police report of 3 August of the same year, the audience addressed issue No.745 concerning the fugitives found in Iasi, inhabitants of Chişinău city, molokans or duhoborts (in original: молоканы, они же духоборцы-п.п.), in the presence of Oblasti Government, were interrogated and showed: „Vasilii Golubov, aged 29, was born in Moscow, son of Dimitrie and Natalia, inhabitants of the same city, who were already dead and were molokans. He left the city during the devastation of Moscow by the French, together with his father and younger brother, Leon; based on the certificate possessed by his father, they came straight to Ackerman town, where they

lived around a year, his father returned to Moscow, while he moved afterwards to Chisinau with his brother. He was registered here by Town Duma as a town inhabitant, has been paying contributions to the state until to date.

He follows the molokan religion since a small child, and shares it according to the custom: he doesn't attend church, doesn't observe lent according to Christian tradition, doesn't worship icons, does not make cross, does not wish to join the Christian religion. All the property he has is a horse and a cart, and necessary clothing".

His wife, Vasilisa Golubeva, was 24, born in Ackerman town, her parents were Zaharii and Caterina, both already deceased. As far as she had heard, they came from Moscow, were registered as town inhabitants. She married eight years earlier and observed all the traditions that her husband did. When they married, they were wed by the inhabitant of Bender city Zaharev who they didn't know whether he was still alive, the wedding including only the reading of prayers by Zaharev.

As per Andrei Strogov, is it shown that he was 27, was born in Moscow, in the family of Savin and Marina. He was taken from Moscow by his father and went to Nicolaev, where they lived for two years, and then they moved to Izmail, where they lived for over four years. After that, his father crossed the Danube, while he went to Odesa, and after approximately four years, he went to Hâncești locality; here he lived for one year, after which he married an orphan girl named Ana, in Bender, she stayed at old man Parfion Leontievici, both from among molokans. After two years, they settled in Chișinău, being entered in the population registry by the Town Duma. He observes the customs of molokans and does not want to convert to Orthodox religion.

His wife, Ana, aged 25, does not know her birth place, she only knows her father's name was Petru, and her mother's name - Marfa. After her mother's death, her father went over the Danube, while she stayed in Izmail, under the tutelage of Cuzima Colițov, who she moved with to Ackerman town and got employed as a maid and babysitter by a Greek man. As the latter moved to Bender, she went together with him. There, she lived at molokan Parfion Leontievici till she married Andrei Strogov.

Similar information is practically mentioned also about Iacov Crâlov, Piotr Bocaciov, Leon Golubev, and Fiodor Crâlov. All of them were born in molokan families in Moscow, but left the city when it was invaded by Napoleon's troops. Passing through several localities, where they stayed for short periods, they settled in Chisinau by 1826.

Skopits. Data about these are provided by both quarantine reports, and excerpts from the reports of regional courts. Thus, a Sculeni Quarantine letter of 16 August 1835 provides a range of data that is of our interest. Thus, detainee Pancrat Epihin originated from Riazani Gubernia, Ranenbauman County, Picova village, peasant by social origin, castrated five years earlier by villager Efim Hlapcov who was a soldier in reserve.

Then, Achinfei Lașcov came from Moscow Gubernia, Bogorodsc County, Ciolcova village owned by landlady Jerebțova, and was castrated six years earlier, in Reazani Gubernia, Cangelisa locality by soldier in reserve Tihon Zveaghin.

Cuzima Lipatov came from Tula Gubernia, Vigovsc County, Pruticov village owned by captain Boicov, and was castrated in Gorodînța village by peasant Boris Ericem in 1812.

The document further mentions Evghenii Tolochichin, Gurii Govorov, and Andrei Berleav – all from Reazani Gubernia, Ranenbaum County, Cotorovca, Dubovaia, and Golovinscina villages, castrated in different circumstances some years earlier..

Interesting data were also provided by the Orhei court report of 20 December 1835 which mentions about Nicolai Șalimov who stated during the interrogation that he came from Olrov Gubernia, Maloarhanghelsc county, Malâe Ploty village, and was castrated by the inhabitant of the same village Hariton Afanasiev, being convinced by the latter that only in this way he would save his soul. His brother Afanasie Șalimov was castrated 13 years earlier by a butcher under the pretext that he had been bit by a snake and could save his life only in respective way. In addition to these two brothers, the document reported on peasants Marchel Golovin, Sidor Ilin, and Feodosii Cotelelv who were from the same gubernia and county as the first two men, and had been castrated, as stated by the latter, as they were promised to get their souls saved and sins forgiven in this way. (NARM., f., 6, Op., I, d., 75, and Op., II, d., 865)

It is obvious that here we cannot but agree with the statements of A. Miler regarding the existence of russification policies rather than just one such policy, and in this case, regarding religious policies rather than one such religious policy of the Russian Empire, which obviously differed from one region to another (let's say, from Basarabia to north-western gubernias of the empire) or from one confession to another.

It is obvious that in the case of Basarabia there were no extensive actions planned for converting the population to the „true religion”, that of the autocrat, because the majority of the population from the Prut-Nistru

space was of Orthodox religion, while the religious communities existing beside the latter did not represent a threat for the unity of the empire.

Nevertheless, one could observe some actions of this type on behalf of the dominant church, but the ethnic-confessional community was actually in action in respective cases, which is why the conversions from other religions to Orthodox religion were seldom in Basarabia, compared to other gubernias or parts of the empire, and in many of such cases the conversion was generated by the obtaining of certain privileges of either economic or other nature (NARM., f., 205, Op., I).

Thus, the information provided above allows us to state that the communities of religious minorities used to represent one of the key elements in the conservation of the national identity of the population that had come from the outside of Basarabian border.

On the one hand, the constitution of these communities envisioned from the very start the inclusion of religious traditions and customs. The religious element was practically merged with the national element, so that the two elements be perceived as unitary and indivisible in the collective imagination and mentality. On the other hand, at that moment, religion represented a power uniting representatives of one or another nation, which was conserving the identity and represented an instrument for “linking” with the outside world.

It was the very elements, such as religious affiliation, church, and priesthood that constituted the substrate of the national identity, and since the communities were organized on religious bases, as was the case of Basarabia, these very elements conserved and maintained the national conscience in development.

It can be also stated that the slogan announced by tsarist authorities, including personally by the tsar, entitled “Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Poporaneity” was not observed, the political interests prevailing in many cases over the religious ones, and so, the interests of the Orthodox Church Institution were not only once damaged, while the stimulation of different religious minority communities would strengthen the ethnic-religious communities.

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