CHANGING IDENTITIES. THE IDENTITY VOCABULARY OF THE GREAT BOYARS IN THE PRINCIPALITY OF MOLDAVIA TOWARDS THE END OF THE 18TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The central theme of our research concerns the terms used to define the identity of great boyar families, both ethnic and religious, in the 18th century. We consider the great local boyar families both those who were rooted in Moldavia (as far back as classic Middle Ages) as well as those who became local during the 17th-18th centuries and had Greek origins. According to sources, terms like *pământean*, *moldovean*, *român*, *rumân*, *grec*, *fanariot*, *ţarigrădean, levantin, insular* (native, moldavian, romanian, greek, fanariot, levantin, constantinopolitan, insular), but also *creştin*, *drept credincios*, *ortodox* (christian, true believer, orthodox) have been frequently used. These terms generated confusion within historical research and fuelled two interpretation trends somehow contrasting. The one sustained by the researchers of the Middle Ages insisted on the importance of religious identity, including the Moldavians in the orthodox Christianity and favoring the integration of the Phanariots settled in Moldavia. They also mentioned a supposed Graecization of the Moldavian elite following the religious identity and the use of the Greek language in administration, Church and culture. The other trend, preferred by most modernists, appealed to a recurrent methodology in order to identify the early origin and the alleged time persistence of a modern Romanian ethnic identity since the 17th century. Thus, terms like *pământean* (native) equals *român* (Romanian) and *Phanariots* equals *Greek*, validating an ethno-national interpretation of the political disputes of the elites.

Our historical research led to the conclusion that the identity aspects which operate within the Moldavian elite of the 18th century combine several elements – ethnic, confessionary, social – in a manner specific to the epoch, based on two fundamental terms: *pământean* (local, native) and *venetic* (foreign, outlander). The *local* was, in most cases, Moldavian, his features being determined by orthodoxy, the age of his family on the territory and land possession which would allow the owner to be part of complex social relations built on patronage relations, as defined by .Michael Mann, George M. Foster and S. N. Eisenstadt The *outlander* (referring to the phanariotes) was also orthodox, but lacking both his belonging to a family rooted in the society and the integration in the complex social relations specific to the local boyars. From our point of view, this historical situation allowed, on one hand, the integration of the phanariotes who were able to adapt to the lifestyle specific to the local boyars up to becoming land owners, and, on the other hand, the use of the Greek language in administration and culture not being perceived by the local boyars as estranging their historical roots, towards the end of the 18th century.

INTRODUCTION

In the study of the identity configuration of the Moldavian elites, a first difference, easy to observe, is concerning the vocabulary. In internal sources the identity gravitates around the terms Moldavian, Wallachian, native, Greek, foreigner (moldovean, valah, pământean, grec, venetic), while the authors of external sources (consular correspondence and memories of foreign travelers) use rather confused ethnic distinctions when they write about the Orthodox people from the Principalities. Sometimes the Moldavians are associated to the common people or to the minor boyars, the "Geeks" to the great boyars and the "Bulgarians" to the merchants, using a rather social than ethnical criteria. The explanation is fairly simple. These European encontered Greek speaking Christian (Orthodox) elites, formed under the influence of the post-Byzantine Greek culture, but observed that the commoners spoke either a Slavic or a neo-Roman language. The confusions of perception were inevitable, being accentuated by the feeling of their own cultural superiority, by the existence of some beliefs and customs that they didn't understand and perceived as "barbarian" [1]. In prolongation of this deformed perception, the French consul Hugot considered, around 1825, that "no one [among the boyars] belonged to the country by origin, they were Armenian, Hebrew, Bulgarians and Gypsies", that came from other places, thus "today they are called boyars or nobles of the country, although there is no one left from the ancient noble families of the country". At the same time, they generically call "Greeks" all the dignitaries close to the Prince, from the proximity of the political power [2]. However, plenty foreign observers, officials of simple travelers, speak about the „la nation moldave", „la nation valaque" or even „la nation roumain", and attribute to some boyar the quality of "patriot" just because he gave proofs of fidelity towards that foreign power, without any preoccupation regarding his ethnicity.

Using these external sources, citing them abundantly, the Romanian historians that focused on this subject didn't sufficiently take into consideration the cultural gap and, especially, the differences of political culture between the two spaces, European and Romanian. This notable difference influenced the opinions of foreigners, consuls, agents in mission, immigrants or travelers, no matter how knowledgeable they were regarding the oriental world. That is why, from a methodological stance, the texts produced by strangers, officials or travelers, must be used as narrative sources for the society described, as well as an expression of certain social-political values, traditions and ideological options of their authors. The contrast of cultures and traditions, especially between the French political culture, defined by the ideas of Enlightenment, and what foreigners called "bad customs and prejudices of the great boyars" influenced the perception and the reasoning of the foreigner [3], [4].

THEORY. METHODOLOGY

In a general plan, with regard to imagology and cultural alterity, this type of deformed perception of the Orient, sensible to the stances of the cultural alterity, were not an invention of the Enlightenment. Similar evaluations are found in the first half of the 18th century at Jean Chardin and Montesquieu, both perceiving the Orient as

the political space of despotism, "without law and rule", where the government "pulls everything after itself, after the will and caprices" of the monarch. Otherwise, as the foreign space was more exotic and "the group [observed] were larger […] the image was all the more caricaturized, schematic and striking" [4] [5]. Edward W. Said name this discourse about the Orient orientalism, "a style of thought based on the ontological and epistemological distinction between the East and (most of the times) the West", without studying it "no one could ever understand the extremely systematic discipline through which the European culture was capable to lead […] the East from the political, sociological, military, ideological, scientific and imaginative points of view, in the post-Enlightenment period" [4].

From this methodological framework, afferent to the imagology, the study of symbolic geographies allows the contextualization and explaining the political vocabulary and the assessments made by strangers (French, Russians, Austrians) regarding the realities from the Principalities. It is about the mental representations of a political, historical and cultural place, attributing it certain features in virtue of which it is classified and ideologized according to the hierarchy of values of the eminent. In this sense, building the symbolic geographies presume the ethnicization of the space (usually superficial, having as criteria the language and confession, with the inherent confusions between Romanians, Greeks, Russians), the defining of some features presumed specific (ignorance, political instability, the absence of morals and social civilized norms) [1]. Thus a historical genealogy of differences and of the civilizing role of the French, Austrian and Russian issuer is created. These manifestations are not that much the expression of an assumed cultural superiority, civilizing and imperialist, of the arrogance of the foreign observer, as they are a discourse, in the sense affirmed by Michel Foucault. The complex relation between power and knowledge, described by Foucault through the notion of discourse gives way to some representation thorough which the reality discovered is explained, hierarchized, classified, and gets a meaning that makes it intelligible [6]. This explanatory operation, natural stage of cultural and political "colonization" of a strategically important space, appeals to an identity vocabulary specific to the West, regarding the nation, patriotism, ethnicity, with the purpose to harmonize the cultural landmarks of the author with the realities of the society discovered and "taken into possession".

For these reasons, in order to understand the identity delimitation among the boyars from Moldavia and to evaluate their vocabulary, the references from external sources have to be contextually confronted with those from internal sources, taking into account the chronological synchronism and the differences in the meaning of the words, according to the political culture and the specificity of the language. On this basis, the *phenomena of ethnicization of identities* can be observed. It took place in another manner and later than in the West, due to the absence of a public space for circulating the ideas and debate, until the changes generated by the Organic Regulations (1832).

IDENTITY FEATURES OF THE MOLDAVIAN BOYARS

According to the internal sources, the difference between "natives" and "foreigners" divided the boyars from the Principalities into two categories, opposed on the contrasting and fluid grounds of alterity. The origin of the family had a special value for the identity and the community integration, but not in the ideological meaning of the modern national discourse, but under the forms of the attachment to what the boyars understood by the notion of "native". This referred only to the Orthodox, related to the tradition of the country, to a series of customs and habits that reclaimed the presence of the ascendants in the "land of the country" two to three generations in a row. The absence of precise juridical norms based on which the "foreigner" could acquire the quality of "native" oriented the historical research in the direction of studying the social strategies for "naturalization" of the Orthodox "foreigner". Generally, the idea that the integration among the boyars was through marriages with girls from local boyar families and through the acquisition of land possession is accepted. But this practice was not a sufficient rule to complete "naturalization", for the acknowledgement of the quality of native family. Some integrated, others didn't, being still regarded as foreigners. Only the descendants of the "naturalized" foreigner beneficiated of the full integration in the "community of the boyars of the country". This situation aroused misunderstandings and confusions in the perception of the foreign observer, who, connecting the ethnicity to the national language, considered the Moldavian to be either "Greek", who "saw in the Russian a natural fiend, a brother", because he wrote and spoke Greek, either all the Moldavian boyars to be a "troop of cosmopolitans" [11].

The sources confirm the rather high tolerance of the natives towards the "foreigners", even towards the "Greeks", in the horizon of the everyday life, of social cohabitation, but also the aggressiveness of the local boyars against those "Greeks" that were coopted, in a form or another, in the power structures from the Principalities. Son of a Greek woman, the great boyar, Alexandru Beldiman displays in his writings rough attitudes and resentment towards the "Greeks", making, however, a distinction between the naturalized and the foreigners, from a pronounced social point of view. This situation from the Principalities had correspondent in other spaces from the Balkans [7]. An example afferent to a close geographic space illustrates the force of these perceptions, which separated the "locals" from the foreigners after some criteria that combined the social and the ethnic. The less important officials and the rich merchants from the Bulgarian city of Sliven were named "Greek" by the locals, and the craftsmen, artisans and commoners were caller "torlaci", although both categories belonged to the Bulgarian ethnicity [8].

In the perspective of social-political realities and, implicitly of the historical research, the difference between the naturalized and the foreigner, both Orthodox, was not reflected by precise rules and practices, but was influenced by context and circumstances, by behavior and adequacy. The boyar that wished to be naturalized had to be bound by marriage to a local prestigious family, had to poses villages and parts of villages, to know the inhabitants from these villages, to spend a part of his time there, to build mansions and churches, to place under his protection and to help the leaders of the villages, otherwise said, to patron the villages they possessed. These

actual practices "tied" the foreigner with the land and separated the Greek naturalized boyars, who had estates and relatives among the local boyars, from the "foreign Greeks", "who had no merit of presumption to the least important office", because "they had no ancestors […] they had no right in this land and they don't care about the needs of the country. Possessing the villages was not enough if it wasn't followed by the integration in the specific social system, which was a *system of relations and patronage*. Integration, naturalization or their failure didn't rigorously follow ethnic difference. The Catargi and Manu families from Moldavia had a completely different status, the first was a "great local family", the other one was "greek", although their ancestors were Greeks, Ioan Catargi, great postelnik during the reign of Matei Basarab (1646), the father of Apostol Catargi, the starter of the Moldavian branch, and Manolache Manu, from which "the boyar family Mano descends", former rector of the Constantinople Patriarchy, established in the Principalities in 1691 [9].

As long as between the local boyars and the "Greek foreigners" persisted an equilibrium of power and influence favorable to the first ones, predominant in the administration, "the community of the boyars of the country" tolerated their presence, seeking to integrate them to their specific structures [10]. Towards the end of the 18th century, having to absorb a surplus of "foreign" and upstart elements – in the conditions of an accentuated Greek emigration from the Ottoman Empire and the encouragement of the Greek emancipation movement by Russia – the native boyars outlined an aggressed political imaginary, of "besieged fortress". "The community of the country's boyars" was perceived by the native boyars as s structure formed from families and lineage, containing only those who beneficiated from "the right of being local" and were "boyars from ancestors". *The had to had a boyar tradition in their family recognized by society as authentic*. starting from this fundament, deeply implanted in mentality, the native boyars resumed in simple, repetitive formulas a complex historical process, identified in the presence of the "foreigner" and in the growth of the "foreign" boyar families (named Greek), two of the causes for the accentuation of Moldavia's dependence to the Porte and of the degradation of the internal political situation [10].

The supremacy that the great families of native boyars claimed in the administration was based on the prestige of these families in society, on their effective social power. This power balanced in the eyes of the entire community the arbitrary power of the Phanariot Princes, perceived as the main source of the economic crises, of the endemic corruption and of the degradation of the political and juridical status of Moldavia towards the Ottoman Empire. Also, the native elite was considered the only rampart against the "Greek seizure", against the immeasurable penetration of the "foreigners" in the country's offices. This fact is observed in the tolerance towards the more frequent marriages between sons of native great boyar families and "Greek girls" from Phanariot families, for reasons of power. Thus, as a frequent mental stereotype, "to taunt those evil and indomitable among the Greeks" was a "patriotic duty". However, as boyar from the period said "I can forgive a Greek, who is temporary here and doesn't care about the country, being foreign to him, but a native Greek, son of this homeland to rob it […] I can't forgive", the distinction between the naturalized Greek boyars and those "foreigners" was obvious [11].

Ain these conditions, around 1821-1822, the adversity of the native boyars towards the Eterist movement can't be explained on the political ground of the confrontation between the presumed two modern national movements, but it wasn't only a deaf fight for offices and resources. Placing the anti-Eterist and anti-Greek reactions at the origins of the Romanian modern national discourse, in a manner ideologically founded by Nicolae Bălcescu and developed by Mihail Eminescu, numerous studies on this matter failed to seriously take into consideration the features of the political imaginary, of social representations, of the mentality of the native boyars from the 18th century and the specific of the solidarity forms from the Romanian society before modernity, and wrongfully judged them with modern criteria. On one hand, in relation with the Christian subjects of the Porte, usually named "Greeks" or "foreigners", the landmarks of alterity were not of political nature in a modern sense, juridical and mentally separating the members of a ethno-national sovereignty from a "foreigner" belonging to another sovereignty; but were defined by the ethnic and social identity of the "foreigner" and, especially, by the identity landmarks of being local, by specific traditional social-political behaviors. In the first decades of the 19th century a national discourse of the native boyars, which, in this case, could ideologically separate the native countryman (Romanian) from the Greek foreigner, excluding him from the national community body, hadn't been formed [7].

Rising against the Eterist movement, the native boyars from Moldavia didn't contest the national objectives of the Greeks and didn't place themselves of defense positions regarding a presumptive danger on denationalization. On the contrary, they accepted as just the declared national objective of the Eterists, "to free their homeland", but violently accused their social behavior, they were seen as "wrongdoers", and their moral attributes, the dissimulation through which they masked "the countless and unbearable sufferings they caused […] especially to the poor inhabitants with different kinds of violence and pillage, […] of robberies and cruelties". Thus, the Greek national discourse didn't appear as a potential danger in itself, consciously perceived, but rather as a hypocrisy. This imagological stereotype wasn't attributed only to the Eterists, but, in general, to the Greeks, along with other negative features. In the past, hey were assigned only to the Phanariots, but now were extended on the Eterists as well as on all the Greeks. The Eterists were judged by the native boyars on the base of the same faults of which, in the past, only the Phanariots were accused and stigmatized (abuse, pillage, insolence and robberies), but also on other imagological stereotypes about the Phanariots existent in the traditional society, extracted from the repertoire of specific mental representations. Otherwise said, the Eterist movement offered to the boyars the opportunity of a political rephrasing of older tirades, full of resentment against the "foreign" Phanariot boyars. Of course, it's not a confrontation between nationalisms, Romanian and Greek, but of a transposition in a more general plan, with reference to all the Greeks, of older stereotypes about "foreigners" and "Phanariots". However, we see a phase of transition, ideologically and discursive confuse, towards a relation identity/alterity of ethno-national type, visible in sources a decade later [12]. In a similar manner, the boyars from Wallachia didn't contested the Eterists because, being Greeks, would have threatened the Romanian national identity, but because they were associated in the plan of representations to the Greek "officials" who filled the local administration during the reign of the last Phanariot Princes (Ion Caragea and Alexandru Suţu). In the period of the local Princes, as the restrictions imposed to the "Greek Eterists", from the

Porte's order, to clean the Principalities of "rebels" and "renegades", gained a certain amplitude, accentuated also by the anti-Greek rhetoric of the local boyars, the "Greek" ethnic origin tended to became a compromising factor in the political and business relations, an obstacle in becoming "local". Many Levantines declare themselves Bulgarian in order to obtain the indigenat, although they were Greek speaking [11].

RESULTS

The sum of attitudes, reactions, representation and mental images of the locals regarding the ethnic origin of the inhabitants, separating the local from the "foreigners", illustrate the inexistence of a social and ethnic disjunction in the 18th century. The traditional vicinities and social differences between the local boyars and the "foreigners" tended to become ethnical, to delimitate the Romanians from the Greeks on modern ethno-national criteria, in an attitude and mental climate in which the majority of the pre-modern identity forms (social, confessional, provincial) had ethnical values. However, in society the modern type ethnicity was configured with difficulty into a form of national identity, dominant and comprehensive, generically validated by the entire community, and rather late, after the revolutionary movement of 1821. Until then, the "foreigner" was perceived as the man "stranger to the place", without "connection with the land" and who "breached customs", lacking social reputation, the ethnic belonging and the native language were a subsidiary factor of identity in the plan of social representations [13]. From the perspective of a modern national discourse, the ethnic origin and the native language of the foreigner are essential in the configuration of certain attitudes and social representations, the modern national elite being by excellence the promotor of ethnicity and of the affirmation of the features of Romanian ethnicity, illustrated, among others, by the interest toward folklore, as an authentic cultural print of the ethnic. In the 18th century, the Moldavian boyars were not yet a national elite, but was to became in the first half of the next century.

The older forms of identity – concerning security and social hierarchy, the social models in which the ethnic belonging represent a natural given, the quality of local was perceived as having particular behavioral features, which combine the social and the ethnic, building images of alterity specific to the traditional society, integrating a local regardless to his ethnic origin and excluded the "foreigner" [14], even if, in some cases, he was Romanian at origins, but become "Greek" through administrative and power behavior – don't disappear, but only gradually alter their traditional content, enriched with new representations of the ethnic. In this complex historical process, according to the sources of the period, we assist to the rather confuse preliminaries of the ethnicization of collective identities. In their turn, the solidarities among the local boyars fortify, tending to become exclusive enough, in an apparently paradoxical manner, the representation and images of the locals, some about others, show the persistence of certain ruptures in the society. Reflex of some confuse identity reactions for the modern observer, the local boyars attached the ethnic to the themes of social legitimacy. The vocabulary of that period reflects these suggestive antinomies (local/Greek, patriot/upstart, local boyar/" foreigner"), socially and ethnical validated, in a rather theatrical manner. That is why, in the texts from the end

of the 18th century, we observe the omnipresence of the antithesis between "good patriot" and "bad patriot", but altogether "patriots", meaning "sons of this homeland", local Moldavians [14].

CONCLUSION

Their identity representation, reflected in vocabulary and language, are in full consonance with the entire political thought of the local boyars. It was centered on the notion of being *local*, which represented a community belonging based on tradition, without historically delimitated precise ethnical landmarks. That explains why in the memoirs of the boyars *the political identity of the state* doesn't appear as an expression of ethnicity. In the memoirs previous to 1821, the differentiation between the territory of the Principalities and that of the Ottoman Empire has as source the quality of ***Christians subjects of the Porte*** of the locals, without ethnic references regarding a ethnicized historical tradition (ethnic origin, language), or a ethnicization of the boyar "political body", as a Romanian elite pleading in the sense of the emancipation from the "oppression" of the "foreigner" [15]. When they request the removal of the "Greek" boyars from offices, they affirm the exclusive rights of the locals not of the Romanians. In our understanding, *local* and *Romanian* are two *qualitatively* different notions, the first concerning the belonging to a local lineage (family)integrated in the *traditional social system*, indifferent to the ethnic origin, the other one an essential attribute of the *ethnicity*, defined by origin and language.

The metamorphosis of the stereotypes about the Greeks, *now with an obvious ethnic character*, was to a goo extent a natural phenomenon, resulting from the changes inspired by the historicism and the philosophy of the Enlightenment, from the emergence of a new cultural support, yet unrefined and incoherent, for the enunciation of the Romanian ethnical identity. Composing this cultural scaffolding, the texts of local scholars approach the issue of the removal of Greeks as a first condition for the moral recovery of the society and for the local "patriot" boyars to regain the offices of the country, they didn't have (for now) the necessary cultural qualities to discursively develop the theme of a confrontation between two opposite *national identities*.

The expression of the Romanian/Greek alterity in the manner of a collision between the two constituted national identities, which would expose the danger of denationalization of the Romanians by the Greeks and, at the same time, the need of "national rebirth", had to wait the stage in which an authentic Romanian "intelligentsia" was capable to modernly define the values of ethnic Romanian identity: ethnic origin as a condition for belonging to the nation, national language as the main element of the identity of the Romanian nation and the historical tradition as depositary of a legacy and of a commonly shared national memory.

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