

HISTORIOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE GAGAUZ IDENTITY AND INTEGRATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract

The Gagauz identity and the integration in the Republic of Moldova is an exciting topic but controversial in historiography. The difficulty of studying comes from the very content of the given phenomenon. Because identity is self-perception as part of society, i.e., it is formed in the informational space, the understanding and study of its traditions depend directly on the cultural environment and socio-material characteristics. Therefore, during the investigation of identity was accumulated a considerable amount of data.

This article aims to address the main historiographical trends to create a complex picture of the identity and integration of the Gagauz community and identify new directions in research. Attempts are made to review scientific research on the problems of the new regionalism, social practices of identification, and self-identification. The historiographical review aims to develop an efficient methodological strategy for studying regional and self-identification processes in A.T.U. Gagauzia. The topic consists of a corpus of modern research publications on the issue of regional ethnic identity.

The study focus on social constructivism, and the methodology uses a critical analysis of scientific sources dedicated to regional identity and self-determination. Are underlined the main ideas and methods of scientific modelling of modern processes characteristic of the new regionalism.

The political reforms of the 1990s in the Republic of Moldova launched the regionalization of the territory concerned, accompanied by the increase of regional self-awareness. In this sense are conducted the theoretical updates of the Gagauz identity. In the scientific sphere, these processes are pointed out in the manifestation of concepts such as „ethnic identity”, „regional identity”, „regional mythology”, „regional ideology”, etc.

The regional elite began to consolidate their positions, promoting various symbols and legends. Thus, the competition between the region and the center appeared in new cultural conditions, which led to the search for new and unique phenomena for A.T.U. Gagauzia, distinguishing this region from others.

Keywords: *historiography, Republic of Moldova, Gagauz, ethnic identity, integration.*

Introduction

Today, when globalization makes its presence felt in everyday life and national borders erased, more and more people lose their identity. Likewise, Gagauz faces acute challenges such as migration, socio-economic problems and is in great danger of losing their identity. The Republic of Moldova has been trying for three decades to develop a national ideology and inclusion strategies to overcome the political-socio-cultural rupture of the region. In this sense, historiography reflects the changes in the modeling of ethnic identity and the integration of Gagauzia in this critical transition period. The unique features of Gagauz can be discovered only by researching new sources and discovering new theories about their emergence.

For the first time, the ethnic name *Gagauz* appears in 1854 in an article intitled *Die Bulgaren in Bessarabien* and by the Academician P. Köppen [1, p. 80].

The scientific debut of researching Gagauz ethnogenesis, history, and language, we owe to the Czech Professor Konstantin Jireček, who wrote in 1877 *The History of the Bulgarians* [2, p. 224]. He first separated the Gagauz from the Bulgarians. According to him, the Gagauz are the descendants of some middle-aged Turkic people, probably the Cuman's, who converted to Christianity even before the appearance of the Ottoman Turks.

The author also believes that the ethnonym Gagauz has a Balkan origin. Jireček compared the Gagauz language with the Cuman language and found many common roots. Since then, historiography has evolved and developed over time, now the most important school of them are:

I. Russian historiography before the Bolshevik revolution has an essential role in collecting and systematizing rich informational material about the Transdanubian settlers. In many respects, this was possible due to the social position occupied by the authors, most of them being part of the tzarist military or administrative system.

II. At the same time, this factor had a negative contribution because these scholars interpreted the emigration from the perspective of Russian imperial politics, which outlined the existing domestic realities in the Balkans (the complicated situation in the Ottoman Empire: hefty taxes, repression, Islamization, and denationalization), which caused the emigration of Balkan people.

A separate layer in Gagauz historiography is related to the second half of the 19th century and written by clergy. As a rule, these were individual descriptions of the life and customs of the Gagauz people. Priest K. Malai described the Gagauz calendar, weddings, and funeral rites. Another priest I. Kozak made a similar report in: *Dezghingea, Bulgarian Parish of Bendery County* [3, p. 6-7].

One of the most representative is the Russian Turkologist, Professor P.V. Golubovsky. In his work *Pechenegs, Torks, and Polovtsy before the Tatar invasion*, he substantiated the identity of the Cumans with the Polovtsy, as well as their distinction from the Pechenegs and Uzes, the earlier nomads in Eastern Europe [4, p. 23]. He also pointed to the mixed origin of the Gagauz.

In the works of Russian ethnographer and writer Valentin Moshkov, *The Gagauz of the Bendery County (Ethnographic Essays and Materials)* [5, p. 18], the author collected information among Gagauz groups living in Bessarabia. The book contains many factual and comparative material, which is used and now in scientific analysis.

According to him, the „Gagauz could be the descendants of the Cuman or „Black Hoods”, who disappeared from southern Russia after the Mongol invasion” [6, p. 17-18].

Another Russian researcher dealing with the history of the Gagauz community in Bessarabia is Nikolai Derzhavin [7, p. 16]. His information

is very precious because it comes from the Gagauz Bessarabian villages. The author's main goal was to collect ethnographic material.

During the Soviet period, historians treated the historical past from class positions and implemented the totalitarian Soviet model. Ideas regarding the nation and national identity were produced and reproduced in historiography as central elements of politics.

In 1953, G.E. Markov published the article entitled *Materials on the Ethnography of the Gagauz*. He visited Gagauz villages in the south of the Moldovan S.S.R. and the Ismail region of the Ukrainian S.S.R. in 1950, thus becoming the first Soviet scholar to conduct field research among the Gagauz after they entered into the U.S.S.R. In his article, Markov discovers the nomadic past of the Gagauz based on some features of the Gagauz's economy and lifestyle [8, p. 56].

Moldovan historian I.I. Meșceriuc researched the relocation of Bulgarians and Gagauz to Bessarabia. Analyzing the names from the *Name list of immigrants from the right to the left side of the Danube since 1809 and living in Moldova and Bessarabia*, he concludes that the Gagauz were numerous, and accounting for about two-thirds of the total number of settlers [9, p. 65-95]. And considers the Bulgarians and the Gagauz as one nation [9, p. 74-75].

Besides the scientific activity, Meșceriuc is also well known for his civic activism. In 1957, the author addressed his letter to the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U., Comrade N. Khrushchev, and the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, Comrade N. Bulganin. With the intent to create autonomy in the Southern M.S.S.R. territories inhabited mainly with Bulgarian and Gagauz population. The letter pages of which for a long time there was a stamp „without the right to be published”. However, it is good to know its contents: „Dear comrades! Allow me, as a communist and a Soviet citizen, to contact on issues that have long worried me and need to be resolved soon ...” „The peoples and nationalities living in the U.S.S.R., according to the Soviet constitution, have their statehood. Both large nations and small nations have it.

Meanwhile, about 300,000 people of Bulgarians and Gagauz live within the Moldavian S.S.R. occupying a separate territory. They have more than 80 large villages on this territory, each of which has from 2,000-3,000 to 12,000 people. Moreover, this population does not have its statehood ...” [10].

Meșceriuc draws attention to the fact that the lack of statehood restrains the development of culture. „The current costs of cultural events carried out not in their native language do not reach the goal ...” [10]. Probably he is the first one and, for the first time during the Soviet time, who wrote and required for autonomy in Budjak.

Since the late 70s of the 20th century, Soviet Turkologist N.A. Baskakov starts to develop a typological characteristic of the grammatical structure of

Turkic languages. The author created a holistic concept of the Turkic language type, embodied in three parts: *Historical and typological characteristic of the structure of Turkic languages* (M., 1975), *Historical and typological morphology of Turkic languages* (M., 1979), *Historical and typological phonology of Turkic languages* (M., 1988) [11, p. 13-20].

Nevertheless, after 1990, Baskakov was criticized by Turkish scholars and not without reason. Because there are three significant languages within the Turkic family: Turkish, Chuvash, and Yakut. The rest are not languages but dialects that are very close to each other. These new languages (among them the Gagauz) were created for political reasons after 1917 to split the unity of the Turkic world.

The first grammar of the Gagauz language was written in 1964 by L.A. Pokrovskaya [12, p. 9-10].

The study of the ritual side of the life of ethnic groups, including family rituals, remains crucial in ethnographic research and annually are published various work on this subject.

Moldovan historian Valentin Zelenciuc became one of the first professional ethnographers in post-war Bessarabia. Author of numerous ethnographic studies, V. Zelenciuc, addressed several topics, which he remained faithful to throughout his professional career: calendar and family habits, traditional clothing, the domain of ethnic demography, and ethnic processes. He concludes that the calendar cycle of rites and beliefs of the *Transdanubian settlers* also changed significantly by the end of the 19th century and had no exact analogies with the calendar rites of the Bulgarians from Bulgaria. Many ceremonies related to shepherding were lost, instead developed new customs reflecting the occupation of agriculture also appeared national features borrowed from the Moldovan and Ukrainian neighbors.

In his book: *The population of Bessarabia and Podnestrovia in the 19th century*, Zelenciuc notes that: „in official documents for a long time was not made the distinction between Bulgarians and Gagauz, who were considered Bulgarians” [13, p. 191].

S. Kuroglo, who continues ethnographic research, considers the publications of other authors who studied the Gagauz problem, makes extensive use of archive materials and folk works. However, the primary sources for his work were field recordings made by himself during his ethnographic expeditions in 1970-1978 in the Gagauz villages of the Moldova S.S.R. and the Odesa region of the Ukrainian S.S.R.

In the comparative analysis, the author indicates that most of the Gagauz rituals are similar to the practices of their neighboring, especially Bulgarians and Moldavians, some alike with other Turkic peoples, which testified to ethnocultural contacts with them. However, he also found some distinctive local elements of the rites [3, p. 21].

Another Gagauz researcher, the ethnographer M.V. Marunevici, is devoted to studying family rituals and traditional material culture. In her monographs, Marunevici describes the conventional dwelling, customs, rites, and beliefs associated with various aspects of the everyday life of the Gagauz [14, p. 3].

While working in the Academy of Sciences of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (M.S.S.R.), she participated actively at national and international scientific conferences, seminars, symposia, and other forums. Over the years, she has published more than 30 scientific works, including three monographs: *Settlements, Housing, and the Peasant Manor of the Gagauz of Southern Bessarabia in the 19th – Early 20th Centuries* (Chișinău, 1980); *Socialist transformations in the life and culture of the Gagauz population of the M.S.S.R.* (co-authored with S. S. Kuroglo) (Chișinău, 1983) and *Material Culture of the Gagauz people of the 19th – early 20th centuries* (Chișinău, 1988), some sections and articles in collective monographs, collections, magazines, and other printed publications.

In the 90s, Maria Marunevici joins to the popular movement *Gagauz Halki* and devotes herself to social and political activities [15].

Mihail Guboglo, a good specialist in ethno-sociology and ethnopolitical science, dedicated numerous articles and monographs to the ethnic history of Gagauz and their current ethnopolitical position as a part of the Republic of Moldova. Regarding Gagauz origins, M. Guboglo is adept at the Steppe hypothesis (Gagauz descend from the „*Pechenegs, Uzes and Cuman's tribes*”) [16, p.103]. Guboglo also is a big supporter of Russia in the region and sees Gagauzia and Transnistria as outposts in the Southwest of the Russian world [17, p. 44].

Andrei Shabashov from Odesa University is the author of numerous scientific works, articles, brochures, monographs, the editor-compiler of collections of scientific works, in particular: *Essays on the History and Ethnography of the Village of Kirnichki in Bessarabia* (Odesa, 1998); *Chiyshiya: essays on the history and ethnography of the Bulgarian village of Gorodnee in Bessarabia* (Odesa, 2003). His work *Gagauz: a system of terms of kinship and the origin of the people* (Odesa, 2002) opened a series of fundamental works on the history and ethnography of the Gagauz, which essentially revived Gagauz studies after the 90s. A. Shabashov took an active part in the creation of such landmark publications as *History and Culture of the Gagauz. Essays* (2006), *Gagauz* (2011), *Gagauz in the world and the world of Gagauz* (2012).

Shabashov was busy with a wide range of scientific interests: an ethnography of Slavic and Turkic peoples, a kinship system, and traditional culture. Particularly significant is the researcher's contribution to the study of kinship terms and the traditional culture of the Gagauz and Bulgarians of Ukraine and Moldova. In the early 19th century, the Czarist administration

registered the Gagauz and other Orthodox Christian ethnicities from the Balkans, who migrated to Bessarabia as “Bulgarian Colonists” and appeared on the ethnographic map only in the mid-nineteenth century [18, p. 324].

In the Russian Federation now, the well-known researcher in the field of origin and identity of Gagauz is N.V. Anikin. Resulting from his Ph.D. thesis: *The Problems of Ethnic Identification of the Moldovan Gagauz*, the Gagauz have already formed functional orientations towards the Russian language, culture, and everything that’s Russian. However, Anikin warns that if Russia does not support them and will not lead to a corresponding policy for the Russian-speaking people in the post-Soviet space, such orientations may change. Similar trends are already being displayed [19, p. 22].

In Russian Empire and Soviet Union time, the most common hypothesis, according to which the Gagauz are descendants of the nomadic Turkic-speaking tribes of the Pechenegs, Uzes, Oghuz, and Cumans, who came to the Balkans from the Northern Black Sea steppes.

III. Bulgarian historiography. Studied in sufficient detail the Gagauz topics, determined in particular by the Bulgarian state’s interest towards the population migrating in the Southern Bessarabia.

IV. Since the 1850s in Bulgaria appeared many publications addressing the Bulgarians and Gagauz ethnic issues from the Southern Bessarabia, focusing on the history and their displacement circumstances. The polemics about Gagauz identity will reappear during the 1870-1880 years, due to Professor V. Grigorovich from the Department of Education in the Odesa region concerning the language of study for the ethnic Bulgarians and Gagauz from the Comrat college. Then the government decided to replace the Bulgarian with Russian. Bulgarian authorities and some nationalist groups vehemently criticized this decision, as results started a real literary war, which condemns the assimilation of the Bulgarians and Gagauz in Bessarabia, many authors being adepts of their common origin [20, p. 58].

In 1896, Bulgarian archaeologists brothers Karel and Hermann Škorpil launched the *Proto-Bulgarian* theory of Gagauz and Gadjal common origin [21, p. 162]. According to this hypothesis, Gagauz are the descendants of the Turkic-speaking Bulgars because the founders of Danube Bulgaria preserved their language and did not assimilate with Slavs. With the adaptation of Christianity, they were able to keep ethnic roots, language, and faith in Jesus. The argument is the location of the core of the Bulgarian Khanate precisely in the Deliorman region and the capital, Pliska, in the area of the modern city of Shumen.

At the beginning of the 20th century, in Bulgarian ethnology, interest in various problems of Gagauz ethnography was growing. Several works were dedicated to the Bulgarian immigrants to Bessarabia, which include the Gagauz issue too. Among them, it is necessary to mention Bulgarian

ethnographer and linguist Lubomir Miletic (1863-1937); in his work *The Old Bulgarian Population in Northeastern Bulgaria* (1902), the author does not make the difference between Gagauz and Bulgarians, for him, they are the same people. Furthermore, the cause of their migration to Bessarabia is the result of Turkification policies promoted by Osman authorities toward Balkan Christian people [22, p. 15-18].

Bulgarian ethnologist Gavril Zanetov, a native Bessarabian Gagauz. In his work *The Bulgarian population in the Middle Ages* (1902), the author paid great attention to the Gagauz people of North-Eastern Bulgaria and Bessarabia. Analyzing the history of the division of the Bulgarians beyond the Danube into *White Bulgarians* and *Black Bulgarians*, G. Zanetov concludes that the *Black Bulgarians* are related to the Gagauz people [23, p. 72-73]. Moreover, the Gagauz are called Bulgarians not by imitation and not by the desire to be equated with other Bulgarians, but for other independent reasons. Furthermore, the causes originated in the old history of these people [23, p. 73-74].

During the interwar period, Bulgarian folklorist Atanas Manov carried out a tremendous ethnographic work on Gagauz, which is reflected in his work: *The origin of the Gagauz and their customs and morals*. This book is a real storehouse of ethnographic, historical, linguistic information about Bulgarian Gagauz in the first quarter of the 20th century. He collected the stories, legends, and customs from Deliorman Gagauz villages, which give him a clear idea of their life.

Manov's work includes worldview, religious beliefs, birth, wedding, death, ideas about nature, cosmogony, mythological creatures, folk calendar, non-calendar rites and customs, folk medicine, song folklore, sayings, riddles, geographical names, names of herbs, and household cultures. Quite valuable information in studying the "primordial habitat" of the Gagauz [24, p. 73].

P. Mutafčiev represents a Bulgarian nationalist school, which rejects the Turkic origin of the Gagauz people. He argued that the Gagauz are "Turkified Bulgarians," the same as Turkish-speaking Muslims who lived in Bulgaria and converted to Islam and thus lost their language [25, p. 299].

The followers of this school, without embarrassment, stated that all the inhabitants of modern Bulgaria and its surrounding territories are ethnically Bulgarian.

V. Romanian historiography. During the Romanian administration in Bessarabia (1918-1940), the interest in Gagauz history and culture start to attract Romanian scholars too. The prominent Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga assumes that the Gagauz originated from the native Christian peoples of the Balkan peninsula, including the Proto-Romanians [26, p. 7], but for certain historical conditions were Turkified and only kept their ancestral faith.

B. P. Hașdeu, and Valentina Botnărescu also call the Gagauz „indigenous native inhabitants” of the Balkan Peninsula, which has not been romanized [14, p. 3].

Romanian Professor from Chernivtsi University, Ion Nistor, mentioned the Gagauz in his book: „Gagauz lived in Dobrudja near Varna. They moved, crossed the Danube, and settled in Budjak, Bessarabia, where they established their villages near the Bulgarians. The Russian rulers gave them many lands that remained vacant after the Tatars resettled. Gagauz origins are from the Pechenegs, Cumans, and Turks tribes. They have adopted the Orthodox faith but preserved the Turkic language, a Gagauz national language that is purer than the language of the Ottoman Turks” [27, p. 287].

At the same time, Archpriest Mihail Çakir (1861-1938) accomplished the first study of Gagauz history. He also is the author of Gagauz-Romanian and Russian-Moldavian dictionaries and the „History of the Bessarabian Gagauz”. Separate sections of this work are devoted to the Balkan period of Gagauz history, the resettlement of the Gagauz in Bessarabia, the material and spiritual culture of the Gagauz people. He was also interested in the origin of the Gagauz people and the etymology of the ethnonym „Gagauz”. Çakir supports the Steppe hypothesis [28, p. 29], which suggests that the Gagauz may be descendants of other Turkic nomadic tribes than Seljuks: such as Bulgars and Cumans-Kipchaks from the Eurasian steppes.

The hypothesis was taken over and developed by another Romanian scholar of Gagauz ethnicity, Mihail Guboglu, in his student dissertation: „The Gagauz in the Light of History” (1938). The author concludes that the Gagauz are descendants of Uzes or Oghuz tribes. He also suggests the existence in Dobrudja of a „Seljuk-Gagauz state”, where the Gagauz population had a significant share [29, p. 3].

Gh. I. Brătianu and Aurel Decei linked the origin of the Gagauz to the establishment in 1263 of the Anatolian Selgiucide Turks in Dobrudja [30, p. 4].

M. Babuşca supposes that the ethnogenesis of the Gagauz was a continuous process divided into two periods: 11th century - first half of the 13th century, corresponding with the migration and partially the settlement of the Pechenegs, Uzis, and Cumans in the Romanian and Bulgarian space. Furthermore, second stage: second half of the 13th century, when came other Turks from Anatolia [31, p. 7-15].

A Romanian historian specialized in medieval history, Constantin Rezachevici, has made an essential contribution to the study of Gagauz. He asserts that at the Gagauz ethnogenesis process, Romanians from Dobrudja also participated [32, p.10].

If getting to know contemporary Romanian authors is I. Diaconu, who has researched international law regarding the protection of minority rights [33, p. 38].

VI. Moldovan historiography. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the A.T.U. Gagauzia in the Republic of Moldova, research on the Gagauz intensified, were conducted various studies and developed

strategies for social and political inclusion. Moldovan and West scholars contribute to studying the ethnic history and integration of the Gagauz, the study and development of the Gagauz language.

VII. Evdochia Soroceanu, a senior specialist in ethnolinguistics from the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, provides ethnolinguistic studies about the spiritual culture of Gagauz and Bulgarians from Moldova, calendar rituals of Bessarabian Gagauz, in which ritual terminology is analyzed based on the description of calendar holidays and customs [34, p. 256].

The basis of her work is the information collected from Moldovan Gagauz villages and the Odesa region for more than twenty years [35]. Furthermore, as a philologist who respects, E. Soroceanu writes her materials in the Romanian and Gagauz languages to better understand the local audience. According to her, Moldavians and Gagauz have very similar customs, and we should get to know each other better.

Another Gagauz contemporary prodigious researcher from the same institution is Elizaveta Kvilincova, a specialist in ethnology and history of Gagauz. In the sphere of scientific interests are the regional particularities of traditional culture and Gagauz folklore, the processes of adaptation and cultural integration of Gagauz and other minority ethnic groups from the Republic of Moldova, mutual cultural influence processes, ethnic, religious, and linguistic identity issues [36, p. 36-44].

The works of another modern Gagauz ethnographer, O. K. Radova (Karanastas), investigates the stages of the resettlement of the Gagauz in Budjak. Based on anthroponymic data, it conducts to the ethnic identification of the Bessarabian Gagauz, which designates villages with the Gagauz population resettled from the Balkans in the late 18th and early 19th centuries [37, p. 269-288].

Bulgarians Moldovan researchers also paid special attention to study Gagauz history, among them we can mention I. Grec [38, p. 260-269], from the Academy of Sciences of Moldova and I. Meșceriuc [39, p. 74]. In their works, they described the living of the Gagauz and Bulgarians in the space between the Prut and the Dniester.

Moldovan scientist in Gagauzology, professor Ion Dron, devoted his life studying the toponymy of the Republic of Moldova of Turkic origin [40, p. 4], and many of these settlements are inhabited by the Gagauz people today.

S. Rusnac, in her works, examines the psychological aspect of interethnic relations [41, p. 131], I. Cașu, the historian from the Moldavian State University, reveals the consequences of Soviet „national politics” in Bessarabia [42, p. 246]. While I. Frunțașu [43, p. 146-147], and G. Negru both analyze the ethnolinguistic policy in Moldovan S.S.R [44, p. 36-52].

In a monograph, D. Gurgurov tries to explain the Bulgarian origin of the Gagauz, analyzing the theories of the genesis of the Gagauz people and the population of Southern Bessarabia [45, p. 56].

The researchers M. Bulova and V. Saca address the ethnic identity of the Gagauz and the repercussions of the integration policies from the perspective that the Republic of Moldova is a state with a varied poly-ethnic structure. The authors intend to analyze the manifestation, political options, and the degree of the Gagauz ethnic minority participation in the national parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova [46, p. 25].

Professor A. Morozaan affirms that the A.T.U. Gagauzia could represent the interests of its population and solve their internal problems within the limits of its competence. They also can develop politically, economically, and culturally. The author also points out that integration processes involve the consolidation of the state as a whole [47, p. 89-98].

E. Pătraș studied the national legal framework of national minorities' rights in the Republic of Moldova. By the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova of August 27, 1991, the Supreme Court „guarantees the exercise of social, economic, cultural and political freedoms of all citizens of the Republic of Moldova, including persons belonging to national, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, following the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent documents of the Paris Charter for a New Europe” [48, p. 150].

The articles of the Comrat University professor A.K. Paptsova are devoted to the problems of the religious identity of the Gagauz in different historical periods [49, p. 497-514].

S. Mironova investigates the ethnic identity of the Gagauz and the integration policies repercussions from the perspective of the political relations between the A.T.U. Gagauzia with the central authorities of the Republic of Moldova [50, p. 127-147].

Natalia Putină's research interest is ethnic minorities, ethnic politics and ethnic identity, migration, the electoral process in the Republic of Moldova and A.T.U. Gagauzia. In her articles about Gagauz's autonomy, she pursues the main features and the lack of sociopolitical integration and the disintegration of Gagauz in the Moldovan society. Indeed, the integration of ethnic groups into a nation-building state is a long and complex process. She also analyzes Gagauz participation and interest in the sociopolitical processes in the Republic of Moldova and autonomy. The degree of identification of the Gagauz with the Moldovan state and their elements. To ensure a positive outcome, it is vital to improve the involvement of both parties. On the one side, the main objective of the state's ethnic policy must be to protect the identity of minorities and balanced naturalization through accommodation in the state community. On the other side, the minority ethnic groups wish to live in a democratic state. In particular, A.T.U. Gagauzia in the Republic of Moldova does not mean separation or isolation but represents a guarantee for Gagauz's accommodation by preserving their ethnic specificity [51, p. 163-179].

The authors A. Macovei and R. Svetlicinii also try to elucidate the ethnic

identity of the Gagauz and the repercussions of the integration policies [52, p.17-23]. Others like G. Pogoneț deal with the ethnic identity of the Gagauz and the repercussions of integration policies from the perspective of ethnic conflicts [53, p. 97].

Finally, according to S. Galiman, the people of the Republic of Moldova are the Romanians (Moldovans) Bessarabian, as well as Russians, Ukrainians, Belarussians, Bulgarians, Gagauz, and others living on the territory of the country. They are in close political and juridical relation with the state [54, p. 236-242].

VIII. Western Historiography. Among the Western researchers, the British Orientalist and historian Paul Wittek developed the hypothesis according to which the Gagauz, are the descendants of the Seljuk Turkic tribes, who lived in the Dobrudja present territory as early as the 13th century [55, p. 12-24]. Their leader Sultan Seljuk Kay-Kaus (another alleged etymology of the word Gagauz), adopted Christianity because he created in Dobrudja a state with the capital at Karvuna, which was under the scepter of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Until the end of the 14th century, these „Turks” came under Ottoman rule but retained their Orthodox faith and use Bulgarian and Greek as liturgical languages.

American Professor C. King is one of the first researchers in the West, which focuses on the in-depth study of post-Soviet Moldova. He conducts extensive research in the region, offering a historical perspective on constructing a new Moldovan national identity and its gravity, and provides numerous interviews with individuals, political and cultural leaders from the region [56, p. 738-756].

King illuminates the eternal problem of the politics of identity and cultural transformations experienced by Moldova. Over the past two centuries, this country has been the subject of various cultural development projects from Russia, Romania, and the Soviet Union until it became an independent state in 1991.

The author displays how language, history, and culture became political elites manipulating objects and why some attempts to create an identity were successful, while others failed. In the case of Moldova, the identity construction project has successfully created a state but faced difficulties in building an independent nation [57, p. 145, 209].

The Estonian researcher Pål Kolstø, in his collection of articles entitled *National integration and violent conflict in post-Soviet societies: the cases of Estonia and Moldova*, the author tries to find out why in Estonia it was possible to maintain social peace, and other countries with the same past, for example, the Republic of Moldova, experienced a bloody civil war in 1992, where it led to human victims and the disintegration of the country. Pål states that these two states have many common characteristics, but there are also significant differences. National integration and violent conflicts in post-Soviet societies

analyze the processes of nation-building and ethnic integration in Estonia and the Republic of Moldova to increase our general understanding of how social peace remains strong in one place and disintegrates in another. He uses both „field” empirical studies and a solid theoretical framework to discuss theories about ethnic violence in the modern world and their possible relevance to these two countries. The research results contribute to a better understanding of the process of national integration in Estonia and Moldova, and community violence in general [58, p. 31].

The German historian Stefan Troebst’s article *Autonomy from Gagauzia in Moldova, an example of an end to ethnopolitical conflicts?* shows that it is imperative to understand the political circumstances in which was granted the special status of Gagauzia. By granting territorial autonomy, the Moldovan central government ended a conflict that had arisen in 1989, which threatened to take the form of a civil war twice in October 1990 and in August 1991. At the same time, the solution to the Gagauz problem had a calming effect on the other and more significant ethnopolitical conflict in Transnistria. Against the background of the agitated situation in the country, at the beginning of the nineties, the Autonomy Act for Gagauzia represents a spectacular victory of reason over the ethnonational draped striving for the power of old elite groups, a feat of all conflict actors that is rare in the post-Soviet area.

Despite this success in negotiations in 1994, the multilateral organizations involved in solving the problem had no sympathy for the territorial autonomy solution model, but instead dealt with vague postmodern concepts such as that of a de-ethnicized civil society. The reasons they gave were that an autonomous regime based on the ethnic mix in Southern Moldova would create new minorities and a dangerous precedent for the entire region [59, p. 53-55].

The American scientist William Crowther’s research on the Republic of Moldova in the context of the national revival of Gagauz offers a deep analysis of the relationship between political reforms and the dynamics of changes during 1987-1989, when popular mobilization was the most intense. In the late 80s, the M.S.S.R., like many other regions of the former U.S.S.R., entered a period of political turmoil. As the weakening of the Communist Party manifested, a growing conflict between the majority of Romanian-language and minority activists began to grow. The author observes that the separatist forces quickly established themselves in two regions of the republic: Transnistria on the east bank of the Dniester River and the Southern districts of Gagauz. Both claimed sovereignty and resisted the authority of the central government. Until 1992, severe fighting took place, especially in Transnistria, and Moldova seemed to be about to spiral into direct civil conflict. However, until 1995, the nationalist forces in Moldova declined, and one of the two separatist conflicts was resolved peacefully through the reintegration of the Gagauz into Moldova. The second conflict, in Transnistria, was at least partially deflated, and escalation was avoided [60, p. 147-164].

As an extension, we can say that the separatist forces have strengthened not only in these two regions but also in the whole country.

Another Briton researcher, John Webster, provides an institutional explanation for the peaceful solution of the conflict between the Moldovan government and its small Gagauz minority in the period from 1988 to 1995 years [61, p. 73-74].

Frederica Prina, a specialist in international relations, provides studies on Moldovan linguistic politics; according to the author, Moldova is deeply divided, not only on a national basis, but also linguistic. There are languages of national minorities, then Russian and official Moldovan/Romanian. It is also important to accentuate that the Gagauz minority uses more Russian language than the Moldovan/Romanian language [62, p. 9-10].

The French social anthropologist Wanda Dressler writes about the competing influences of Russia and Romania in the Republic of Moldova and the complicated situations faced by minorities there [63, p. 34-58].

The Czech professors from the University of Ostrava, Vladimír Baar and Daniel Jakubek, speak in their article about the processes that took place and created the Moldovan identity [64, p. 58-92].

Hülya Demirdirek's undertook research on the Gagauz people's lives in Moldova and the argumentation used by Gagauz intelligentsia when they refer to their origins and Budjak territories generally [65, p. 67-71].

Siegfried Wöber deals with various factors that have influenced the creation of the autonomy of the Gagauz people after separation from the Soviet Union and the proclamation of autonomy [66, p. 11-15].

The Irish researcher James Alexander Kapalo conducted an ethnographic study of folk religion and identity among the Gagauz, Turkish-speaking Christians in the Republic of Moldova [67, p. 261].

The Professor at Panteion University, Lambros Baltiotis, talks about the relationship between the Greek republic and the Gagauz people [68, p. 6-35].

In Poland, research about Gagauz was made by Krakow University Professors T. Kowalski and W. Zajackowski. Today their works are continued by Kamil Całus; according to him, another critical problem that monitors the situation in Moldova and the Gagauz people is the possibility of separatism, which is not uncommon in the countries that survived communism [69, p. 1-6].

Another Polish Professor, Bartłomiej Zdaniuk, noted that one of the main problems in today's Moldova social and political life is national unity. The main issue of his paper is that the statehood of Moldova is questionable in its sovereignty and national unity [70, p. 135-153].

In Germany, the research on the Gagauz issue was made by the famous Turcologists Ernst Max Hoppe and Gerhardt Doerfer's [71, p. 260-270]. Another German specialist, Astrid Menz, focuses on Moldovan linguistic politics and the Gagauz language [72, p. 55-69].

Oleh Protsyk political scientist from Flensburg University, in his work, examines the issue of democracy and federalization in the Republic of Moldova [73, p. 72-90].

In Switzerland, Simon Schlegel scores the benefits that the Gagauz people gained by acquiring autonomy. Neither their Bulgarian neighbors nor the Gagauz on the Ukrainian side of the border have achieved a similar degree of political autonomy. However, with the beginning of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict in 2014, this characteristic of Gagauz autonomy came to be seen as a potentially dangerous precedent in Ukraine [74, p. 1-23].

In Turkey, Ayten Kiliç wrote an excellent Master Thesis about the Gagauz history, these slightly forgotten people from the South of Moldova. The author researches their origin, culture, religion, traditions, and the historical, social, and political events that shaped their lives [75, p. 48].

Therefore, we notice that the historiography about Gagauz has developed considerably, and with their affirmation in the historical arena, the interest continues to arouse. Nevertheless, this direction is not sufficient investigated, and the topic needs further detailed research.

Conclusions

It is believed that the Gagauz people's history has several centuries, the uncertainty about their ethnogenesis is due to the lack of written sources, because the Gagauz started to be recorded separately only during the 19th century.

Since the 20th century, the researchers have begun to focus seriously on the history of the Gagauz, many of whom are pros and cons opinions about their origin, using both local sources (here we have to remember their folklore) and diverse interpretations manuscripts (in various European libraries).

Numerous authors, both Romanians and foreigners, write about the Gagauz origins, concluding that: they could be the descendants of the Turkified Bulgarians, Greeks, or other Balkan autochthonous population, Northeastern Eurasian Turkic tribes, or Seljuk Turks.

Their origin is still unclear despite dozens of studies; no author has given a clear explanation of the origin of Gagauz, especially since the mixture of peoples and languages makes it difficult to establish their exact identity.

In the late 80s of the 20th century, the Gagauz manifested themselves with the declaration of independence from Moldovan central authorities. The collapse of the U.S.S.R. state has left all territories in a disastrous sociopolitical situation, each newly created state trying to attract as much territory as possible. The particular situation of the Republic of Moldova has led to the creation of the Gagauz Autonomous Region (1994), partly dependent on its former membership, but more and more with its local specific development.

Concerning autonomy, another concept as difficult to define as the previous one, calls for a well-defined territory, a special form of government, and special linguistic, cultural, and educational rights granted to this territory.

There also were voices against this region, meaning that the Republic of Moldova should try to have other methods to keep it in the national territory. As the Republic of Moldova failed to stop the existing Transnistrian conflict forcefully, the only solution envisaged by the then leaders of the country was only a political one. At the same time, some international experts believe that the solution found is a positive one and should be applied whenever the situation requires it.

Problems regarding the poor integration of the ethnic minorities in the Republic of Moldova are reminiscent of U.S.S.R. politics and the inability to solve it during independence.

Poor integration of the Gagauz community is a danger to the Republic of Moldova's security and makes the state vulnerable to external risks. Moldovan authorities can take over E.U. practices regarding the management of inter-ethnic relations to eliminate this threat.

The creation of the A.T.U. Gagauzia solved some problems of the inhabitants guaranteed extensive rights for national minorities; future elaboration and implementation of a constructive multicultural policy would significantly ensure Moldova's social and national security.

As a general conclusion, we can say that the Gagauz represent a particular minority with a special status. They develop with small steps within the Republic of Moldova, trying not to be crushed by other actors' more or less mesmeric interests. Chișinău should encompass the protection of Gagauz so that the region gets the look of a strong partner both politically and economically without serious interference in its social life.

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Rezumat

ANALIZA ISTORIOGRAFICĂ A IDENTITĂȚII GĂGĂUZILOR ȘI INTEGRĂRII LOR ÎN REPUBLICA MOLDOVA. Problema identității și integrării găgăuzilor în Republica Moldova este un subiect interesant, dar și destul de controversat în istoriografie. Dificultatea studierii provine din însăși conținutul fenomenului dat. Deoarece identitatea este percepția de sine ca parte a societății, adică se formează în spațiul informațional, înțelegerea și studiul tradițiilor sale depind în mod direct de mediul cultural și de caracteristicile socio-materiale. Prin urmare, în cursul studiului identității, s-a acumulat o mulțime de date care nu pot fi reduse la teorie.

Scopul acestui articol este de a aborda principalele tendințe istoriografice pentru a crea o imagine mai completă a identității și integrării comunității găgăuzilor, precum și pentru a identifica noi direcții în cercetare. De asemenea, este necesară o revizuire istoriografică a cercetărilor științifice privind problemele noului regionalism, noilor practici sociale de identificare și autoidentificare. Pe baza revizuirii istoriografice, este planificată în viitor dezvoltarea unei strategii metodologice eficiente pentru studierea proceselor de identificare regională și autoidentificare în U.T.A. Găgăuzia.

Subiectul este constituit dintr-un set de publicații moderne de cercetare privind problema identității etnice regionale. Sunt luate în considerare unele articole științifice, în care această problemă este prezentată mai complet. Atenția principală a studiului este concentrată în contextul constructivismului social, iar metodologia folosește analiza critică a surselor științifice dedicate identificării și autoidentificării regionale. Sunt evidențiate ideile și metodele importante de modelare științifică a proceselor moderne caracteristice noului regionalism. Reformele politice din anii 1990, în Republica Moldova, au lansat procesul de regionalizare a teritoriului interesat, însoțit de creșterea conștiinței de sine regionale. În acest sens, abordarea teoretică a identității găgăuzilor este actualizată. În sfera științifică, aceste procese au fost exprimate în manifestarea unor concepte precum „identitate etnică”, „identitate regională”, „mitologie regională”, „ideologie regională”, etc.

Elita regională a început să își consolideze pozițiile, promovând diferite simboluri și legende. Astfel, competiția dintre regiune și centru a apărut în condiții culturale noi, ceea ce a dus la căutarea unor fenomene noi și unice pentru U.T.A. Găgăuzia, distingând această regiune de altele.

Cuvinte-cheie: istoriografie, Republica Moldova, găgăuzi, identitate etnică, integrare.

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