

Seriile tezelor de doctorat susținute public în UDJG începând cu 1 octombrie 2013 sunt:

Domeniul fundamental ȘTIINȚE INGINEREȘTI

- Seria I 1: **Biotehnologii**
- Seria I 2: **Calculatoare și tehnologia informației**
- Seria I 3: **Inginerie electrică**
- Seria I 4: **Inginerie industrială**
- Seria I 5: **Ingineria materialelor**
- Seria I 6: **Inginerie mecanică**
- Seria I 7: **Ingineria produselor alimentare**
- Seria I 8: **Ingineria sistemelor**
- Seria I 9: **Inginerie și management în agicultură și dezvoltare rurală**

Domeniul fundamental ȘTIINȚE SOCIALE

- Seria E 1: **Economie**
- Seria E 2: **Management**
- Seria SSEF: **Știința sportului și educației fizice**

Domeniul fundamental ȘTIINȚE UMANISTE ȘI ARTE

- Seria U 1: **Filologie-Engleză**
- Seria U 2: **Filologie-Română**
- Seria U 3: **Istorie**
- Seria U 4: **Filologie-Franceză**

Domeniul fundamental MATEMATICĂ ȘI ȘTIINȚE ALE NATURII

- Seria C: **Chimie**

Domeniul fundamental ȘTIINȚE BIOLOGICE ȘI BIOMEDICALE

- Seria M: **Medicină**

CONTENTS OF THE DISSERTATION

LIST OF ANNEXES	I
INTRODUCTION	
I. Preliminaries	1
II. Clarifications on spatial delimitation. The administrative structuring of Southern Bessarabia in the interwar period	10
III. On the origins of minorities in Southern Bessarabia. Considerations on the ethnic map of the interwar period	15
IV. Methodology, structure, historiography	
Purpose, hypothesis, objectives	26
Methodology and structure	28
Historiography	34
Sources	46
CHAPTER I	
The circumstances and evolutions of cultural integration	
I. The status of <i>Culture</i> in post-World War I Europe. The nation-building project and Romania's cultural politics in the interwar period	49
II. Strategies, means, actors, instruments of Romanian cultural politics	
II.1. Paradigms of the national culturalization program	55
II.2. Operationalization of the national program for Romanian cultural education	59
III. Bessarabia's cultural tableau – premises, dilemmas, and perspectives	69
IV. The program for building Bessarabia's national identity through culture	
IV.1. Drawing and implementing the general lines of the cultural intervention	75
IV.2. Considerations on the role and status of national periodicals	80
IV.3. The elite's cultural and professional assemblies, popular gatherings, national celebrations – fundamental environments for formative interaction	88
V. ASTRA Association and its contributions to Bessarabia's cultural environment	
V.1. ASTRA's early entrance onto the Bessarabian socio-cultural scene	92
V.2. Onisifor Ghibu's designation and the objectives of his mission. Structuring ASTRA in Bessarabia	94
V.3. Material context and the financial complications of ASTRA in Bessarabia	99
V.4. Various impediments in the way of ASTRA's propaganda in Bessarabia	103
V.5. ASTRA's courses of cultural intervention in Bessarabia	
V.5.1. Editorial policies, instruments for publishing and distribution	104
V.5.2. ASTRA's cultural associations and activities in Bessarabia	110
VI. Southern Bessarabia and the national program of identity building through culturalization	
VI.1. Overview	116
VI.2. On the activity of cultural establishments lead by ASTRA	122
VI.3. On the activity of cultural establishments lead by the Royal Cultural Foundation	125
VII. On periodicals from Southern Bessarabia	131
VIII. Relations with the cultural alterity of the populations found in Budjak	140
VIII.1. The Russians and Ukrainians	141
VIII.2. The Bulgarians	150
VIII.3. The Gagaouz	154
VIII.4. The Germans	159
VIII.5. The Jews	169

IX. Final reflections	170
-----------------------	-----

CHAPTER II

Spirituality, the religious authority of the State, and the Romanian Orthodox Church as instruments for nation building

I. The status of spirituality and of the Church in Romanian national culture. The role outlined for orthodoxy within the interwar nation-building program. The dilemma of diversity within Romanian spiritual identity	179
II. The institutional incorporation of the provincial Church in the national religious system. Outlining Bessarabian spiritual alterity at the beginning of the interwar period	182
III. The language used in services, the religious calendar, the question of true belief – three obstacles in the face of orthodox nationalization. Establishing the major principles for intervention within the religious environment	187
IV. „Creating” Romanians through national orthodoxy: establishing prerogatives and relations between the moral institutions of the State. Theorizing the program for intervention upon (Southern) Bessarabia	192
V. Local reactions and attitudes towards the intentions of remodelling the orthodox environment in Southern Bessarabia. Preliminary considerations on the issue of service languages and on the results of the efforts to control the use of the old religious calendar	201
VI. Customizing the national-formative role of the clergy. Preliminary considerations on the condition and activity of the priests acting in Southern Bessarabia	207
VII. Relational premises between the population and the clergy – grounds for popular reserve towards the image of the priest. Socio-professional discrepancies within the priesthood of Southern Bessarabia	211
VIII. The pastoral-missionary vision of the Cetatea Albă-Ismail Diocese and the relation between priests and the tenets of the program for nation-building through church. Attitudes and actions of the clergymen in the context of nationalizing southern bessarabian orthodoxy. Preliminary considerations on the issue of languages used for services held in Budjak	214
IX. Further considerations on the question of sectarianism. Inter-ethnic collaboration within the southern bessarabian diocese	224
X. The Romanian priest as a national community leader. Non-ecclesiastical aspects of the clergy’s activities in Southern Bessarabia. Partnerships between the clergy and other national elites for the cultural nationalization of Budjak	228
XI. Final reflections	235

CHAPTER III

Hard power institutions and the interwar process of nation-building

I. Coercion and persuasion, tools of State power and strategies of standardizing politics. Considerations from the perspective of the State’s hard power	241
II. General views concerning the position and the role of the Romanian Army within the interwar nation-building program	245
III. Integrating Bessarabia and its South in the Romanian national military system	
III.1. Structures, branches, operational profiles	250
III.2. Qualitative professional characteristics. The state of mind of the military stationed in Southern Bessarabia. Relational dilemmas and issues between the Centre and the Periphery, inside local military structures and in their relationship with the local population. Positions of southern bessarabians towards the military authority of the Romanian State	254
III.3. The issue of drafting multi-ethnic southern bessarabians in the Romanian national Army. Voluntary and regular recruitment. Integrating former imperial officers	275

IV. Using hard power institutions in the social, political, and cultural management of Southern Bessarabia – Coercive authority	
IV.1. Coercive measures as seen by the social environment of Southern Bessarabia	287
IV.2. Typological interactions between hard authority and Budjak minorities	289
IV.3. The role of Jews in the cultural rivalry between Romanians and Russians. The position of the State's hard power concerning minoritarian bookshops and libraries in Southern Bessarabia	298
V. Justice as a hard power – an instrument for repression or one with complementary potential in the attempt to persuasively integrate the southern bessarabian community?	305
VI. The Army and its attempts to persuasively integrate the multi-ethnic population of Southern Bessarabia – courses, strategies, applications, results	
VI.1. Actions of a material-constructive nature	310
VI.2. Morally-constructive models	313
VI.3. Educational and cultural interactions	316
VII. Final reflections	323

CHAPTER IV

Limitations in the attempt at forming a Romanian elite in Southern Bessarabia

I. <i>The elite</i> as a concept – definitions; typological, structural, operational characteristics	327
II. Preliminaries on the process and results of forming a national elite in interwar Bessarabia and its multiethnic Southern region	331
III. Old and new elites. Moral examples and resources given to future generations of southern bessarabians	
III.1. Budjak's administration under qualitative and quantitative consideration	
Abuses and social damages – the harmful image of interwar civil servants	335
The state of mind of civil servants – the capacity of the Romanian State to gain the trust, obedience and loyalty of the administration workers in Southern Bessarabia	339
Romanian versus non-Romanian – difficulties in introducing national regulations to the southern bessarabian administration; ethnic representation amongst the civil servants of Budjak	341
III.2. Teachers and their social imagery – the multiethnic schooling body and its relational dynamics	
Reorganizing the regional system. Southern Bessarabia outside the cultural sanitary belt	345
Linguistic standardization of the schooling elite – from its debut to the (dis)continuity of its results	347
The public image of the educational elite in Southern Bessarabia as shown through professional inspections	352
IV. The forming of a national elite in Southern Bessarabia. From theories and plans to material resources and actual opportunities	
IV.1. „Uplifting the village” – about the ideal of forming a Romanian rural elite	365
IV.2. Resources and evolutions in the process of mass-educating the Romanian population in Southern Bessarabia	
Premises, perspectives, practical resources of the regional schooling environment	370
Attendance, graduation rates, literacy. Dimensions of schooling in Southern Bessarabia	376
IV.3. The economic universe of Southern Bessarabia – capabilities, necessities, opportunities, evolutions in the interwar period	
IV.3.1. The agricultural horizon	
Land reform in Southern Bessarabia. Allotment and colonisation as tools for nationalizing Budjak	379

About the professionalization and endowment of agricultural activity in Southern Bessarabia	384
About the agricultural yield in Southern Bessarabia	387
IV.3.2. The commercial and industrial horizon	
About the place held by Bessarabia and Budjak in the economic overview of the country	393
Agricultural, animal, and viticultural trade as a professional branch in Southern Bessarabia	394
The issue of infrastructure and its impact on the regional economic environment	397
Industry, trade, administration – secondary occupations in the professional profile of Southern Bessarabia	402
V. Final reflections	405
CONCLUSIONS	411
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
ANNEXES	

NATION BUILDING AND THE IDENTITY ISSUE IN GREATER ROMANIA. THE CASE OF SOUTHERN BESSARABIA

- abstract -

Keywords: regional identity, cultural politics, cultural policies, cultural missionaries, integration, persuasion, coercion, national institutions, mass education, minorities, Budjak

Overview. For the Romanian people, World War One and its outcomes marked a new historical stage of collective feeling and reasoning. Construed from the point of view of the existing historical memory, the territorial unification of 1918 was offering the occasion for the political fulfillment of the entire Romanian ethnic community, along with the promise of a future shaped by its own sovereign authority, its own values, principles and models of life. Crowning a pre-existing vision, the State and its national community were to become entirely representative for Romanian essentiality. This intended trajectory was deviated by the socio-political realities of the time. Unlike the pre-war period, the Romanian State now had increased and previously unknown responsibilities, resulting from the need to democratically integrate an appreciable diversity of nationalities and to manage as efficiently as possible the multitude of their positions, which were more or less favorable to the new central authority. At the same time, the State had to solve the issue of its own unity because, beyond their fundamental similarities, Romanians from the united territories did not have strictly the same identity composition or the same attitudes and manifestations towards their Romanian conscience. Along with the aspects of minority otherness, the so-called "slips" in Romanian conscience formed the reality of regional social mosaics, which disturbed the unifying vision formulated before the actual process of national construction. Considered to be the result of malicious interference by imperial rule, differences specific to the Romanian populations of the provinces led the new central power to establish normatively that the "pure" state of the exclusively numbered qualities defined as intrinsically Romanian was predominantly found within the Old Kingdom. This attitude, along with the advantage in terms of political power, determined the substantiation of the socio-cultural models of the Old Kingdom within the program for restructuring national life. Consequently, for interwar Romania the shaping of collective conscience followed a binomial approach, aiming simultaneously for the homogenization of the population with a Romanian bio-cultural origin and for the civic integration of non-Romanian ethnic groups, at least insofar as they would become undisturbing to the interests of the majority. Beyond this organic separation, the patterns for collective identification had to come together in order to provide a common identity base for all citizens. The entire population living within the Romanian borders had to be convinced that it was part of a single extended community and that it shared the same long-term interests. Therefore, from the practical perspective of the national ideology, the process of standardizing social construction opened in its full scale only after the 1918 unification. Greater Romania wanted a fast national consolidation, a difficult objective under the conditions of the complicated interwar climate. A complex, discontinuous and sinuous process, Romanian nation-building advanced with a natural character of non-uniformity. Dependent on premises which were varied from one regional environment to another, its results composed an evolutionary model that was fragmented and branched rather than linear.

Even so, for a long time the process of building national identity within the interwar Romanian State seemed to be treated as a fact, unaidedly fulfilled, and not as a natural and necessary succession of stages and accumulations of (sometimes unequal) results. Historiographical discourse had often shown a preference for pursuing fixed interpretations of

the structural ensemble of this historical interval. For reasons relative to the circumstances, needs, and interests of various times, historians opted for a positivist perspective in presenting the facts and phenomena encountered in the political, economic, social and cultural reform of the Romanian interwar society. Moreover, when it did get analyzed through the filter of its programmatic character, through its multitude of causal relations, the interwar process of nation-building was often discussed in a general horizon, without being decomposed from a geographical, thematic, or ethnic point of view. However, the latter way of study has become more and more present in recent scientific debates, new topics and research directions bringing into attention both the specificity of premises and the variability of results within the Romanian national-formative process. Once implemented, analytical customization can be engaged, among many other feasible directions, in discovering the regional faces of the process. In this case, the novelty of the examinations is not found in (re)conveying major actions undertaken by the Romanian State in its intentions to unify and standardize national mechanisms, but in identifying and defining the specific nature of interventions and results obtained in each micro-social environment.

Leaning in such a direction, our own approach has been directed towards the Bessarabian ambience – especially the southern part of the province – seeking to discover the ways in which State authority related to the challenges and opportunities of this area, which was full in special characteristics. As fruitful as the subject promised to be in its theoretical essence and its informational components, it could rarely be found in the analytical perspectives already developed on the complex evolutions contained by the interwar history of the Romanian State. In fact, almost without differentiation on time period or subject, information with direct and clear reference to Southern Bessarabia proved to be generally scarce, disparate, and poor. Under these conditions, any intention to unravel ambiguities or scientific curiosities concerning this region's social environment was subject to increased efforts to determine relevant data from the multitude of references existing on the entire province. However, the efforts to identify and study the South Bessarabian elements inside the interwar identity-building program dictated their own necessity, by promising to add value to the interpretive (re)formulation of micro and macro political and social phenomena developed in the provincial community and, by extension, in the national one. Furthermore, the need for continuous expansion of research in order to address the distinct circumstances of the incorporation of the Peripheries into the national mass imagined by the Centre – and especially the need to analyze events “not only from the perspective of Bucharest politicians, but also of the population” – followed the incentives found in similar scientific approaches¹. Therefore, the particular typology and dynamics of the relations between the central authority and Southern Bessarabians (and especially the absence of satisfactory examinations on them) stimulated our inclination towards this specific space and community. Presented as an implicit achievement in classical historiography, the national and political restructuring of popular conscience required considerable and concentrated efforts in all the provinces, moreso in Russified Bessarabia and its South, an ethno-cultural mosaic. Revising the traditional discourse affected by unidirectional narrative reflexes, the studies of the new historiographical generation coagulated in the late '90s and in the '00s-'10s and chose lines of interpretation unimpeded by the previous necessities (or, as the case may have been, choices) to avoid being too critical on the events and processes carried out in an organized manner inside the interwar society. Instead, they sought to demonstrate argumentatively that in 1918 the nation started from real unevenness in popular identity and attitudes and, moreover, that it required direct and difficult

¹ See Cristina Petrescu, „Contrasting/Conflicting Identities: Bessarabians, Romanians, Moldovans” in Balázs Trencsényi, Dragoș Petrescu, Cristina Petrescu, Constantin Iordachi, Zoltán Kántor (ed.), *Nation Building and Contested Identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies*, Budapest/Iași, Regio Books/Poliroam, 2001, pp. 153-178, but also Eadem, „Construcția identității naționale” in Monica Heintz (coord.), *Stat slab, Cetățenie incertă. Studii despre Republica Moldova*, Curtea Veche Publishing, București, 2007.

interventions to become stable beyond bio-ethnic equivalence. The latter had proven insufficient even for the formation of solidarity in reasoning and action amongst Romanians themselves², without numbering in the complications naturally raised by the alterity of minorities. Finding new elements for scientific debate by analyzing the process of phased construction of national solidarity in its various social parameters, such examinations established the relevance of determining the place occupied by provinces and regions in the system of creating “good Romanians”, be they conditioned by “blood” or civic law.

The region’s evolution cannot be retraced without positioning it in relation to historical, political, economic, social, cultural aspects. Integrated into the Tsarist Empire along with the rest of the eastern part of modern Moldova, to which its name was later extended, Southern Bessarabia was immediately subjected to a policy of colonization that populated its lands with numerous and diverse peoples: Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Gagauz, Jews, Germans. With such a weighty ethnic situation, Budjak made the regulatory intervention of the interwar Romanian State particularly difficult. Being one of the most fragmented regions in terms of socio-cultural profiles, Southern Bessarabia had a feature that distinguished it from other territories united in 1918, namely that between 1856 and 1878 part of it had had the opportunity to experience the early stages of Romanian nation-building. Whether and how important this aspect was for its subsequent evolutions remains to be seen. The strategies and tools used by the State in those 22 years in which the counties of Cahul, Bolgrad, and Ismail were under Romanian administration were broadly the same as those implemented during its next government (which, incidentally, would extend over a similar period). But just as in the next century, the population of 1860-1870 had been too fragmented, and time too short for results to be lasting. However, the actions of the Romanian government had had a certain degree of efficiency and some non-negligible social effects, and this not only upon its own ethnic group³. Could this *intermezzo* be considered as a real advantage of the South in the issue of the identity integration of Bessarabia in the interwar period? All indications urge us to answer in the negative. Neither the social effects of the cyclical political-administrative fragmentation suffered by the Southern region nor its demographic, social, political, and economic features would facilitate the social-constructive mission of the future Romanian administration.

Looking back on the South-Bessarabian development within the interwar social-building program, we consider that the actors that were bound in a mutually decisive relationship with the contents that are subject to our analysis formed a tripartite structure. This included the official power, the local Romanian population, and the minority population. The core of the analysis of the interwar nationalization program (as it developed in Southern Bessarabia) is based on the structural and qualitative measurement of the interactions between these three major subjects, on following their perspectives for reasoning and action, as well as on distinguishing the way in which they affected each other. Historiography shows us synthetically the essential position of the State’s power in terms of theorizing and planning the national modeling process. Knowledge of the inflexible policies outlined in Bucharest and of the authorities’ reservation towards deviation from the carefully controlled standardization methodology thus encourages us to presume the improbability of reformative intervention being adapted to the peculiarities of Bessarabia and its multiethnic South. However, curiosity remains for investigating whether there were areas or specific moments in which the coordinating Centre may have leaned receptively towards the signals returned from the territory and may it have accepted the adaptation of the practical rigidity of its rules according to the special features and needs of the Southern Bessarabian Periphery. The extension of this

² See Irina Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare (1918-1930)*, translated by Vlad Russo, Humanitas, București, 1998, p. 30.

³ A good testimony on this fact can be found at Charles Upson Clark in *Bessarabia, Russia and Roumania on the Black Sea*, Dodd, Mead&Co, New York, 1927, chapter X („The survival of Roumanian”), pp. 88-89.

analytical direction is represented by the positions and manifestations of local factors, dictating the follow-up of the way in which the indigenous elements of authority (both Romanian and minoritarian) reconciled with/countered those introduced to the territory with the mission to implement and supervise the application of norms preferred by the national State. Complementary, regarding the instruments traditionally used for the formation of a social adhesion around the superior values and interests of the State – social leadings undertaken through legislation, administration, institutions, etc. in order to form a certain type of socio-political culture –, variables such as their importance and quota, constancy, linearity, or their elasticity in action can indicate in a sufficiently outlined manner the degree of regional effectiveness of the nation-building program. A final, illustrative, and significant threshold of observation and analysis is represented by the relational circuit created on account of the typology and intensity of the connections between the attitudes and actions of the promoters of nationalization, on the one hand, and those of the local population, on the other.

In order to understand the dynamics of this circuit we will need to look at the regional climate and the different levels on which the governing authority was positioned. In Southern Bessarabia, Romanians did not form an elite majority or even a demographical one. They only had preponderance inside Tighina and Cahul counties; however, not even this presence was compelling. Rural, poor, overwhelmingly illiterate, without cohesive or well organized elites, Romanians had no power for socio-economical domination over the South Bessarabian region, just as they did not have it in the rest of the province. But the ethnic blend and the supremacy of minorities were not the only elements that prevented the efficient expansion of Romanian authority in Southern Bessarabia and the construction of a new collective conscience. Another major problem was the State's ability to properly manage the character of these communities. Having only known the pre-war precedent of a single minority population (and a relatively quiet and integrated one, at that), the Centre in Bucharest did not have the necessary tools to relate to the diversity of its new citizens, especially not to their closed and defensive nature. Overall, the South Bessarabian region looked like a mosaic of identities refractory to integration of any kind. All the local ethnic groups lived in community „islands“. Of them all, only the Germans and certain parts of the Jewish population were more cooperative and open to adaptation to the new socio-political-cultural conditions. Affected by the logic of Zionism, other segments of South Bessarabian Jews rejected any claim for integration. The Russians had anti-Romanian sentiments, but were still considered by some authorities to be easily denationalized through intense propaganda. Bulgarians were also problematic, being assimilated both in their social nature and in the perception of the new rule as loyal partisans of the old regime. The Ukrainians were also considered to be Russified and disobedient, although their manifestations were less refractory and many of their attitudes towards the old and new authorities could have otherwise been useful to Romanian politics. From the outlook of the Romanian locals themselves, the Southern region was considered to be the most culturally/nationally alienated part of Bessarabia.

Under these complex circumstances one of the matters that disadvantaged the evolutions of the socio-formative program was the way in which Romanian power manifested its authority: in a manner which was not as oppressive as the Russian imperial one, but withal not far from the classical means of administrative pressure put upon the population. In the absence of a real demographical majority that could exert horizontal social pressure, the Romanian regime was also perceived as being oppressive without actually having the force of such a position. It therefore accumulated the unfavorable reactions of a restrictive rule without being able to extract the possible collateral benefits that inevitably return from such a governing system. Attempts to coerce the movements of the local populations, especially those of suppressing cultural diversification, strengthened reactions of separation and self-isolation inside the communities in Southern Bessarabia. Doubled by obsessive surveillance by the authorities and later by societal adherence to the political far right, ethnic fragmentation and pressure from assimilative policies amplified rejection of the precepts and norms of the ruling

majority and pushed minorities into political and socio-cultural coalitions that were unpleasant to the nation-State. Beyond the implications of this climate, the advantages that some minorities had through economic potency further outlined the fact that Romanian authority did not have enough power to wield a visible restructuring pressure on the local environment.

The way in which the State sought to manage the correlation between these circumstances and its own intentions to reorganize the provincial environment was characteristic of the historical time and values. State authority had a vision and used tools that were specific to traditionalism based on ethno-cultural prioritization, weakly adapting them to the new principles of controlled liberal democracy, obviously seeking to favour attracting as many benefits as possible for the ultimate goal of establishing multipurpose Romanian representation rather than to discern what its practical duties were in relation to the rights of alterity. Actions undertaken within the State's nation-building program can be classified as persuasive or restrictive depending on the angle of perspective. They did not usually target major physical, legal, or economic constraints. The issue can, of course, be greatly nuanced, and historical analysis does not ignore the controversies over the means used for securing the South Bessarabian territory and social environment against Bolshevism, nor the unfortunate manner in which national phenomena and events interjected with European history around World War II. Both situations led to the flaring of defensive attitudes towards otherness and generated significant deviations from what the Romanian State claimed its politics and policies to be (those of uniformization in a non-aggressive manner).

Viable nation-building is a process of integration that must substantially intensify various forms of contact and communication between the State and the popular body, as well as within the latter. Creating a uniform identity culture requires the "removal" of individuals from their closed communities, from local or regional identification, and their insertion in a process of over-ordination which involves, among other things, spiritual and material modernization. Beyond mass education in State-controlled schools or incorporation into disciplinary military activities, socially-constructive contact is dependent on modernization processes such as the expansion of communication and transport means, development of markets, improvement of medical and sanitary conditions, urbanization. Overcoming social immobility gives the individual the opportunity to interact with those with whom he is being urged to identify. The methods by which social contact is enhanced also make up that long-term development that provides stability, thus gaining the goodwill and trust of the population, making it less rigid towards assuming the national-political identity proposed by the State. All these transformations reside in ideological availability for including them in the nation-building strategy, but also in the objective capability to support such a burden as general modernization. For such reasons, development was not prominent in the methodology of Romanian interwar nation-building. Looked upon from the prospect of necessities, the specific modernization of Bessarabia was not a successful process, and in its multiethnic South the image of the Romanian State was greatly charged for the stagnation (sometimes even involutions) detected by the population through comparison with the pre-war period.

For any universal process of modernization and social building, as well as for our particular case study, another essential need is/was the development of an urban elite, respectively of a Romanian elite to support the assimilation of Bessarabia and its Russified and multicultural South. The "conquest" of the urban environment by the Romanian element was crucial for spreading the cultural, political, and economic models of the ruling majority. However, the urbanization of Romanians and the general process itself failed, (Southern) Bessarabian cities remaining few in number and mainly populated by minorities. The visibility of ethnics in various urban structures was not severely affected by the introduction of Romanian administration, nor was their cultural or financial status. Furthermore, attempts to substitute social authority and to coagulate solidarity of the multiethnic population for the socio-political model of the Romanian State were not in the least supported by the fact that the whole of Bessarabia seemed to be a converging point of poorly trained and abusive officials.

Progress in social and material development was slow and failed to determine profoundly good effects, ones that would be observable in the daily lives of locals and stimulate positive correlation to centrally-directed interventions. Instead, the State preferred to base its socio-political-identity build on the cultural system. Keeping in line with the visions and practices of other European states, which at that time were also consolidating their socio-political models by underlying them in the tradition of predominant ethnic groups (“nation-makers”), interwar Romania made concentrated use of cultural determination. Through culture, education, and orthodox spirituality, the national elite hoped to sediment the elements of Romanian identity in the psyche of all citizens. The first and foremost step for standardization – the introduction of the Romanian language in public structures, with special attention on the educational system – developed ambivalent results at provincial and regional levels. If linguistic systematization would certainly have its effects, it was equally true that in the 1930s there were still many people in Bessarabia who did not know/did not choose to use the Romanian language, including some who represented the official authority of the Romanian State through their profession. The situation was dire in the South. The attempt to increase literacy had underwhelming results even for Romanians. With an infrastructure greatly extended in the first interwar decade, the schooling system had its merits and successes in Southern Bessarabia as an instrument of the nation-building program. Even so, it could only permeate the social environment to a limited extent. Its formative role was therefore supplemented by the extracurricular. The first activities through which this system sought to affirm Romanian cultural specificity were done in the southern part of the province.

In light of the circumstances in which it took place, Romanian cultural activity had and at the same time did not have results in this corner of the country. According to reports issued in the counties of Cahul, Tighina, Cetatea Albă and Ismail, it was sometimes effective in attracting individuals that were not being drawn in by schooling. Victories in this respect were facilitated by partnerships between various national-cultural missionaries, as well as by the promptness of their collaborations. In this regard, Southern Bessarabians were at one point one step ahead of their counterparts from the Center and the North of the province, managing ever since the first half of the 1920s to form cultural structures that would later prove some level of efficiency and longevity in relation to the social and material conditions of the regional environment. However, despite all its engagement, the attempt at generalizing Romanian cultural elements struggled to cope with the social factors of the multiethnic South. The atmosphere of the old dominion remained deeply present, the essence of community relations remaining Russian.

Time (or, more particularly, the lack of) cyclically reappears as one of the main obstacles for more satisfactory progress in the socio-formative course of interwar Bessarabian society. The nature of the social environment in which actions were taken, as well as the general manner of intervention must then be added. The State kept its vision of vertical implementation, almost without taking into account the outcomes of its methods⁴, showing a strong defensive distrust of local factors, maintaining a tense relationship with subjects that it was otherwise presumably trying to attract towards its values and norms. Central authorities incompletely positioned themselves in relation to the role played by various segments of local society, regulating and establishing forms of coexistence based exclusively on the objectives of the Romanian National State, which was in turn interpreted from the perspective of the Old Kingdom. The possibility that the population might resist, refuse, or renegotiate certain elements of the national program that was meant to reformulate its identity instincts⁵ was

⁴ Arthur-Viorel Tuluș, „Aspecte comparative privind integrarea comunităților evreiești din jurul gurilor Dunării în structurile României interbelice: sudul Basarabiei versus Vecchiul Regat” in *Danubius*, XXX, Editura Muzeului de Istorie, Galați, 2012, p. 362.

⁵ See Abel Polese, „Language and Identity in Ukraine: Was it Really Nation-Building?” in *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, no 3/2011, Institute of International Social Studies, Tallinn University, p. 37.

somewhat taken into account, but only at the level of abstract theorizations, without the notice of relational shortcomings ever leading to adaptation of policies or strategies. All these aspects require an in-depth and systematic treatment, in order to provide dense conclusions on the development of the national-cultural-building program of Southern Bessarabia.

The purpose of the analysis. The multiple and complex elements that composed the South-Bessarabian society occupied a special place in the context created by the efforts of the State authority in shaping the entire national community according to principles and values that would correspond as much as possible to the image of Romanian identity. Consequently, they can and must occupy a clear place in the analysis operated on the development of this (re)constitutive process. The specific features of Southern Bessarabia make this region a separable subject from the province's evolution as a whole, a subject treated as such to optimize the knowledge and ability to interpret and understand the political, economic, and cultural manifestations that ultimately contributed – along with an association of many other essential considerations – to the lack of social longevity of the identity model proposed to Bessarabia in the interwar period. The identification of the shape and rhythm in which the effects arising from the application of the intensive nation-building program were expressed in the South of Bessarabia thusly enhances the gradual understanding of similar mechanisms at provincial and national level.

Without aspiring to the mirage of exhaustiveness, our dissertation will try to expand the universe of knowledge already formed on the interwar history of Southern Bessarabia by the researchers that are to be indicated in the historiography segment. Deriving from their work, we will in our turn try to reduce the gaps in information and analysis that still exist concerning this territory and social area. Our ultimate goal is to make the region and its history more visible to both the scientific community and all those interested in knowing and understanding local, regional, and national history. Discerning the complexity of the socio-formative framework by referring to the multiple ramifications of its ideological and practical components, keeping in mind the natural connections that Southern Bessarabia had with its surroundings, our outlook will gradually descend from the general features of the national plan, to the stages of provincial peculiarity, in order to stop over the regional case study. Seeking to understand the nature and quality of relations formed on this two-way line, our research aims to establish the position of Southern Bessarabian and its multiethnic society within the intentions and actions to form national unity and uniformity.

Central thesis. Our hypothesis is that, under the determinations of ultra-centralized policies in which everything (from conceptual definitions to practical interventions in the management of community life) was established and coordinated from the Centre in Bucharest, Southern Bessarabia could not benefit from official individualization within the scheme of the nation-building program, even though it had socio-political and ethno-cultural characteristics that would have required – to an even greater extent than the rest of the province, which in itself proved to be much more different in the reception of central authority than the latter would have expected or wished for – the extraordinary adaptation of the inflexibility in attitude and strategy of State power. Subsequently, we presume that this lack of consideration for the fragility of its potential (either consolidating or destabilizing) negatively influenced the relationship between the Centre and the Periphery, and that consequently it profoundly disadvantaged the development of socio-(re)formative intervention. Being one of the most vulnerable transition zones between the Russian and the Romanian political and social environments, Southern Bessarabia occupied a distressed position inside the province, which was in turn seen, in its whole, as unstable and difficult to integrate. State reluctance to engage in a vast and intensive material investment for the integration of Bessarabia, along with the unfavorable economic conditions of the country (which further restricted its financial possibilities, thusly decreasing the likelihood of favoring this province in relation to others,

which were considered to be less risky from a political, economic, social, and cultural perspective) gave Budjak very low developmental dynamics. The active (although undeclared) choice of policy, as well as the objective impossibility of conducting a massive intervention – one that was not administrative or cultural – were thus the harbingers of Southern Bessarabian failures in the identity integration program.

Objectives. In order to verify this supposition and to clearly determine the place of Southern Bessarabian society within the ideological and methodological structure of the institutionalized nation-building endeavour, we will see to fulfill 3 major objectives. First we will frame the general manner in which the interwar Romanian State pursued its goals. We will be interested in establishing what did State reasoning prefer regarding the characteristics of its program for transforming a heterogeneous environment into one that would accept and respect the same clear set of identity rules. On the same note, we will also want to determine the position of central authority relative to the manner in which its ideological, strategic, instrumental, and methodical ensemble would relate to the social conditions found at provincial and regional level. Our next goal will be to systematically reconstruct and analyze the peripheral climate. We will seek to map, as accurately as possible, the political, economic, and socio-cultural environment of Bessarabia, especially its South, in order to determine the premises in which they received the interventions aimed at reformulating community identification, and then to draw their lines of relational evolution vis-à-vis the integrative requirements of the Centre. Our last point of interest will be to identify and examine possible reasons why the links established between the two parties did not evolve favorably within the nationalization program. Comparing the shapes of theory, practice, and feeling that had been idealized by the discourse on the unified future of the Romanian community (and the subordinate future of the minorities), on the one hand, with the realities of community life in Southern Bessarabia, on the other, we are looking to name some of the elements in respect to which the contact between State and population did not succeed in taking deeply constructive figures. Increasing the specificity of these indications, we will say that what we are broadly interested in is to identify the nature, characteristics, and methods of nation-building governance policies of Greater Romania, to determine what was their chance for application in the social environment of Southern Bessarabia, what was their relationship with local Romanian identity and with the ethno-cultural particularities of the region, and what were the manners by which State authority lost (or did not even gain) representativeness and ability in remodeling the social environment of Southern Bessarabia so that it acquired a national image in the sense of loyalty by the multiethnic population towards the political and cultural precepts of the majority, in itself imagined under a certain and strict set of characteristics.

With these objectives in mind, we wish to obtain answers to an ever-growing list of questions, which illustrates the need to downwardly reconstruct the image of interwar Bessarabian society. First of all, what was the conceptual framework of Romanian nation-building and how did its applied structure look like? How was the abstract relationship between majority and minority/otherness constituted, respectively how was the nationalization program theoretically and factually divided between these two essential components? What status, role, attributions, and how much freedom of reasoning and action did the actors of the national environment receive? How was the relationship between the population and the institutions of the State (School, Church, Army, Administration) established? How did their representation expand at provincial, regional, local level? What were some of the essential features of South Bessarabian alterity? Upset by the new political situation, how did relations between majority and minority resettle and move forward in the multiethnic South of Bessarabia? How has the process of building a uniform social identity affected in the context of the region's multiculturalism? How about in the context of its severe lack of infrastructure, its very low levels of urbanization and industrialization, its unfavorable economic situation? In the light of its special features and the stringency with which its priority was claimed in terms

of needs to “save the identity” of local Romanians (outnumbered, economically and culturally enveloped), did Southern Bessarabia receive personalized status or support for the advantageous balancing of its social relations? Finally, what developments could the national integration program go through in Southern Bessarabia during the two decades in which it was put into application?

Methodology. We are attempting to clarify the forms of (dis)continuity between the ideological shape that the social-building program got from State authority, on one side, and the evolutions that it took in practice, at the particular level of the Southern Bessarabian society, on the other. Making use of the methodological complementarity between an ethical and an emic perspective, the dissertation explores the relationship between the way in which the nation-building process was perceived by the (external) reason of the State and its missionary elites, on the one hand, and by the (internal) reason of Southern Bessarabian communities, on the other hand. The research also has an inward-looking approach, seeking to investigate the conditions of regional community life in the political, economic, and socio-cultural context of the interwar Romanian State, without deepening the subject of external determinations, of the complicated international environment where the place of the Southern Bessarabian borderland must be sought, just like the last element of a matryoshka doll, by removing superior layers of determination. Thinking that, even in this “halved” form, our research cannot claim to be exhaustive in its theoretical substantiation, in methodological directions, in its data and in the validity of its conclusions, we found it appropriate not to extend it towards research directions with importance and complexity that require their own analytical attention. Therefore, without ignoring the significance that external factors held for the development of the Romanian nation-building program in Southern Bessarabia (and throughout the province), we saw it as cautious to focus on a single direction for our present research, while we will add the former elements into analysis through subsequent developments of the subject.

Through these perspectives, our study seeks to recompose a social microsystem, to represent a quasi-complete circuit for examining its parts, to touch as many relevant points in retracing the composition of the interwar national environment and the connections it had with the socio-formative program and its application in Southern Bessarabia. Looking to describe, analyze, and then facilitate the understanding of the depths typical to various formats of social space (national, provincial, especially regional and local), our analysis gradually descends from the ideological and strategic level of central power, passing through provincial particularities, then finally stopping at the level of local, Southern Bessarabian communities, and the ways in which they received, interpreted and felt the changes dictated to them by the new national objectives. The first step in the operationalization of this working plan was to identify the elements through which the State composed and wielded its values, principles, and nation-building regulations onto the social community. Needing to identify the fields and tools by which the identity-standardization program was formulated and applied, we inevitably looked to the moral institutions and the modeling environments that they governed inside the interwar community: School (mass education), Church (Orthodox morality and spirituality), Military authority (security, order, social discipline), Economy (community development), Administration (organizational efficiency), Culture (popular contact with the idealized contours of a social identity raised on a rigorous and exclusive selection). Intended to act both separately and together, all these sectors, primordialily representative within a structured society, had to compose a complex and complete identity culture, which in turn had to be presented to the citizen every time he stepped into the public space.

The thorough analysis of these authorities, which had full power to influence the course of community life, gave our research a themed structure, in which chronology brought a natural but secondary reconstructive support. Instead of dividing in stages the evolutions we found within Southern Bessarabian society regarding its relations with the governing authority

of the Romanian National State, our work was built on individual and in-depth examinations of the role that each of the aforementioned institutions played in the attempt to integrate the population in the political, economic, and social structures of the centralized State. These institutions have been treated consecutively as micro-areas of interest. Simultaneously, following a general model, but also one customized to the particularity and the analytical needs of the recorded processes and phenomena, the content of each themed segment was arranged in descending logical order, bringing together informed considerations on the place that the respective authority occupied in the ideological pantheon of the Romanian nation-building program, its position within the interdependence created by the high authority of the State between symbolic institutions, its typical objectives and strategies, the operational features of its actors, the typology of its particular interventions upon provincial and regional/local social dynamics, popular reactions for/against the latter and, consequently, the nature and quality of the relations that each institution contracted with the social environment (especially with the multiethnic one of Southern Bessarabia); finally, local developments registered by the attempt to gain social representation for the conduct requirements which defined each major institution.

As one can see, our attention was focused on determining the researchable features of the 3 major collective actors involved in recalibrating social representativeness and authority; this resetting was presumed within the program of organized reshaping and homogenization of the composite universe of community identities brought together by the 1918 Union. By the power they could exercise over the theoretical and factual course of this collective adaptation to the new requirements of interwar politics, these actors can be qualified as active participants (the State, in its supreme quality of creator and decider), intermediaries (national elites and moral institutions, as operatives for the former) and passive participants (the population, as the object and final recipient). The core of our analysis was based on the measurement, then the structural and qualitative interpretation of interactions between these subjects, on the pursuit of their reason and action, on distinguishing the way in which they affected each other. The case study of Southern Bessarabia then came to naturally close the causal circle which was in motion in interwar society.

In addition to this analytical distribution, the structure of the dissertation also includes another important division. We were naturally attracted to the separation in levels (national, provincial, local) and socio-reconstructive directions (domains of community life), but also to one other major element differentiating relations between the active and passive components of the reformative process: the separation of subjects by their connection with the idealized bio-cultural Romanianness. Consequently, we sought to research the properties of the Southern Bessarabian social environment and to establish the validity of our hypothesis by retracing the region's multiethnic character (with both minorities and Romanian particularities). We were interested in identifying the ways in which contacts between nation-State politics and Southern Bessarabian alterity took place, as well as the way in which central authority related to the population that it unreservedly recognized as belonging to its nucleus, but that did not rise to the expectations regarding the conduct suitable for a unified and governing majority. All the ethnic groups that visibly populated this territory were kept in constant attention while documenting and interpreting social dynamics. This increase in elements of interest complicated and to some extent burdened the process of collecting and classifying data. However, the opportune nature of this additional effort could not be overlooked. Ignoring the region's ethnic map and the place occupied by non-Romanians in the relational mechanisms between local society and the centralized standardization program would have otherwise meant the incomplete execution of operations necessary to the completion of our objectives. As a result, each themed segment contains information on the relations of various forms of State authority, first with the national population and then with the minority population of Southern Bessarabia. It is our belief that only through this double perspective can we obtain the optimal data and interpretations necessary for the correct

understanding of this social environment, as well as for arguing the admissibility of the considerations which we formulated at the beginning of the research.

In fact, due to the place alterity occupied in the environment of Southern Bessarabia, we found it appropriate to give it an engaging inclination, in order to demonstrate the local status of minority communities, to relate it to the Romanian counterpart, to show by direct comparison which were the premises of its relationship with the latter and its governing authority, and possibly to unravel the causes of its defensive, repulsive, and/or restrictive attitude (other than the obvious ones). This subsidiarity was not solely based on the need for informational and interpretative balance, but also on the wish for variety, seconded by scientific curiosity. Historiography regarding interwar Bessarabia presents, with an almost all-encompassing predilection, the thesis of inequality in authority and socio-economic influence between the Romanian and Russian elements, an imbalance that caused severe obstacles for the development of the new national regime. Along with the (often brief) references to the other minorities of the province, usually mentioned to emphasize the anti-Romanian character of imperial policies, the Romanian-Russian rivalry was the most frequently and widely exposed ethnic relationship. Considering the quantity and quality of these analyzes, we found it appropriate to diversify and examine the Romanianness of the province (in our case of its South) equally through its relationship with other ethnic communities, not only with the previously dominant one. The first difficulty raised by this objective was reflected in the parameters of documentation. It had to be done correctly but somewhat easily, to allow us to permeate the subject without subjecting us to an unbalanced effort in identifying information, one that would divert our attention from the other objectives of the research. The segment we dedicated to historiography and sources will show that both pre-existing studies and original information found in archives helped us to compose a well-informed image on the position of alterity in the provincial society, but without fully satisfying our expectations and needs. Recreating the histories of South Bessarabian minorities appeared to us in horizons that have been more or less promising. We can discern, for instance, differences between the quantity and quality of identifiable data on the German community versus on the Gagauz population. Inequalities in the chronology of information proved to be another factor hindering the documentation process, as the interwar period was less fruitful than other historical segments. Navigating the shortcomings, our analysis focused on the appropriate use of the knowledge collected. It aimed to discern the social status of minority communities in Southern Bessarabia and to distinguish their capabilities (or actual progress) for integration into the register established by State authority. One of the major objectives set within these tasks was to determine points of multilateral comparison between the situations of different ethnic groups, especially in the sense of supplementing the traditional discussion regarding the relations between Romanians and Russians. The fact that in the interwar years the balance of economic and socio-cultural influence existing between these two parties continued largely on the foundations built under imperial rule has been much discussed from the perspective of the unfavorable position given to Romanians. The fact that the real supremacy of the former masters rather stopped at the level of urban elites and administrative authority has been less emphasized over time. Looking down to the ordinary population, Russian peasantry had always been as uneducated as the Romanian one and just as poor, lacking the means with which to develop its economic activity profitably. Then, under the interwar administration, both communities would prove equally incapacitated by their lack of experience, resources, and will power to structure internal elements of political, economic, cultural representation. The peasantry of both the former and the present rulers seemed to be equally apathetic towards the modernization of its community life. Therefore, the bulk of the Russian population in Southern Bessarabia did not have many elements with which to compete with the bulk of the Romanian population. The resistance of its cultural model remained the main asset, but it manifested solely on the success of the pre-war political power in fixing it in the mind and collective conduct of the provincial society. By slight contrast, although it lacked decision-

making power, a Southern Bessarabian community such as the German one had some capacity to morally and materially compete with the status of the new dominant ethnic group. This was not in the sense of a competition for legitimacy and governing authority, of course, but in the sense of a symbolic measuring on the quantity and quality of resources available to each community. Along with the Jewry, Germans held spiritual alterity in Southern Bessarabia, which made them resilient to certain integrative pressures within the new nationalization program. The two ethnic groups also had the highest levels of literacy, which had given them special measures for community spirit over time. Unlike the rest of the multiethnic peasantry, the Germans had special qualities in organizing their farming activity and the best developed rural community. Without having a special background compared to other regional ethnic groups (but this was still in the context of previous colonial privileges), the German population had a better outlined and a more balanced community. If Russians maintained their cultural and financial capacity almost exclusively through their urban elite, while their peasantry remained inert in underdevelopment (a characteristic of other Orthodox ethnic groups too), Germans had a more uniform division of wealth and a more cohesive socio-cultural network. In fact, all regional ethnic groups had their own characteristics, that placed them in distinct positions from each other and in relation to the authorities. Seeking to decipher the mechanisms of social relations that determined the quality of the interwar integration program in Southern Bessarabia, we consider that all of these elements are worth exploring.

Structure. Reuniting all these directions, our dissertation has been divided into 4 chapters. They analyze 6 essential areas of social life, indispensable to the process of building collective identity: culture, religion, order and security, education, economy, the administration of communal life. These were treated through their appropriate institutions⁶. The first 3 were separated in their own chapters, while the last 3 were reunited in a single segment, which deals with the disproportions between the major desideratum of State authority on overturning the balance of social influence in favor of Romanianness, the efforts put into this objective with long-term development and, finally, the results obtained in this respect in the interwar period. While it may seem gratuitous, this separation sought to mark the subtle differences between the nature, position, and mission occupied by each domain within the process of national identity building. While they were all moral institutions of essential importance, entities emanating from State authority, which in its normative subordination managed the whole spectrum of collective life by receiving approximately equal representation and powers, they still had fine differences in terms of the essence of the role they played in the program for reformulating the characteristics of the (Southern) Bessarabian social environment. In this sense, although they also had definite implications in the administration, control, and guidance of the social standardization mechanisms, the Cultural system, the Church, and the Military had rather indirect attributions in the practical formation of the next generations of citizens compared to those held by Schooling, Administration, and the Economy. The reconstructive role of the 6 institutions could therefore be divided in two ramifications, one with inclinations towards the moral, abstract side of the process, the other with a palpable, factual inclination. The cultural, spiritual, and disciplinary norms induced/imposed through the first 3 institutions contributed to the creation of a new climate, which prepared the mental transition of the heterogeneous population towards a conscience formatted by Romanian tradition. The educational, administrative, and economic system had instead the quality of building the very chances of stabilizing and perpetuating this environment. Moreover, they were the ones that had (at least in theory) the ability to achieve the qualitative transformation of the characteristics of the

⁶ We use the notion of *institution* in its quality of being a „supra-structural manner of organizing social relations, which are repeated and typified according to juridical regulations that have been established by occupational fields and that mirror the historical character of the social system“; definition according to dexonline.ro/definitie/institutie [20.12.2020].

Romanian population, so that the latter could gradually and *de facto*, not only *de jure*, take over authority over the regional community. Considering that one of the State's main goals was to raise the moral and material situation of the Romanian population by creating a proper elite in Bessarabia, we considered this structural division to be convenient.

Briefly looking at each chapter, we emphasize the method of starting from the general point of view and gradually descending towards the case study of Southern Bessarabia.

In Chapter I – *The circumstances and evolutions of cultural integration* – our first aim was to integrate the Romanian plan of nation-building through Culture in the wider horizon of similar processes that were launched immediately after the First World War by all newly established nation-states of Europe. Considering this context, but also the historical past of the Romanian space, we then aimed to establish the ideological structure of the nationalization program and the manner in which it was set to operate through Culture. We therefore sought to clarify the paradigms, strategies, means, actors, and instruments of Romanian cultural policy. Outlining State context was followed by defining the conditions held by Bessarabia in wait of the implementation of these newly listed elements. Our portrayal of the province's cultural scene – including premises, dilemmas, and perspectives under which contacts between Periphery and Centre would open – preceded the description of the manner in which the culturalization program was planned and applied here. An extensive inclination was given to the instruments (publications, cultural activities dedicated to the elite and the population, etc.) and the institutions (ASTRA's regional organization, for a start) that occupied leading positions in this integrative approach. The latter received a dedicated segment, as a testament to the operational importance it held through its provincial and regional pioneering. The last part of the first chapter was dedicated exclusively to the cultural situation of Southern Bessarabia. Starting from the local circumstances that State propaganda had to face, our focus split between the interventions made by the biggest institutions within the interwar cultural program (ASTRA and the "Prince Carol" Royal Foundation), following their contributions to the objectives set by the State regarding the spread of Romanian cultural principles and norms among the Southern Bessarabian populations. We also looked through periodicals circulating in the region, before concluding with an analysis on the relations between the cultural authority of the State with the alterity of Southern Bessarabia (with the successive treatment of Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, Jewish, and German case studies).

The second chapter – *Spirituality, the religious authority of the State, and the Romanian Orthodox Church as instruments for nation building* – was also organized in several segments. As in the previous case, our examination started with the identification of the spiritual-religious ideology of the State, and with drawing the role that it was assigned within the identity building program. Here, too, the purpose was to establish the place that otherness (meaning everything that was not orthodoxy with a traditional Romanian appearance) occupied in the plan for social integration through religion. The extension of this point was profiling the moral and "technical" problems of (Southern) Bessarabian spiritual alterity. They were the visible differences in mentality and religious practice, which distinguished 3 major factors for opposition between State authority and the local multiethnic population: the language of the service, the religious calendar, the subject of true faith. Southern Bessarabia's social environment was anchored in the use of Russian and the Julian calendar in church service, and it often slipped into so-called sectarianism. Its multiethnicity and the demographic weakness of the national element made the intervention of State authority more difficult to manage than in areas with compact Romanian-Moldovan population (without it giving much faster or better results over there). In this context, the relations between those responsible for directing the standardization of the religious environment in Southern Bessarabia became ever the more important. We therefore considered it pertinent to decipher their collaborative relations before pursuing the development of their interventions. The political authority of the State, the spiritual authority of the Orthodox Church (with its institutional subordinate in Southern Bessarabia), and finally the local clerical staff each had their own way of defining and dealing

with the issue of integrating the multiethnic population through religion. Their visions were not always in agreement; the resulting disproportions seeped into local society and left impressions that, along with the unpleasant nature of the changes themselves, affected the way in which the religious institution interacted with the composite conscience of the Southern region. In order to adequately illustrate the difficulties of trying to nationalize through Orthodoxy, we therefore accompanied the description of the way in which the cultural reformulation of the religious act was theorized and carried out, with the examination of the reactions manifested by locals to the new principles and practices of their churches.

Chapter III – *Hard power institutions and the interwar process of nation-building* – is the last in the series that offers separate segments to the moral institutions engaged in the interwar program of forming national identity. It opens with the conceptual, instrumental, and strategic substantiation of «coercion» and «persuasion» at the level of hard power State authority and in the socio-formative context that interests us. What follows is the integration of military authority in the ideological register of the Romanian nation-building program, then the identification of the evolutionary stages of the contact that it had with the (Southern) Bessarabian environment. In the sensitive context of the first interwar decade, the State's military power was perhaps the most visible authority within public space. It was often protested against, it generated tensions and it received numerous defensive reactions from the local population, it imprinted unpleasant images through the inappropriate behaviors of some of its territorial representatives and, for the most part, estranged civilians instead of attracting them. Integrating Southern Bessarabians, both Romanian and minorities, into the Army, or gaining their respect for the national military in general, would prove to be difficult and end in an unfortunate failure. Trying to justify its coercive presence within Southern Bessarabian society through the argument of national and community security, then seeking to customize its public reflection by developing constructive actions (material, moral, cultural), military authority failed to gain the prestige, trust, and power of influence that it officially claimed, nor did it find progressive ways of effective interaction with the various populations of Southern Bessarabia.

The last chapter of our dissertation seeks to determine the *Limitations in the attempt at forming a Romanian elite in Southern Bessarabia*, namely the State's inability to fulfill one of its most important nation-building objectives. The chapter brings together considerations on 3 major areas of public life – Administration, School/Education, Economy – retracing the way in which the Romanian State understood to use the moral and material potential of these institutions to determine the functional integration of the region into a unitary system, the reactions provoked in Southern Bessarabia by the policies and the more or less inspired interventions within these fields, as well as the results obtained through the social activity carried out by these environments up until the sudden interruption of the Romanian governance over the territory. In short, the content of this segment confronts the claims made by the State regarding the socio-economic developments that the Romanian population should have gone through in order to “take into” its new status of ruling community, on the one hand, with the quantitative and qualitative realities of moral and material investments that it assumed (/could have assumed at that historical moment) to facilitate and encourage these modernizations and social advances, on the other hand. The chapter therefore follows the capacity of the Romanian State, but also that of its representative population, to engineer the necessary conditions in order to support the gradual creation of an elite that would lead the public life of the province according to Romanian values and norms. Putting the evolutions of the 3 socially-constructive entities in the context of the doublet between the capacity and the national will for development, this segment follows the factual effects developed in the Southern Bessarabian environment by the attempts and failures of the authorities to nationalize the province through Administration and School (less so through Economy), and to make Romanians the new real masters of a territory in which the Russian essence had been deeply implanted. The successes, but especially the opportunities missed by the poor management of the moral and material

patrimony of these 3 domains of collective life show what real balance there was in the South of Bessarabia between Romanian and non-Romanian, bringing us closer to the validation or nullification of the hypothesis on which we have operated.

The contents of each of these segments were articulated through final considerations specific to the analyzed field. The use of gradual conclusions was a practically motivated choice, this form of work optimizing the identification of results logically derived from the undertaken examinations. The most important elements separable from these intermediate reflections were reunited and integrated in the final exposition regarding the verification of our initial hypothesis.

Referred to at the end of the material, the bibliography summons the sources that we considered pertinent and useful for documentation. As in the case of any complex research, it collects only the works that have been directly cited in the text, the complete field of information that prepared the composition of the study being much wider.

Finally, the last component of the dissertation lists a series of annexes that we considered useful for supporting the data and ideas submitted in the body of the analysis. They include references to the territorial delimitation and ethno-demographic composition of Southern Bessarabia, as well as data on cultural activity in its social environment.

Our research has a historical nature. It is a broad exposition of the circumstances in which community life unfolded in Southern Bessarabia under the direct determinations of the State program for systematic formation of a new collective conscience. Following in the footsteps of the natural chronology of events, our work followed the political, economic, cultural dynamics manifested within the regional social environment during the years between the two world wars. After identifying, comparing, and interpreting the corresponding data, the description of events was accompanied by a description of phenomena and procedures. The latter was not only made in the sense of explaining the succession of facts, but also in pursuing action-reaction exchanges between State power and the local population, namely of moral disputes and the ways in which they were or were not resolved. Keeping in mind the nature of our hypothesis, we found that this methodological combination adequately supported the correct tracing of the social topography of Southern Bessarabia.

Historiography. In line with the needs and interests of various political periods, the interwar nation-building program was not critically approached by the historiographical generations of the second half of the twentieth century. Only after the crossing of a certain threshold in Romanian history and the emergence of a new system of interpretations was this subject taken over by the national scientific community and put into an analytical process whose novelty would reside not only in filling information gaps, but in the more objective and balanced treatment of an epoch so representative in the nation's mythology that it had been previously seen as either distorted or incomplete, under a parochial discourse of autochthonous-protocronistic inspiration⁷. With the political and social liberalization of the 1990s, researchers in Romania and the rest of Central and Eastern Europe took on the issues of nationalism and the interwar nation-building programs. Although not without a slow start and a stumbling progress, historiography on the process of (re)formulating (with unifying intentions) the collective identity within the Romanian space has continuously increased in size in the last 30 years, bringing together new and interesting perspectives on the effects of this endeavour. Sifting through them for our own use, we focused on studies that could be guides for tracing the ideology and national-constructive methodology (following an instrumentalist interpretation), or from which we could extract information directly related to their applications and results in (Southern) Bessarabia. Because the process of nation building was in itself a complex enterprise, branched in multiple and varied directions of intervention,

⁷ See Constantin Iordachi, „România Mare: între competiții ideologice și consens naționalist” in *Sfera Politicii*, nr. 64, anul VI, 1998, pp. 57-61, retrieved from forum.md/ru/823158 [12.12.2020].

whose results had to be brought together to measure the deep effects produced on the social environment, its historiographical register could not take a fluid form, having rather a harsh aspect, with numerous irregularities, with long pauses between studies seeming to be directly related to our interests. Apart from a relatively small series of titles that can be easily framed in our time and space parameters, the historiography of the subject summons many diverse works, whose contents have made a valuable contribution to the attempt for understanding political, economic, social and cultural phenomena and dynamics encountered within the Southern Bessarabian multiethnic community from the interwar period. The situation only emphasizes that the subject we are dealing with has not yet had sufficient development and that our approach can bring relevant stock to an historiographical gap.

Each of the studies we used touches on one or more aspects that can be included in the 3-level analysis structure of our research – national, provincial, regional/local. On their background of ideas and information we constructed our own ways of reasoning and analyzing the issues in question, as well as retrieving data that helped us compose our own view on the facts. Although a chronological sequence would have visibly illustrated the dynamics (and irregularities) in the development of the historiographical nucleus that we used for reconstructing interwar events and processes, we found that this arrangement would be confusing rather than useful because of sudden transitions from one type of research to another, from very general studies to ones focusing on specific elements of social or local matters. This only shows the difficulty with which works that could explain the nation-building process and the interwar evolutions of Southern Bessarabian populations developed over time. In order to compensate for the lack of linearity and to avoid the impression of a forced order, we chose to present our historiographical components in an (imperfect) themed sequence.

Amongst works dedicated to the structured examination of the Romanian interwar nation-building process, the first complex analysis, bearing well-deserved expectations of scientific novelty, was the one composed in 1995 by Irina Livezeanu – *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle (1918-1930)*⁸. It quickly became one of the leading support-books for any attempt to understand the internal dynamics of the Romanian interwar society, because it brought into the essence of scientific discussion the way in which the communities united in 1918 under the same flag, but not under the same political, economic, social, cultural and identity impulses, related to one another. In her work, Irina Livezeanu was the first to raise the need to critically address the political, social and cultural evolutions of the interwar period from the analytical perspective of an organized construction of the collective environment, a process equally real, valid, and necessary in light of the differences that existed between the Romanian communities as were the organic and volitional foundations that had determined them to accept the Union. Focusing consecutively on the provinces united in 1918, she demonstrated that nationalization was undertaken in the form of a veritable *Kulturkampf*⁹, a cultural clash that sometimes turned into conflict and was always accompanied by tensions, dissatisfaction and frustration on the part of all involved. Irina Livezeanu's work analytically opposed the politico-cultural centralism to provincial regionalism – the former referring to identity pluralism as an artificial confusion, an extrinsically determined deviation, the latter existing naturally, beyond foreign interventions invoked defensively by the ideology proclaiming native uniformity. It was also the first scientific work that proposed clear, outlined directions for dealing with the issue of the nation-building process in the specific respect of Bessarabia.

After the analysis operated by Irina Livezeanu, other inclinations began to appear, slowly but promising, towards more critical approaches of the interwar process of building the Romanian nation and on the centralized program itself, as well as methodical divisions of the

⁸ Cornell University Press, 1995, 2000, translated in 1998 by Vlad Russo and published by Humanitas, București as *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare: 1918-1930*.

⁹ Constantin Iordachi, „România Mare: între competiții ideologice și consens naționalist”, *loc. cit.*

provincial evolutions regarding the attempts of homogenizing culturalization. One example was the 2015 essay by Lucian Boia – *How Romania was Romanianized*¹⁰. More inclined to work on the history of ideas and the imaginary than on the actual development of the nation-building program, Boia nevertheless merged these two directions in this study. Reflecting the goal of serving as a tool for popularizing historical information and interpretations, rather than deepening a discussion on the phenomena being presented, the book does not have a notable density, but still illuminates the way in which the State and its elites pursued, throughout modern and contemporary history, a continuous goal of emphasizing the Romanian element in society. In the chapter dedicated to the interwar period, the author begins his argument by dealing with the ethno-demographic situation of the newly constituted nation-State and with the identity and attitude differences present within the reunited Romanianness. He continues by presenting the role played by School in the process of culturally integrating ethnic populations, then by exposing the manner in which the approach and developments of World War II led to a re-elevation in statistical weight for Romanians by reducing minority communities after the loss of territories, population exchanges or withdrawals, as well as the result of ethnic cleansing, which became an unfortunate State policy. Through its content and the moment of its issue, Lucian Boia's book was not meant to be innovative from an informational or methodological point of view, but had the intention to popularize interpretations which were poorly known to the general public. Being very accessible, it had the greatest general visibility of all the works we deal with. For this reason, it has raised the most numerous and, most likely, the most intense reactions of acceptance or rejection, despite the fact that the ideas it contained are not in their essence, if they are to be compared to the theses argued by Irina Livezeanu or other researchers, not at all new in academic debate.

Earlier studies came out with less visibility, but collective works such as the one edited in 2001 by Balázs Trencsényi, Dragoș Petrescu, Cristina Petrescu, Constantin Iordachi and Zoltán Kántor – *Nation Building and Contested Identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies*, containing a very useful study on the Bessarabian province and the way in which identity models that its population was urged to internalize contrasted over time¹¹ – marked, however, the growing interest that researchers with various backgrounds had in discovering and deepening these issues. Several important works were to follow, not all of them strictly following the line of provincial history and not all belonging to the Romanian historiographical space, but each emulatively studying the substantiation and ramifications of the nation-building process. In this register, in 2014 another step would be taken in the expansion of the Romanian research on Bessarabia's evolutions from its annexation to the imperial power to its establishment as an independent State. In the volume edited by Diana Dumitru and Petru Negură – *Moldova: a Borderland's fluid history* – the history between 1812 and 1991 and all its stages of political and socio-cultural modeling/remodeling were treated systematically and integratively. The volume stops on the major moments in which State power intervened in the Bessarabian environment for social determination through various vectors, providing a logical and, as the title itself indicates, fluid narrative, i.e. an excellent form of progressive permeation of Bessarabia's historical experience with the components of a process (in her case, several) of nation-building. In our objective to follow interwar evolutions, the contributions of Svetlana Suveică, Petru Negură, and Diana Dumitru were of special interest¹².

¹⁰ Published by Humanitas, București.

¹¹ See Cristina Petrescu, „Contrasting/Conflicting Identities: Bessarabians, Romanians, Moldovans” in *cited vol.*, Budapest/Iași, Regio Books/Polirrom, 2001, pp. 153-178.

¹² See in *Moldova: a Borderland's fluid history*, special number for *Euxeinos, Governance and Culture in the Black Sea Region*, nr. 15/16 (2014), Chișinău, the following articles: Svetlana Suveică, „Between the Empire and the Nation-State: Metamorphoses of the Bessarabian Elite (1918)”, pp. 34-45; Petru Negură, „From a «Liberation» to Another. The Bessarabian Writers During the First Year of Soviet Power (1940-1941): Integration Strategies and Forms of Exclusion”, pp. 46-64; Diana Dumitru, „How the Bessarabians Were Perceived by the Romanian Civilian-Military Administration in 1941”, pp. 65-76.

In 2000, Charles King's complex work – *The Moldovans, Romania, Russia and the Politics of Culture* – discussed the historical evolution of the issue of identity in the current space of the Republic of Moldova, explaining the stages of Romanian-Moldovan-Russian interaction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and studying Bessarabia's position on the basis of its status as the object of successive (and very different) programs for designing a uniform identity culture. Following the difficult journey of the Bessarabian environment from 1812 to the end of the 1990s, Charles King compared the premises, strategic characteristics, and results of the 4 stages in which the multiethnic population was subjected to pressure to integrate into the identity format desirable to the State that governed the province at any given moment. He followed the tensions generated from outside or even inside Bessarabian society and how the various political powers appealed to Culture to determine popular subordination to the objectives and interests of the ruling elite. According to his own indications, the author sought to develop an analysis on the malleability of national identity, on the degree to which individuals can change their conceptions of self and surrounding community through the active intervention of education, cultural policies and any other form of State intermediation¹³. Treating the Moldovan space from its status as a borderland, Charles King sought to determine, among other things, the universal reasons why some attempts to shape a collective identity are successful while others fail. Throughout his study, King aimed to highlight the way in which Imperial, Romanian and Soviet policies and elites manipulated the elements of language and history to determine the formation of a certain social identity in the Bessarabian space. Through his work, Charles King was one of the first international researchers to deal with the mental impact that the Bessarabian multiethnic community went through as a result of its historical back-and-forth experienced with successive transitions from Romanian influence to the Russian one.

In his book from 2007 – *La Difficile Unione*¹⁴ – the Italian historian Alberto Basciani dealt with the issue of relations developed between Bessarabia and the rest of the Romania space, especially with the ruling Centre, in the difficult interwar period, a time that was less illuminated by the favorable developments through which it has been promoted in traditional historiography and more representative in terms of shortcomings, inconveniences and relational dilemmas. In a detached, lucid and excellently documented analysis, Basciani presented the relations between the Old Kingdom and the province in their simple (yet complicated) veracity, without slipping on one side or the other of discursive balance, carefully drawing attention to the fact that the interpretation of the various failures of socio-political contact and the nation-building program must be seen not only in the direction of the instability created by the Bolshevik-Communist problem, but also from the direction of the State's inability to provide attractive grounds for the stable integration of the multiethnic population.

Through their studies, Arthur Tuluș¹⁵ and Valentin Ciorbea¹⁶ introduced in special examination the regional and local space, but also extended the analysis on the integration process towards the perspective of contact and social communication, on the one hand, as well as economy and material development, on the other. The authors drew attention to the need for diversification in terms of identifying and researching the methods which were (not) used by State authority in order to attract the (Southern) Bessarabian space in a nationally-convergent dynamic. Other works that are deeply related to the Southern Bessarabian space and the nation-

¹³ See Charles King, „Contested territories, contentious identities” in *cited vol.*, p. 1.

¹⁴ Published by Aracne, Rome. Translated in 2018 by George Doru Ivan and Maria Voicu as *Dificila Unire. Basarabia și România Mare (1918-1940)*, published by Cartier, Chișinău, with a preface by Keith Hitchins.

¹⁵ See „Conectarea Basarabiei la comerțul exterior al României prin Gurile Dunării. Problema infrastructurii de transport” in *cited vol.*, Partener/Galați University Press, 2011, pp. 175-187.

¹⁶ See „Preocupări ale autorităților române pentru amenajarea portului maritim Bugaz (Limanu Nistrului), 1918-1940” in *Ibidem*, pp. 188-206.

building process are the one from 2016 by Arthur Tuluş¹⁷ and the one from 2018 by George Enache¹⁸, both of them meticulously redrawing the lines of the Romanian interwar society according to the domains they specifically develop. They offer us means to see into Budjak's social mechanisms, simultaneously providing us with raw information about the Romanian and minority communities, about the way State authority planned and implemented its integrative actions, about the positions held by institutions and their representatives, those who made direct contact with the population and, last but not least, about the latter and its reactions to the operational ensemble directed at it to determine and supervise its adherence to the norms of conduct that were desirable to the State.

Keeping with the line of institutional analysis, without being directly related to the study of nation-building, but rather seeking to explore the interwar political imaginary by probing administrative and ethical-legal representations, Bogdan Bucur's work¹⁹ represents another important landmark for distinguishing the national, provincial, and local mechanisms of the enterprise which was meant to standardize the identity pluralism of the populations reunited under a single territory, with all the unfathomable complexity of their social variety. Bogdan Bucur sought to address "the leitmotif of the Romanian interwar administration that disappointed expectations – especially in the provinces reunited in 1918"²⁰. His work proves essential for understanding how the ultra-centralized system of the State led from Bucharest managed to drive away the population from the provinces and not to converge it to the idea of a single, political and social identity.

Simon Schlegel's *Making Ethnicity in Southern Bessarabia. Tracing the histories of an ambiguous concept in a contested land*²¹ is the first and so far the only extended analysis focused exclusively on the Southern Bessarabian environment, on some of the political and socio-cultural processes that it and its multiethnic society went through over time. In his book, Schlegel treats the ethno-social question of Southern Bessarabia through the stages of bisecular history, following its fragmentation under the political and cultural rules of the Tsarist Empire, the Kingdom of Romania, the Soviet Union, and the Republic of Ukraine. Based on the issue of ethnic boundaries and the diverse discourses that have justified them over time, Schlegel's investigation focuses on the ways in which they were used as a tool for political and social control by the various powers who governed over Southern Bessarabia throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Connecting to the instrumentalist theory, which says that ethnic boundaries are culturally constructed, Schlegel sought to determine which narratives and which techniques proved effective in convincing the inhabitants of Southern Bessarabia that they were part of a determined and determinable collective, as well as whether these narratives were somehow adapted when they proved unproductive. Seeking to determine which were the parameters of socio-political inclusion or exclusion on ethnic grounds under the Romanian regime, the author named his chapter on the interwar period "Persuasion and paranoia". Like others before him, Schlegel noted that the years between the two world wars were characterized by a relationship based on deep mistrust between the authorities and whatever was perceived as being minority-related. Following the thesis of ethnic boundaries, Schlegel argued that the interwar administration only deepened the delimitations that already existed between communities in

¹⁷ See *Stări de spirit ale populației din județul Cetatea Albă între anii 1933-1934. Documente din Arhiva de Stat a Regiunii Odessa, Ucraina, Istros, Brăila*, 2016.

¹⁸ See *Mărturisiri înaintea mării încercări. Conferințele preoțești din Episcopia Cetății Albe-Ismail (iulie 1944)*, introductory study, notes and comments by George Enache, Lexon-Prim, Chișinău, 2018.

¹⁹ Bogdan Bucur, *Sociologia proastei guvernări în România interbelică*, Rao, București, 2019.

²⁰ Ioan-Aurel Pop, „Cuvânt înainte” in *Ibidem*, p. 14.

²¹ Brill Publishing House, Leiden/Boston, 2019. We have made use of the published work as well as its manuscript (the authors own PhD dissertation). In this respect, see Simon Schlegel, *The Making of Ethnicity in Southern Bessarabia: Tracing the histories of an ambiguous concept in a contested land*, Dissertation Zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der Philosophie (2016), Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, 287 pp., retrieved from d-nb.info/119802881/34 [14.12.2020]. The two variants will be referenced alternately.

Southern Bessarabia. He then showed how these social demarcations were used to distinguish those who deserved from those who (presumably) did not deserve to be considered loyal citizens of the State. He identified the two major directions of inter-community relations (the attempt at integration and social exclusion, respectively), which were sometimes alternatively used by the authorities and the national elite. Schlegel also spoke about the failure of interwar agrarian reform to bring economic development to the province, about the limitations of the literacy process (rejected by the multiethnic population in terms of linguistic standardization), about the social effects of the introduction of a foreign and many a times non-communicative administrative apparatus, about the gradual worsening of bio-nationalist rhetoric and its effects in Southern Bessarabia. Thusly, his analysis intertwines with the same balance between persuasion and coercion that we seek to undertake. However, by emphasizing the importance of the Soviet process of reformulating the ethnic issue and its significance in identity and social relations, Simon Schlegel's analysis had goals that are significantly distant from our own particular elements of interest.

Looking strictly in the lines of knowledge on the minority component of Southern Bessarabian society in the interwar period, the first visible takes on the ethnic issue, on the place it occupied within provincial society, and on the manner in which the Romanian State related to minorities came out in 2011-2012. Through his studies on the Germans from Budjak²² and the Jews from the Lower Danube are²³, Arthur Tuluș marked the distinctive place occupied by these communities in the regional social environment. The author outlined the specific features of these communities, which had been integrated in an identity space that extended into Southern Bessarabia from Southern Russia, thus drawing attention to the particularity of these peoples within the interwar Romanian State, as well as the difficulties that the latter met in its attempt to understand and relate to them. Valentina Chirtoagă would also publish about the interwar life of the Germans from Budjak²⁴; however, as her activity was already founded on another historical period²⁵, her contributions did not seem to extend to our range of interest.

Coinciding with these inclinations on the German community of Budjak, the first recent work largely dedicated to the history of a minority population in Southern Bessarabia

²² See „The Germans from Southern Bessarabia (Bugeac). From Colonisation to Repatriation” in Mircea Brie, Sorin Șipoș, Ioan Horga (coord.), *Ethno-confessional realities in the Romanian area: historical perspectives (XVIII-XX centuries)*, Editura Universității Oradea, 2011, pp. 293-306. For the Romanian-speaking space (and strictly for the history after World War One) we have been able to identify, prior to this study, only one other text that relates to the interwar evolutions of the German people of Southern Bessarabia; see Svetlana Guz, „Situația coloniștilor germani în timpul aplicării reformei agrare din 1918-1920 în Basarabia” in *Revista de istorie a Moldovei*, nr. 1 (25), 1996, Chișinău, pp. 47-53.

²³ See „Zionism - from the left to the right side of the political ideologies. Reflecting the Zionist trends in the life of the Jewish communities from Southern Bessarabia and the Lower Danube” in *Valahian Journal of Historical Studies*, vol. 17, august 2012, pp. 81-85 and „Aspecte comparative privind integrarea comunităților evreiești din jurul Gurilor Dunării în structurile României interbelice: Sudul Basarabiei versus Vechiul Regat” in *Danubius*, XXX, Editura Muzeului de Istorie Galați, 2012, pp. 351-374. In 2016 this last article expanded into a book, see *Aspecte din viața comunităților evreiești din jurul Gurilor Dunării (până în 1938). Mituri istoriografice, percepții contemporane și realități istorice*, Istros, Brăila, 2016.

²⁴ See for example „Învățământul în localitățile populate de germani din Basarabia interbelică” in *Revista de Etnologie și Culturologie*, nr. 11-12, 2012, pp. 35-37 or „Considerații privind repatrierea germanilor basarabeni” in *Revista de Etnologie și Culturologie*, nr. 13-14, 2013, pp. 216-219.

²⁵ See „Considerații privind învățământul în localitățile etnicilor germani din Basarabia în secolul XIX-începutul secolului XX” in *Revista de Etnologie și Culturologie*, nr. 2, 2007, pp. 191-194; „Considerații privind viața religioasă în localitățile etnicilor germani din Basarabia în secolul XIX-începutul secolului XX” in *Revista de Etnologie și Culturologie*, nr. 3, 2008, pp. 150-153; „Unele considerații privind evoluția culturii în localitățile etnicilor germani din Basarabia în secolul XIX-începutul secolului XX” in *Revista de Etnologie și Culturologie*, nr. 4, 2008, pp. 95-98, but also *Etnicii germani din Basarabia: evoluție demografică, social-economică și cultural-spirituală (1814-1917)*, PhD dissertation [manuscript], Institutul de Istorie, Chișinău, 2018.

came out in 2014: Ute Schmidt's *Basarabia. Coloniștii germani de la Marea Neagră [Bessarabia. German settlers in the Black Sea]*²⁶. In it the author explores the history of the German population settled in Bessarabia in the nineteenth century, by going into the historical, political, economic, social, cultural evolution of this community. The book systematically explains the circumstances through which this ethnic group came to be in the Budjak steppe, its difficult path to settling in a new homeland, the tribulations it suffered during the establishment of the colonies, the ways it organized its life under the authority of a completely unknown State power, the development of its internal coexistence (religion, education, culture, economy, administration), the relationship it developed with neighboring peoples. Ute Schmidt's research is not focused on a certain time period. Its bulk is focused on the pre-war history of the colonies but, in aiming at an overview for their existence in Southern Bessarabia, the author did not fail to stop on the interwar era. The book closes with the repatriation process carried out during the Second World War, and the conditions that the Reich prepared for these ethnics who were neither Russians, nor Romanians, nor "pure" Germans, but a bit of everything. While they cannot be fully comprehensive, the book's themes and chronological listing provide excellent markers for analyzing interactional dynamics. They always bring into question the perspective of "otherness", of minority having to manage the accumulation of changes on community life after the intervention of a superior authority. Against this background, Schmidt chose to summarize in the interwar chapter elements such as the significance of politically-symbolic moments in the relationship between the Romanian State and the Southern Bessarabian Germans, the evolutions of their contacts regarding economic and cultural standardization, the ways in which the ethnic community understood to protect itself, but also the way in which it came to absorb the political and identity emanations of the German space to the detriment of those of the State in which it actually lived its life.

If the regional history of the German ethnic group had the support of some analytical inclinations that, once brought together, benefited us in retracing the interwar evolutions of this community, historiography was not as generous in the case of other Southern Bessarabian minorities. For the Gagaouz and the Bulgarians, for example, when they do not raise accessibility issues, noticeable studies rarely have content that can shed light on the social transformations suffered by these two communities during the interwar period. Otherwise, viewed under general parameters, their specific historiographies have developed significantly over time. Within the Romanian-speaking society, a universal interest manifested itself ever since the pre-war period, intellectual elites showing interest in the historical and ethno-cultural mapping of the spaces inhabited by Romanians. Ethno-demographic knowledge about the provinces which were to be united was therefore formed even before the First World War and the Great Union. Unique information about the communities that populated them was brought to light. Many studies dealt with the ethnogenetic process of the Gagaouz and the Bulgarians, with the search for their biological and cultural roots or the retracing of the historical steps that resulted in their settlement on territories belonging to the future unitary Romanian State. In the interwar period, when the study of national minorities became a necessity and a strategic objective in its internal and foreign policy, fundamental studies increased the number and quality of historiographical elements on these two populations. At that time, the first Romanian researcher to study the particular history of the trans-Danubian colonists seems to have been Gheorghe Dragomir²⁷. Other useful works were those of Paul Mihailovici²⁸, M. Roman²⁹,

²⁶ Translated by Cristina Grossu-Chiriac for Cartier, Chișinău.

²⁷ See *Coloniile bulgare din sudul Basarabiei*, Tipografia Națională, Tulcea, 1923. This primacy is given to Dragomir by Ivan Duminiță in „Viața spirituală a bulgarilor din Basarabia română în anii 1856-1878”, *Revista de Etnologie și Culturologie*, vol. IX-X, 2011, Chișinău, p. 93.

²⁸ See „Bibliografie bulgară și rusă referitoare la Basarabia și coloniștii bulgari” in *Arhivele Basarabiei*, an. 4, nr. 4, 1932, pp. 322-325.

Theodor Holban³⁰, Ion Nistor³¹. At the end of the interwar period the linguistics of the Gagaouz people were studied by George Mihail Dragoș, and their anthropology was studied by the Russian-born Romanian researcher Olga Necrasov³². The political and cultural conditions of the interwar years gave minoritarian intellectuals their own opportunities and resources for enlarging knowledge on their own regional communities. In the internal registry of Bulgarian and Gagaouz historiography, notable contributions were those of Vladimir Diacovici³³, Dimitar Mincev³⁴, B. Manoff³⁵, or Mihail Guboglu³⁶. In the specific case of the Gagaouz, the most distinctive (interwar) name in the process of retracing ethnic history was indisputably that of Mihail Ciachir, man of letters and of the cloth. His contributions proved to be fundamental for the Gagaouz in knowing their own history and culture, pentru their dissemination amongst Romanians, and for the exploratory reconciliation of ethnic parties within a nation-State which was highly concentrated on its own needs and interests³⁷. Research on this Turkish but orthodox people continued after the Second World War³⁸, as well as in the 1990s through the works of de Constantin Rezachevici³⁹ or Mihaela Babușka⁴⁰. In the 2000s the many studies of Anatol Măcriș distinguished themselves, and in the 2010s the scientific community within the Republic of Moldova gave some attention to the history of trans-Danubian settlers⁴¹. At the end of a fairly extensive list we still, however, find that too little of the content in all of these

²⁹ See „Turcii de rit creștin (Găgăuții): Scurt istoric. Situația Găgăuților din sudul Basarabiei. Raporturile cu bulgarii. Încercări de bulgarizare” in *Revista Societății Culturale Dobrogene*, an XVII, Cernăuți, 1936.

³⁰ See „Știri noi despre bisericile și populația creștină din sudul Basarabiei” in *Arhivele Basarabiei*, an 8, nr. 4, 1936, pp. 266-275.

³¹ See *Așezările bulgare și găgăuze din Basarabia*, Analele Academiei Române, Memoriile secțiunii istorice, Seria III, tom XXVI, București, 1944.

³² See George-Mihail Dragoș, „Flora și fauna în toponimia Basarabiei. Elemente turcești” in *Buletinul Institutului de Filologie Română „Alexandru Philippide” Iași*, vol. VII-VIII, 1940-1941, pp. 198-229, and Olga Necrasov, *Le problème de l'origine des gagaouz et la structure anthropologique de ce groupement ethnique*, Institutul de Arte Grafice, Iași, 1940. A summary of their work can be found at Dan Prodan, „Preocupări de orientalistă-turcologie în România de la Marea Unire până la instaurarea regimului comunist (1918-1948)” in *Acta Moldaviae Septentrionalis*, nr. III, 2004, pp. 194, 183.

³³ *Basarabia bulgară*, Tipografia Acc. Dr. Radical, Sofia, 1918, apoi *Bulgarii din Basarabia*, Sofia, 1930.

³⁴ *Bulgarii din Basarabia de Sud*, Imprimeria „Grafica Modernă”, Constanța, 1938.

³⁵ *Originea găgăuzilor*, traducere din bulgară de N. Bazarlia, Tipografia Universul, București, 1940.

³⁶ See „Găgăuzii în lumina istoriei”, originally published in Turkish in *Türk Birliği*, Bazarlic (nr. 19/1939). A summary in Mihail Guboglu's work can be found at Dan Prodan, „Preocupări de orientalistă-turcologie în România de la Marea Unire până la instaurarea regimului comunist (1918-1948)”, pp. 86-88. The article was an extract from Guboglu's doctoral dissertation, which seems to have never been published in full form because of the troubles brought on by World War Two.

³⁷ The most dense of Mihail Ciachir's historiographical work is *Istoria găgăuzilor din România*, Chișinău, 1933. His publications on the language, religion, social manners of the Gagaouz were collected by Victor Tsvirkun, Ivan Duminiță, Vitaly Syrf, Tatiana Zaikovskaya in *Protoiereul Mihail Ceachir. Articole privind istoria și cultura găgăuzilor din Basarabia publicate în revista „Viața Basarabiei”*, Lexon Prim, Chișinău, 2018. For their summary and for other works by Ciachir see Dan Prodan, „Preocupări de orientalistă-turcologie în România de la Marea Unire până la instaurarea regimului comunist (1918-1948)”, pp. 177-182.

³⁸ See the articles that Vladimir Drimba wrote in the 1960s-1970s on the history, morphosyntax, and dialectology of the Gagaouz language.

³⁹ See „Găgăuzii” in *Maqaçın Istoric*, an XXXI, nr. 5-6, mai-iunie 1997, pp. 60-63, 64-68 respectively.

⁴⁰ See „Considerații privind originea și evoluția istorică a găgăuzilor” in *Caietele Laboratorului de Studii Otomane*, București, Nr. 2 (1993), pp. 7-16.

⁴¹ See Dinu Poștarencu, „Coloniștii transdanubieni din Basarabia în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea” in *Revista de Etnologie și Culturologie*, vol. XVII, 2015, pp. 65-71; Idem, „Bulgarii din Bașcalia” in *Бесарабските българи. История, култура и език [Bulgarii basarabeni: istorie, cultură și limbă]*, Nikolai Chervenkov, Ivan Duminiță (ed.), Lexon-Plus, Chișinău, 2014, pp. 115-119; Valentin Tomuleț, „Negustori bulgari în structura etnică a burgheziei comerciale din Basarabia (1812-1868)” in *Ibidem*, pp. 120-138; Alexandru Cerga, „Lăcașurile sfinte ale bulgarilor din satele Cairaclia și Corten, raionul Taraclia” in *Revista de Etnologie și Culturologie*, Vol. XVII, 2015, pp. 72-76 ș.a.

previous studies is of good use to our own research on the Southern Bessarabian region. In the case of the Gagaouz people, the attempts at deciphering the course of their existence led to most of the analyzes dedicated to them dealing mainly with medieval and modern history. The community of Southern Bessarabian Bulgarians seems to be in the same situation, although it had a less urgent need to determine the depths of its history. Of particular interest to us, the interwar period is very poorly covered as a specific timeline of community life in the case of both regional groups, a gap that is just beginning to be (timidly) resolved. Useful contributions were those of Pavel Moraru⁴² (2014; he looked at the contacts between Romanians and the Bulgarian minority in Southern Bessarabia at the end of the interwar period), of Dimitris Michalopoulos⁴³ (2016; he looked at the diplomatic negotiations that took place in the interwar period concerning the religious rights of Orthodox Turks in Romania), and of Ivan Duminică⁴⁴ (2015-2017; he looked at the political and community history of Gagaouz and Bulgarians in Southern Bessarabia). Unfortunately, some other studies that would have seemed promising could only be identified as abstracts for public presentations⁴⁵. Therefore, although it has a real potential in development, the fund for historical knowledge on the Gagaouz and Bulgarian communities in Southern Bessarabia remains incomplete for the interwar period.

Reaching the end of our historiographical list, we see that each of the studies that we named offers a complementary perspective, but that none of them treats the object of our interest as a whole. Although each new entry brought new aspects in pursuing the evolutions of the community environment in the interwar Romanian State, all these analyzes remain limited in being representative for our goals, leaving us wanting to expand our view and understanding on the phenomena developed in the particular environment of Bessarabia and its Southern region. This fact highlights the timely character of our own research development.

⁴² See „Minoritatea bulgară din Basarabia în perioada regimului Antonescu” in *Revista de Istorie a Moldovei*, nr. 4, 2014, pp. 33-43.

⁴³ See „The Metropolitan of the Gagauz: Ambassador Tanrıöver and the problem of Romania’s Christian Orthodox Turks” in *Turkey and Romania: a history of partnership and collaboration in the Balkans*, International Balkan Annual Conference, Book Series 4, Istanbul, 2016, pp. 567-573.

⁴⁴ See Ivan Duminică, Stepan Bulgar, „Găgăuzii din Basarabia în contextul relațiilor româno-turce în perioada 1931-1940: istorie și personalități” in *Archiva Moldaviae*, VII, 2015, pp. 57-78; Ivan Duminică, „Policy options of the Bulgarians of Bessarabia during 1918-1940” in Sorin Radu, Oliver Jens Schmitt (ed.), *Politics and Peasants in Interwar Romania: Perceptions, Mentalities, Propaganda*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, pp. 513-542; Idem, „Cu privire la modernizarea orașului Comrat în perioada interbelică (1918-1940)” in *Revista de Etnologie și Culturologie*, vol. XXV (2019), pp. 67-73.

⁴⁵ See for example Ivan Duminică, „«Cursuri bulgare» pentru pedagogi în Bolgrad (1918)” ; Idem, „Bulgarul Krste Misirkov și problema Basarabiei (1917-1918)” ; Idem, „Dimitar Mincev (1905-1973) – Un cercetător uitat al bulgarilor din Basarabia” ; Mihail Chilaru, „Mișcarea iredentistă bulgară din sudul Basarabiei – ani ’20-’30 ai secolului XX”.